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**SOPHIA AND THE JOHANNINE JESUS**

by

**JAMES MARTIN CLARK SCOTT**

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**A Thesis  
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This thesis examines the relationship between the Jewish figure of Sophia and the Johannine Jesus. Recognising the problem of identifying the *female* Sophia with the *male* Jesus, we ask how the Fourth Evangelist has tackled it and what effect, if any, the solution may have had on the portrayal of women within the Gospel.

Following an introductory chapter outlining the scope of the thesis, Chapter Two examines the context from which John has drawn on Sophia. Bearing in mind always the monotheistic character of Judaism, we discover the way in which traits of ANE Goddesses have influenced the development of Sophia as a figure within Jewish thought. We find that by the time of the writing of John's Gospel, on the one hand there was a highly developed picture of Sophia as a feminine expression of God active in Israel's history, while on the other hand there were efforts to repress her gender significance.

Chapter Three examines the relationship between this female figure and John's picture of Jesus. The Logos of the Prologue, found to be influenced at almost every turn by Sophia speculation, proves to be a useful cover employed by the Fourth Evangelist to effect the switch of gender from Sophia to Jesus. Further study shows that all the main themes of the Prologue are worked out in detail in the body of the Gospel. Hardly a major Johannine theme remains untouched by some measure of Sophia's influence. This leads us to the conclusion that John has intentionally presented us with Jesus as Jesus Sophia incarnate.

Chapter Four examines the possibility of a connection between the discerned Sophia christology and the prominent role played by women in the Gospel. We find that all the stories concerning women appear at important christological points in the Gospel. Further investigation shows that all the women demonstrate the essential characteristics of discipleship, in a way in which the traditional male disciples of the Synoptic tradition do not. The women are seen to function as paradigms of discipleship for the community to which the Gospel is addressed. In addition, traces of influence from Sophia speculation are also to be found in the way in which the stories concerning women are told.

Finally, some reflections are offered on the wider implications of the findings in chapters three and four, along with some suggestions for further research.

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To my wife, friend and colleague, Jayne, my debt is enormous. She is not mentioned out of any sense of convention in these matters,

but because she has contributed greatly to the thesis through many valuable insights and corrections. Her partnership in ministry has enabled me to find time which otherwise would have been impossible, and in addition to all her own responsibilities she has offered a continuous back-up service in times of depression, anxiety and apparent hopelessness! It is to her that this work is dedicated in love and in the hope that she will one day truly be able to experience the freedom to exercise fully her many gifts in the footsteps of the Johannine women.

*Jarrow, April 1990.*

## ABBREVIATIONS

- ANET PRITCHARD, J. B., (ed.) Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1955[2]).
- BAG BAUER, W., A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, trans. and rev. W. F. Arndt/F. W. Gingrich (Chicago/London, University of Chicago Press, 1979[2]).
- BDB BROWN, F./DRIVER, S. R./BRIGGS, C. A., A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1979=1951).
- Hatch-Redpath HATCH, E./REDPATH, H. A., A Concordance to the Septuagint and Other Versions of the Old Testament (Graz, Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1954=1897).
- IDB BUTTRICK, G. A., et al. (eds.) The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible (New York/Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1962ff).
- NIDNTT BROWN, C. (ed.), The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology 3 vols (Exeter, Paternoster Press, 1978).
- TDNT KITTEL, G./FRIEDRICH, G., (eds.) Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1964ff).
- LXX Septuaginta. Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes, 2 vols ed. A. Rahlfs et al. (Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1982=1935).
- MT Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, ed. R. Kittel, et al. (Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1977).

Abbreviations of Journals, Periodicals, Commentary Series and Monograph Series, when used follow the standard abbreviations given in: S. Schwertner (ed.) Theologische Realenzyklopädie Abkürzungsverzeichnis (Berlin/New York, Walter de Gruyter, 1976) 3-343.

- ⊕ This symbol is used at points in the thesis to indicate an identity between two subjects, which is more than can be expressed simply by an 'equals' (=) sign; e.g., Jesus ⊕ God.
- = The 'equals' sign is used to indicate a parallel text or an equality in relationship.

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I confirm that no part of the material offered has previously been submitted by me for a degree in this or in any other University.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

There can be few more daunting tasks in the life of church musicians than attempting to write Passion music in the wake of Bach: whatever they do will either appear imitative and so secondary, innovative and so rather risky, or downright irrelevant! For a musician turned theologian approaching the Gospel of John, the writing of a thesis appears a similarly overwhelming task. There has been such a vast volume of scholarly work of immense variety written on the Fourth Gospel by so many giants of New Testament scholarship, that the task of writing something new and original becomes more difficult as the months of research tick by. Thus, as we set out on this present work, it is vital to delineate the precise contribution we seek to make. At times it will certainly appear imitative, but at others hopefully also innovative, with all the risk that entails. Above all, however, it seeks to avoid the pitfall of our third alternative, but that must be left to the reader!

Some comments on the origin of the thesis may be helpful in understanding its final outcome. Initially interest was stimulated through the author's participation in a seminar on the subject of 'Women in the Gospels' in the spring of 1981, for which seminar he shared responsibility for the examination of the role of women in the Fourth Gospel. At that time, the only significant material available on the subject was the article by Raymond Brown briefly outlining some of the notable features of the Johannine women<sup>1</sup>. This led to further reflection, amongst which the most striking observation was the prominence of women at crucial christological points in the unfolding drama of the Johannine account. The unexplained connection between

christology and the role of women proved to be the germ out of which the plant has grown. The recognition of the crucial influence of Wisdom speculation on the Johannine picture of Jesus, especially as noted already by Brown in his commentary<sup>2</sup> and further encouraged by Professor Dunn's own conclusions<sup>3</sup>, led the author to investigate the significance of the *gender* of Sophia for understanding the Johannine perspective in general and the role of women in particular.

We shall now turn to outline the methodology employed in the construction of this thesis, the direction in which our investigation will take us and some of the questions with which we seek to grapple. In addition, we will attempt to set the thesis in context amongst the whole range of studies on Wisdom literature, Johannine Christology, and the role of women in New Testament times.

### 1.1 SETTING THE SCENE

As the overall title already suggests, this thesis sets out to examine in detail the relationship between the Jewish figure of Wisdom, known by her Greek title, Sophia, and the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel. The decision to refer to her by her Greek name is a deliberate one, taken on two counts. Firstly, by its use, her *gender* is immediately made clear, a factor not evident in the abstract English word, Wisdom. This will be a vital issue when we come to examine the way that New Testament writers, in particular John, seek to identify an exclusively female figure with the male Jesus. Secondly, the use of the Greek name reveals this author's assumption that the Fourth Evangelist used Greek as the language for writing the Gospel from the beginning, rather than Aramaic, "even though the

language displays many Semitisms or Semitic colouring"<sup>4</sup>. This presupposition is of some importance in respect of our handling of materials in chapter three, where reference will be made to the Septuagint (=LXX) text of the writings under consideration rather than to the Hebrew text (=MT), even where this is extant (i.e., Proverbs).

In order to approach the question of the relationship of Jesus and Sophia in the Fourth Gospel, it is first necessary to establish who, or what she is and means for Judaism in the first century of the Christian era. This will entail a review of the influences which were exerted on the formation and development of Sophia in the period from her first major appearance in Proverbs 1-9, through to the highly sophisticated presentations of her in the Wisdom of Solomon and the work of the first century Alexandrian Jewish philosopher, Philo. Our purpose in chapter two will thus obviously be to set the context out of which the Fourth Evangelist uses the Sophia traditions in relation to Jesus, but we will also be concerned to establish more clearly the exact relationship envisaged by the Wisdom writers between Sophia and the traditional male monotheistic God of Israel, Yahweh. This in turn will raise the question, which is vital to the thesis as a whole, of the *gender significance* of Sophia. To what extent, if any, was the *gender* of Sophia an issue for the Wisdom writers themselves, and further for the author of the Fourth Gospel in portraying Jesus Christ?

All of this assumes that Sophia really is a vital figure for the Fourth Evangelist's process of christological reflection. The purpose of chapter three is to put this assumption to the test, as there we shall examine the way in which Sophia speculation has shaped the

figure of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. Initially we will look at the Logos of the Prologue in relation to the Sophia of Jewish Wisdom speculation, before turning to an examination of the connection between Prologue and Gospel in the light of this relationship. Naturally much of this work will draw on previous studies of both Johannine christology and the relation of Prologue to Gospel, but it will do so under a different aspect, that of the question of the gender significance of Sophia. It will also be concerned with *thematic* relationship rather than merely with linguistic parallels within the Fourth Gospel itself, though these will still be pursued. In the end, we hope to shed some new light both on the vexed question of the reasons for the disappearance of the Logos after the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel, and on the methodology which the Fourth Evangelist adopts in the course of christological reflection. In doing so we will hope to demonstrate not only that Sophia speculation is the *primary* influence on Johannine christology, but also that the Fourth Evangelist was conscious of the gender problem involved in the identification of Sophia with Jesus Christ and dealt with this problem in the most satisfactory way available to him/her<sup>s</sup>.

In the fourth chapter we turn to an examination of the way in which the Fourth Evangelist's christological 'solution' may have affected the outworking of gender roles in the Gospel. In particular this will involve us in a closer look at the role of women as paradigms of discipleship in the Gospel and their relationship to the traditional male disciples of the Synoptic tradition. We will hope to show that the influence of Sophia extends also to the role of women in the Fourth Gospel and that this in turn provides a "perceptive

corrective"<sup>6</sup> to other New Testament writings which tend to stress the subordination of women. In addition, it may cause us to reassess the role which women may actually have played in the community to which the Fourth Gospel was originally addressed. We shall conclude the thesis by summarising our findings, offering some further reflections on them, and pointing to some future questions which must for the moment remain unanswered, but towards whose investigation, we believe, this present thesis must push us.

## 1.2 SETTING THE CONTEXT

Since, as we have indicated, this thesis traverses ground already well trodden by scholars from several disciplines of theological study, it is essential to clarify our particular focus with precision over against other works in those disciplines. Essentially there are three main areas in which this must be done: firstly, in relation to chapter two, the contribution of the thesis to Wisdom studies; secondly, the interaction with studies on Johannine christology; thirdly, the relation to other studies on women in the Gospels, in particular those treating from a feminist perspective. At times we will be seen to be largely in agreement with the assessments made by the authors we review, at other times clearly coming to very different conclusions, while at other points we will seek to build upon conclusions already made and well tested in the past. Before embarking on this task, however, it is vital for us to clarify the method by which we shall attempt to conduct our investigations. Since our ultimate conclusions may appear at times either controversial or tendentious (or both), it will be important to understand the method used to reach them.

### 1.2.1 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of employing a specific methodological approach in New Testament study is at least two-fold: firstly it must aim at *exactness*, or precision in handling the subject material. Secondly, it should seek to enable the writer to say something *reasonably secure* about the subject matter addressed. However, as Sanders has remarked, "finding agreement about the ground rules by which what is relatively secure can be identified is very difficult"<sup>7</sup>. Although this statement would always have been true to some degree in relation to New Testament scholarship, it has grown in significance in recent years with the increasing diversity of methodological approaches to Biblical interpretation. While there are a number of probable causes for this diversity, some theological, some sociological, others ideological, perhaps the most significant has been a growing sense of dissatisfaction with the too rigid application of historical-critical methodology to the Biblical text. In particular the claims put forward for the results of both Form and Redaction criticism have at times ignored a properly critical appraisal of their own limitations. We therefore find ourselves writing in an era of New Testament scholarship which, perhaps more than any before, lacks a clear or unified approach to method.

The new approach to methodology in Biblical study has developed in several different directions<sup>8</sup>. The whole new Literary movement, which itself contains considerable diversity<sup>9</sup>, has sought to move from a concern with mere historical reconstruction to one of the study of the Bible as literature, whether from a secular or from a religious starting point. While literary critics by no means reject the

legitimacy of historical-critical techniques for study, they nevertheless want to approach the Bible "with questions, expectations and techniques appropriate to the modern study of literature, rather than as a historical or theological source"<sup>10</sup>. Then again, from a different perspective, Childs has developed a critique of what he sees as the excesses of historical criticism, from the point of view of his 'canonical' approach<sup>11</sup>. His motives, "the concern to deal seriously with the effect which the shape of the canonical collection has on the individual parts"<sup>12</sup>, and the necessity of rethinking "the relation between the historical critical study of the Bible and its theological use as religious literature within a community of faith"<sup>13</sup>, are indeed laudable, even if he does not always succeed in taking his own methodology to heart<sup>14</sup>!

The attention of modern biblical scholars has also been drawn to sociological models as tools for biblical research<sup>15</sup>. These models have provided new insight on both the task of historical reconstruction and theological interpretation/reflection. Perhaps in this sociological area more than any other, the effects of adopting what might be called a 'secular' methodology can be seen in the results to which individual scholars come. For example, the numerous studies which adopt a Marxist starting point as a methodological base will clearly come to very different conclusions from those treating the same biblical material using a Durkheimian sociological model! At this point we see underlined the need for a proper statement of methodological presuppositions.

Another major contribution to the debate on the methodology of biblical interpretation has been made by feminist scholars. While we

will discuss in more detail the relationship between this present thesis and studies on women, particularly those treating from a feminist perspective, later in this chapter, it is appropriate now to note the importance of feminist critique for the modern debate on methodology. Since there is as much variety amongst feminist approaches as, for example, amongst the new Literary schools, it is difficult to make generalisations in discussing method. However, it would be fair to say that feminist biblical scholars have developed *heuristic* approaches to the text which allow questions to be asked of the biblical materials which have led to tentative new historical reconstructions, and imaginative and refreshing forms of theological reflection which would have been impossible to achieve using traditional historical-critical methodology alone. Fiorenza sums up the ideal of such method when she says: "the task is, therefore, not so much rediscovering new sources, as rereading the available sources in a different key"<sup>16</sup>.

It will become clear to the reader in the course of this thesis that it is to this last named methodological approach that we are most indebted. While this thesis by definition cannot be termed a 'feminist' work (the author being male!), it does seek to take seriously the insights of feminist scholarship in formulating an approach to the text. In doing so we will always be keeping in mind the principal aims of methodology outlined at the opening of this section. Our first methodological principle of *exactness* carries with it the necessity to take serious account of the text itself and ultimately to judge the results of our study in the light of it, particularly where our findings run contrary to traditionally held

interpretations. This is not to imply that exactness should be equated with *objectivity* in an empirical sense, for it is our contention that all New Testament study is coloured by the background and starting point of the individual commentator, at least to some extent. Responding to the accusation often levelled at feminist writers, that they are merely projecting back today's questions onto texts which cannot possibly answer them, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza says:

Such an argument overlooks the fact that all scholarship on early Christianity is determined by contemporary questions and interests. . . . Biblical-historical inquiries are always determined by ecclesial and societal interests and questions<sup>17</sup>.

While we would agree wholeheartedly with Fiorenza's sentiments here, we must also recognise the danger of lapsing into a methodology which overlooks the *historical context* of the New Testament writings in a desire to claim authenticity for one's own understanding<sup>18</sup>. Responding to this potential danger, Susanne Heine comments:

Over against this I would set an understanding of scholarship which begins from an awareness of its limitations: there is a particular method for every object which produces a corresponding result. Every method begins from a heuristic interest which determines the results and which must also be taken into account for exactness<sup>19</sup>.

The recognition of the need to acknowledge our contemporary interests and influences in the pursuit of exactness is not, of course, simply an observation made by feminist scholars. The necessity of allowing historical context and historical probability to assist in judging the validity of our contemporary interpretation is outlined also by Morgan when he says:

Our understanding of the whole development of our tradition, together with some understanding of contemporary experience provides the basis of most theological reflection. It is therefore important to make our historical understanding of Christian origins as accurate and truthful as possible. Clearly the evidence is in certain respects one-sided, and most readings of it biased. Corrections and correctives are therefore welcome<sup>20</sup>.

How then shall we proceed? Perhaps the best term to describe our overall methodology would be *heuristic*. By that we understand that we are setting out to find certain answers (which can only at best be provisional) to specific questions which we address to the text. This is not to say that these questions are simply drawn at *random* from our twentieth century interests and imposed on the Johannine text. On the contrary, we hope to show that they are questions which are both related to and determined by the text.

There are two angles from which this may be seen in relation to our overall theme of Jesus and Sophia in this thesis. On the one hand we are faced with texts written in a particular era, with all the implications of their historical context, which talk about the man Jesus, using language which, in the context of Jewish literature and its environment, can be identified as characteristically used of the female figure Sophia. Was this language, which scholars have clearly identified as evocative of Wisdom tradition, used by John in order *deliberately* to evoke Sophia? Since the language in which the text was written itself indicates gender, we ask whether or not it is historically possible or plausible that the Fourth Evangelist was *conscious* of gender as an issue in identifying Jesus with Sophia. Firm conclusions here may not be possible, but we may look for pointers both in the historical environment leading up to and

surrounding the writing of the Fourth Gospel, and in the language and method of the Fourth Evangelist. Whatever conclusions we come to, however, it is the Evangelist's choice of language, given its use elsewhere, and its presence in the text which provokes our question.

On the other hand, our heuristic method is not completely dependent on historical *certainty* in order to make a valid interpretation of the text. It might be argued that it is impossible to enter the mind of the Fourth Evangelist and determine the reasons for the choice of the particular language employed. However, we may still legitimately look at that language in the light of that used by other writers before and up to the era of the New Testament and ask whether or not it is possible to read that language in a new way which interacts also with our contemporary experience and situation.

Our heuristic methodology seeks to employ both these approaches to the text. While we will agree with Morgan, that "historical truthfulness is a value worth preserving"<sup>21</sup>, we will also remain aware that it is never absolute. Fiorenza reminds us that "historical 'objectivity' can only be approached by reflecting critically on and naming one's theoretical presuppositions and political allegiances"<sup>22</sup>. The word 'political' is here used in its widest sense, an important observation when we consider that the primary subject material of this present thesis touches upon two of the most sensitive areas of modern Christian 'politics', namely, the question of the adequacy of human language (particularly in its use of gender terms) in relation to talking about God, and the role of women in the Christian community. If 'allegiances' are to be declared in the interests of exactness, then it is important to alert the reader to two basic convictions held

by this present writer<sup>23</sup>. Firstly, while *all* human language is ultimately inadequate in expressing our understanding of God, the traditional custom of referring to God *only* in male terminology is the more inadequate because of its restricted code. Secondly, the striving towards equality of opportunity for women and men in all avenues of Christian service and leadership (whether lay or ordained) is not simply desirable, but is necessary in the search for a wholistic understanding of Christian community.

These two issues are not directly addressed in this thesis, but they are part of the context out of which this writer approaches the task of New Testament exegesis. Like Fiorenza, "I do not want to advocate a value-free exegesis but only to clarify the values at stake"<sup>24</sup>. In our heuristic endeavour we shall address questions which we believe are provoked by the text itself, but which may not clearly have been heard before. This may be due to some extent to the constraining influence of traditional historical-critical methodology. The formulation of our questions, however, will also show dependence on the influence of feminist New Testament scholars, whose willingness to break free from the dominant male-oriented practice of theology has challenged the roots of much of our thinking.

Perhaps the best way of illustrating our methodological approach is to offer a very brief and somewhat simplistic example of it. The text of the Prologue to John's Gospel has probably had more ink spilled over it than any other in modern New Testament study. In his classic essay on the Incarnation, Maurice Wiles makes the following comments:

Incarnation, in its full and proper sense, is not something directly presented in scripture. It is a construction built on the variegated evidence to be found there. Increased historical knowledge has enabled our generation to see this truth about the way in which incarnational doctrine emerged more clearly than some earlier generations. The New Testament writers were not simply reporters of the teaching of Jesus or of agreed church doctrine. They were *interpreters* and describe the *specialness* of Jesus to which they all bear witness<sup>25</sup>.

Insofar as the later developed understanding of 'incarnation' in both Patristic writings and modern theology is concerned, Wiles may have a case. But surely the text of Jn 1:14 itself points us to the fact that the Fourth Evangelist understood 'incarnation' in a fuller sense than other New Testament writers<sup>26</sup>. The very fact that this text, more than any other, dominated the discussion of christology for centuries to come, reflects its unique contribution to the understanding of the specialness of the incarnation. Dunn sums this up when he says:

Now in John the word of God is identified with a particular historical person, whose pre-existence as a person with God is asserted throughout. Now the Christian conception of God must make room for the person who was Christ, the Logos incarnate<sup>27</sup>.

However, this prominence of the Johannine Prologue in subsequent christological discussion also points us to another important feature of the text. While it raises the issue of 'incarnation' (σάρξ ἐγένετο), it does not *define* its meaning. The *concept* of incarnation is inherent in the vocabulary of the text, but the label 'incarnation' remains a heuristic word: we do not know exactly what it means. The subsequent discussion of christology, from the second century to the present day, has been the ongoing process of trying to *find* meaning.

Now our heuristic approach wants to delve as far as possible into the mind and method of the Evangelist to ask what models, if any, were available for speaking of Jesus Christ in the way in which the Prologue does. Why does the Fourth Gospel interpret and describe the specialness of Jesus in this particular way? What problems can we discern in presenting Jesus in this way and could the Fourth Evangelist have been conscious of them?

Here we may see the interaction between our heuristic approach and the text. On the one hand, the question with which we come to the text is conditioned by modern understanding of the *doctrine* of the incarnation, asking how the Fourth Evangelist came to the statement of Jn 1:14 and what problems (conscious or unconscious) may have been involved in doing so. In terms of our thesis as a whole, the question of the model adopted by the Fourth Evangelist in interpreting the specialness of Jesus will be posed under two further modern influences: the observation by numerous scholars of the similarity between the Logos concept and statements concerning the Jewish figure Sophia, and the search by some feminist theologians for a less (or non-) androcentric approach to christology. To this extent we are seeking to find an answer to a modern question. On the other hand, it is only because of the claim which the text itself makes (ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο), and because of its context in a hymnic/poetic structure which raises such issues as pre-existence and equality with God, that the question may be asked and an answer attempted in the first place.

There is, then, an interaction between text and question. While the question comes out of a contemporary interest and is influenced by factors not necessarily part of the original context of the New

Testament world, the text nevertheless remains a fundamental part of the dialogue and itself governs the answer. In terms of our overall thesis this means that the presence of *female* Sophia in the text of the Old Testament and intertestamental writings poses the question of *gender* in relation to God (even if some might say this was not a conscious issue in the mind of the original writer), and the phenomenon of the parallelism between the text of John 1:1-18 and statements concerning female Sophia further poses the question of gender in relation to the man Jesus.

Despite adopting such an approach, we will not abandon the tools of historical criticism. These will be of particular importance in determining the meaning of specific texts in context. Thus our methodology should not be construed as anti-historical-critical, but rather as one which seeks to use the best points of that method within what is arguably a more imaginative and flexible framework.

Apart from the principle of returning to the text and its context, what checks and balances may we employ with regard to the criterion of 'exactness'? Here, perhaps, the dictum proposed by Sanders may be helpful: "how sure are we of the possible range of meanings of any given action or saying; how many lines of evidence converge towards the same meaning"<sup>28</sup>. It is fairly obvious that the need to maintain a reasonable flow of thought, taken with the constraints of time and volume, will limit the extent to which we may list and examine *all* the ranges of meaning of every text and subject upon which we will touch in the course of this thesis. However, we will attempt to indicate the extent to which we believe our interpretation should be seen as possible or probable. The second

part of Sanders' statement will be of particular importance in our third and fourth chapters, where the number of lines of evidence converging towards our conclusions will, to a large extent, help to determine their validity as answers to the questions posed.

The actual questions to which we seek some form of answer throughout the thesis have already been indicated to some degree in our attempt to 'set the scene'<sup>29</sup>. However, for the sake of clarity, we shall spell them out more directly here, bearing in mind our comments on their place within our heuristic framework. Firstly, we ask the question as to how significant the *gender* of Sophia was in her emergence as a figure in Jewish thought. To what extent were the Jewish writers *aware* of this in their reflections on her? Is there any evidence to suggest that her gender was seen as *problematic*, in particular in relation to both monotheism and Yahwism?

Secondly, we ask whether or not there is evidence to support the claim of a number of scholars that the Fourth Evangelist used Sophia as a background, or model for the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel. If so, could the Evangelist have been conscious of a *gender problem* in identifying the male Jesus with a female figure? If Sophia indeed lies behind the Prologue in some measure, does she also effectively influence the Gospel as a whole, and to what extent? If the Fourth Evangelist has used Sophia as some kind of model, what method is used to present this christological perspective?

Thirdly, we ask what effect such a use of a Sophia christology might have had on the Fourth Evangelist's portrayal of female figures in the Gospel. What function do women have in the Gospel? How do

they relate to John's picture of Jesus? Is there any evidence of influence from Sophia tradition on the stories concerning women? What, if anything, can we infer from our conclusions concerning the community to which the Fourth Gospel is addressed?

Lastly, we will want to ask briefly what conclusions our reading of the text may allow us to draw in relation to the modern day Christian community. With these questions in mind, we turn now to look at the contribution which this thesis seeks to make in the three main areas of research on which it impinges: Wisdom Studies; Johannine christology; Studies on Women.

### 1.2.2 WISDOM STUDIES

The Wisdom literature of Israel has always posed problems to biblical scholars because of its consistent defiance of all attempts at schematization or simple categorization. In contrast to so much of the Old Testament's preoccupation with the divine purpose and order of Israel's life and history, the Wisdom writers present a marked strand of 'secularity', which shows more interest in everyday life experience and the benefits of sound common sense than in discerning God's word and will. This rather different approach to life provided by the Wisdom literature was further underlined with the realisation that it "was a phenomenon common to the ancient East, a cultural commodity with respect to which Israel was to a great extent a recipient and not a donor"<sup>30</sup>. With this discovery, Israel's wisdom was firmly placed within the context of the wider ANE world, rather than being seen in the splendid isolation of comparison only with other Old Testament traditions. Much of the study of Wisdom literature has consequently

concentrated on the task of making comparisons between Israel's Wisdom and that of other traditions, notably those Egyptian, Canaanite and Mesopotamian materials unearthed this century<sup>31</sup>. While this comparative approach has provided many illuminating parallels, its value now lies more in the basis it gives for understanding *Israel's* use of the wider Wisdom traditions of the ANE within the context of a *monotheistic* framework of faith. Thus, the more recent question has tended to be not so much what aspects of ANE wisdom has Israel *adopted*, but rather how has what has been adopted been understood and *adapted* by those who borrowed it from the wider religious climate of their day<sup>32</sup>. In addition, there has been a growing recognition of the widespread influence of Wisdom tradition on the other written traditions of Israel, including the Prophets and the Deuteronomic historians, and this too has helped to place Israel's Wisdom firmly within the context of the wider span of Hebrew religious thought<sup>33</sup>.

It is at this point that our present thesis enters the scene, for although we are vitally interested in the influence of ANE polytheistic religions on the development of the figure of Sophia in Israel, we are nevertheless concerned primarily to understand her meaning and function within that Jewish tradition of declared monotheism. There have, of course, been many treatments of the way in which various influences have asserted themselves on Sophia, most notably in relation to the ANE Goddesses MAAT, Ishtar/Astarte, and Isis<sup>34</sup>, and our critique of these will largely be given in the context of our discussions in chapter two. For the moment, however, we would note that such treatments have tended to deal more with the question of Sophia's status as personification or hypostasis, rather than

addressing directly the issue with which we are concerned, namely her gender significance. Thus we find that Mack, in his influential early study on the relationship between Logos and Sophia in the later stream of Jewish Wisdom represented by Wisdom of Solomon and Philo, can talk quite freely of Sophia as representing part of a mythological scheme whereby it became possible to develop a "theology of the transcendence of God"<sup>35</sup>, without ever really discussing the implications of using a *feminine* figure to do so. This comes across also even more clearly in the language which authors use to describe Sophia's function, for example, in Dunn's summary statement asserting that *she* is "a way of speaking about God *himself*. . . without compromising *his* transcendence"<sup>36</sup>!

One recent exception to this trend has been the work undertaken by Claudia Camp attempting to relate the figure of Sophia to other feminine aspects of the book of Proverbs and to ground this in a plausible *Sitz im Leben*<sup>37</sup>. She sees the feminine aspects of the book, including Sophia herself, as "serving to unify the composition and message of the book"<sup>38</sup>, a fact which is demonstrated by the way in which the Sophia poems of chapters 1-9 are balanced at the end of the book by two poems about women. She sums this unifying function up by concluding that, "in the book of Proverbs, one stands or falls in the eyes of God and community based on one's relationship to various women"<sup>39</sup>. Camp sees the function of these women, the divine Sophia and the idealised woman of Prov 31, as symbols legitimising the changing society of post-exilic Israel, in which a "greater balance in the contributive roles of women and men. . . would be expected in a period of economic pressure, de-urbanization, and incipient

democratization"<sup>40</sup>. While we might want at points to question her somewhat random methodological approach and aspects of her understanding of post-exilic society in Israel, she nevertheless presents a serious and worthwhile attempt to make sense of the gender significance of Sophia in an overwhelmingly patriarchal tradition.

Camp's interest, of course, lies in the literary function of the symbol within the book of *Proverbs*, and while her conclusions may point us to the way in which the gender of Sophia may be taken seriously, they cannot, by nature of her study's limited scope, take us far enough towards understanding Sophia's significance in the New Testament era. We will need to come to some understanding of the dichotomy which exists in the book of *Sirach*, between the exalted figure of Sophia, the embodiment of Torah in Sir 24, and the very negative attitude of the book as a whole towards women. We shall seek to show that this can only be resolved by understanding her relationship to Torah as an attempt at confinement, and a move toward the removal of her gender significance.

Our investigation will also uncover this process of confinement being continued in the writings of Philo, who appears to withdraw Sophia from the lower realm of the created world as a means of limiting her gender influence. Here we shall diverge considerably from the judgements of Baer, the only major contributor to the discussion of gender issues in Philo<sup>41</sup>, who concludes that Philo actually has an asexual view of God, which allows him also to view Sophia as either male or female. While this argument fits well into Baer's scheme, it hardly takes seriously the reasons for Philo wanting to view her in this way in the first place, which reasons will be the

subject of our scrutiny. Philo's attitude to Sophia will be seen as important because of the emergence of his work in such close temporal proximity to the writings of the New Testament, and thus as a witness to the currency of discussion of the *gender* of Sophia as an issue in at least one branch of first century Judaism.

The discussion of the possibility of influence of ANE Goddesses on Jewish Sophia speculation has raised some problems in previous research, but we cannot simply sidestep those problems if we want to understand her gender significance properly. In the past, some have sought to draw out a series of linguistic parallels between, for example, Isis traditions and the figure of Sophia in Wisdom of Solomon<sup>42</sup>, but the attempt has proved unsatisfactory<sup>43</sup>. More helpful have been those studies which have pointed to the way in which general configurations of ideas connected with the Goddess have exercised an influence at various stages of Sophia's development<sup>44</sup>. This is of particular significance in the case of Wisdom of Solomon, which represents both the zenith of her exaltation and the closest representation of her as a figure in Jewish literature to the era in which the New Testament writers drew upon her as an image.

This second approach is nearer to the one which we will adopt, for we will define some specific areas in which similarities may be seen between Sophia and the Goddesses. However, our aim will much more be to establish that the needs and experiences of the people of the ANE, which were projected onto the Goddesses, particularly through the fertility cults, were common *universal* needs, to which Jewish use of the Sophia figure, often in the guise of the Goddess motifs, sought in some measure to respond, while retaining allegiance to the concept

of monotheism. In other words, we will be setting out to show that there was an identifiable desire to find an expression of the feminine nature in the deity, which was met, at least in Proverbs and more clearly in the Wisdom of Solomon, through the use of the female figure Sophia.

Another problem related to comparison of Sophia with ANE Goddesses has been raised by some feminist approaches. This may be summed up in a few words by Mary Daly's assertion, "that there was a universally matriarchal world which prevailed before the descent into hierarchical domination by males"<sup>45</sup>. This conclusion comes from the assumption that the gender roles of the deities of the ancient world, and in particular the prominence given to the Goddesses in the extant literature, reflects the actual position of women relative to men in prehistoric society. While this might appear to be an attractive theory for those who see the key to women's liberation in the present day situation as being the establishment of the fact that in the past they once were at least equals if not the dominant force in society, thus showing that there is no justification for any view that women are inherently inferior by nature, the fact is that the theory is almost impossible to substantiate. Ochsorn has given at least a plausible argument for the possibility that the sexes were viewed more or less equally in some areas of cultic practice<sup>46</sup>, but this does not necessarily imply anything about the role of women in society at large. Thus, while we shall see in the figure of the ANE Goddess of love and fertility the expression of human experience of the miracle of renewal and regeneration, involving a feminine dimension, we will avoid reading back from this any conclusion about its relevance to the

actual role of women in ANE society generally, or in Israel in particular.

In summary then, we may discern three areas in which this present thesis will seek to make a small contribution to the ongoing task of research into the Wisdom traditions of Israel. Firstly, we shall direct our discussion to the question of the *gender significance* of Sophia from her earliest manifestation in the book of Proverbs through to the beginning of the Christian era in Wisdom of Solomon and Philo. To a degree this will pick up on the work already done by Camp, and also to some extent that of Lang. Although we cannot examine the material in the detailed way in which their studies on Proverbs have been conducted, we will nevertheless cover new ground in extending those authors work into the later Jewish Wisdom traditions.

Secondly, we will seek to identify much more precisely than in the past, the reasons for Sophia's identification with Torah in Sirach and Baruch, and her confinement and transsexual switch in the writings of Philo. This will again sharpen our question as to the significance of the gender of Sophia for those authors who used her in their works.

Thirdly, we hope to approach the question of the influence of the ANE Goddesses on Sophia through the recognition of their appearance as an expression of a universally felt need for feminine participation in the act of creation and life-giving, of which Israel also must have felt a part. All this we shall do while holding in mind the need for Israel to set such speculation in the context of a monotheistic faith.

### 1.2.3 THE CHRISTOLOGY OF JOHN

The precise nature of Johannine christology has been a subject of discussion almost from the day the Gospel was written! Within the canon of the New Testament itself, the Johannine Epistles already seem to reflect a struggle against adversaries within the community itself, whose interpretation of Johannine christology had led them in a gnostic direction, though as Brown rightly comments, "it may well be that the position of the epistolary adversaries had not yet jelled into a distinctively gnostic system of thought"<sup>47</sup>. However, it is clear that at least by the mid-second century, gnostic movements were freely using the Fourth Gospel as a significant stepping-off point for their own particular brands of speculation<sup>48</sup>. Indeed, the Valentinian Gnostic Heracleon, wrote a commentary on the Gospel from his own particular perspective<sup>49</sup>, which may well have contributed to the fact that the Gospel itself was open to a charge of Gnostic origins as late as the early third century<sup>50</sup>. Indeed, as Käsemann's famous description of the Fourth Gospel's christology as a "form of naïve docetism"<sup>51</sup> shows us, the issue of John's orthodoxy has remained a question right up to our own day. Only in recent months has Marianne Thompson once again felt the necessity to reassert the authenticity of the Johannine picture of Jesus Christ as fully human, in a most penetrating study and critique of Käsemann's stance<sup>52</sup>. She points to the fact that discussion of the main emphasis of Johannine christology will always have to focus upon the Prologue to the Gospel, and in particular the crucial verse, 1:14. The outcome of the debate will turn upon our understanding of that verse. Thus, while Bultmann sees ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο as the decisive part of the verse, showing that

"the Revealer is nothing but a man"<sup>53</sup>, Käsemann takes ἔθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ as the pointer to the fact that Jesus is "God walking on the face of the earth"<sup>54</sup>. We would agree that this verse, and indeed the whole of the Prologue, is determinative for our understanding of Johannine christology, but not merely in terms of the question of the humanity/divinity of Jesus. It is also vital for understanding the *origins* of that christology and consequently determining its meaning<sup>55</sup>.

A major problem for modern Johannine scholars has been that of determining the source from which the Fourth Evangelist has drawn the Logos concept. In addition, the complete disappearance of that concept from the christological picture after Jn 1:1-18 has raised further questions as to the integrity of Prologue and Gospel as a single unit<sup>56</sup>. If John really is so interested in Jesus Christ as the Logos, why, in the midst of the numerous ἐγὼ εἶμι statements do we not find Jesus declaring himself as such? The answer to this question will depend largely on how we understand the origins of the Logos concept. While there are many nuances attached by individual authors to the theories, there are basically only three sources which have been mooted seriously as possible source material for the Fourth Evangelist's presentation: a Gnostic background; a link with the Philonic concept; a connection with Jewish Sophia speculation.

The classic statement of a proposed Gnostic background to Johannine christology was given by Rudolf Bultmann, who sought to establish links between Mandaean thought, as representative of a Gnosticism opposed in the Johannine writings, and the picture of Jesus in John<sup>57</sup>. In particular, Bultmann believed that the Logos concept in

the Prologue, combined with the apologetic material related to John the Baptist, represented an attempt by the Fourth Evangelist to counter the claims of such a Gnostic group who held some allegiance to the Baptist. He therefore sees in the Prologue a reworked version of a Gnostic hymn in praise of the Logos, which the Fourth Evangelist has taken and demythologised from its Redeemer Myth origins into a presentation of Jesus Christ as the Logos who has come ἐν σαρκί<sup>58</sup>. Despite his adherence to this viewpoint, however, even Bultmann is forced to admit the probability of a connection with Jewish Sophia speculation, though this he sees as thoroughly subsumed in the Gnostic thought-patterns<sup>59</sup>.

Bultmann's methodology and conclusions have been critiqued by numerous scholars<sup>60</sup>, though his viewpoint is still maintained at least in a modified form by some followers<sup>61</sup>. One major problem is that we have no evidence that Gnostic speculation *in the form posited by Bultmann* actually existed in the period up to the writing of the Fourth Gospel. There is also no evidence whatsoever of a connection of such thought with John the Baptist. We may want to agree with Rudolph, that Gnosticism "was originally a non-Christian phenomenon which was gradually enriched with Christian concepts until it made its appearance as independent Christian Gnosis"<sup>62</sup>, but that the Fourth Gospel either attempts to counter such influence, or belongs to the process of its emergence is far from clear. However, a second and more easily verifiable objection may be made to Bultmann's theory, that being the fact that it is "in many ways unnecessary"<sup>63</sup>. As we shall see, the Logos concept can be understood quite fully without any

reference to a supposed Gnostic Redeemer Myth for which there is only the most insubstantial evidence available.

A second theory with regard to the origins of the Logos of Jn 1:1-18 has proposed that it is dependent upon Philo. The most forthright proponent of this idea has been A.W.Argyle<sup>64</sup>, but the argument has been more carefully put by C.H.Dodd<sup>65</sup>. In listing a number of parallels between Philo and the Prologue to John, Dodd finds a "λόγος in many respects similar to that of Philo; and it is difficult not to think that the author intended this"<sup>66</sup>. However, although Philo might seem a better starting point for our understanding of Johannine christology than Gnosticism, especially because of his Jewish faith and the evidence of his use of a Logos concept, caution must be observed in drawing any direct connection between the two. Since, as we will argue, Philo and the Fourth Evangelist both show dependence on the wider tradition of Jewish Sophia speculation in the outworking of their respective Logos concepts, the likelihood is that they share a common background in that tradition, rather than that they show direct lines of dependence on one another. It is quite clear that Philo's understanding of the Logos is radically different from the Johannine conception, and we shall reinforce this opinion through our examination of the *gender* significance of Sophia and the way in which both authors deal very differently with it.

The third major option for understanding the Logos of the Fourth Gospel is the view that it stems from a background of Jewish Sophia speculation. This was already suggested in modern times as early as 1917 by J.R.Harris<sup>67</sup>, whose treatment seems remarkably modern even

today. However, due largely to the excitement raised by the influence of the history of religions school and Bultmann in particular, the idea was not seriously taken up again until much more recently. The contribution of Brown<sup>68</sup> has been particularly important, but others<sup>69</sup>, including even Dodd<sup>70</sup>, have shown interest in this background. Most recently the works of Dunn<sup>71</sup> and Willett<sup>72</sup> have moved us towards an even deeper appreciation of Sophia's influence, not only in the Prologue but also in the Gospel as a whole. With all this work there has been a growing realisation that we need no longer search outwith the boundaries of Jewish thinking, or even outwith the Old Testament and Apocryphal writings, in order to find a plausible source for understanding the Johannine Logos concept. Thus, while Philo may be useful for us in attempting to trace the way in which Sophia speculation could be developed in the first century of the Christian era, it is not to him that we must look, but to that tradition of Sophia herself if we are to make sense of John's christology.

It is at this point that our present thesis enters the field of play. While we will be building very much upon the work of those whom we have already mentioned, we shall be seeking to make several new emphases in the course of our study. In the first instance, we will take up the point raised in our introductory paragraph, that the *gender significance* of Sophia has not yet been fully recognised in the writings of those interested in her use by the Fourth Evangelist<sup>73</sup>. We shall thus approach the whole question of John's use of Sophia by asking whether the Logos/Sophia is a sophisticated method employed by the Fourth Evangelist to deal with the switch in gender from female Sophia to male Jesus. If so, the picture of Jesus as Jesus Sophia in

the Fourth Gospel as a whole can then be viewed as an outworking of the solution provided by the Evangelist to the gender-problem through the introduction of Jesus as Logos/Sophia in the Prologue.

A second contribution will be made in the area of Sophia influence on the Fourth Evangelist's picture of Jesus Christ. Up until this point, scholars have been ready to admit to a considerable influence exerted by Sophia, but we will attempt to show that the christology of the Fourth Gospel is nothing less than a *thoroughgoing* Sophia christology. That is, the role of Sophia is not merely influential, but is rather the very *basis* upon which Johannine christology is founded and by which it must be understood. Thus we shall observe that certain motifs and devices used by the Fourth Evangelist, previously attributed in whole or part to other sources, are in fact better understood from a Wisdom perspective. We shall note this, for example, in the Descent-Ascent motif, and the so-called σημεῖα source in John. In the course of this exercise we will also be able to reinforce further the conclusion that the Prologue and Gospel really do form a thematic unity.

The question of the mysterious disappearance of the Logos is a third area in which we hope to provide a new perspective, that being related also to our first two points. The dropping of the Logos after Jn 1:1-18 is very rarely discussed as an issue in Johannine christology, any discussion being conducted more commonly on the level of *tradition and redaction*. Generally speaking, it is assumed by Johannine scholars that the hymnic material contained in the Prologue was available in some form to the Fourth Evangelist, and that this hymn already contained reference to the Logos, a conclusion with which

we would agree. However, the disappearance is then explained on the basis of the fact that, while John used the hymnic material, the Logos, not being a part of typical Johannine redactional language, was dropped from that point onward. But this makes little sense if we want to see the Prologue and Gospel as a unified structure. In contrast, our discussion will make it possible to argue that the Logos is dropped in line with the gender solution brought forward by the Fourth Evangelist: namely, that Jesus appears initially as Logos, because he is male, but is then presented throughout the Gospel as *Sophia* incarnate both in the works performed and the words spoken.

A further issue which we shall want to raise in relation to the *Sophia* christology of the Fourth Gospel will be the relationship, if any, which that christology bears to the role played by women, in whose presence a number of crucial christological statements are made. We shall wish to examine the way in which *Sophia* tradition not only acts as the basis for christological reflection, but also whether this actually affects the way in which stories about women are constructed and told. In this realm we are unaware of any previous such investigation.

#### 1.2.4 STUDIES ON WOMEN

The last fifteen years has seen an ever-increasing flow of materials produced dealing with all manner of issues related to women in the ancient world generally and their role in biblical literature particularly. There have been a number of factors involved in this expansion of interest and study, not least being the strengthening of the debate concerning the ordination of women to the

ministry/priesthood. However, another vital factor has been the increased activity of feminist writers, who have applied their own penetrating, and at times devastatingly accurate, analytical skills to the task of biblical interpretation. As we noted above, this has not always been met with enthusiasm by the overwhelmingly male scholarly community. It is, however, largely through the originality of some of the questions being asked by feminists today that we are beginning to discover new things about the role of women in both the Old Testament and the New Testament for the first time.

Up until the early eighties the majority of materials produced on women in the New Testament were dealing with their role in the Pauline churches, often with a view to dealing further with the question of women's role in the contemporary church<sup>74</sup>. Since then, many more studies have begun to focus our attention on both Jesus' attitude to women and the role of women in the Gospel accounts. Perhaps this shift away from the emphasis on trying to 'prove' the legitimacy of women's rightly expanding role in the Church from the New Testament itself owes something to the kind of attitude which Sandra Schneiders reflects when she says:

The immense effort which is currently being expended to show from scripture that discrimination against women in the Church is not justified is, in my opinion, open to serious misunderstanding unless those doing the work. . . make it clear from the outset that such an effort is not demanded by the issue itself. The sex of believers is not an issue in the New Testament and we should not allow ourselves, either as believers or as scholars, to be manipulated into acting as if it is. The burden of proof lies with those who wish to set limits to the exercise of Christian freedom by female members of the community<sup>75</sup>

This switch away from the need to justify change has led to some serious work on the attempt to rediscover the role of women in the earliest Christian communities, a lot of this being based on research in the Gospels. The most comprehensive work has been undertaken by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza<sup>76</sup>, who has made real strides towards the development of a methodology for the 'discovery'<sup>77</sup> of traditions concerning the women of the early Church. While sharing their frustration, Fiorenza rejects the stance of some feminists who feel that they "must move beyond the boundaries of biblical religion and reject the patriarchal authority of biblical revelation"<sup>78</sup>. This attitude, she says,

too quickly concedes that women have no authentic history within biblical religion and too easily relinquishes women's feminist biblical heritage. Nor can such a stance do justice to the positive experiences of contemporary women within biblical religion<sup>79</sup>.

Fiorenza thus sets out to discover the authentic history of women within the communities to which the Gospels are addressed, and of particular interest to us, within the communities of the Markan and Johannine Churches. She discovers there that the "first writers of the Gospels articulate a very different ethos of Christian discipleship and community than that presented by the writers of injunctions to patriarchal submission"<sup>80</sup>. Her work on the Gospel of John<sup>81</sup> builds on that already undertaken by Brown<sup>82</sup> and Schneiders<sup>83</sup>, but she is able to point more securely to the women of the Fourth Gospel as "paradigms of women's apostolic discipleship. . .not just to be imitated by women but by all those who belong to Jesus 'very own' familial community"<sup>84</sup>.

While we will differ at a number of points from her conclusions, we will nevertheless see her work, along with that of the others on whom she already builds, as the foundation for the task we undertake in the fourth chapter<sup>85</sup>. We will, however, provide two major advances on work done so far, firstly, by making our study far greater in depth, dealing with the whole story rather than just the actual woman herself in each account. This will provide us with a number of new insights not yet observed in other studies. Secondly, we will come at the stories concerning women in the Fourth Gospel from a different angle to that previously adopted by other scholars as we examine what influence has been exerted upon the development of the *role of women* by the figure of Sophia, who by that point we will have identified as the foundation of the christological understanding of the Fourth Evangelist. This will again help us to provide a new perspective on the role and function of women in the Gospel, and hopefully also from there in the Johannine community to which the Gospel is addressed.

If Fiorenza demonstrates the better aspects of research into the role of women in New Testament times, there are other approaches from which this author would like to remain more distant. One such example is the work by Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendell on the women of the Jesus community<sup>86</sup>. While she has collected some fascinating materials illustrating the way that many of the major female figures of the New Testament have been understood and depicted artistically through the history of the Christian Church, her work on the New Testament texts themselves leaves a lot to be desired. Indeed, at times she seems to fall foul of some of the worst aspects of the Old Quest for the Historical Jesus, especially in her portrayal of Jesus' relationship

with Mary Magdalene<sup>87</sup>. As a work of some "theological imagination" using "art and culture to rediscover obscured traditions which are matriarchal, or favourable to women"<sup>88</sup> it is a fascinating and instructive book to read, but as an attempt to "remove the burden of the patriarchal past from a small section of the *New Testament*"<sup>89</sup>, it falls far short. Susanne Heine sums its shortcomings up succinctly by declaring that "associations with the biblical texts remain associative fantasy"<sup>90</sup>.

Another prevalent approach to studies on women in the ancient world, not merely as represented in the New Testament, which should be mentioned is that adopted by Jungian feminist analysts<sup>91</sup>. While some criticism of this method must be voiced, it has nevertheless proved penetrative in its analysis of the function of the Goddess in ANE religion, though at times drawing quite unwarranted conclusions from it<sup>92</sup>. In our second chapter especially we shall make use of some materials from two such studies<sup>93</sup>, but without necessarily following the conclusions or methods of their authors. Engelsmann's description of the repression of Sophia in Philo is helpful in our discovery of the fact that the gender of Sophia was a significant factor in his treatment of Sophia as a symbol, but we will ultimately come to the same conclusions without the need to rely on the imposition of the archetypal concepts of *mater* and *anima* which Engelsmann applies. While it may be accepted that the Goddesses (and Gods!) of the ANE reflected to some extent the experiences and needs of the people by whom they were worshipped, to make a general statement concerning the human psyche on the basis of removing these figures from their historical context can hardly be justified. Thus, to view Sophia as

*simply* the re-emergence of these longings and desires, without reference to the historical and theological context of Israel's faith, must lead to distortion. Ochshorn sums this up in her critique of Jungian methodology when she says:

In their ahistorical assumptions of universal, eternal sameness in the meanings of feminine and masculine, they (*seem*) to oversimplify and violate the complexity and variety of human experience<sup>94</sup>.

Two other monographs by a male New Testament scholar should also be mentioned here. In his studies, Witherington has looked at the roles of women firstly in the ministry of Jesus<sup>95</sup> and then in the earliest Christian communities as reflected in the writings of the New Testament<sup>96</sup>. The first of these books provides us with some useful comments on the stories about women in the Fourth Gospel, but we will both disagree with some of his conclusions and follow others in a much more radical direction. For example, we must make a more positive assessment of Martha's confession in Jn 11:27 than simply to say that it "is the least inadequate to this point in the Fourth Gospel"<sup>97</sup>. Or again, we will disagree that in the same account, Mary is portrayed as "one who has given herself wrongly over to an all consuming sorrow even in Jesus' presence"<sup>98</sup>. In addition, we find it difficult to accept that Witherington's conclusion, "that Jesus was attempting to reform, not reject, the patriarchal framework of his culture"<sup>99</sup>, can be anything other than mere speculation. What we may say is that the various New Testament writers *understood* Jesus' reactions and attitudes to women in *very* different ways. We will argue that the Fourth Evangelist portrays women as the paradigms of discipleship for the Christian community at the end of the first century, much against

the trend of other New Testament traditions, but very much because she/he saw this as a legitimate understanding of Jesus' own attitude. To the attitude of the *historical* Jesus, however, we can ultimately only bring our own subjective perspective, however well-intentioned that may be!

The second of Witherington's books takes us little further, being very lopsided in its treatment of the women in the Fourth Gospel<sup>100</sup>. His observations on Mary Magdalene's importance for the community are well-made<sup>101</sup>, but his uncritical acceptance of Jn 21 as an affirmation of "the ongoing male leadership of the community"<sup>102</sup> leaves much to be desired.

Any study of women in the earliest communities of the Christian Church must reckon with the paucity of source materials available. Perhaps the Fourth Gospel more than any other New Testament document, recommends itself in this respect. While we will obviously want to draw some wider conclusions about the role of women in the Johannine community, our study will attempt to maintain a strict adherence to the actual texts as they are presented to us by the Fourth Evangelist. We will also argue strongly, as we noted above, that the questions we are asking about gender, both that of the gender significance of Sophia and that of the significance of gender roles in the Fourth Gospel, are questions which also come out of the context of the *first* century, rather than ones simply imposed from the perspective of a *twentieth* century desire to affirm the equality of women in the Church for today. Despite the limited source material, there is sufficient indication of this in some side-remarks within the Gospel itself (eg. Jn 4:27), in the attitude of Philo and even in the New Testament

writings whose authors feel the need to spell out their opinions on the role of women! We will hope to show that the Fourth Gospel, at least, does not share many of those opinions.

### 1.3 SETTING OUT

As we now set out in the pursuit of our thesis, it is worthwhile also setting out some presuppositions which will lie behind the study as a whole. It is not our intention to argue a case for these, although we will point where possible to literature which does so in more detail. Rather, as we did in the case of our discussion of method, so here also we wish to make the reader aware of at least some of the author's innate exegetical biases!

Firstly, we take for granted that the Fourth Gospel was written to address a mixed community of Christian believers whose particular needs, attitudes and situation will to some extent be reflected and addressed within its boundaries<sup>103</sup>. This is particularly important for our understanding of the significance of the use of a Sophia christology and the prominence of the role of women in the Fourth Gospel.

Secondly, we assume the Gospel to have been written some time towards the end of the first century, probably in the period from 85-95 AD<sup>104</sup>. This has important implications for our study, since it determines the context of influence from Jewish speculation on Johannine christology as that of late first century Judaism.

Thirdly, we presuppose that the present form of the Gospel is the result of a process of redaction, which may be possible to point to at

specific places in the Gospel, but which is now generally impossible for us to reconstruct fully<sup>105</sup>. This will be of significance at those points where we find it possible to identify the hand of the redactor at work, but we will not attempt to argue, for example, that a Sophia-tradition redaction has taken place at a *particular stage* in the development of the Fourth Gospel.

Finally, we take it for granted that the task of pursuing the gender significance of Sophia and that of the role of women in the Fourth Gospel is a worthwhile one, in that it seeks to further our appreciation of an erstwhile neglected and often maligned section of people comprising more than half of our world population and considerably more of the present day Christian community! It is to be hoped that it may also in some small way contribute to their further and proper recognition within that community. But let us see. . . .

## CHAPTER TWO

### WHO IS SOPHIA, WHAT IS SHE?

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The people of Israel emerged from an environment which acknowledged the existence of many deities of both sexes. It is difficult to imagine that such an environment would not have rubbed off, to some extent at least, on those who sought to establish themselves as 'Yahweh's people'. Indeed, the Old Testament prophets and the historical writers show us just how often the influence of other Gods and Goddesses impinged upon the 'pure' religion of Yahweh, which they promoted with such vigour. These Goddesses and Gods of the ANE, like the God of Israel, did not exist in isolation from the society of which they were a part, being rather an expression of the needs, aspirations and to some extent the experiences of the people. The most obvious example of this comes in the area of fertility, both human and agricultural, where the recurring cycle of life becomes personified in the deity, and in particular in the Goddess figure. One can hardly propose that the people of Israel were somehow immune to the life experiences which were influential in the emergence of the pantheons, yet the Old Testament reflects a picture of Yahweh which is both rigid in its claim to monotheism and almost exclusively male in its imagery. Only occasionally do we find traces of any kind of feminine dimension of the divine in Jewish thought, the most prominent such being the representation of God's wisdom in the female figure, Sophia.

The purpose of this present chapter is to look again at this figure and to ask, firstly, *who* she is in relation to the predominant

male-God, Yahweh. We will then turn to the question of *what* she is, bearing in mind the context of ANE life to which we have alluded above. This will inevitably lead us into the question of the significance of Sophia's gender in the context of Jewish thought, and the extent to which this posed a problem both for Jewish writers and for the early Christian writers, who wanted to identify the male Jesus with the female figure of Sophia. We begin, however, by outlining the context of ANE religion in more detail.

## 2.2 SOPHIA IN THE CONTEXT OF ANE GODDESSES

However difficult it may be to determine the origins of the Jewish figure of Sophia, and whatever problems there may be in specifying her exact relationship to the one 'true' God, Yahweh, one thing may be said with certainty: Sophia emerged in the context of an ANE world widely accustomed to the cult of a variety of Goddesses. The biblical tradition itself reflects this in the warnings given against the dangers of ensnarement in their grasp, particularly with reference to the destruction of the cult of Asherah (Judg 3:7; 6:26-30; I Kgs 14:23; 15:13; II Kgs 21:7; 23:4,7; II Chr 15:16)<sup>1</sup>. The overwhelming evidence of archaeological studies in Syria/Palestine also affirms our assertion, particularly in the numerous texts unearthed at Ras Sharma<sup>2</sup>, which give considerable information concerning the BAAL - ANATH cycle alluded to in the biblical traditions<sup>3</sup>.

So what was it in the cult of the Goddess which the guardians of the patriarchal faith of Israel feared so much? How was it that even in the face of their fear, a female representation of God, Sophia, was

able to emerge at all? We shall approach the second of these questions by initially attempting an answer to the first. We shall examine three closely related aspects of the Goddess religions which may be seen to have a direct bearing on Sophia herself: the fertility cult; the sacral marriage; the goddess of love.

### 2.2.1 THE FERTILITY CULT

One of the most widespread features of all ANE religion was the adherence to some form of the fertility cult, in which deities of both sexes represented the continuing cycle of fecundity in both nature and the human process<sup>4</sup>. The manifestations of this cult were varied<sup>5</sup>, but they had at their centre the worship of a Mother-Goddess, the consort of a young God, who is either killed or runs away, and for whom the Goddess both mourns and searches. The eventual finding or return of this young God is the sign for restored fertility<sup>6</sup>. Belonging to agrarian societies, the ANE peoples worshipped in this cycle what they saw around them in the natural processes of the world: life (fertility) giving way to death (barrenness) and then returning to life (fertility) again.

Among the major representatives of this cultic ritual we find the Mesopotamian *Ishtar-Tammuz* and the Canaanite *Anath-Baal*. The earlier of these cycles is probably that of the Sumerian/Akkadian *Ishtar-Tammuz*, where the results of Ishtar's descent into the underworld to find her lover, Tammuz, are graphically recorded in the '*Descent of Ishtar to the Nether World*':

Since Ishtar has gone down to the Land of no Return,  
The bull springs not upon the cow, the ass impregnates  
not the jenny,  
In the street the man impregnates not the maiden.



In a field; verily the birds ate  
The pieces of him, verily the sparrow(s) made an end  
Of the parts of him piece by piece<sup>13</sup>.

This is followed by the announcement that Baal, who was dead, is now alive! His return is announced throughout the land by Anath, and is followed by the return of showers of rain, and thus by fertility in the land:

The downpour of rain will [again] come down;  
[for] the victor Baal [is alive]. . .  
He will graciously send [rain] from the clouds  
[And] give plentiful [showers of rain]<sup>14</sup>.

Although the texts related to this cycle are somewhat fragmented we are able to gain an overall impression of the way in which the fertility cycle was understood. The role of the Goddess, while somewhat less emphasised than in the Ishtar-Tammuz sequence, is nevertheless central to the desire for fertility and to its restoration through the successful return of the young God from the realm of the dead. It was this cycle of events which was celebrated annually in the fertility cult rituals, and it was these rituals which undoubtedly caused the biggest problems for the biblical writers. Central to them was the practise of cultic prostitution, which Qualls-Corbett sums up for us thus:

Desire and sexual response experienced as a regenerative power were recognised as a gift or a blessing from the divine. Man's and woman's sexual nature and their religious attitude were inseparable. In their praises of thanksgiving or in their supplications, they offered the sex act to the goddess revered for love and passion. It was an act, honourable and pious, pleasing to both deity and mortal alike<sup>15</sup>.

Of course, the biblical writers would hardly agree with this assessment of its affirmation by the deity (!), but to this we will return later. Whatever they thought about it, the intention of the participants in the act of sacral prostitution was to "emulate and stimulate the deities who bestowed fertility"<sup>16</sup>.

### 2.2.2 THE SACRAL MARRIAGE

Intimately connected with the rites of the fertility cult was the act of Sacral Marriage. This was practised widely in the ANE even down to the Greco-Roman era (ἱερός γάμος). We have already seen the seeds of it in the role of the cult prostitutes. The Sacral Marriage was seen as a dramatic re-enactment of the sexual union between the great Mother-Goddess and her young Son/lover, which guaranteed the fertility of the land, animals and human beings alike<sup>17</sup>. Unfortunately there is little textual evidence to describe what actually took place at these ceremonies, much of our understanding having to be gleaned either by inference from the texts concerning the fertility cycle, or by trying to strip off the rhetoric of polemic directed against its practice.

Heine correctly cautions us against merely reading the myths of ANE fertility ritual back into the real lives of the community<sup>18</sup>. In particular she reminds us of the need to view the mythological texts alongside those we have of a *non-mythological* nature, which, at least at Ras Sharma, forbid such practises as incest and bestiality, which are clearly implied as 'normal' in the mythological texts<sup>19</sup>. However, archaeological studies of the iconography of the ANE do yield a number of significant pointers to the fact that the Sacral Marriage existed

as a ritual within the cult. In his monumental study of the 'Naked Goddess' figurines of Syria, Winter has identified a number of visual representations of this event<sup>20</sup>. He is at pains to point out that these do *not* illustrate the actual rituals themselves, but rather represent the sanctification of sexuality<sup>21</sup>. He also concludes that since the images of this type appear on pottery of both high and very cheap quality, they reflect the widespread influence of this cultic ceremony on the people<sup>22</sup>.

We may then turn to a collective assessment of what may have happened in this ritual. In most cases it is assumed that intercourse took place between the king and a sacred prostitute annually, probably during the New-Year festival, as the embodiment of the God and Goddess respectively. Through this representative act, the "fecundity of land and womb and the well-being of all people, were assured"<sup>23</sup>. As we shall see, the biblical writers go much beyond this in their descriptions and polemic, suggesting the involvement of many more than the two main players we have proposed, but this may serve only to underline the probability that at least some kind of ceremony along the lines outlined actually took place.

### 2.2.3 THE GODDESS OF LOVE

If we seek to place Sophia in context in the religious milieu of the ANE, we would be foolish to overlook the prominence of the Goddess of Love as a figure in cultic veneration. Her role is, of course, closely connected to the matters we have already mentioned, the fertility cult and its concomitant rite of Sacral Marriage, but she appears in a wide variety of places and guises throughout the ANE

world. She probably reached her peak as a figure in Hellenistic times, being identified variously with Aphrodite, Venus or Isis<sup>24</sup>. However, from earliest times she was identified with Innana in Sumerian mythology, with Ishtar in Mesopotamia, and with Anath and Astarte in Canaan and Syria.

The Goddess of Love's appeal lay naturally in her sexuality and beauty, at least as far as men were concerned, and probably also in these things as an example for women. She was often associated with the Moon or Stars, this again being a connection with the idea of fertility: the sun parches the land by day, threatening life, while the moon brings refreshment in the shadows and softness of the night<sup>25</sup>. She was also thought of as a virgin, which may appear somewhat anachronistic to our modern way of thinking when we consider that each of the above-mentioned Goddesses was a Mother/Sister-lover to some young God and bore offspring. However, as Engelsmann explains:

The Goddess is called virgin because she is not under the control of a husband, father, or other male relative. She may have a lover, or lovers, but she does not form part of a syzygy, nor is she paired with a god as Hera is with Zeus. She rules alone. Although she is a virgin, that is, one-in-herself, she is not a 'virgin intacta'<sup>26</sup>.

Details of any cultic practices connected with the Goddess are again difficult to come by, but there are numerous examples from all the geographical regions of the ANE of figurines, statuettes and votifs illustrating her. Most of these have a connection with the question of fertility, though Winter also believes that many of the Naked Goddess figurines of Syria/Palestine represent her also as a

Protectress, Interceder, or Mediatrix<sup>27</sup>. In Mesopotamia she would normally appear with a crescent-shaped crown<sup>28</sup>, and this led to the practise of baking special cakes in that shape to be offered to her<sup>29</sup>.

Of all the Goddesses of the ANE pantheons, the Goddess of Love represented most fully the feminine realm of sexuality. It is worth noting Ruether's comments on the theme of sexuality and power among the deities:

The Goddess and God are equivalent, not complementary, images of the divine. Psalms addressed to Ishtar do not address her as the embodiment of maternal, nurturing and feminine characteristics, but as the expression of divine sovereignty and power in female form. Sexual potency and social power are found in both the Goddess and the God. There are tensions which define ancient religions - especially between chaos and cosmos, death and life - but divine forces, male and female, are ranged on both sides of the dichotomies<sup>30</sup>.

However, in the Goddess of Love we see the pivot between the old and new orders of polytheistic religion, for by Greco-Roman times she becomes a full embodiment of all that is beautiful, nurturing, maternal, enchanting and sexually appetising in womanhood (at least from a male perspective!)<sup>31</sup>. By the time of the writing of the New Testament, of course, the Goddess was known in both her older and more modern form, her powers of attraction having in no sense diminished.

#### 2.2.4 THE BIBLICAL OPPOSITION

When we consider the background of fertility cult, Sacral Marriage, and the homage given to the Goddess of Love, we may begin to understand the perspective of the biblical historians and the prophetic traditions in Israel. Like all rhetorical condemnation, we

must read the biblical opposition with a measure of scepticism, for it will surely have exaggerated and to some extent misrepresented the actions of those whom it addressed. However, in order to set the scene fully for the emergence of Sophia, we must summarise its main thrust<sup>32</sup>.

Among the historical writers, the book of Kings speaks out forcefully against the cult of Asherah and Baal in particular. In I Kgs 14:22-24, Rehoboham is condemned for his failure to curb the flourishing of the cult in Israel, while I Kgs 15:12-13 praises Asa for his efforts to rid the land of this practice. As Gray comments: "the old local animistic beliefs and rites of imitative magic of the fertility-cult, served by ritual prostitutes, died hard"<sup>33</sup>. This is surely borne out by the fact that already in the Gideon sequence of Judges 6:25-32, the Deuteronomist presupposes the destruction of the cult of Asherah/Baal in favour of the worship of Yahweh<sup>34</sup>, yet some fertility cult practice still appears to flourish in monarchic times. The particular thrust of the condemnation has a two-fold dimension. Firstly, it is a condemnation of the worship of a God and Goddess other than the patriarchal God, Yahweh, which causes him to be 'jealous' (  $\cdot\lambda\text{ך} \text{פ}^{\text{א}} \text{ל}$  ). Secondly, it is a condemnation of the practice of *cultic* prostitution<sup>35</sup> on both moral and religious grounds, though the religious grounds were the stronger element. Because the cult prostitutes, either male or female, represented the fertility deity, to have intercourse with them was to have intercourse with the 'foreign' deity and thus to denigrate Yahweh<sup>36</sup>. This again comes across clearly in the reforms of Josiah, reported in II Kings 23 (II Chron 34)<sup>37</sup>, who removes the temple prostitutes and symbols of the



We must, therefore, recognise that the biblical writers are unequivocal in their condemnation of all cultic activity, in particular that of the fertility cult, and Goddess worship which would detract from the sovereign claim of the one true God, Yahweh. The limitations of this exclusive, patriarchal attitude will be outlined in our following conclusions and will lead us to the question of Sophia's role in Israel.

#### 2.2.5 CONCLUSIONS

Since our investigation seeks to uncover the role of Sophia in particular, our examination of the religious milieu in which she emerged has concentrated on the particular role of the *feminine* aspect of that religious environment, namely that of the Goddess<sup>44</sup>. From it we may draw the following inferences.

1. In all of the states surrounding Israel and in the occupied land of Canaan itself, the religious norm was polytheism. Within that context, Goddesses of varying kinds flourished, most particularly in relation to the fertility cult, which mirrored the annual cycle of renewal in the land. Those female figures were seen as an *essential* component of this miracle of creativity. As people of the land, whether nomadic or settled, they depended utterly on the annual cycle of rebirth for their very existence.

Drawing on her background in Jungian analysis, Qualls-Corbett sums up the emergence and significance of myth in the following manner:

Myths are to a collective culture what dreams are to the individual. From the symbolism of both myths and dreams we discern psychic events. Thus we find that

myths are not just delightful but idle stories of gods and goddesses, heroes or demons, from a forgotten time; they speak of living psychological material and act as a repository of truths appropriate to an individual's inner life, as well as to the life of the community<sup>45</sup>.

If we allow ourselves to understand the mythology of the fertility cult in this way, we may see that it expresses the indispensable need of the community for an annual miracle of renewal, in a manner which reflected their real experience. The creation of new life in humans and in animals came through the intercourse of male and female: why should the same not be true also in the spiritual world on which they also depended so much for their survival? Thus the cultic practice and mythology upon which it fed reflected the most basic, universal need for revitalization and re-creation: and fundamental to that was a *feminine* principle alongside the masculine.

2. Given that the need for a feminine principle was a fundamental and indispensable component of the religious consciousness of the ANE world, we immediately see the problem for Israel in maintaining an exclusively patriarchal, monotheistic view of God. The male God, Yahweh, not only existed in splendid isolation, he even created on 'his' own, without the assistance of a *feminine* principle. This was utterly foreign not only to the mythology of the age, but also to human *experience*. If we ask why the people of Israel continually returned to the polytheistic fertility cults instead of maintaining allegiance to the one true male-God, Yahweh, the answer may, at least in part, lie in the difficulty of matching this God to their real experience of life, and in particular the miracle of regeneration<sup>46</sup>. Ochshorn is thus correct in her conclusion that, "on

the whole, the neutral or favourable disposition toward female sexuality in polytheistic religions comes to comprise one of the fundamental differences from monotheism"<sup>47</sup>. When we turn to the figure of Sophia in Israel's writings we must ask to what extent she represents an attempt to deal with this problem.

3. It might be observed that the picture we have drawn of cultic life in Israel relies for its evidence on purely pre-exilic materials, while the figure of Sophia in Proverbs belongs to a book compiled in post-exilic Israel. Can we be sure that cultic problems discerned in pre-exilic Israel had any significance for the formation of a figure in the time after the exile? We shall deal with this issue in part under our examination of the relationship between Sophia and the Goddesses, but for the moment we may note that within the book of Proverbs itself we have a number of allusions to the problems of the prostitute and the adulteress in Israelite society. Bostrom has argued that such material refers to the continuing problem of apostasy<sup>48</sup>, a view which has found support in some measure, though not without modification, from other scholars<sup>49</sup>. Indeed, this view may be borne out by the latest of the major Old Testament prophets, Ezekiel, who uses the images of the cultic prostitute and the adulteress to address Judah's abandonment of pure Jahwism<sup>50</sup>. While we cannot say with certainty that the same situation prevailed with regard to the practice of the cult after the exile as before it, the imagery of a text like Prov 7:4-5 depends very much on an understanding of such a situation (εἶπον τὴν σοφίαν σὴν ἀδελφὴν εἶναι. . . ἵνα σε τηρήσῃ ἀπὸ γυναικὸς ἀλλοτρίας καὶ πονηρᾶς [Prov 7:4-5]). In such thinking the *gender* of Sophia is of considerable significance as a counter to the

attractions of the other woman, whether or not the text rests on a pre- or post-exilic background.

4. Before turning to Sophia herself, it is important to clarify one other issue in relation to the whole area of Goddess-speculation and gender roles in the ANE. Although many feminists have posited the idea of an ancient matriarchal society based on the Goddess religion, which was later forced to give way to patriarchal structures<sup>51</sup>, it is the opinion of this author that such speculation is both of little value and is insupportable from the available evidence. Pomeroy sums up the issue succinctly when she writes:

Modern feminists find the theory of female dominance in religion as well as in other areas of prehistoric culture attractive, as though what has happened in the past could be repeated in the future. This popular view is understandable, since, if women were not subordinate in the past, we have no *ipso facto* proof that they are so by nature. . . . However, to use the mother goddess theory to draw any conclusions regarding the high status of human females of the time would be foolhardy. Later religions, in particular Christianity, have demonstrated that the mother may be worshiped in societies where male dominance and even misogyny are rampant<sup>52</sup>.

Thus, whatever conclusions we may later want to draw with regard to the origin and function of the figure Sophia in Israel, we would be well advised to heed the caution noted in Pomeroy's reflection on the relationship between myth and the reality of the social situation.

### 2.3 WHO IS SOPHIA?

Even for the most superficial reader of Wisdom literature it is striking to note the way in which Sophia functions within that tradition: striking on two counts. Firstly, in the midst of an

overwhelmingly patriarchal religion we are suddenly presented with a strongly positive feminine dimension. Secondly, at the heart of a faith and tradition deeply committed to monotheism we are presented with a figure who appears to take on the functions and attributes of the one God, Yahweh, in a way which one might otherwise have associated with the common exchange of attributes between Gods and Goddesses within the context of polytheistic religions<sup>53</sup>. It is therefore important to come to some kind of understanding of the relationship which is portrayed as existing between Sophia and Yahweh, always keeping at the forefront of our minds the context of Jewish monotheism. At the same time we have noted the wider context of polytheism in the ANE, and so the question of the influence of ANE Goddess figures on Sophia is one which we cannot ignore lightly, and we shall return to this later in the course of our study<sup>54</sup>. First we shall ask the question 'Who is Sophia?' by looking at the development of the relationship between her and Yahweh in the book of Proverbs, in some Apocryphal works and finally in Philo. In doing so we will be attempting to provide a context for understanding the relationship as it impinged upon the first-century Christian authors' understanding of the Jesus = God relationship.

### 2.3.1 SOPHIA AND YAHWEH IN PROVERBS

Apart from a short appearance in Job 28, the biblical appearances of Sophia are confined to the book of Proverbs, in particular chapters 1-9. The reference in Job 28 probably represents an early level of reflection and would be better characterized as a "Hymn to Wisdom"<sup>55</sup>, than as a formal attempt at personification<sup>56</sup>.

However, in Proverbs 1 - 9 we find a Sophia who speaks out in her own right in a way elsewhere only associated with Yahweh.

Although Sophia appears at various points throughout the section 1 - 9, there are three main passages in which she speaks out publicly: 1:20ff; 8:1-36; 9:1ff. Since the opening words of the book (1:1-7) have established that "the source of authority is Yahweh"<sup>57</sup>, it is all the more surprising to find the figure of Sophia appearing only a short time thereafter claiming a similar authority for herself. She is able to pronounce judgement with equanimity on those who have refused to respond to her words and who choose to remain in their ignorance (1:22-26). Much of the language of this passage reflects the message of the prophets, the word of Yahweh, which Sophia now puts in the first person<sup>58</sup>. Elsewhere it is Yahweh who will be sought but not found (Mich 3:4; Is 1:15), to whom people will cry out but not be heard (Jer 11:11,14), but now this has become the province of Sophia (Prov 1:28). Again, in the final incitement to respond in 1:33, we find that Sophia is able to supplant Yahweh in the role of life-giver<sup>59</sup>.

Chapter 8 takes us a step further. Initially in verses 1-21 Sophia makes promises of great riches, knowledge, happiness and prosperity to those who will hear her. It is she who speaks 'truth' (8:7); it is by her authority that kings and princes rule (8:15-16), a power which the Psalmist attributes to Yahweh (Ps 21:1-2); she is also the provider of good things (8:18-21). It is, however, in the verses from 8:22ff that the real shock comes, for here she claims a place for herself as the intimate of Yahweh and as his partner in the very act of creation itself. Admittedly she stands in a subordinate position

to Yahweh, who 'begat' (  $\text{בְּרָא}$  )<sup>60</sup> her, but her participation and her priority at the act of creation certainly implies a special relationship between herself and Yahweh. This is borne out by 8:30-31, where she appears as his 'sporting' companion in whom he delights daily.

Chapter 9 presents yet another picture of Sophia in the public places, this time offering herself to men and inviting them into her table to eat and drink. This passage is particularly important for our understanding of Sophia, because it lays stress upon her *gender* as an important factor in the relationship between her and her followers. Her appeal is based on something which Yahweh cannot offer, namely, her feminine attractiveness over against the woman of folly who prostitutes herself later in the chapter.

All of this leads us to question of what exactly the relationship is between Sophia and Yahweh. The connection with life and creation, and her role in relation to the king immediately raises the possibility of some connection with the Goddess figures we have already noted in the surrounding religious culture, and many attempts have been made to tie Sophia to one or other of them<sup>61</sup>. However, when placed in the context of the whole book, particularly in view of 8:22, she can hardly be viewed as an independent deity.

In her recent study of the relationship between Sophia and other feminine aspects of the book, Camp has emphasised the importance of the profound symbolism of the figure, while at the same time stressing her femininity<sup>62</sup>. She acknowledges the influence of certain features of foreign Goddesses, but asks the question as to "what they meant to

those who did the borrowing and to their successors who passed on this tradition"<sup>63</sup>. What must be clear is that they did not intend Sophia to be seen as an independent deity, or as a consort of Yahweh. Adopting the view that Proverbs emerged in its present form from the post-exilic era, Camp sees the figure of Sophia as a theological justification of "Yahweh's universal rulership in wisdom"<sup>64</sup> in the context of a new social and political situation. The powerful symbolism embodied in the figure is, she believes, drawn from Israel's experience of the changing function of women in that society, and becomes a metaphor for the way in which the divine Yahweh is mediated in the realm of humanity<sup>65</sup>.

Most previous treatments of the relationship between Sophia and Yahweh in Proverbs have tended to emphasise one of two main proposals: either, that she is an hypostasis, or that she is a personification of a divine attribute<sup>66</sup>. Camp, however, presents us with Sophia as a religious symbol expressing both human experience *per se*, and human experience of the transcendent, albeit in a personified manner. Sophia may well express "God's active concern in creation, revelation and redemption, while at the same time protecting his holy transcendence and wholly otherness"<sup>67</sup>, but what is strikingly significant is the fact that this was achieved through the use of a *female* symbol, which finds her roots to some extent in the experience and interaction of women in Israel's society.

If then we ask, "Who is Sophia?" in the context of the book of Proverbs, for the moment we must answer that she is a symbolic feminine figure, who, on account primarily of her *gender*, replaces Yahweh in a number of traditional roles (creator; giver of life;

judge; provider), while remaining subordinate to him in terms of her 'begottenness'. We must now see how this symbol develops in the later period of Israel's religious thought.

### 2.3.2 SOPHIA AND YAHWEH IN THE APOCRYPHAL LITERATURE

While there are numerous books outside the limits of the Old Testament which are related to the Wisdom tradition, the figure of Sophia herself only rarely makes an appearance comparable with that we have already noted in Proverbs. The major texts which concern us in this respect are found in the books of Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon, though there is also an important reference to her in relation to the Torah in the book of Baruch. These same books are also important because of the influence they have been shown to have had on New Testament writers, so it is to them that we will turn in our search for a clearer definition of the relationship between Sophia and Yahweh. Before doing so, however, it is worth reminding ourselves that, although Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon are frequently lumped together in studies of this kind, they do emerge from very different backgrounds, addressing very different audiences.

The Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach is certainly the earlier book, dating most probably somewhere between 198-175 BCE<sup>68</sup>. In many respects the book is similar to the biblical Proverbs, being a collection of teaching on the rights and wrongs of life in general, with a note as to the outcome and consequences in the life of the individual. Originally written in Hebrew<sup>69</sup>, the work comes from the pen of a Jewish writer who lived and worked as a scribe in Jerusalem, although there is considerable evidence of Hellenistic influence<sup>70</sup>.

Poetic material related to Sophia is found throughout the book [1:14-20; 4:11-19; 14:20-15:8; 51:13-30], but the major focus comes in the poem of chapter 24. In parallel with Proverbs 8, Sophia appears as the agent of creation and the giver of life, who comes to dwell in Israel, taking root like a tree and offering her fruit to all who hunger and thirst. Like Proverbs, we find in juxtaposition to this the warning against the wiles of the 'evil woman' [Sir 23] and the extolling of Sophia's virtue [Sir 24], though it must be observed that Sirach's general attitude to women<sup>71</sup> tends toward the negative in a book which is "strongly male-oriented and chauvinistic in places"<sup>72</sup>.

What is most innovative in Sirach's portrayal of Sophia's role is the identification of her with Israel's Torah in 24:23. Not only does she re-appear in the guise we have known from Proverbs, but now she also comes to be the very embodiment of that most lasting symbol of Yahweh's will and influence among the people, the book of the law. But this development may turn out to be a two-sided coin as far as *Sophia* is concerned: on the one hand it can be viewed as a positive expansion of the influence of Sophia in the realm of that most sacred part of Israel's relationship with God. On the other hand, it may be seen as a negative move in respect of Sophia's development, confining her, as it surely does, to the manageable limits of a book.

Why should this be so? As we saw in the book of Proverbs, Sophia was able to appear in a symbolic role as the presence and all-pervading power of God at work in creation, while remaining 'safely' within the confines of Yahweh's control. This may have been governed to an extent by the situation in which the book was compiled<sup>73</sup>, but by the time of Sirach's writing, that social, political and religious

setting had radically changed. When we consider Sirach's very strong attempts to delineate the sphere of woman's influence, to keep her under male control<sup>74</sup>, we can hardly be surprised at his attempt also to bring Sophia very closely under control, in the most obvious way available: through confining her to the well-defined parameters of the Torah. This not only dissipated any potential threat to monotheism, but is it not significant that it also obliterated her gender significance. The personalised symbol is thus prevented from developing individual personality by confinement to the impersonal concept of Torah<sup>75</sup>.

With the Wisdom of Solomon we move to a different world altogether: Israel's religious life in the Diaspora, in particular Egypt. Probably written around the beginning of the Christian era<sup>76</sup>, the book shows clear signs of composition in the philosophical environment of Alexandria<sup>77</sup>. The work is "an exhortation to pursue wisdom and thereby to live the righteous life that issues in immortality"<sup>78</sup>, and was almost certainly a response to both internal and external pressures caused by the need to maintain the attraction of the Jewish monotheistic religion in the midst of a syncretistic Hellenistic environment<sup>79</sup>. The figure of Sophia reaches her pinnacle in this work, being at once the one who creates, who saves and who reveals. She sits at the throne of God [9:4] and is loved by him [8:3]. At the same time she has been shown to manifest many of the attributes ascribed to Isis in the cults of Alexandria<sup>80</sup>, as the famous list of characteristics in 7:22ff shows. Her saving powers are taken for granted in many texts, but are made explicit at least in 9:18, where the people are said to have been 'saved' by Sophia (καὶ τῆ

σοφία εσώθησαν). This salvific power is indeed the basis of the reinterpretation of Israel's history which follows in the remarkable chapters 10-11. Here all of the great acts of Yahweh, from Adam through Abraham to Moses and the Prophets, are recounted as the acts of Sophia. She has, to use Johnson's words, "brought about the decisive revelatory and liberating events of the people of Israel"<sup>81</sup>.

Clearly in this book we have moved beyond even the close identification of Sophia and Yahweh given by Proverbs and Sirach. Indeed, the two are so closely related that they may almost be seen as one. This is expressed in passages such as Wisd 7:25-26, where she is described as the 'Breath of God's power', 'an emanation of the glory of the Almighty', 'the flawless mirror of the active power of God', and 'the image of his goodness'. On the other hand, there still remains a distinction, such as the passage where she is depicted "as a divine consort sitting by God's throne (9:4)."<sup>82</sup> To take these elements of Sophia's portrayal seriously we need to move beyond traditional scholarly classifications of her as a personification of cosmic order<sup>83</sup>, didactic wisdom<sup>84</sup>, or of the divine attribute of wisdom<sup>85</sup>, and indeed beyond seeing her as an hypostasis<sup>86</sup>. The more recent trend is towards the identification of Sophia with the creative and saving involvement of Yahweh in the world, as typified by the quotation from Dunn in section 2.3.1<sup>87</sup>. However, although this viewpoint leads us in the right direction, it has not yet given sufficient consideration to the *feminine* aspect of the figure Sophia. Can we really speak about an exclusively male Yahweh who appears in a feminine guise without seeing him as some kind of transsexual deity? Von Rad certainly recognises a problem with her gender (without offering any real solution!) when he says that Sophia's speeches bear:

. . . all the marks of a divine address. It resounds everywhere; it is impossible to escape it; and the way in which it presents man with the decision between life and death is something like an ultimatum. Even the gifts which it promises can only be described as gifts of salvation, and here lies the problem: an 'I', who is certainly not Yahweh, but who nevertheless summons men to itself<sup>88</sup>.

Johnson, however, responds to Von Rad's difficulty by observing: "The assumption that God can only be rightly imaged as male functions as a pair of blinders blocking the full significance of the texts"<sup>89</sup>. Since Yahweh is an exclusively *male* expression of the Hebrew God, the assumption is made that anything which does not correspond to that maleness must of necessity be explained away somehow in terms of it. If we are prepared, however, to observe with Johnson, that "both female Sophia and male YHWH express the one god who promises life upon being found"<sup>90</sup>, we shall then be able to move away from a too male-oriented theology, to allow Sophia to be what she seems to be in the literature with which we have been dealing: "God herself in her activity in the world, God imaged as female acting subject"<sup>91</sup>.

Let us pause for a moment here to ask whether such a line of interpretation falls into the trap of imposing a modern issue on the ancient texts. The problem of allowing for a certain fluidity in the gender of God may indeed be a modern question, but in looking at the figure of Sophia as she appears in Proverbs, Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon we have also seen that her *gender* may well have raised questions for the authors of those books. Indeed, when we later look at the relationship between Sophia and the ANE Goddesses we shall want to underline the importance of her gender in the establishment of the God of Israel as the giver of life, saviour, creator, etc.. Whether

or not the authors of Sirach and Baruch were fully aware of the consequences of their identification of Sophia with Torah, from our perspective we may see that it had the *effect* of limiting the gender significance of Sophia through the means of confinement. By the same token we may also understand Enoch's withdrawal of Sophia to the safety of a seat in heaven as a confinement of her influence, though again this may not have been the primary motivation of the author. That there was a fear of a feminine expression of god in these authors may not yet be mooted with certainty, but as we turn to Philo we may perhaps see it more clearly.

### 2.3.3 SOPHIA AND PHILO

Philo's significance for the study of New Testament backgrounds lies not so much in the possibility of direct influence on the New Testament writers themselves, as in his witness to a particular trend of Jewish philosophical reflection and speculation at the time of the formation of the New Testament. We need not, then, in this present study be over concerned with any possible influence from Philo's conception of the Logos-Sophia relationship to God on Johannine christology, but we should see his significance rather as a pointer to a certain trend in Sophia speculation at the time in which Johannine thinking was developing.

Philo's writings display a "unique blend of Jewish monotheism with middle-Platonic and Stoic philosophy"<sup>92</sup>. The resulting synthesis of ideas makes it extremely difficult to make any definitive statement of 'Philo's view' on a particular subject. The relationship of God and Sophia, or of Logos and Sophia is no exception to this observation. In general, however, Philo sees Sophia as belonging to

the upper realm of the divine [κόσμος νοητός], while the Logos replaces her traditional role as God active in the world of sensory perception [κόσμος αἰσθητός]. This switch may very well have come about as a result of Sophia's gender, a possibility which is reinforced by Philo's willingness to assert that she is in actual fact 'male' (*De Fuga* 51-52)! He almost invariably sees the female realm as something negative or evil. As Baer observes, he

. . . extensively exploits female terminology as a vehicle for expressing his widespread depreciation of the created world. . . . The female, sense-perceptible, created world stands as a constant threat to man's existence<sup>93</sup>.

However, Baer then goes on to argue that Philo distinguishes two levels of thinking with regard to gender significance, thus allowing him to conclude that Philo sees God as *asexual*:

Philo understands the higher nature of man to be asexual, whereas man's lower nature is involved in the male-female polarity. The description of man created after the image of God as οὐτ' ἄρρεν οὔτε θῆλυ was thus seen to constitute a denial of his participation in the sphere of sexuality. When Philo refers to the sense-perceptible world as female and the realm of the mind as male, however, it is clear that he is using the categories male and female quite differently. According to this second usage, female refers to the material, sense-perceptible realm, which includes the male-female polarity, whereas male refers to that realm which is intrinsically asexual, i.e., the sphere of the nous, the Logos, and ultimately God himself. It is in accord with this second usage that Philo is able to describe God as male in *Fug* 51<sup>94</sup>.

On the face of it this might seem an attractive argument, but it is actually something imposed upon Philo rather than emerging from his writing. One might be more convinced of the asexuality argument if Philo felt free at times to express God's nature in female terms

rather than so exclusively in male terminology. However, the reverse is the case: even that most feminine of Jewish expressions of God, Sophia, has to be crammed into a male stereotype:

For pre-eminence always pertains to the masculine, and the feminine always comes short of it and is lesser than it. Let us, then, pay no heed to the discrepancy in the gender of the words, and say that the daughter of God, even Sophia, is not only masculine, but father, sowing and begetting in souls aptness to learn, discipline, knowledge, sound sense and laudable actions. [Fuga 51-52]

Looking more closely at this text we may observe two things in relation to our thesis. Firstly, the necessity to underline the 'discrepancy' in gender and to switch it from female to male renders the suggestion that Philo sees God as anything but male, to say the least, unlikely! Even if we accept the notion of an "active-passive polarity" at work in Philo's concept of Sophia, whereby she is seen as "female-passive in relationship to God, and male-active in relationship to man"<sup>95</sup>, we are still left with a God who is essentially male in relation to a female-passive Sophia. It is precisely because of her gender that Philo has a problem with Sophia and replaces her function in the κόσμος ἀίσθητός with that of the male Logos. Thus, to argue that Philo sees Sophia (and God) as asexual is, to use Baer's own words against him, "to misunderstand Philo completely"<sup>96</sup>. Having seen the heights achieved by Sophia in a writing like Wisdom of Solomon<sup>97</sup>, Philo seems to have been afraid of the influence of a goddess-like figure like Isis infringing the male-monotheism of the patriarchal Yahwistic religion. He thus creates,

a 'dainty' Sophia who could only survive in the rarified air of heaven and who needed to be protected from the contamination of the flesh. She is a far cry from the Sophia of Proverbs who stands in the streets

of Israel calling out to men to forsake the whore and to dine at her own table<sup>98</sup>.

Secondly, it might be argued that the change in the gender of Sophia at this point in *Fuga* 51-52 reflects the wider context in which Philo is discussing Bethuel, Rebekah's father and thus the father-in-law of the patriarch Isaac. If this is the case, then it would only serve to reinforce the belief that Philo was *conscious* of a problem in identifying a female figure with a male one, a conclusion which would have considerable significance for our observations on the similar problem facing New Testament writers identifying Jesus with Sophia.

What we may be seeing in Philo's outworking of the relationship between God and Sophia is a reaction against the increasing freedom, typified by Wisdom of Solomon, of expressing God's activity in the world in feminine terms through the use of the figure Sophia. To an extent Philo would only be continuing a trend we have already hinted at in Sirach and Baruch, namely the limitation of Sophia to the Torah, and in Enoch's withdrawal of her into the heavenly realm. However, Philo appears to take this trend much more radically forward in two ways. *Firstly*, he removes Sophia effectively from the world and confines her to the realm of the divine. We find this, for example, in his description of the giving of the tabernacle as a 'copy' (μίμημα) of Sophia:

When God willed to send down the image of divine excellence from heaven to earth in pity for our race, that it should not lose its share in the better lot, he constructs as a symbol of the truth the holy tabernacle and its contents to be a representation and copy of Wisdom. [QuisRer 112]

Thus *Sophia* is not sent into the world, but a mere representation of her in the form of the tabernacle. We also find that instead of *Sophia* descending into the world to impart her gifts, it is the *Logos* who comes on her behalf:

The Divine Word (ὁ θεῖος λόγος) descends from the fountain of Wisdom like a river to lave and water the heaven-sent celestial shoots and plants of virtue loving souls which are as a garden. [DeSomn II,242]

This process of keeping *Sophia* in the upper realm of the κόσμος νοητός leads Mack to comment:

Die *Sophia* stellt also die außerweltliche Sphäre des Heils dar. D.h., sie ist nicht mehr die nahe Weisheit, sondern tritt vielmehr samt ihren Gaben in das Jenseits und wird faktisch als die verborgene verstanden. . . . Die Weisheit verkörpert nunmehr den kosmos noetos<sup>99</sup>.

Secondly, Philo attempts to remove *Sophia*'s gender significance by calling her 'male'<sup>100</sup>, and by denigrating all that is female by associating all the feminine species with the created, evil, material world. We find this, for example, in his reflections on the creation and fall accounts:

Pleasure does not venture to bring her wiles and deceptions to bear on the man, but on the woman, and by her means on him. This is a telling and well-made point: for in us mind (νοῦς) corresponds to man, the senses (αἴσθησις) to woman; and pleasure encounters and holds parley with the senses first, and through them cheats with her quackeries the sovereign mind itself. [OpMund 165]

Philo thus makes every effort to strip *Sophia* of her feminine influence, largely because of his antipathy toward that gender group and his inherent sense of the supremacy of all that is male, including

God 'himself'. We may, therefore, conclude with Engelsmann that the "growing tension between Yahweh and Sophia . . . appears to have been resolved by repression . . . (in) the writings of Philo"<sup>101</sup>.

#### 2.3.4 CONCLUSIONS

We have noted a developing relationship expressed between Sophia and God in Jewish literature leading up to the New Testament era. From her beginnings in Proverbs through to her pinnacle in the Wisdom of Solomon, Sophia increasingly takes on roles otherwise attributed to the male figure, Yahweh, in the Jewish tradition. In answer to the question "Who is Sophia?" in relation to Yahweh, for the moment we would reply that she appears to be a feminine expression of God active in the world, who seems to function in an equivalent manner to that more normally associated in the Old Testament with the male expression of God, Yahweh. At least in Wisdom of Solomon she is not pictured as dependent upon, or subordinate to Yahweh, but is quite simply a feminine alternative to the traditional expression of God, who even in the same book can equally be called male. We have seen that this seems to have caused problems for those accustomed to an exclusively male-symboled theology, in particular the Alexandrian philosopher, Philo, and that it probably led to attempts to repress or subdue her influence on Jewish speculation. In Philo's case at least, this was not so much due to a concern for the maintenance of strict monotheism, but more to the problem of her gender, a claim substantiated by his noting the 'discrepancy' of gender between Sophia and God in *Fuga 51*. However, we are glad to note that, despite all efforts to remove her, Sophia survived in some form, even in Philo!

## 2.4 "WHAT IS SHE?"

Having attempted provisionally to answer the question "*Who is Sophia?*", we must now turn to the second part of our deliberation, "*What is she?*". By this we mean to investigate the extent to which extraneous influences, in particular those of the ANE Goddess cults we have noted, affected the formation of the figure as she appears in Jewish Wisdom literature. This will help us to understand the extent to which her gender was significant in Jewish speculation, for while Philo's intentions may be more explicit with regard to the gender significance of Sophia, we have yet to establish that significance in the wider spectrum of Jewish thought. We shall therefore proceed to examine the various influences which may have led to the establishment of her prominence in the centuries leading up to her 'final flourish' in the book of Wisdom.

### 2.4.1 THE GENDER SIGNIFICANCE OF SOPHIA

Unlike our own language, the languages of the Biblical world and writings indicate gender as part of their grammatical structure. Such languages do "invite personification"<sup>102</sup>: that is, by the allocation of gender to abstract concepts or inanimate objects they allow for the possibility of personalising them. For a polytheistically inclined religious group this opens up a marvellous vista of possibilities: for monotheistic Judaism it proved rather a headache! We see this perhaps most clearly in the case under study, the female figure of Sophia. We shall briefly note the linguistic background before proceeding to an examination of the way in which

certain features associated with ANE Goddesses may have accrued to the developing picture of the figure we have noted in Jewish tradition.

#### 2.4.1.1 LINGUISTIC REMARKS

The group of words usually translated from the various Semitic languages and dialects by the English word 'Wisdom' are all feminine in gender. As Fohrer correctly remarked, "the common translation 'wise', 'wisdom' is unfortunate and to a large degree inexact"<sup>103</sup>, this being true not only of the Hebrew usage, but also of other languages, since the various words denote a much wider semantic field than is normally associated with our word 'Wisdom'.

The two Biblical terms of note for our present study are the Hebrew word  $\text{חָכְמָה}$ , and its LXX equivalent  $\eta \sigma\phi\acute{\alpha}$ . The Hebrew form is a feminine noun from the root  $\text{חָכַן}$  and covers a variety of meanings from technical 'skill' in military operations or administration, through 'shrewdness' or 'prudence' in religious matters, to a 'divine attribute', which seems to include a whole range of meaning in itself<sup>104</sup>. It is from this final meaning that the personalising process begins, particularly in the Proverbs texts we have noted. The LXX consistently translates  $\text{חָכְמָה}$  with  $\sigma\phi\acute{\alpha}$ <sup>105</sup>, despite the difficulties in compatibility between the Greek and Hebrew concepts<sup>106</sup>. In both languages, however, the feminine gender provides an ideal vehicle for creating a figure who is at one and the same time alluring to men and an appropriate 'consort' for the divine.

The nearest equivalent to these biblical terms in the extant literature of the ANE is probably the Egyptian term **MAAT**, but this word covers an even wider semantic range.

Maat is right order in nature and society, as established under the act of creation, and hence means, according to the context, what is right, what is correct, law, order, justice and truth<sup>107</sup>.

*MAAT* is clearly understood as feminine, as witness the personification and representation of her as Goddess of Law, Truth and Justice<sup>108</sup>.

Despite the neutrality of the English word 'Wisdom', we may see from this brief survey that the Semitic and Greek terms consistently apply the feminine gender to the equivalent concept. This fact will be seen to have no mean bearing on the emergence of a *female* figure associated with that concept in the biblical tradition.

#### 2.4.1.2 SOPHIA AND THE GODDESS

The gender of the vocabulary may be an important factor, but it cannot alone convince us of any gender significance attached to the figure who appears in Proverbs and the subsequent tradition. Other influences must surely have been at work to create a figure who reaches the stature of Sophia in the Wisdom of Solomon. The most obvious and most frequently investigated possible source of influence is the ANE Goddess, who appears in many and varied forms. Amongst the most vigorously pursued of these female deities have been the Canaanite and Egyptian figures, and each of these we will review in turn. Before embarking on such a survey, however, it is prudent to re-emphasise the caveat, that evidence of parallels between ANE deities and Sophia, or even direct influence upon the formation of the Jewish figure, does not necessarily determine or restrict meaning in that which has been influenced. The Jewish Sophia will ultimately have to stand on her own in the *Jewish* context.

#### 2.4.1.2.1 SOPHIA AND THE CANAANITE GODDESSES

The argument for the influence of Canaanite deities on the Jewish figure of Sophia has been put most cogently by W.F. Albright<sup>109</sup> and G. Bostrom<sup>110</sup>. Albright identified a Semitic Goddess of the vine, whom he took to be an equivalent of *Ishtar*<sup>111</sup>. This Goddess, as we saw in our earlier survey<sup>112</sup>, descended to the underworld and then returned, or was elevated by her consort, to heaven, a fact which Albright compares to Sophia's appearance by descending into the world. Further evidence of Canaanite influence is found in the *Aramaic Words of Ahiqar*: "[Wisdom] is from the Gods, and to the Gods she is precious; forever her kingdom is fixed in heaven, for the holy Lord elevated her"<sup>113</sup>. This is taken to show that Wisdom was known as a Goddess outside of Israel. In addition, Albright finds that Proverbs 8:9 "swarms with words and expressions otherwise found only in such Canaanite texts as the Ugaritic tablets and the Phoenician inscriptions"<sup>114</sup>. All of this he sees as a background to the emergence of Sophia in Proverbs, while recognising that the Hebrew writers have subordinated her to Yahweh and interpreted her in a symbolic manner.

Already in 1947, Ringgren noted some of the problems of such a viewpoint, not least the fact that Ishtar is never identified with wisdom in the *myth*, and that she descends to the underworld rather than to the earth, as in Sophia's case<sup>115</sup>. This critique has been taken further by others, notably Whybray<sup>116</sup> and Lang<sup>117</sup>. A re-examination of Proverbs 8 - 9 has shown Albright's claims of Canaanite influence to be grossly exaggerated<sup>118</sup>, just as further investigation of the Ahiqar text has shown the adoption of the word 'Wisdom' at the

opening of the statement to be questionable<sup>119</sup>. Ringgren rightly comments that there may be certain "phenomenological parallels"<sup>120</sup>, but there is little evidence of a direct line of influence.

Bostrom adopted a slightly different approach to Albright. He perceived in Sophia a polemic against the worship of Astarte, the Canaanite fertility Goddess<sup>121</sup>. He identified the 'strange woman' of Proverbs 1-9 as a worshipper of Astarte, with whom the figure of Sophia is deliberately contrasted. Sophia, therefore, takes on certain characteristics of the Goddess in order to be a conscious option to draw people away from the cult of the foreign Goddess. Among these characteristics transferred to Sophia are, the Bride<sup>122</sup>, and the practice of self-glorifying hymnology<sup>123</sup>. Ringgren follows Bostrom most of the way, but sees the 'strange woman' as an Israelite who has become a devotee of the Astarte/Ishtar cult, rather than a foreigner<sup>124</sup>. Both McKane<sup>125</sup> and Whybray<sup>126</sup> question this, but still allow that there has been some influence of a general nature from the Canaanite Astarte/Ishtar traditions on the formation of the figure of Sophia. Referring to Bostrom's theory, Whybray suggests that it may rather have been the universal temptation of adultery which brought out the symbol of the 'strange woman', and sums up the issue thus:

It was natural that in the polytheistic and syncretistic milieu of the ancient near east, where even in Israel the cult of the goddess of love cannot have been entirely unfamiliar, this theme should have expressed itself partly in her imagery<sup>127</sup>.

Thus, while there is no systematic presentation of the features of the Canaanite Goddess in the Proverbial picture of Sophia, there is nevertheless sufficient evidence to suggest that features of her

mythology were important in Sophia's formation, at least at the level of Proverbs 1 - 9. The two important features in this respect would be her self-predicatory speeches and the call to take her as a bride for oneself (Prov 4:6,8-9). These influences are probably no more than would have been natural in a Jewish culture surrounded by the polytheistic religions of Canaan. They do not, however, constitute proof that Sophia was herself viewed as some form of Goddess.

#### **2.4.1.2.2 SOPHIA AND EGYPTIAN GODDESSES**

There can be no doubt that Israelite Wisdom literature was influenced at many points by the much older and more highly developed literature of the Egyptian wisdom schools. While with the idea of Canaanite influence, Albright was forced to postulate a hypothetical corpus of literature from that culture, due to a complete absence of sources<sup>128</sup>, in the case of Egyptian wisdom such material is to hand<sup>129</sup>. The two principle female deities suggested as possibly influential in the formation of Sophia speculation from this region of the ANE are *MAAT* and Isis. We shall look at each of these possibilities in turn.

##### **2.4.1.2.2.1 SOPHIA AND MAAT**

The most thorough study of the relationship between Sophia and *MAAT* has been undertaken by Crista Bauer-Kayatz<sup>130</sup>. She continues the work already begun by Donner, suggesting a direct link between *MAAT* and Sophia on the basis of the above-mentioned Ahiqar fragment, which he saw as something of a missing link<sup>131</sup>. Kayatz avoids some of the critique later levelled at Donner<sup>132</sup>, by suggesting that the Egyptian *MAAT* influence came at a much earlier time than was

previously presumed. She draws out numerous parallels between *MAAT* and Sophia, among which the following are the most notable.

*MAAT*, like Sophia, was instrumental in the act of creation, existing before the world began (Prov 8:22ff)<sup>133</sup>. She was the plaything of the great God, *Re-Atum*, just as Sophia sported at Yahweh's side in Prov 8:30<sup>134</sup>. Sophia is the giver and the guardian of life, being described as a 'garland' worn around the neck of her disciples (Prov 1:9; 6:21), and in similar fashion, we find that *MAAT* was depicted on both amulets and chains hung around the necks of the chief judges in Egypt<sup>135</sup>. Kayatz is not so much interested in the idea of a literary dependence between the Jewish and Egyptian writings, but much more in the role that the two figures play in the wider tradition of their individual schools. These roles are seen to be similar, in that both *MAAT* and Sophia are a "central concept which embraces God, the world and humanity, and draws into a unity, theological, cosmological and paedagogical thought and will"<sup>136</sup>.

Kayatz not only indicates the points of similarity between Sophia and *MAAT*, but also acknowledges the fundamental difference, that Sophia is never allowed to maintain the measure of independence and preeminence within Yahwism which *MAAT* enjoys in Egyptian thought<sup>137</sup>. Of course, she is dealing only with the earliest Sophia tradition in Proverbs, rather than following through the line of development to, for example, Wisdom of Solomon. As we shall see, however, that is a proper approach, since the later Jewish tradition is almost certain to have been much more affected by later Egyptian thought than directly by the ancient *MAAT*<sup>138</sup>.

The problems with Kayatz's approach and solution to the riddle of Sophia's origins have again been thoroughly outlined, most recently by Claudia Camp<sup>139</sup>: the possibility of a much more general ANE background than that affected by *MAAT* for many of the features found in Sophia; the lack of evidence for a personified *MAAT* in Egyptian *Wisdom* writings; the over-emphasis on *MAAT* materials as a unifying force in Proverbs 1 - 9; the problem of the relationship between a Sophia influenced by *MAAT* in Prov 8 and the figure in Prov 1:20-33, which Kayatz sees as untouched by the Egyptian influence. However, while accepting the fact that direct *dependence* has not been established, there remains the overall impression that the authors or redactors of Proverbs must at least have been aware of the kind of background which *MAAT* offered. Given the clear indications we have of Egyptian influence in Proverbs<sup>140</sup>, it is hardly outrageous to suggest that they knew of the significance of *MAAT* as a concept, and as a Goddess figure in Egypt. Taking into account the Proverbial writers' consciousness of Egyptian *Wisdom* tradition and acknowledging the similarity of the traditions mentioned and examined in detail by Kayatz, Mack and others, leads us to posit at least an awareness of *MAAT* background in the minds of the Jewish authors as the figure of Sophia developed within the Jewish tradition up to the point of Proverbs. What is significant for us at the moment is the fact that they persisted in developing an overtly feminine Sophia in the face of the 'dangers' of foreign Goddesses, of which they were surely aware<sup>141</sup>.

#### 2.4.1.2.2.2 SOPHIA AND ISIS

Of all the various ANE Goddesses mooted as a possible background to the understanding of the development of Sophia, the most

widely acknowledged and advanced has been the Egyptian Isis<sup>142</sup>. Varying degrees of influence have been proposed, but only rarely has an attempt been made to deny altogether an influence of some kind<sup>143</sup>. Perhaps the greatest difficulty has been encountered by those seeking a direct influence at an *early* stage in Israel's Sophia speculation. Hengel is able to show early traces of an Isis-Astarte relationship in Palestine<sup>144</sup>, but has to admit that a connection with Proverbs "is still uncertain"<sup>145</sup>. However, more convincing material has been brought to light concerning Sirach and more especially the Wisdom of Solomon.

As early as 1937, Knox proposed an Isis influence on the figure of Sophia in Sirach<sup>146</sup>. He saw in Sirach 24 "the answer of orthodox Judaism" to those finding it "hard to resist the attractions of Isis"<sup>147</sup>. His study pointed out the flexibility and adaptability of Isis, in particular in relation to her influence on the Syrian Astarte, which in turn he believed to have influenced the picture of Sophia. The wandering quest of Isis has been altered to present a Sophia who comes down to earth and searches out her disciples, while indulging in self-praise "modelled on Isis of the aretalogy"<sup>148</sup>.

The Wisdom of Solomon represents the pinnacle of Sophia speculation in pre-Gnostic circles<sup>149</sup>, and at the same time has shown the greatest affinity to Isis traditions. Both Burton Mack<sup>150</sup> and James Reese<sup>151</sup> have dealt with this in some detail, but it has again been thoroughly rehearsed in recent times by J.S.Kloppenborg<sup>152</sup>. While acknowledging the value of some of Reese's work, Kloppenborg asserts that "what is required is not a lot of parallel terms and titles but a demonstration that complete configurations of

specifically Isiac-mythologumena are mirrored in Wisdom<sup>153</sup>. He does not doubt that Wisdom of Solomon owes a great deal to older biblical traditions, but at the same time stresses that it "goes far beyond the traditional *topoi*<sup>154</sup> of Wisdom in Proverbs, Job and Sirach<sup>155</sup>. Of particular importance is the parallelism between Sophia and Isis in their role as Saviour<sup>156</sup>, a role not specifically attributed to Sophia in other earlier Wisdom writings. Kloppenborg shows how the saving acts of Sophia in Wisdom 9-10 have been chosen not so much for their place in the traditional Heilsgeschichte of Israel, but rather because they are "incidents which are precisely of the sort over which Isis also had control"<sup>157</sup>. Two examples of such incidents are the reference to the guiding of Noah's ark (Wisd 10:4), which "corresponds closely to one of Isis' major competences, the protection and guiding of sailors"<sup>158</sup>, and her support of the righteous man in prison (Wisd 10:14), which "is closely paralleled by Isis' promise to save prisoners when they pray for her presence"<sup>159</sup>.

Kloppenborg goes on to show strong links between Sophia's relationship with the king in Wisd 6:1 - 9:17 and the similar functions of Isis<sup>160</sup>. Both represent the divine power by which the king comes to power and rules, and by which he sustains that prosperity and longevity one associates with a good king. Both Sophia and Isis are intimates of God and the king. He sums up:

The mythic power which informed Egyptian ideology is captivated and transformed for Judaism, enabling Jews to maintain themselves in an atmosphere of intense religious and political propaganda<sup>161</sup>.

His final section reflects on the reason for this transformation, outlining the social setting into which the work was addressed<sup>162</sup>. In

the end, the figure of Sophia functions as both a stimulus to Jews suffering under pagan attack, and as an apologetic designed to allow for "communication with the dominant group to whose privileges and position Alexandrian Jews aspired"<sup>163</sup>.

By attempting to outline areas of *function* which correspond, rather than concentrating on mere verbal or linguistic overlaps, Kloppenborg has achieved a significant methodological breakthrough in dealing with the relationship between the ANE Goddess and Sophia. He has also rooted this in a plausible sociological analysis. What is important for our present study is not whether he is correct in every detail of his analysis, but that he has conclusively shown the need for a Jewish writer to counter the claims of a widely known Goddess by the use of a corresponding symbol from *within* his own tradition: that is, by using the overtly feminine figure of Sophia. Indeed, it is her *gender* that makes Sophia the most attractive choice as a counterpart to Isis, thus adding considerable weight to our proposition that gender was a significant issue in relation to Sophia in pre-Christian Jewish thought.

#### 2.4.1.2.3 THE GODDESS IN PHILO

We have already noted the difficulty which Philo experienced with the gender of Sophia and his efforts to confine her to the realm of the κόσμος νοητός. We must briefly now explore the influence that the Goddess figure, in particular Isis, exercised on his view of Sophia even in that upper realm. This influence was already recognised by Goodenough<sup>164</sup>, who also connects Philo's understanding of Sophia to that of the Wisdom of Solomon:

Sophia as an equivalent of the Logos-stream is by now so familiar in Philo himself that the conception of Sophia in *Wisdom* can be accepted as a predecessor of at least a large part of the Philonic Logos"<sup>165</sup>.

Since we have already recognised the influence of Isis on the Sophia of Wisdom of Solomon, we may see already how Philo was caught up in the process.

However, we do also have more direct evidence of Isis influence on his Sophia figure. Perhaps the best example comes in Philo's use of the title "many-named" (πολύωνυμος) to describe her in *LegAll I, 43*: "By using many words for it Moses has already made it manifest that the sublime and heavenly Wisdom is of many names (πολύωνυμον)". This was an epithet frequently used of Isis<sup>166</sup>, though Philo can also use it of Sophia's other manifestation in the world, the Logos, in *DeConf 146*:

But if there be any as yet unfit to be called a Son of God, let him press to take his place under God's first-born, the Word (λόγος), who holds the eldership among the angels, their ruler as it were. And many names (πολύωνυμον) are his, for he is called, 'the Beginning', and the Name of God, and his Word, and the Man after his image, and 'he that sees', that is Israel.

There are also some parallels between Philo's Sophia and the acclamation of Isis as the Goddess of the Sun. While Isis can claim: "I divided the earth from the heaven. I showed the paths of the stars. I ordered the course of the sun and moon"<sup>167</sup>, it can be said of Sophia: "Wisdom is God's archetypal luminary and the sun is a copy and image of it" (*DeMigr 40*). Then again, Mack also sees in the relationship between Sophia and Logos in Philo an echo of the mythology of Isis and Horus, whereby the Logos becomes Sophia's

representative in the world in a similar way to that in which Horus, the son of Isis, comes upon earth<sup>168</sup>. We find also, for example, that Sophia can be recognised as the mother of the Logos, in *Fuga 108-109*, through the relationship of the High Priest:

We say, then, that the High Priest is not a man, but a Divine Word and immune from all unrighteousness whether intentional or unintentional. . . because he is the child of parents incorruptible, and wholly free from stain, his father being God, who is likewise Father of all, and his mother Wisdom (μητρὸς δὲ σοφίας), through whom the universe came into existence. *DeFuga 108-109*

This, along with many other examples he is able to bring, leads Mack to conclude that Philo has sought to continue the tradition of Jewish Wisdom speculation by adopting the Isis myth to fit Sophia:

Die weisheitliche Aussagen über die Welt als Schöpfung, Gott als ewigen und gerechten Lenker und Herrscher der Welt entsprechen ägyptischen Anschauungen, insbesondere über die Funktionen derjenigen ägyptischen Gottheiten, die hinter der Weisheit stehen. Die Anziehungskraft der ägyptischen Vorstellungen war offensichtlich so groß, daß neue Mythologumena der Göttin Isis ständig und zunehmend zur Ergänzung der Weisheitsgestalt in die Weisheitsspekulation eingedrungen sind. . . . Und doch wurde das israelitisch-jüdische Erbe damit nicht preisgegeben. Denn die Verwendung von Vorstellungen aus der ägyptischen Mythologie zielt gerade darauf ab, den jüdischen Gottesgedanken zu bewahren, die Werke Gottes zu verstehen, und den Anspruch Gottes an Israel zu hören. Eben darin besteht das Anliegen der jüdischen Weisheitsspekulation<sup>169</sup>.

Thus we see that Philo, continuing, as he believed, the line of Jewish Wisdom speculation, also depended largely on an ANE Goddess figure for the shaping of his own Sophia<sup>170</sup>.

#### 2.4.1.3 CONCLUSIONS

There can be little doubt from our brief summary of the proposed ANE Goddess influence on the development of Sophia, that such influence, whether it be of Ishtar/Astarte, MAAT or Isis, has indeed shaped the form of the figure to some degree by the time of the writing of Wisdom of Solomon and Philo. This is not to deny that Sophia is rooted firmly in Israel's own tradition, nor does it indicate that there was ever any intention that Sophia should be seen as a Goddess figure in competition with Yahweh. There remains no evidence of a Wisdom cult in Israel: "No worship is offered to Wisdom; Wisdom has no priests in Israel"<sup>171</sup>. The intention was in fact quite the opposite, to protect Jewish monotheism from the temptation offered by the Goddess cults, and in particular the highly syncretistic cult of Isis. While the evidence of direct influence on the early Proverbial Sophia may still be scanty, the later development shows that the need was keenly felt to meet the Goddess head on with a female figure from a Jewish perspective who could also be identified with God. Taking the known influence of Egyptian Wisdom literature on Israel into consideration, we may reasonably propose that the later tradition is merely the continuation of a process begun already in the Sophia of Proverbs, but of which direct evidence is simply not available. One thing is certain: Sophia's gender was one of the most important reasons for her adoption as a counter to the Goddess cults.

#### 2.4.2 HYPOSTASIS; PERSONIFICATION: WHAT IS SHE?

So we return to the question "What is Sophia?" in terms of Jewish monotheism. Clearly she is identified with Yahweh, but is not

Yahweh: clearly also she has many features associated with the Goddesses of the ANE, yet she is not herself a Goddess. The two major hypotheses traditionally put forward with regard to her relationship with Yahweh have suggested either that she is an hypostasis or that she is a personification. We shall offer some reflections on each of these before attempting a closer definition.

The opinion that Sophia is an *hypostasis* of a divine attribute of Yahweh, namely she is God's Wisdom acting as a separate entity ultimately identical with Yahweh, has been proposed on numerous occasions<sup>172</sup>. However, part of the problem with such a view, as indeed with the idea of personification, is that a lot depends on whether we are talking about the Sophia in Proverbs, in Sirach, in Wisdom of Solomon or in Philo. For as we have already noted, there is a development in the picture of Sophia from the earliest manifestation in the Proverbial tradition through to the later streams of thought. In assessing the idea of Sophia as an hypostasis, Lang suggests that most attempts have presupposed that "Zoroastrianism has influenced Judaism, and Persian hypostases provided the models for the hypostases of Jewish theology"<sup>173</sup>. Much more likely is the proposition that, because of the 'otherness' of God and the consequent shyness of speaking the name of God, words such as *Shekinah* and *Memra* were used in an apparently hypostatic way in its place. But these were "not considered separate beings dwelling in heaven"<sup>174</sup>, and certainly not so in the era when the Proverbial figure of Sophia was developed. In Proverbs she remains a creation of Yahweh, albeit one who is said to sport at his side, and it is only much later in Wisdom of Solomon that she achieves a higher status, replacing Yahweh's action with her own.

The only place where we might agree that Sophia came near to truly functioning as an hypostasis is in the work of Philo, who through his Sophia/Logos interchange places her in a kind of mediatory position between the κόσμος νοητός and the κόσμος αἰσθητός<sup>175</sup>.

The concept of Sophia as a *personification* is more appealing, at least in the earlier strands of tradition. Lang notes two types of personification, poetic and mythological<sup>176</sup>. The poetic personification merely gives a kind of personality to an abstract concept, for example, in the way that Jerusalem becomes Zion, who can be said to have daughters that rejoice (Zech 2:10)! The second, mythological type, grew out of powers or realms of the deity, which were personalised to the point of becoming deified themselves. Lang believes that the Sophia of the Proverbs speeches reflects such a *background*, but that the mythical figure of the Goddess, which stands behind her, has been stripped off leaving a 'shadow', which retains some of her divine features<sup>177</sup>. Thus, although she is no longer a deity herself, now as a *poetic* personification she stands as a unifying element for the book as a whole<sup>178</sup>. Camp also notes this unifying effect of personification when she says:

We can contrast the wisdom expressed with varying content and in independent units in the proverb collection with the more unified, integrated focus of the personified Wisdom of the poems. The personification of Wisdom serves to call attention to the unity of the 'wisdoms' which it represents and for which it speaks<sup>179</sup>.

While this understanding of Sophia as a personification accords well with the material concerning her in the book of Proverbs, and to some

extent that of Sirach, it still remains inadequate as a measure of her in Wisdom of Solomon<sup>180</sup>.

We have observed that Sophia reaches the pinnacle of her development in the book of Wisdom. Here she not only speaks on behalf of God, but speaks *as* God. The history of Israel's salvation at Yahweh's hand is retold with Sophia at the helm. This is no mere hypostasis or personification, but is rather a full-blown expression of God at work in the world, in the lives of individuals and in the history of Israel, using female imagery. God speaks and acts as Sophia, just as she could also speak and act as Yahweh. There is no serious attempt to confine her action or to limit the scope of her power. In Wisdom of Solomon, Sophia is effectively God in feminine form, equivalent to the more common Jewish expression of God in the masculine form, Yahweh.

## 2.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the course of this chapter we have noted an ongoing development in the relationship between Sophia and God from the time of her earliest appearance in Proverbs to that in the Wisdom of Solomon at the beginning of the Christian era. In the first instance we surveyed the religious climate in which the earliest figure of Sophia emerged and developed. We saw in the Goddesses of the fertility cults a preoccupation with the need to express a feminine element as an essential component of the annual miracle of creativity, which was the universal experience of the agrarian societies of the ANE. This need was most commonly expressed in a mirror image of the human reproductive process transferred into the realms of deity and

possibly also reflected in the cultic practice through ritual prostitution and the idea of the Sacral Marriage. We saw that this cycle must have posed a problem to the people of Israel, because of the insistence on a monotheistic understanding of Yahweh, the patriarchal God, who alone created and alone sustains the world around. This seemed to deny both their experience of the miracle of human renewal and the contemporary mythological order.

We then went on to ask the question, "Who is Sophia?". In doing so we tried always to keep in mind the nature of Israel's religion as *monotheistic* at least in principle if not always in practice. In her initial appearance in Proverbs Sophia was seen as a symbolic figure in female guise, who took on some of the roles traditionally associated with Yahweh, while remaining quite clearly within his control. At the same time, when we asked the question "What is She?", we saw that it would be foolish to deny completely the possibility that the symbol was drawn to a degree from the religious environment in which Israel lived: that is, there was probably at least some element of borrowing from ANE Goddess speculation. This use of material from contemporary religious circles, however, in no way implied that there was an attempt to *copy* the Goddess religions in terms of setting up a Sophia cult in Israel. Rather, it served somewhat as a *counter* to them, which may be reflected in the contrast between Sophia and Dame Folly in Proverbs 1-9. While monotheism was in no way threatened by Sophia's appearance in Proverbs, we did still note that in her appearance lay the possibility of the beginnings of a feminine expression of God within Israel's tradition, who is certainly not the traditional patriarchal God, Yahweh!

Moving to the book of Sirach, we saw two things: firstly, the development of Sophia's role as creatrix, giver of life and sustainer of those who accepted her after her settling on earth, moving beyond the initial steps of the first person speeches in Proverbs 1 and 8. Secondly, in the identification of Sophia with Torah, the beginnings of what we suggested might be an attempt to suppress the gender significance of Sophia and to define her parameters. While we could not fully substantiate the consciousness of such suppression in the mind of the author, the possibility was heightened by the observation of the negative, male-chauvinistic attitude towards women presented in the book as a whole. Such an attitude was noted in an even more explicit form in the works of Philo. Again, with Sirach 24, the likely influence of Goddess features was noted in the picture of Sophia, in particular those of Astarte, who may herself have been heavily dependent on Isis, who by that period was influential throughout the entire Greco-Roman world.

The Wisdom of Solomon provided us with both an unrestricted picture of Sophia as God herself at work in the life and salvation-history of Israel, and with a clear view of the manner in which pagan Goddess influence may actually have worked in Sophia's development. She was seen to be almost indistinguishable from God (Wisd 7:25-26), and at one and the same time quite distinct in her function (Wisd 9:4). As the Saviour of both Israel collectively and of the individual, and in her relationship with the king, she clearly took on configurations of Isis, but in doing so did not succumb to the danger of being swallowed up by Isis into a form of independent Goddess worship. Rather, the assimilation of traits of Isis was best

explained as propaganda against such a challenge and as an apologetic for Jewish religion in a syncretistic hellenistic society.

With regard to the Alexandrian philosopher Philo, we saw that he too sought to use the figure of Sophia within the context of Jewish monotheism. However, this usage was also heavily influenced both by his Platonic base and his understanding of the nature of human sexuality. This probably led him to withdraw Sophia largely to the upper realm of the κόσμος νοητός, replacing her function in the κόσμος αίσθητός by the work of the Logos. Philo's Sophia comes closest to the category traditionally defined as *hypostasis*, and her form is influenced greatly by the Goddess Isis. However, Philo is at great pains to obliterate any cultic influence by removing or transmuting her sexuality, on at least one occasion even making her male instead of female. This is effectively done in terms of her role in the κόσμος αίσθητός by the substitution of the male Logos.

Our survey has attempted to provide us with a context for understanding the Fourth Gospel's use of Sophia speculation in the process of christological reflection. The subject is by no means unrehearsed in scholarly circles, but despite that, very little attention has been paid to the significance of the *gender* of Sophia. This present study has yielded four points of note in this respect.

1. The initial relationship of Sophia with the God of Israel depends to an unescapable degree upon her *femininity*. It is no mere coincidence that *Sophia* was chosen as an expression of God active in the world: on the contrary, it was precisely because her gender

allowed for the expression of God in a new way, in a new world that the figure of female Sophia was chosen. Although we cannot say so with certainty, it may even have functioned initially also as an apologetic over-against the Goddess cults of Canaan, in which case the feminine charms of Sophia were of fundamental importance. Certainly the picture of Sophia as a woman calling out in the streets for men to come to her, in Proverbs, is one which rests upon a traditional view of the female of the species holding certain attractions for the male! Her juxtaposition to the archetypal 'loose woman', Dame Folly, bears this out. In addition, it is worth noting in relation to the figure in Proverbs, that the emphasis on her role as creatrix and giver of life may also owe something to her gender. Ochshorn has suggested that the Genesis creation accounts reflect a certain denigration of the role of female sexuality and its relegation to a secondary position, by presenting a kind of asexual act of creation which allows for the emergence of a male, non-reproductive God<sup>181</sup>. If there is any truth in this claim, then Sophia's appearance in the role of assistant at the time of creation to some extent redresses the balance, could have offered a counter to the fertility cults of Canaanite religion, and would have gone some way towards meeting that need for a 'feminine dimension' within the divine order which was almost universally felt outside of Israel's tradition in the ANE.

2. The feminine gender of Sophia is vital to a proper understanding of her role in the Wisdom of Solomon. In order to counteract the influence and attraction of Isis to hellenistic Jews, it must have seemed essential to present a *feminine* dimension of the divine within Israel, who showed that the salvific function ascribed

to Isis in the cult was in fact the property of God, who expressed herself in the form of Sophia. In that situation, therefore, Sophia is not a subordinate of Yahweh, or even a consort, but is in fact an alternative mode of divine self-revelation.. Sophia is God herself over-against Isis, and in this role her gender is of inescapable importance. Just as Yahweh is an expression of the one God (*male*), so too Sophia is an expression of the one God (*female*).

It is worth asking at this point whether or not the material concerning Sophia is merely to be seen as a simple use of metaphor. We recognise, of course, that *all* language concerning God is to some extent metaphorical, attempting as it does to express the inexpressible within the confines of human thought patterns. Sophia is no more an exception to this rule than is the more common expression of God within Judaism, Yahweh. However, since we have attempted to show that Sophia's presence in Proverbs, Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon comes about *precisely because of her gender*, as a counter to the other Goddess figures, we would argue here that she is not merely a means of talking about God, who is really male, but rather an expression of who God is in her very being.

In talking about the assimilation of Sophia traditions within New Testament christology, Hengel remarks that "of course the concept of 'sophia', which was always threatened by mythological speculation, had to give way to the clear 'Logos', the Word of God"<sup>102</sup>. Unfortunately Hengel fails to go on to indicate *why* Logos might be 'clearer' than Sophia - a clarity which stills eludes New Testament scholars to this day! What he also omits to tell us is that the very reason why Sophia was 'threatened' by contemporary mythology was because of her *gender*,

the implication of his statement being that Logos was 'safer' because it was a masculine term<sup>183</sup>.

The inability (or unwillingness) of Judaic thought to express God in anything other than masculine terms seems to have left a credibility gap between experience (of creation, reproduction, etc.) and Old Testament theology. The expression of God in feminine terms through the use of the feminine figure Sophia offers, and we believe offered to the wisdom writers, an opportunity to overcome this problem, however threatening that may have been or may remain. Thus, while Sophia speculation contains as much of a metaphorical character as that concerning Yahweh, we would contend that she also represents the reality of God's being as legitimately and significantly as does Yahweh.

3. There appear to have been attempts to limit the significance of Sophia's gender, most notably on the part of Philo, but also through the association of Sophia with Torah in Sirach and Baruch<sup>184</sup>. The very fact that Philo found it necessary to mention the gender significance of Sophia in *De Fuga* 52, points to the conclusion that Sophia was not perceived as a merely asexual metaphor, but that her gender was perceived as *important*. The manner of her appearance in Jewish Wisdom writings may have raised fears that in some way the male deity, Yahweh, and with him monotheism, might be compromised or even 'subverted'! Her gender significance was therefore sufficiently well established to need some form of 'counteraction'.

4. In answer to our question, "Who is Sophia, what is She?", a lot will depend on *when* we ask it. At the time of the writing of

Proverbs she is probably just to be seen as a poetic personification of God's Wisdom. However, by the time that Wisdom of Solomon was written, the beginning of the Christian era, we find that she has developed into a full-blown expression of God in female terminology, coterminus with the traditional male expression, Yahweh. What is important for our present thesis is the fact that she has achieved this status *before* the New Testament writers began to draw upon her image for their own understanding of Jesus Christ. Since her gender was an issue which called for mention and probably even for some concern in Jewish writers, how would the New Testament writers react to the problem of identifying the female Sophia with the male Jesus? It is to this problem, and in particular to the solution provided by the author of the Fourth Gospel that we must now turn our attention.

## CHAPTER THREE

### SOPHIA AND THE JOHANNINE JESUS

#### 3.1 JESUS - THE WISDOM OF GOD

There can be little doubt that one of the earliest significant images used by the Christian Church to help define the relationship of Jesus to God was the Jewish figure of Wisdom. While Paul, the Synoptics and the author of Hebrews may spring to mind as the clearest examples of the direct adoption of Wisdom as a 'Christian' category, the author of John was no less interested in this aspect of Jesus' relationship to God<sup>1</sup>. It may rightly be said that Jesus only thought of himself as a messenger of Wisdom<sup>2</sup>, but it is nevertheless clear that the New Testament writers applied the concept of Wisdom in varying degrees directly to Jesus and ultimately saw it as an appropriate vehicle for expressing the pre-existence of Christ<sup>3</sup>. What is perhaps most remarkable is not the fact that these writers thought of Jesus as the embodiment of God's Wisdom, but that they felt able to take over what we have seen to be an entirely *feminine* image in both the Old Testament and later Jewish writings, and apply it without apparent difficulty directly to the *masculine* figure, Jesus. It might have been open to question whether these authors were conscious of a problem at this point, or whether they merely regarded the gender of Jesus or Wisdom as unimportant in the quest for an adequate christology<sup>4</sup>, but our last chapter has shown that at least for some Jewish writers of the era immediately before and spanning the writing of the New Testament, the gender of Sophia was important as an issue in the discussion of her role. In this chapter we hope to demonstrate that the question of gender is not lightly passed over, at least by the author of the Fourth Gospel, but is rather of great significance

especially in relation to the adoption of the λόγος motif in the Prologue.

Before attempting to tackle the Johannine approach to Jesus and Wisdom, we shall firstly give a very brief summary of the ways in which those other New Testament authors who make allusion to Wisdom, partly through the use of a pre-existence motif, namely Paul, the Synoptics and the writer to the Hebrews, deal with the subject. We shall then proceed to a close examination of the relationship between σοφία and λόγος in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel, and the effect this has on Johannine christology as a whole.

### 3.1.1 JESUS AND WISDOM IN PAUL

While Paul is largely critical of the kind of Wisdom speculation prevalent in Hellenistic-Jewish circles of his day<sup>5</sup>, he nevertheless identified Jesus with the Wisdom tradition. He both adopted early Christian hymns based partly on Wisdom speculation<sup>6</sup>, and used traditions associated with Wisdom to express his own christological viewpoint<sup>7</sup>. It may even be that Paul's adoption of the Wisdom theme came about because of its use by his opponents (probably Gnostics) in Corinth. Certainly this is the suggestion of Dunn in relation to the reference to Christ as the Wisdom of God in 1 Cor 1-2. He thinks that the emphasis on God's Wisdom displayed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, foolishness to Paul's opponents, may possibly have been "provoked by the wayward elitism of the Corinthian 'gnostic' faction"<sup>8</sup>.

It is quite doubtful that Paul adopted these traditions in order to project a doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ, but at the same

time, he wants to make clear, that what tradition has called the Wisdom of God is now made manifest in the man Jesus, and is known through his life, death and resurrection<sup>9</sup>. There is no attempt on Paul's part to mould together specifically the personified figure of Sophia and the man Jesus: rather, Paul was one of those early Christians who "were ransacking the vocabulary available to them in order that they might express as fully as possible the significance of Jesus"<sup>10</sup>. It is thus hardly surprising that Paul should have seen no problem in the identification of a male character with a traditionally female one, since the question of an *incarnation* of Sophia in Jesus does not form part of his thinking.

### 3.1.2 JESUS AND WISDOM IN THE SYNOPTIC TRADITION

With the Synoptic Gospels we move into both a different generation and a different genre. The earliest Gospel, Mark, contains almost nothing of significance for our study<sup>11</sup>, but the two later Gospels both contain material which relates Jewish Wisdom to the figure of Jesus himself<sup>12</sup>. Interestingly enough, most of this material comes from the sayings source Q<sup>13</sup>, although the two evangelists have different attitudes to their treatment of the material, Matthew in particular altering it to give his own interpretation. Analysis of the underlying Q texts has shown that the source did not identify Jesus as Sophia herself, but saw him as the messenger and teacher of Wisdom<sup>14</sup>. Luke largely retains this notion, though with his own particular nuances<sup>15</sup>, while Matthew in every instance amends his source to make Jesus speak in the place of Sophia herself and not merely as a messenger relating her message. The most obvious example of Matthew's method comes in Mt 23:34 [=Lk 11:49],

where the words attributed to Sophia in both Q and Luke are found directly in the mouth of Jesus. What we have in Matthew is a "full-blown expression of Wisdom Christology"<sup>16</sup>, as distinct from the identification of Jesus as the messenger of Wisdom in Mark, Q, and Luke: that is, for Matthew, Jesus = Wisdom.

Why then is Matthew able to identify Jesus the man with Sophia the woman without any apparent scruples about the gender mix? The answer may lie partly in the fact that Matthew has not seen the problem as clearly as we might have expected, but also partly in the fact that he is not yet talking strictly in *incarnational* terms about Jesus and Wisdom. He apparently does not wish to expound a christology which sees Jesus as pre-existent Sophia incarnate. Certainly Matthew does not present a highly developed picture of Jesus functioning in the role attributed elsewhere to Sophia. It is precisely the absence of the pre-existence motif that is vital for understanding Matthew's presentation of Jesus as Sophia over against that of the Fourth Gospel. Matthew, in the opening chapters of his Gospel, sees Jesus' divine origin beginning in the conception by the Holy Spirit<sup>17</sup>, the supposed 'virgin birth (conception)' of Mt 1:18-25. To speak of Jesus as Sophia incarnate would already imply his pre-existence, but Matthew probably does not intend to do so<sup>18</sup>. Rather, he sees Jesus in a sense replacing the function of Wisdom as the "closest intimate of God"<sup>19</sup>, and can thus substitute the male figure Jesus for the female Sophia without apparent contradiction. As long as the author avoids the strict language of incarnation the gender switch is just about manageable, but when we turn to John we shall see the difficulty which arises when this point is pressed.

In summary then, the Synoptic writers do not face the same problem as John because they have not yet developed a fully incarnational understanding of Jesus as pre-existent Sophia. Matthew certainly comes closest to this in his talk of Jesus as 'God with us' (Mt 1:23), an idea which he extends also into the future relationship of Jesus to the disciples (Mt 18:20; 28:20), and in his reference to Jesus as Wisdom. However, without a concept of pre-existence he just avoids the gender difficulty by the skin of his teeth!

### 3.1.3 JESUS AND WISDOM IN HEBREWS 1:1-3

Outside of the Johannine corpus and the writings of those New Testament authors whom we have surveyed, the only other reference we have to Jesus as pre-existent Wisdom is found in Hebrews 1:1-3. This introduction to the epistle seems to contain fragments of an early Christian hymn<sup>20</sup>, in which parallels are drawn between Sophia as the ἀπαύγασμα of God (Wisd 7:26) and Jesus Christ as such (Heb 1:3). There is also allusion to Jesus Christ as the creator of all things (Heb 1:2) and thus, by implication, as pre-existent<sup>21</sup>. However, while there are very clear parallels between Heb 1:2-3 and what is said in the tradition concerning Sophia, "Hebrews has nothing else that can readily be labelled 'Wisdom christology'"<sup>22</sup>.

The absence of further Wisdom elements in the overall christological picture painted by the author of Hebrews points to the fact that that author was adopting a method similar to that we have already noted in Paul: namely, gleaning materials from the earliest Christian expressions of Christ's significance to expound his own understanding. The main emphasis of Hebrews lies on Jesus' Sonship,

which the author can equally expound through the use of an Adam christology in Heb 2:6-18<sup>23</sup>.

Had Hebrews gone on to use the identification of Jesus as the embodiment of Sophia in a more widespread and insistent manner, we would have had to question why such a move was possible without prior resolution of the gender problem. What seems more likely, however, is that a snippet of an early hymn has been taken over by the author without any real recognition of the gender issue involved, the identification of Jesus as Sophia *incarnate* not being at all the main thrust of his christology.

### 3.2 JESUS, LOGOS AND SOPHIA IN JOHN

It has long been recognised that the Gospel of John contains elements of a Wisdom Christology, even though no word of the σοφία/σοφός family appears in the text. Some have seen the Wisdom motifs as confined to the λόγος concept in the Prologue, but amongst these even Bultmann, who wants to see the Prologue as rooted in a Gnostic Redeemer-myth, has to admit that "there can be no doubt . . . that a connection exists between the Judaic Wisdom myth and the Johannine Prologue"<sup>24</sup>. However, if the Prologue is to be seen as an integral part of the Gospel and not merely as a kind of preface stuck on at the beginning of the book as an afterthought, then one would expect the motifs contained in it to be worked out to some extent at least within the Gospel as a whole. This has indeed been shown to be the case, particularly in the material collected by Raymond Brown<sup>25</sup>.

Why is it then, that if Wisdom motifs are to be found both in the Prologue and in the main body of the Gospel, no *explicit* connection is

made between Jesus and Sophia herself? We shall attempt to answer this question by looking in some detail at the λόγος concept and how it relates to σοφία in both the period leading up to the writing of the Gospel and in the Gospel itself. Initially, however, we shall see how a certain parallelism between them was already developing in the Wisdom tradition itself.

### 3.2.1 LOGOS AND SOPHIA IN WISDOM OF SOLOMON

In our examination of the development of Sophia as a figure in Jewish Wisdom speculation, we saw that in Wisdom of Solomon she reached a pinnacle in what may be interpreted as God expressing herself in female terms. However, we hinted at the same time that God could also be referred to in male terminology in the same book. It has long been recognised that Wisdom of Solomon, emerging as it does from hellenistic Alexandria, was influenced by the philosophical environment of that city, which was dominated to an extent by Platonic thought<sup>26</sup>. Of course the results of this influence on Jewish thought are seen much more clearly in Philo, a fact which we observed already in our survey of his use of Sophia tradition. As we turn now to look at the relationship between λόγος and σοφία, we may already find evidence of a developing parallelism between the concepts in Wisdom of Solomon itself.

The possibility of an equation between λόγος and σοφία was already inherent in the writings of the Old Testament. We note the parallel between the *ideas* of Ps 32:6 [LXX] and Prov 3:19 -

τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ κυρίου οἱ οὐρανοὶ ἐστερεώθησαν (Ps 32:6)  
καὶ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ πᾶσα ἡ δύναμις αὐτοῦ

ὁ θεὸς τῆ σοφίᾳ ἐθεμελίωσεν τὴν γῆν (Prov 3:19)

At this stage of reflection, of course, we are nowhere near the picture of Sophia which we have in Wisdom of Solomon, but it is quite possible that an author familiar with the Old Testament tradition could easily pick up a parallel here in the idea of Logos, Spirit and Sophia. Indeed, all of these concepts appear within the space of a few verses in Wisdom of Solomon 9:1-2,17

θεὸ πατέρων καὶ κύριε τοῦ ἐλέους  
ὁ ποιήσας τὰ πάντα ἐν λόγῳ σου  
καὶ τῆ σοφίᾳ σου κατασκευάσας ἄνθρωπον. . . (9:1-2)  
βουλήν δέ σου τίς ἔγνω, εἰ μὴ σὺ ἔδωκας σοφίαν  
καὶ ἐπέμψας τὸ ἅγιον σου πνεῦμα ἀπὸ ὑψίστων (9:17)

However, it is the parallel between Logos and Sophia which takes on a special configuration in Wisdom of Solomon. Having introduced Sophia as the intervener on behalf of the godly in Israel's history in the remarkable chapters 10-11, we find that in 18:15 it is rather the Logos who comes to the rescue of God's righteous children in their imprisonment:

ὁ παντοδύναμός σου λόγος ἀπ' οὐρανῶν ἐκ θρόνων  
βασιλείων ἀπότομος πολεμιστῆς εἰς μέσον τῆς ὀλεθρίας  
ἤλατο γῆς ξίφος ὄξυ τὴν ἀνυπόκριτον ἐπιταγὴν σου φέρων.  
(Wisd 18:15)

Mack has suggested that this switch of roles probably took place because of a changing understanding of the role of Sophia, such as that represented in Sirach, Baruch and the later 2 Enoch, where Sophia is either identified with the Torah or she is withdrawn and no longer accessible in the world<sup>27</sup>. He would then see this developed in Philo, where it is only the Logos and not Sophia who is available in the κόσμος αἰσθητός. We would suggest, however, that such a viewpoint

cannot take seriously enough into account the exalted position of Sophia in the previous chapters of Wisdom of Solomon, where she is anything but withdrawn. While the Wisdom of Solomon may show signs of Greek philosophical influence in its vocabulary<sup>28</sup>, it hardly shows the kind of radical influence of Platonism which we shall see to be so much at the foundation of Philo's speculation. A far more likely explanation is that the author found the word λόγος to be another way to "speak of God's immanent involvement"<sup>29</sup> with human affairs, but in male terminology rather than in the female expression of Sophia. It may even be possible that the author of Wisdom of Solomon considered the male figure, λόγος, to be more suitable for the role of sudden executioner, or angel of death, which is the function required in Wisd 18. Whatever the reason, the use of the word λόγος itself would have been suggested by the Old Testament tradition of God's word being spoken and having effect in the world, but was also attractive because of its familiarity in the Greek-speaking hellenistic philosophical environment to which the book was addressed.

Whatever the origins of the λόγος in Wisdom of Solomon, there can be no question but that σοφία remains the primary influence on the book. What is important at this point of our study is to note that the two concepts were beginning to be seen as potentially interchangeable ways of speaking about the same thing. Wisdom of Solomon thus represents a stage on the road towards a mutual identity, a process which Philo, for different reasons, develops much further.



### 3.2.2 LOGOS AND SOPHIA IN PHILO

In the preceding chapter we already discussed at some length the way in which Philo seeks to confine Sophia in the rarified atmosphere of the κόσμος νοητός while replacing her functions in the lower realm by the work of the Logos. Some further comments on the relationship between the two concepts are in order here to show how interchangeable the two words really were by the end of the first century of the Christian era.

Since, as we have seen, the writings of Philo have long been recognised as a peculiar blend of Greek philosophical tradition and the thought world of Judaism, it is hardly surprising that Philo, in a continuation of the trend already noted in the Wisdom of Solomon, uses the terms λόγος and σοφία with a large degree of interchangeability. On the one hand, for example, we find that Sophia is the mother of the Logos<sup>30</sup>, while only a few pages earlier, on the other hand, the Logos has been described as the fountain of Sophia<sup>31</sup>. In order to understand this relationship it is important to see both Logos and Sophia in the context of the two-tier cosmological speculation which characterizes so much of Philo's writing.

Under the influence principally of Platonism, Philo distinguishes two separate worlds, the κόσμος νοητός, which is the realm of forms and ideas and thus of God, and the κόσμος αἰσθητός, which is but an imperfect shadow of the realm of God, and which corresponds to our sensory world<sup>32</sup>. Important for us also is to realise that for him, "God is absolutely removed from us, incomprehensible, and only known as absolute being"<sup>33</sup>. Both Logos and Sophia belong to the upper realm

of ideas, and their task is the mediation of what is knowable about God. However, this function, performed by Sophia in the Wisdom tradition, is given by Philo to the Logos in the lower realm. Their correspondence in function arises to some extent out of the fact that each represents in its own tradition the same type of activity. In the Wisdom tradition, Sophia is the creative power of God who appears amongst the peoples of the earth as the agent of God, calling them to herself and thus to God<sup>34</sup>. In the hellenistic philosophical world, probably most especially in Stoic tradition, Philo finds the idea of the Logos as the embodiment of divine reason active in the world<sup>35</sup>. However, we should beware of thinking that Philo is simply exchanging one word for another, or haphazardly using two different terms for the same concept. Rather, he is seeking to extend the Wisdom tradition and speculation beyond its accustomed boundaries. For Philo, all philosophy must be subject to his Jewish tradition, where he would see Moses as the "primary source of philosophy"<sup>36</sup>. Taking up from the later Wisdom idea in which Sophia is withdrawn from the world, for example in Sirach 4:17-19, Philo now sees Sophia as withdrawn to remain in the κόσμος νοητός with God and thus unattainable to human knowledge.

However, the problem remains that we *do* know and experience something of God, despite his unknowableness, and thus it is necessary for Philo to express how it is possible to apprehend the divine even partially. This he does by replacing the activity of Sophia in the κόσμος αἰσθητός by that of the Logos as a kind of intermediary figure<sup>37</sup>. Thus we find that the Logos is often the guide on the way to the goal<sup>38</sup>, which is Sophia, who in turn is the embodiment of the

unlimited knowledge of God<sup>39</sup>. The Logos replaces the functions previously ascribed to Sophia in the world in the Wisdom tradition. While Philo follows Prov 8:22 in calling Sophia the 'first' (πρωτίστη) of God's creatures<sup>40</sup>, so also he calls the Logos the 'firstborn' (πρωτόγονος) of God<sup>41</sup>. From the Wisdom tradition of Sirach 24:23-25 we know of Sophia identified with the Torah, but for Philo this comparison is made with the Logos<sup>42</sup>. Again, just as Prov 8:31 and Sir 24:7,11-12 can talk of Sophia sojourning among the people of the earth, Philo transfers this function in the κόσμος αἰσθητός to the Logos<sup>43</sup>.

It becomes clear then, that for Philo, Logos and Sophia are virtually synonymous in meaning and function, while at the same time retaining some individual characteristics. Perhaps the best illustration of their relationship to God and each other is that given by Philo himself: they are like a stream flowing out from a source [God] which comes to water the thirsty souls of humanity<sup>44</sup>. By this combination and exchange of categories, Philo manages both to push Wisdom speculation into new territory related to his philosophical environment and at the same time to maintain his Jewish identity within the confines of that faith's monotheistic structure.

However, as we have seen, Philo has quite another agenda operating behind his attitude to the switch of function between Sophia and Logos, that of the apparent 'danger' of Sophia's gender significance. While he can use Sophia to talk in feminine terms in relation to God, for example as *Mother*<sup>45</sup>, or as *Daughter*<sup>46</sup>, his depreciation of all that is female as weak<sup>47</sup>, and his relegation of the feminine to the realm of the κόσμος αἰσθητός, gives him a vested

interest in seeking to establish the *male* Logos as the agent of God's knowability in the lower realm rather than the *female* Sophia. To this extent, as we saw, the change of gender in the intermediary function from Sophia to Logos may be seen as both conscious and deliberate.

### 3.2.3 LOGOS AND SOPHIA IN JOHN 1:1-18

We have now observed that by the time of the writing of the Fourth Gospel the concepts Logos and Sophia had become more or less synonymous in at least some areas of Jewish thought. We shall now consider the Logos of John's Prologue in an attempt to understand what relation it bears to Jewish Wisdom tradition.

The background and origin of the Logos hymn has long been the subject of intense debate among New Testament scholars<sup>48</sup>. Some have argued, most notably Bultmann, that its original context is the hymnic praise of a Gnostic Redeemer<sup>49</sup>. Others have proposed, by the removal of the line  $\acute{\omicron}\ \lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma\ \sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\ \acute{\epsilon}\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\tau\omicron$  [1:14], that its origin lies in a pre-Christian hymn, possibly to Wisdom<sup>50</sup>. Yet others have seen a direct influence from Philo, to whose writings admittedly some very close parallels can be drawn<sup>51</sup>. However, in recent years, scholars have increasingly come to acknowledge the primary importance of Wisdom speculation for understanding the Johannine Logos<sup>52</sup>, while at the same time seeing the underlying hymn as belonging to the earlier strata of tradition within the Johannine community<sup>53</sup>. We shall examine the parallels between Sophia and Logos in some detail.

*1:1a* opens with the words,  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta\ \eta\nu\ \acute{\omicron}\ \lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ . It is clear that with these words the author is trying to evoke the opening words of the LXX of Genesis 1:1 -  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta\ \acute{\epsilon}\pi\omicron\iota\eta\sigma\epsilon\nu\ \acute{\omicron}\ \theta\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ . The reference is

thus to the presence of the Logos before and at the act of creation. The author must also have been conscious that the Old Testament Wisdom tradition already makes this assertion not of the Logos, but of Sophia. The LXX of Prov 8:22-23 thus reads:

κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ  
πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐθεμελίωσέν με ἐν ἀρχῇ. (Prov 8:22-23)

It may be argued that there is a considerable difference between the ἦν of the Logos and the ἔκτισεν of Sophia: that the Logos is not said to be 'created'. But is the difference so great as some would have us believe? Schnackenburg wants us to agree that "Wisdom is pictured as God's companion and partner in the creation of all things, but the Logos is *really there* before creation"<sup>54</sup>, but this is surely splitting hairs. If the only verse we had was 1:1, we might argue that there is a significant difference between first created and before creation. However, we will see that the Prologue goes on to exegete the ἦν with reference to the creative partnership of the Logos (1:3), not to mention the reference in 1:18 to the Logos/Son of God as the μονογενής of God, a term which could certainly parallel the Hebrew  $\Pi\Omega\text{P}$ , of Prov 8:22.

In Prov 8:22-23, then, the first of God's creations is Sophia and she then becomes the companion of God in the very beginning of his creative activity, or as Ringgren puts it: "wisdom possessed from the beginning royal or divine dignity"<sup>55</sup>. This tradition of Sophia's presence at the very beginning with God from eternity, is continued in the later Wisdom writings of Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon:

προτέρα πάντων ἐκτίσται σοφία  
καὶ σύνεσις φρονήσεως ἐξ αἰῶνος. (Sir 1:4)

καὶ μετὰ σοῦ ἦ σοφία ἣ εἶδυσα τὰ ἔργα σοῦ  
καὶ παροῦσα, ὅτε ἐποίηεις τὸν κόσμον. (Wisd 9:9)

With these texts we see that Sophia is firmly established in the Wisdom tradition as the pre-existent co-operator with God in the task of creation. She existed in the heavens before the world was formed and shares responsibility for the orderly nature of creation. This is precisely the role given by the opening words of John's Prologue to the Logos.

1:1b makes the claim that ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν. Again we find that both early and later Wisdom writers see this closeness to God as a characteristic of Sophia:

ἤμην παρ' αὐτῷ (ἄρμόζουσα) (Prov 8:30)

δόξ μοι τὴν τῶν θρόνων παρέδρον σοφίαν (Wisd 9:4)

πᾶσα σοφία παρὰ κυρίου, καὶ μετ' αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς αἰῶνα  
(Sir 1:1)

The question raised by commentators on this parallel is whether we can see the πρὸς of 1:16 as an equivalent to the μετὰ of Sir 1:1, or indeed of the text we cited previously from Wisd 9:9. Once again, the important issue here must not simply be what is generally true of the Greek usage, but what it actually means in the context in which it is used. Blass-Debrunner shows that πρὸς + accusative can often mean "in the company of", identical to the παρὰ of Prov 8:30<sup>56</sup>, and also shows other New Testament passages where μετὰ + genitive means "in company with", precisely our meaning in Sir 1:1 and Wisd 9:9<sup>57</sup>. Thus we can see in these Wisdom parallels a precise correspondence to the Johannine Logos, even if the literal parallel is not exact<sup>58</sup>.

We have already noted how Philo continues the trend of the later Wisdom writers by allowing to the Logos the attributes of Sophia. Thus we find in *Quod Deus* 31, that the κόσμος νοητός, which is equivalent to the Logos, is said to remain παρ' ἑαυτῷ (= παρὰ θεῷ), while the κόσμος αἰσθητός is sent out into the world. Although Dodd is able to show some striking parallels to the Prologue in Philo<sup>59</sup>, it nevertheless remains less likely that John knew the Philonic material than that he is dependent on the same background tradition, namely Wisdom<sup>60</sup>. The relevance of such parallels to our study lies more in their ability to show how another quite different Jewish writer of the same era could come to very similar conclusions.

There is no direct parallel to be found in Wisdom literature to the astonishing claim of 1:1c - θεός ᾧν ὁ λόγος! However, when we recognise that the omission of the article from θεός is no mere chance, but as Dunn has shown from some parallel Philonic usage is rather a deliberate ploy on the part of the author to equate the Logos with God without at the same time "infringing his monotheism"<sup>61</sup>, we may identify some very similar imagery in the traditions connected with Sophia. Here again it is important to remind ourselves that the ᾧν is to be exegeted in the light of verse 3. So when Sophia is called the architect of all things (Wisd 7:21 - ἡ πάντων τεχνῆτις . . . σοφία), she stands in precisely the same relationship to God, a relationship which is probably prefigured in texts such as Prov 3:19 - ὁ θεός τῇ σοφίᾳ ἐθεμελίωσεν τὴν γῆν. Thus although we cannot find the explicit statement θεός ᾧν ἡ σοφία in the Wisdom corpus, we may nevertheless interpret reference to Sophia in a way which sees a similar sentiment expressed.

That the author of the Prologue wants to avoid "any suggestion of personal identification of the Word with the Father"<sup>62</sup> by the omission of the article in 1:1c is borne out by the repetition in 1:2 of the emphasis on the Logos being with God from the beginning. We have already noted the parallel to Sophia in Prov 8:30; Wisd 9:4; Sir 1:1, but we may also add the words of Prov 8:27 - ἤνικα ἤτοίμαζεν τὸν οὐρανὸν συμπαρήμην αὐτῷ<sup>63</sup>, 'the heavens' being the first part of the creation in Genesis, which Sophia clearly pre-dates.

1:3 both parallels the statements about Sophia as creatrix and to an extent moves beyond them. The verses quoted from Prov 3:19; 8:30, show Sophia co-operating with God in creation, but Wisd 7:21 (ἡ γὰρ πάντων τεχνίτις ἐδίδαξέν με σοφία) comes closer to the πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο of the Prologue. A further example is provided by Wisd 9, where in the context of a statement about their function in the creative process, we find an interesting insight into the gradual convergence of meaning between λόγος and σοφία:

ὁ ποιήσας τὰ πάντα ἐν λόγῳ σου,  
καὶ τῆ σοφίᾳ σου κατασκεύασας ἄνθρωπον. (Wisd 9:1-2)

The earlier tradition of Prov 8:22 has *Sophia* as the first of God's created beings, before even the creation of the world itself, in which she then co-operates, and Sir 24:9 follows this line: πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἔκτισέν με. The author of John's Prologue wants to leave the reader in no doubt that the tradition of Wisd 9:1-2 is being followed, where no mention of Sophia's own creation comes into play. Indeed, the Johannine version reduplicates the emphasis on the creative function of the Logos by adding: καὶ χωρὶς <sup>αὐτοῦ</sup> ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἐν <sup>τῷ</sup> ὄντι γέγονεν (1:3b). Again we find that the description of the Logos is

basically a restatement and re-emphasis of an already familiar portrait of Sophia.

The creative function of the Logos having been established, the author now includes further reminiscences of the Genesis creation account. The Logos is life and gives light, 1:4, both fundamental elements of the Genesis narrative. Yet again, however, these characteristic creation motifs are also identifiable in traditions about Sophia<sup>64</sup>. Prov 8:35 offers a direct parallel between the search for Sophia and the search for life: αἱ γὰρ ἔξοδοί μου ἔξοδοι ζωῆς. This is a conclusion which Sirach also reaches: ὁ ἀγαπῶν αὐτὴν ἀγαπᾷ ζωὴν (Sir 4:12). Baruch continues this idea and expands it to include the antithesis, at the same time placing Sophia in parallel with that most sacred of Israel's institutions, the Torah:<sup>65</sup>

αὕτη ἡ βίβλος τῶν προσταγμάτων τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ὁ νόμος ὁ ὑπάρχων εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. πάντες οἱ κρατοῦντες αὐτῆς εἰς ζωὴν, οἱ δὲ καταλείποντες αὐτὴν ἀποθάνουσιν. (Bar 4:1)

Wisdom of Solomon even goes beyond this by attributing to Sophia the power to grant *eternal* life and provide an everlasting memorial to those who find her:

ἔξω δι' αὐτὴν ἀθανασίαν  
καὶ μνήμην αἰῶνιον τοῖς μὲν' ἐμὲ ἀπολείψω (Wisd 8:13)

Thus we may conclude that the theme of life, very much a creation theme, is also rooted firmly in the Sophia traditions to which John surely alludes at this point.

Like the Logos in 1:4,9, Sophia is a provider of light. This is explicitly stated in Wisd 7:26 - ἀπαύγασμα γὰρ ἐστὶν φωτὸς αἰδίου.

However, we should see this text as a culmination of an already much older tradition. The Psalmist describes God's presence as a source of light (Ps 4:6; 89:15; 104:2), and can even talk of the 'word' (λόγος) of God as a light to his feet (Ps 119:105). Essentially, however, the theme of light must also be connected to the aforementioned tradition of Sophia as the first of God's creations, which according to the Genesis tradition was light<sup>66</sup>. Ashton sums up the opening verses to the Prologue thus:

All human history, every single thing that has ever happened, took place through the mediation of the Logos, but what has come to pass *in* him (i.e. the special events of God's intervention on behalf of his people), this was life, a special life that was God's prerogative to bestow, a life which was also light - illumination and revelation. . . . On this interpretation v.4 alludes to the tradition most fully represented in Wisdom 10, which describes Wisdom's share in all the main events of Israel's history from Adam to the Exodus<sup>67</sup>.

1:5 introduces the contrast between light and darkness. While this is not a prominent theme of the Wisdom tradition, it is nevertheless unnecessary to seek its origins in Gnostic dualism<sup>68</sup>. There is evidence from the Wisdom of Solomon that such a contrast was not unthought of in the later Jewish Wisdom schools:

- (29) ἔστιν γὰρ αὐτὴ εὐπρεπεστέρα ἡλίου  
καὶ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν ἄστρον θέσιν  
φωτὶ συγκρινομένη εὕρισκεται προτέρα  
(30) τοῦτο μὲν γὰρ διαδέχεται νύξ  
σοφίας δὲ οὐ κατισχύει κακία (Wisd 7:29-30)

Perhaps the most obvious background to this contrast may appear to lie in the Jewish apocalyptic tradition<sup>69</sup>, and it may well be that in Jn 1:5 we have "yet another example of the interweaving of Wisdom and Apocalyptic which took place at a very early stage in Christian

theologizing"<sup>70</sup>. Rowland has found a common trend in Apocalyptic thought which he describes as "the belief that God's will can be discerned by means of a mode of revelation which unfolds directly the hidden things of God"<sup>71</sup>. This description is not so far away from the picture of Sophia unfolding the hidden knowledge of God to those who seek her<sup>72</sup>, thus making it quite probable that the two strands of later Jewish thought have been merged by early Christian reflection on the significance of Jesus as Revealer<sup>73</sup>.

When we look more closely at the theme of light and darkness, we find that it is once again associated with the creation motif of Gen 1:1ff. Before the creation of light, the first of the created things after the formation of the heavens and the earth themselves, there existed a primeval darkness - καὶ σκότος ἐπάνω τῆς ἀβύσσου (Gen 1:2). This chaotic darkness is only removed by the creation of φῶς (Gen 1:3). Now as we have seen, for the Wisdom writers, Sophia became the agent of creation, and has already been announced in John's Prologue via the Logos as the creator of all things (Jn 1:3). Is it really so far-fetched to suggest that the influence for the struggle between light and darkness has come from such an association? A lot will depend on our translation of the key verb in 1:5, κατέλαβεν. Bultmann<sup>74</sup> and Schnackenburg<sup>75</sup> both believe it must be translated in parallel to the παραλαμβάνω of 1:11, but this fails to take seriously the only other direct parallel to our word within the Gospel itself, 12:35. There we find a definite thought of *conflict* between darkness and light, the only possible meaning being "overcome"<sup>76</sup>. We would thus contend that the translation of κατέλαβεν in 1:5 must fall in line with that of 12:35, making the meaning one of the overcoming of

the chaotic power of darkness by the creation of light - a very clear parallel to the creative work of Sophia!

The antithetical statement of 1:5 can thus also be viewed against a Sophia background, though the development of this Light/Darkness conflict theme in Apocalyptic may also reflect some of the connection noted by others above. The overall parallelism we have noted, however, suggests that the idea of the Logos as *life* and *light* owes its origin directly to the Sophia tradition.

After an interruption dealing with the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus, the hymn to the Logos resumes in *1:10*<sup>77</sup>. There is some discussion as to whether or not the hymn begins at this point to refer to the earthly ministry of Jesus<sup>78</sup>. On the one hand, Brown sees the originality of 1:12 as the "conclusive argument" showing that 1:10-12 refers to Jesus' ministry<sup>79</sup>, while on the other hand, Schnackenburg rejects 1:12 as an original part of the hymn and refers 1:10-11 to the activity of Sophia<sup>80</sup>. The text of 1:14a - ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο - seems to militate against Brown's argument, which would leave us either having to agree with Schnackenburg, or to find evidence allowing us to attribute the *whole* of 1:10-12 to Sophia tradition.

*1:10a* declares that the Logos was ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, and once again we find clear reference to the same thought attached to Sophia:

ἐν πᾶσα τῇ γῆ, καὶ ἐν παντὶ λαῷ καὶ ἔθνει ἐκτισάμην  
(Sir 24:6)  
διατείνει ἀπὸ πέρατος εἰς πέρας εὐρώστως (Wisd 8:1)

Since the hymn has already indicated that the Logos/Sophia has influence in the world (1:4b), the emphasis here is not so much on its presence in the world as in the reaction of the world to that presence: καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω<sup>81</sup>. The failure to recognise the presence and value of Sophia is a well established theme of Old Testament Wisdom tradition. Prov 1:20ff has Sophia crying out aloud in the open place in an effort to call people from their ignorance into knowledge of her. Prov 1:29 shows the extent of their refusal to heed her counsel: ἐμίσησαν γὰρ σοφίαν, τὸν δὲ φόβον τοῦ κυρίου οὐ προείλαντο. Sirach offers a later tradition with regard to knowledge of Sophia. The theme here is that no matter how hard people try, they will never be able to know or understand Sophia fully:

- (28) οὐ συνετέλεσεν ὁ πρῶτος γνῶναι αὐτήν  
καὶ οὕτως ὁ ἔσχατος οὐκ ἐξιχνίασεν αὐτήν  
(29) ἀπὸ γὰρ θαλάσσης ἐπληθύνθη διανόημα αὐτῆς  
καὶ ἡ βουλή αὐτῆς ἀπὸ ἀβύσσου μεγάλης  
(Sir 24:28-29)

While this text may provide us with a perspective on humanity's failure to comprehend Jesus' message<sup>82</sup>, it is not really the theme of 1:10, as the next line of the hymn makes clear. It is the *refusal* of people to recognise the Logos/Sophia which is at issue, not merely their *inability* to fathom it. The very fact that Prov 1-9 spends so much of the time urging people to listen, already in itself reflects the assumption that, within Wisdom thinking, people *choose* not to hear and know. It is in this refusal to hear that we see a definite similarity to the assertion of Jn 1:10.

In 1:11 we see the development and clarification of 1:10. The Logos came into the world not to those who were unlikely to recognise

him, but precisely to those who should have. It is these people who have rejected him by refusing to receive what was offered. This is an exact replica of the treatment which Sophia received at the hands of those to whom she offered herself. The idea is best expressed in the later stream of Wisdom literature in which Sophia is said to be withdrawing from the world because of rejection by those who should have accepted her<sup>83</sup>. We note the following examples:

ἔγκατέλιπες τὴν πηγὴν τῆς σοφίας (Bar 3:12)

οἱ ἐκζητηταὶ τῆς συνέσεως ὁδὸν τῆς σοφίας (Bar 3:23)  
οὐκ ἔγνωσαν οὐδὲ ἐμνήσθησαν τὰς τρίβους αὐτῆς

οὐ μὴ καταλήμψονται αὐτὴν ἄνθρωποι ἀσύνετοι (Sir 15:7)

*Wisdom could not find a place in which she could dwell;  
but a place was found (for her) in the heavens.  
Then Wisdom went out to dwell with the children of the  
people,*

*but she found no dwelling place.*

*(So) Wisdom returned to her place*

*and she settled permanently among the angels<sup>84</sup>.*

(1 Enoch 42:1-2)

We can see then, that verses 10 and 11 have striking similarities to statements made concerning Sophia in Wisdom speculation. What then of 1:12? If it is part of the original Logos hymn, must we conclude, with Brown, that it makes 1:10-12 refer to the earthly ministry of Jesus, or can we find evidence from Wisdom literature to support its originality without taking away from the impact of 1:14<sup>85</sup>?

That the Logos was rejected by οἱ ἴδιοι must surely be a reference to Israel's role: but this need not yet have been a reference to Jesus' ministry in the original hymn. We have already seen that Sophia was rejected by her own people. At the same time, she was also received by many, being said to enter the lives of those

who are righteous making them friends of God - εἰς ψυχὰς ὁσίας μεταβαίνουσα φίλους θεοῦ καὶ προφήτας κατασκευάζει (Wisd 7:27).

Perhaps even closer to the Johannine idea comes the thought expressed in Baruch, that knowledge and wisdom, which come from God alone, are given to the beloved Israel and Jacob:<sup>86</sup>

ἔξευρεν πάσαν ὁδὸν ἐπιστήμης καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτὴν Ἰακωβ τῷ  
παιδί αὐτοῦ καὶ Ἰσραὴλ τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ  
(Bar 3:37)

It is therefore possible to see 1:12 still as a reference to the ministry of Sophia rather than already needing to anticipate that of the earthly Jesus. 1:12, along with 1:10-11, can thus be a description of the previous efforts of Sophia, and at the same time an anticipation of the results of Jesus' coming task<sup>87</sup>.

The final section of the Logos hymn begins in 1:14 with the statement, ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο. Here we step beyond anything said directly of Sophia in the tradition. However, in the light of what we have seen so far of such tradition and its development, is this assertion really so surprising? If Sophia was active in creation, seeks a dwelling-place continually among humanity, and is responsible for them, it is only one final logical step from there to ἡ σοφία σὰρξ ἐγένετο. While we cannot quote a direct parallel from any sayings of the Wisdom school, we can nevertheless see that 1:14a stands at the end point of a line which stretches back to its origins in the Wisdom tradition.

Since it is at this point that the Logos hymn begins to refer to the earthly ministry of Jesus, it is appropriate here to consider why

the term Logos is used rather than Sophia. It should be obvious that whatever concept was used to describe his coming to earth and taking on humanity must reflect the correct gender: that is, as Jesus is male, so too is the Logos<sup>88</sup>. To find Sophia here as distinct from Logos would be ridiculous, since the earthly Jesus was clearly a man! It renders unnecessary the task of searching for any hint of a previous reference to the *Logos* coming to earth, either in the Old Testament traditions, or in those of Gnosticism<sup>89</sup>. The Logos is simply Sophia taking on flesh and is almost entirely dependent on that tradition. We shall return to this question of gender in John at the end of our investigation of Sophia's role in the Gospel.

In addition to the overlap between Sophia and Logos already noted, we should also take account of the parallelism which exists between Sophia and Torah, in particular that of Sirach 24. For the Wisdom theologians there already was a very real sense in which Sophia had 'taken on flesh': she was to be found embodied in the Torah (Sir 24:23ff; Bar 3:37 - 4:2)<sup>90</sup>. John's claim now runs implicitly against such a viewpoint, for Sophia is to be seen embodied in something much greater than a written code, the Logos/Sophia, Jesus. In fact we will see that this polemic against the view that Sophia = Torah becomes an issue at more than one point in the Gospel, as well as later in the Prologue (1:17). We noted in our previous chapter how this attempt to equate Sophia with Torah may be explained as a form of *confinement* of Sophia, restricting her potential gender significance in relation to a Goddess figure, like, for example, Isis, while at the same time exalting her to the highest position as the book of the law. Now, however, for the Fourth Evangelist, Sophia is given a new lease of

life, as it were, incarnate in the man Jesus Christ, whose life will be seen as the greatest expression of her saving influence.

The probability that 1:14a is a logical conclusion drawn from Sophia's role is heightened by the next part of the verse. 1:14b, καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, must surely owe something to the descriptions of Sophia found, for example, in Sir 24:

ὁ κτίσας με κατέπαυσεν τὴν σκηνὴν μου  
καὶ εἶπεν Ἐν Ἰακωβ κατασκήνωσον  
καὶ ἐν Ἰσραὴλ κατακληρονομήητι (Sir 24:8)

There is a definite change of emphasis from Sir 24 to Jn 1:14b. While the Wisdom passage refers to a general dwelling of Sophia among the wise of Israel, the hymn makes the identification with a specific person, whom the writer will shortly name as Jesus Christ (1:17). But, despite this narrowing down of focus, the language used to describe the Logos' stay on earth probably finds its roots in the description of Sophia in Sirach<sup>91</sup>.

Whether or not 1:14c/d belongs to the original hymn, it certainly shows traces of a similar influence from Wisdom literature to that seen in the rest of the Prologue up to this point. Sophia's δόξα is a guardian to those who accept her, at least in the view of Wisdom of Solomon: καὶ φυλάξει με ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτῆς (Wisd 9:11). In addition, she is said to be an emanation of the glory of God in an earlier passage by the same author:

ἀτμίς γάρ ἐστιν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεως  
καὶ ἀπόρροια τῆς τοῦ παντοκράτορος δόξης εἰλικρινῆς. .  
ἀπαύγασμα γάρ ἐστιν φωτὸς αἰδίου. . . (Wisd 7:25-26)

What makes these verses all the more striking in relation to 1:14 is the fact that only a few verses earlier, the author has described Sophia as μονογενές (Wisd 7:22). There is no need to place the emphasis on the 'begetting' (γεννάω) aspect of this word. It is simply an indication of the uniqueness of the relationship of both Sophia and Logos to God<sup>2</sup>. Just as the glory of the unique Sophia is seen as she comes into the world, so too the glory of the unique Logos is seen as he comes among human beings as a human.

There is no direct parallel to the combined attributes of χάρις and ἀλήθεια in descriptions of Sophia. However, we do find reference to χάρις in the 'branches' which grow out from Sophia: οἱ κλάδοι μου κλάδοι δόξης καὶ χάριτος (Sir 24:16). The phrase χάρις καὶ ἀλήθεια almost certainly corresponds to the Hebrew coupling  $\text{חַסְדִּים} \text{ ו} \text{ אֱמֶת}$ <sup>3</sup>, despite the fact that the LXX consistently prefers the rendering ἔλεος καὶ ἀλήθεια<sup>4</sup>. The covenantal relationship between God and Israel is now applied to the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. While the combination of these elements is not found in direct relationship to Sophia, the individual application of each is. We have already made mention of the use of χάρις in Sir 24:16, but later in the same book we find that the lack of Sophia is equated with the absence of God's grace<sup>5</sup>:

οὐ γὰρ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ παρὰ κυρίου χάρις  
ὅτι πάσης σοφίας ἐστερήθη (Sir 37:21)

We may note also with interest that χάρις as a quality is not merely applied to the female figure Sophia, but more often to women in general. Proverbs declares that the finding of a good wife is indeed the discovery of χάρις: ὅς εὑρεν γυναῖκα ἀγαθὴν, εὗρεν χάριτας (Prov

18:22). According to Sirach, it is the wise woman whose χάρις is worth more than gold:

μη ἀστόχει γυναικὸς σοφίης καὶ ἀγαθῆς  
ἢ γὰρ χάρις αὐτῆς ὑπὲρ τὸ χρυσίον (Sir 7:19)

The same author emphasises the value of a wife's χάρις on other occasions:

χάρις γυναικὸς τέρπει τὸν ἄνδρα αὐτῆς (Sir 26:13)

χάρις ἐπὶ χάριτι γυνὴ αἰσχυνηρὰ (Sir 26:15)

There is no corresponding association of this word with male figures, not even, as one might have expected, in relation to the king, with the one exception that Esther found χάρις before the king in Esther 2:9, 17<sup>6</sup>.

It would certainly be misleading to suggest that the coupling of χάρις καὶ ἀλήθεια found in Jn 1:14 does not reflect the Hebrew expression  $\text{חַסְדִּים וְאֱמֶת}$ . However, allowing for this basic background, we are still left with the question as to why John replaces the usual LXX translation ἔλεος with χάρις. Perhaps the best explanation is that the Fourth Evangelist is simply influenced by early Christian usage of the word χάρις as a translation of the Hebrew word  $\text{חַסְדִּים}$ . Certainly the Pauline epistles make considerable use of this word, especially as a contrast to the law (or works)<sup>97</sup>, for example in Gal 2:21 - οὐκ ἀθειῶ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰ γὰρ διὰ νόμου δικαιοσύνη, ἄρα Χριστὸς ὄρωσαν ἀπέθανεν. Commenting on Paul's use of χάρις in Rom 3:24, Dunn can thus say, "Paul is here developing a different understanding of God's covenant choice and righteousness, by setting grace in antithesis to the law and works"<sup>98</sup>. When we consider the

implicit conflict with Sophia = Torah speculation in Jn 1:14b, together with the more explicit statement of 1:17, we may see the background to the switch in the established Christian first century usage.

We will shortly see that ἀλήθεια is also associated with Sophia in the Wisdom tradition, so we would propose that χάρις is also derived from that same tradition and combined with ἀλήθεια instead of the more usual ἔλεος on the basis of its contemporary Christian usage. Thus the Logos may once again be identified with Sophia, whose quality of χάρις is also associated with God<sup>99</sup>, and the paradigmatic good woman.

The discussion of the background to ἀλήθεια in John has distinguished two different concepts of truth which would serve as a basis: the Hebraic and the Greek philosophical traditions. Bultmann<sup>100</sup> and Dodd<sup>101</sup> both hold that John's usage owes more to the Greek, which is an intellectual category expressing ultimate reality, than to the Hebrew, which places more emphasis on the moral content of faithfulness. More recent discussion has pointed out that it "can be misleading and simplistic to build arguments on this foundation, unless certain strong qualifications are first made and observed"<sup>102</sup>. Thistelton's own contention is, that just because the Johannine usage of ἀλήθεια most often means 'reality', in the sense more often associated with Greek thought, that neither serves to exclude the Hebraic understanding, nor shows that John depends on the Greek concept alone<sup>103</sup>. What is most important for our present discussion is, that while ἀλήθεια in 1:14 may well indicate the presence of the ultimate reality of God in Christ in a "strongly ontological

sense"<sup>104</sup>, the association of the term with the Logos is nevertheless also well documented in the parallel traditions of Jewish Wisdom. Indeed, de la Potterie goes as far as to suggest that ἀλήθεια can be used as a *synonym* for Sophia in Wisdom speculation<sup>105</sup>. In Proverbs, Sophia invites people to listen to her, because truth emerges from her mouth:

εἰσακούσατέ μου . . . ὅτι ἀλήθειαν μελετήσῃ ὁ φάρυγξ  
μου (Prov 8:6-7)

In the context of a long passage which compares those who follow the way of folly and those who trace Sophia's footsteps we find that ἔλεος καὶ ἀλήθεια are claimed as the reward for those who choose Sophia: ἔλεον δὲ καὶ ἀλήθειαν τεκταίνουσιν ἀγαθοί (Prov 14:22). Still in the book of Proverbs we find the juxtapositioning of Sophia and ἀλήθεια, with the accompanying injunction to acquire both:

אֱמֶת וְיִשְׁרָאֵל וְכֹסֶם וְיִשְׁרָאֵל וְכֹסֶם וְיִשְׁרָאֵל וְכֹסֶם וְיִשְׁרָאֵל

(ἀλήθειαν κτησόμεν καὶ μὴ ἀπόσῃ σοφίαν καὶ παιδείαν καὶ συνέσιν)<sup>106</sup>

De la Potterie has also proposed a connection between ἀλήθεια and μυστήριον in certain Wisdom and apocalyptic traditions, which would run parallel to the association between ἀλήθεια and Sophia<sup>107</sup>. In the book of Wisdom there is at least one text which brings all three elements into close proximity:

τί δὲ ἐστὶν σοφία καὶ πῶς ἐγένετο ἀπαγγελῶ  
καὶ οὐκ ἀποκρύψω ὑμῖν μυστήρια. . .  
καὶ οὐ μὴ παροδεύσω τὴν ἀλήθειαν (Wisd 6:22)

In Sirach we also find a close association between Sophia and ἀλήθεια. Just as Sophia is known through the words which one speaks, so too one should guard against speaking in contradiction to the words of truth:

ἐν γὰρ λόγῳ γνωσθήσεται σοφία  
καὶ παιδεία ἐν ῥήματι γλώσσης  
μὴ ἀντίλεγε τῆ ἀλήθειᾳ

(Sir 4:24-25)

As one pursues Sophia in service, which is at the same time service of God (Sir 4:11-19), so too one pursues ἀλήθεια even to death, with the assurance that God fights on your side (Sir 4:28).

Thus, returning to Thistelton's point noted above, we see that whatever decision is arrived at in terms of the meaning of ἀλήθεια in Jn 1:14, we are not forced into the conclusion that the background must be Greek over against Judaic. There are indeed good grounds for viewing the combination χάρις καὶ ἀλήθεια within the complex of Wisdom speculation, while at the same time acknowledging the initial connection with the  $\text{ⲚⲓⲪⲗⲓ ⲧⲞⲓ}$  motif<sup>108</sup>.

1:16 re-emphasises what we have seen concerning the giving of χάρις in 1:14. Just as Sophia gives χάρις to those who seek and find her, so also the Logos gives it out of his πλήρωμα. This term has frequently been interpreted from a Gnostic perspective<sup>109</sup>. But need this necessarily be the case? We have seen that it is both unnecessary and inappropriate to posit a Gnostic background for the Prologue as a whole up to this point, so it would seem rather strange to suddenly require it now.

Πλήρωμα is most commonly used in the LXX of the Psalms, where it describes the fullness of God's creative work:

Τοῦ κυρίου ἡ γῆ καὶ τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτῆς  
ἡ οἰκουμένη καὶ πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐν αὐτῇ  
(Ps 23:1)<sup>110</sup>

The same applies to the verbal form, πληρώω, which is found in the context of descriptions of God's glory filling creation:

εὐλογητὸν τὸ ὄνομα τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα  
καὶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος  
καὶ πληρωθήσεται τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ πᾶσα ἡ γῆ  
(Ps 71:19)<sup>111</sup>

The *verb* is also used in connection with the creative assistance of Sophia, which results in the earth being filled with creatures:

ὡς ἐμεγαλύνθη τὰ ἔργα σου, κύριε  
πάντα ἐν σοφίᾳ ἐποίησας  
ἐπληρώθη ἡ γῆ τῆς κτίσεώς σου  
(Ps 103:24)

In the Wisdom of Solomon we read that Sophia is a πνεῦμα directed towards the good of humanity, from which nothing can be hidden (Wisdom 1:6). Immediately, the universal quality of the πνεῦμα (σοφία) is emphasised:

Ὅτι πνεῦμα κυρίου πεπλήρωκεν τὴν οἰκουμένην  
καὶ τὸ συνέχον τὰ πάντα γινώσκιν ἔχει φωνῆς  
(Wisdom 1:7)

The form πλήρης is also used with some frequency in descriptions of the all-pervading nature of God within the created realm. On occasions this is also linked to God's ἔλεος, which we have seen is considered by many commentators to be the background equivalent of John's χάρις within the Prologue. Once again the Psalms provide us with appropriate material:

ἀγαπᾷ ἐλεημοσύνην καὶ κρίσιν  
τοῦ ἔλεους κυρίου πλήρης ἡ γῆ  
(Ps 32:5)

τοῦ ἔλεους σου κύριε, πλήρης ἡ γῆ  
τὰ δικαιώματά σου δίδαξόν με  
(Ps 118:64)<sup>112</sup>

Having noted the strong identification of the Logos/Sophia with the creative power of God in the opening verses of the Prologue, it surely makes more sense to view the use of πλήρωμα against that same background rather than introducing an unnecessary Gnostic concept. It is from the πλήρωμα of the all-pervading Sophia that this χάρις is to be received.

The closing verses of the Prologue need little further exegesis to clarify the influence of Sophia Christology, since they basically re-emphasise themes which we have already seen may with some degree of probability be attributed to the Wisdom school. The presence of Sophia with God at the beginning of creation is again reflected in the statement that Jesus Christ, the Logos, has *alone* seen God. This point is brought forth as a deliberate contrast to Moses, the lawgiver<sup>113</sup>. We are again reminded that the Logos, like Sophia (Wisdom 7:22), is μονογενής θεός, a fact which we have seen probably owes less to the idea of being 'begotten', than it does to the thought of the opening words of Sirach:

πᾶσα σοφία παρὰ κυρίου  
καὶ μετ' αὐτοῦ ἔστιν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα (Sir 1:1)

The Logos/Sophia was with God at the point of creation and has thus seen God, a privilege denied even to Moses. This closeness to God is marked by the intimate term κόλπος, a word often used to describe the marriage relationship<sup>114</sup>, but also used within the Gospel to describe the closeness of a relationship (13:23)<sup>115</sup>.

In conclusion then, we may say that the Logos of the Prologue is none other than Sophia. From the opening statement of his/her

presence at creation, through the themes of proximity to God, life and light, grace and truth, to the announcement of the rejection and refusal of οἱ ἴδιοι to believe, we can trace the Logos' steps in the traditional material related to Sophia. At virtually every turn of the Prologue we can find Sophia's influence at work on the Johannine Logos.

One might reasonably ask why, in the midst of this hymn, material relating to John the Baptist is interpolated. If the author had wanted merely to distinguish between John as the forerunner and Jesus as the 'real thing', why insert material into the hymn rather than dealing with the issue in the context of the immediately following account of John's witness (1:19ff)? It would make better sense if the interpolations about John in the Prologue could be seen to be directly related to the theme of Sophia incarnate.

The first thing to note is that "John is not the forerunner, for the Logos is already πρῶτος and can have no forerunner"<sup>116</sup>. His role in the Gospel is always as a witness to Jesus. This is highly significant when we remember that in other Christian communities and their writings, Jesus himself is seen as a Teacher, or Messenger of Wisdom<sup>117</sup>. In the Johannine Prologue, John the Baptist is the witness to Sophia and therefore replaces Jesus in that role, at the same time, as we shall later see, becoming a prototype for other witnesses within the Gospel. While we cannot say with certainty how conscious the author of the Fourth Gospel was of the radical implications of structuring the Prologue in the way which we have interpreted it, we would contend that the Prologue in its present form can be read as making a clear distinction between Jesus Sophia incarnate and those

who are witnesses to him. This point is then clarified within the structure of the hymn and before any reference to the *content* of the Baptist's witness itself, or indeed before any other witness is brought forward. Just as Sophia must be distinguished from the mere mortal who witnesses to her<sup>118</sup>, so too the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel makes clear that the *witness* to the Logos/Sophia is someone *other than* the Logos/Sophia, and points beyond his/her witness to that incarnate one.

This emphasis on Jesus Sophia incarnate over against those who merely witness to him in one sense poses a problem for the author and ultimately may have led to the dropping of the name Sophia in favour of the term Logos. There is obviously a gender problem if Jesus the man is to be called Sophia incarnate, but at the same time, the author wants to be able to express the fact that this man is indeed the embodiment of Sophia. The term Logos offers itself as the most appropriate vehicle for making this expression, being at one and the same time an already established synonym for Sophia, and a masculine term. The hymn to Sophia is thus transformed into a hymn to the incarnate Logos, a term otherwise untried as a christological category in the writings of the pre-Johannine Christian Church.

The assumption is generally made that the Prologue to the Gospel of John in some way anticipates the Gospel as a whole. If this is the case, one would expect to find some evidence within the Gospel itself to support the thesis, if it is soundly based, that the Logos title is largely a cover for the gender problem surrounding the identification of Jesus with the female Sophia. We shall now, therefore, turn to the

body of the Gospel to see if the claims of the Logos/Sophia are in harmony with the words and deeds of the Johannine Jesus.

#### 3.2.4 SOPHIA IN THE BODY OF JOHN'S GOSPEL

In any attempt to trace the influence of the Sophia concept on the Gospel of John as a whole, one must immediately observe, that *nowhere* in the Gospel is Jesus referred to as either Logos or Sophia outwith the Prologue. This need not, however, be seen as a point against our thesis, but may in the end be a supportive argument for it. Having clarified who the Logos/Sophia actually is, in the Prologue, the author then works out the theme through the Gospel, but does so by allowing Sophia to present herself in the claims and person of Jesus.

Since our contention is that the Prologue and Gospel are an integral unit, we shall proceed to identify the major themes of the Prologue as they are worked out in the Gospel as a whole. Firstly, we shall allow Jesus Sophia to speak for himself through that most distinctive of Johannine motifs, the ἐγώ εἰμι sayings. We shall then follow approximately the course of the major motifs as they are presented in the Prologue: the opening emphasis on the relationship between Logos/Sophia and God, including the themes of pre-existence, the descent into the world, the intimacy shared between them, the role of the Logos/Sophia as Revealer/Light and the vital question of the emphasis of 1:14 for the humanity/divinity relationship. Following this we will turn to the purpose of Jesus' coming into the world, the theme of Jesus as Teacher and his relationship to those who 'received him' (1:12), before examining the way in which the Logos/Sophia is

rejected by οἱ ἴδιοι (1:11), and the theme of Jesus' relationship to the Law. Finally we shall look at two further themes, perhaps not immediately obvious in the Prologue, but nevertheless key influences on Johannine thinking as a whole, namely the gift of the Spirit, which we have already seen is in some way connected with Logos and Sophia in the Jewish Wisdom tradition, and the σημεῖα of Jesus, which appear to be part of the 'witness' to him of which John the Baptist already stands as a representative in the Prologue.

#### 3.2.4.1 THE ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ SAYINGS

One of the most strikingly individual christological presentations of the Fourth Gospel is the group of discourses in which Jesus introduces himself with the distinctive affirmation, ἐγώ εἰμι. The background to this idiosyncratic introduction has long been a matter of divergent scholarly opinion. Some have seen its origins in Rabbinic material<sup>119</sup>, others in a wider Semitic setting<sup>120</sup>, and yet others in the Gnostic Mandaean tradition<sup>121</sup>. More recently, however, the Old Testament background has been re-affirmed as the most likely point of origin for the Johannine usage, not least in the use of ἐγώ εἰμι as a form of the Divine name in both Deutero-Isaiah and later Jewish writings<sup>122</sup>. Brown has also observed that here, as in other areas of the Gospel, the author of John may well have been influenced by the Wisdom tradition, in particular that of Proverbs 8 and Sirach 24<sup>123</sup>. We shall pursue this suggestion further in an examination of the individual sayings prefixed by the ἐγώ εἰμι formula.

3.2.4.1.1 ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ Ο ΑΠΤΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΖΩΗΣ (6:35)

The first declarative statement using the ἐγώ εἰμι formula in John is that in which Jesus describes himself as the 'Bread of Life' (6:35,48,51). The question has been posed as to whether or not this statement, or any of the others, is a metaphorical or parabolic description of Jesus, or rather a statement of *substance*. Is Jesus merely *like* bread, which gives life to those who eat it, or is Jesus "in reality the embodiment"<sup>124</sup> of bread, shepherd, vine, etc.? Clearly there are metaphorical tendencies in all of these statements, since Jesus is certainly not a lump of bread! On the other hand, the persistent insistence of the author on the true (ἀληθινός) nature of Jesus as each of the elements, seems to favour the interpretation which says that the terms are being applied to Jesus as the *only* one who truly embodies them<sup>125</sup>. We would therefore conclude that they are not *merely* allegorical, metaphorical or parabolic statements about Jesus, but are an attempt to establish the true nature of Jesus as the embodiment of these qualities<sup>126</sup>.

The first person style of address by Sophia in Prov 8 and Sir 24 offers an interesting parallel to the ἐγώ εἰμι statements in John. While the formula ἐγώ εἰμι is not used, it is nevertheless evident that Sophia makes claims for herself using the first person in a manner similar to that employed of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. The connection becomes more attractive when we observe that Sophia lays claim to the idea of being the provider of sustenance, that is, bread and water (or wine). In the latter part of the first person speech in Proverbs, Sophia makes the following invitation to those who are willing to heed her:

Ἔλθατε φάγετε τῶν ἐμῶν ἄρτων  
καὶ πῖετε οἶνον, ὅν ἐκέρασα ὑμῖν

(Prov 9:5)

The juxtaposition of bread and wine here may also be significant in respect of the eucharistic overtones in Jn 6:35ff, and in particular to the rather crude assertion of 6:53ff regarding the eating and drinking of the Son of Man's flesh and blood. Just as Sophia can call upon people to eat and drink of her, so too the Johannine Jesus, whom the Prologue has introduced as Logos/Sophia incarnate, presents himself as the true and living bread for the nourishment of the believer. A direct parallel to this is found in the claims which Sirach makes for Sophia:

οἱ ἐσθιοντές με ἔτι πεινάσουσιν,  
καὶ οἱ πίνοντές με ἔτι διψήσουσιν

(Sir 24:21)

This verse may at first sight seem to contradict Jesus' claim in Jn 6:35, but as Brown has already pointed out, the meaning of the Sirach text is, that those who taste of Sophia "will never have too much Wisdom and will always desire more"<sup>127</sup>. This is surely also the import of Jesus' words.

Although 6:35 only mentions bread specifically, the latter half of the verse implies that Jesus supplies nourishment not only through food, but also through drink: ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμέ οὐ μὴ διψήσει πώποτε. Indeed, this connection becomes explicit in the speech which Jesus makes during the Feast of Tabernacles:

Ἐάν τις διψᾷ ἐρχέσθω πρὸς με καὶ πινέτω ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμέ, καθὼς εἶπεν ἡ γραφή, ποταμοὶ ἐν τῆς κοιλίας αὐτοῦ ῥεῦσουσιν ὕδατος ζῶντος

(Jn 7:37-38)

Since there is no Old Testament text which is directly quoted here, a number of suggestions have been made as to its origin<sup>128</sup>. However, we have noted the rather close parallels to this in Prov 9:5 and Sir 24:21, but two further texts would recommend themselves here. Earlier in Sirach, Sophia is described as a Mother or Bride who supplies the following:

ψωμιεῖ αὐτὸν ἄρτον συνέσεως  
καὶ ὕδωρ σοφίας ποτίσει αὐτόν (Sir 15:3)

The essential nature of the provision of these substances for the maintenance of human life is emphasised later by the same author: ἀρχὴ ζωῆς ὕδωρ καὶ ἄρτος καὶ ἱμάτιον (Sir 29:21)<sup>129</sup>. Sirach even offers us something of a parallel to the words of Jn 7:38, when he says that he has become a channel through which the flow, which is Sophia, can flood out to others, in a way not dissimilar to that envisaged of the disciple in relation to Jesus (Sir 24:30).

However, the reinterpretation of Israel's history under the guidance of Divine Sophia in the Wisdom of Solomon provides even more interesting material. Here we find that the thirst of the wandering Israelites was met by Sophia, who supplied water to them in the wilderness:

ἐδίψησαν καὶ ἐπεκαλέσαντό σε  
καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς ἐκ πέτρας ἀκροτόμου ὕδωρ  
καὶ ἴαμα δίψης ἐκ λίθου σκληροῦ (Wisd 11:4)

If we turn to Philo, we find that Sophia is seen as the supplier of the wilderness Manna itself, this in turn being a symbol for the Torah<sup>130</sup>. Thus in Philo we have the succession *Manna (Bread) - Torah*

- *Sophia*:

ἔτι τοίνυν τὴν οὐράνιον τροφήν - σοφία δὲ ἔστιν - τῆς  
ψυχῆς, ἣν καλεῖ μάνα, διαμένει πᾶσα τοῖς χρησομένοις  
θεῖος λόγος ἐξ Ἰσοῦ, πεφροντικῶς διαφερόντως ἰσότητος.  
(Quis Rer 191)

It is also instructive to compare Philo's description of the Logos as distributing the heavenly Manna, Sophia, to the wilderness people with the σημεῖον which Jesus, the Bread of Life, has just performed as a witness to his ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος claim. As the people sit on the ground in need of food, Jesus Sophia, we may say, blesses what is brought and distributes it according to their need.

Since the connection is already made in Jn 6:30ff between the wilderness bread and the true bread, which 6:35 identifies as Jesus, it must be at least possible that the author of the Gospel was aware of the connection made between Manna and Sophia in the later Wisdom tradition. This would give us a tie up also with the Logos/Sophia of the Prologue, who has previously been compared with Moses in 1:17, and through whom ἀλήθεια is said to come (NB, 6:32 - τὸν ἄρτον . . . τὸν ἀληθινόν), in contrast to the Law. Again it is possible to discern here a potentially subtle polemic against the ensnarement of Sophia within the Torah.

We can see from this discussion that the connection between the claim of the Johannine Jesus to be the 'Bread of Life' and the claims of a similar nature made by Sophia are anything but superficial. Indeed, we might suggest that it is none other than the Logos/Sophia who presents him/herself to the crowds as the sustenance they need for continued life<sup>131</sup>.

3.2.4.1.2 ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ ΤΟ ΦΩΣ ΤΟΥ ΚΟΣΜΟΥ (8:12)

Allowing for the story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery as a later insertion into the Gospel, Jesus' statement in 8:12 is seen as a continuation of his speech at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:14ff), an appropriate setting for taking up the theme of light<sup>132</sup>. The background to John's use of the term 'light' may indeed, as scholars have noted, be complex, but once again the Wisdom tradition provides us with material which would have been both readily available to the author and have provided suitable scope for development of the form which we have in the Fourth Gospel.

Our starting point is Proverbs, where Sophia makes her claim to being the first of God's creations. When we look back to the Genesis creation account, we find that God's first command is: γενηθήτω φῶς (Gen 1:3). We would therefore be justified in saying that Sophia's claim in Prov 8:22 - κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ - already contains within it the potential for understanding Sophia as light. This parallelism becomes explicit among the Old Testament writings in Ecclesiastes:

περισσεία τῆ σοφίᾳ ὑπὲρ τὴν ἀφροσύνην  
ὡς περισσεία τοῦ φωτὸς ὑπὲρ τὸ σκότος (Eccl 2:13)

This is further developed in the Wisdom of Solomon, where Sophia is equated with everlasting light. When compared with the light of day she is seen to be greater (Wisd 7:26), for neither darkness nor evil can prevail against her:

φωτὶ συγκρινομένη εὐρίσκεται προτέρα  
τοῦτο μὲν γὰρ διαδέχεται νύξ  
σοφίας δὲ οὐ κατισχύει κακία

(Wisd 7:29-30)

In Wisd 18:3-4, light is identified with law, an equation we have also noted in respect of Sophia in Wisdom speculation (Sir 24:23). Brown reminds us of the association between law and the light of life in the Qumran literature<sup>133</sup>, which is further evidence of the interchangeability of the concepts *Law - Sophia - Light* at the time of the New Testament writings.

The closeness of association between Sophia and Logos is well illustrated by Philo's treatment of Light in *De Somniis*. Whereas the Biblical tradition sees Sophia as the first creation and therefore equivalent to the Light of Gen 1:3, Philo transfers this role to the Logos<sup>134</sup>. Having first described God as light, he then goes on to say:

τὸ μὲν γὰρ παράδειγμα ὁ πληρέστατος ἦν αὐτοῦ λόγος, φῶς  
- "εἶπε" γὰρ φησὶν "ὁ θεὸς γενέσθω φῶς" (DeSomn I, 75)

There is, then, sufficient evidence within the Wisdom tradition to suggest that Sophia could be equated with light. The Johannine assertion is once again that *Jesus is the true light* (1:9)<sup>135</sup>, and this is graphically illustrated in the healing of the blind man in chapter 9. If Sophia was true light, that function is now accorded to the Logos/Sophia, Jesus, the embodiment of the same tradition.

3.2.4.1.3 ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ Η ΘΥΡΑ ΤΩΝ ΠΡΟΒΑΤΩΝ (10:7); ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ Ο ΠΟΙΜΗΝ Ο ΚΛΑΟΣ (10:11,14)

The two statements regarding the 'Door of the Sheep' and the 'Good Shepherd' are virtually inseparable from each other, not

only because they appear in such close proximity, but also because they are both explanatory comments on the parable which opens the chapter (10:1-5). This parable deals with false shepherds and the relationship of the true shepherd to the sheep. At first sight the two images of the ἐγώ εἰμι statements seem incompatible, since one could hardly be the door and the one who leads through it at one and the same time<sup>136</sup>. The central point of the whole section is a Christological one: "Jesus draws to himself every epithet which the picture of sheep and shepherd suggests"<sup>137</sup>.

It would certainly be very difficult to try and posit a direct dependence of the writer on any statement comparing Sophia with θύρα or ποιμῆν. Proverbs does encourage the wise person to sit at Sophia's door rather than at that of the harlot: indeed, watching at Sophia's door is the way to find life:

μακάριος ἀνὴρ, ὃς εἰσακούσεται μου,  
καὶ ἄνθρωπος, ὃς τὰς ἐμάς ὁδοὺς φυλάξει  
ἀγρυπνῶν ἐπ' ἐμαῖς θύραις καθ' ἡμέραν  
τηρῶν σταθμοὺς ἐμῶν εἰσόδων  
αἱ γὰρ ἔξοδοί μου ἔξοδοι ζωῆς

(Prov 8:34)

Part of the point of entering the door of Jesus Sophia is that those who do so recognise his voice as that of the true/good Shepherd: they *listen* to him (ἀκούσουσιν: 10:16). It is because of this listening that they are able to hear and to have that life for which the Good Shepherd gives up his life (10:10-11). At this point we may discern a real overlap in meaning between the Johannine idea and that expressed in the text of Prov 8:34-35, for it is precisely by sitting at Sophia's door and listening that her disciple comes to have life.

However, this overlap in meaning does not strictly correspond to the idea of Jesus as the door. The background to John's use of θύρα is complex<sup>138</sup>, the most notable parallels being the Apocalyptic notion of the door or gate of heaven<sup>139</sup>, and the Synoptic traditions related to entering the Kingdom<sup>140</sup>. Let us then adopt another kind of approach to the Johannine statement by looking at the use which is made of θύρα as a description of Jesus. Barrett sums up:

There is only one means of entering the fold; there is only one source of knowledge and life; there is only one way to obtain spiritual nourishment; there is only one way to heaven. And the single means of access to all that is good is Jesus<sup>141</sup>.

The idea of Jesus as 'door' has to do with access: access to knowledge, life, and ultimately God's salvation (10:9). When we look at the statement ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ θύρα τῶν προβάτων in this light, we can begin to see not too distant parallels in the Wisdom tradition. Sophia is the source of knowledge (Prov 8:12; 9:6; Sir 1:19) and life (Prov 3:16,18; 8:35; Sir 4:12), and we have already noted how she is the provider of nourishment in the form of bread and water/wine. As the one who has come down from heaven (Sir 24:13ff) she is able to give life and salvation to those who know her. She is indeed *the* Saviour, par excellence, in Wisdom of Solomon 10-19. Thus, although there is no evidence of Sophia being called the 'door', she nevertheless fulfils the same *function* as the one who now claims that title. She is effectively the door to God and salvation for those who seek and find her.

A similar situation exists with regard to the shepherd and the sheep. This image is certainly influenced by Old Testament

traditions<sup>142</sup>, in particular those of the Psalms and Ezekiel 34. Within the Wisdom corpus no direct parallel can be found. The initial declaration of John 10:11 is developed as a contrast to the false shepherd who abandons the sheep when the wolf comes, and this must surely be related to Ezekiel 34<sup>143</sup>. The second declaration in 10:14 develops the main theme of the parable (10:2-3) and here the recurring theme of *life* appears. The shepherd lays down his life in order that the sheep may have life (10:28), which is his gift to them, a gift which we have noted has been exclusively the province of Sophia (or God!) before this time.

A further aspect of the shepherd should be noted in relation to the possible influence of Wisdom tradition: the shepherd has an *intimate* relationship with the sheep, to the extent that he knows each one by name. Sophia encourages the wise to have the kind of intimate relationship with her which she also shares with God. Wisd 7:25-26 describes that relationship and is in turn followed by a description of the way in which Sophia relates to those who come to her, and to whom she comes (Wisd 7:27; 8:2-16). Those who are wise listen to Sophia's voice as she cries out to them (Prov 8:1ff; Sir 24:1ff), and she provides and cares for those who know her (Sir 24:19-22).

Although we have no linguistic parallels in the Wisdom corpus as such, Philo shows us independently that the development of Wisdom thinking can lead us in the direction in which the theme is developed in John. He can talk of the Logos (Sophia) as a shepherd leading and tending the flock. The whole of creation is pictured as a flock under the hand of ὁ ποιμὴν καὶ βασιλεὺς θεὸς (DeAgr, 51), who has appointed the Logos as the shepherd. A similar exegesis of Psalm 23:1 in *De Mut*

116, describes the Logos as the 'shepherd and king' of the mind<sup>144</sup>. This at least shows us that in one strand of thought, there was a direct line of development from Wisdom tradition which saw the Logos/Sophia emerge as a shepherding figure.

Once again we can see that it is possible to find the roots of the Johannine saying in the Wisdom tradition, albeit allowing at the same time for the influence and combination of other suitable Old Testament themes.

#### 3.2.4.1.4 ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ Η ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΣ ΚΑΙ Η ΖΩΗ (11:25)

It is hardly a matter of great surprise to discover that the word ἀνάστασις is nowhere used in Wisdom literature. The almost total lack of any concept of resurrection outside of the Apocalyptic tradition<sup>145</sup> makes a search for linguistic parallels in biblical, or even post-biblical Sapiential writings vain. However, this need not disappoint us in our search for Wisdom traditions behind the ἐγώ εἰμι sayings. Here, as elsewhere, we need to consider the main thrust of the claim rather than the possibility of mere linguistic parallels. The point of Jesus' claim to be the resurrection is not so much one of having the ability to resuscitate dead bodies, but rather that he is the giver of *life*, in this case specifically *eternal life*. We shall therefore concentrate our investigation upon the theme of life, a matter we have necessarily touched upon several times already.

The Old Testament consistently describes God as the giver of life and the Lord of Life (Deut 32:29)<sup>146</sup>. This is evident from the first pages of Genesis onwards, where Yahweh breathes life into creation, and in particular the body of Adam (Gen 2:7). The theme of Yahweh as

the life-giving force is found in every sphere of Israel's religion and life, so it is not surprising to find it celebrated in the worship life reflected in the book of Psalms (Ps 15:11; 20:4; 29:4; 35:9 [LXX]; et al.). Yahweh both gives life and takes it away (Job 1:21), a note emphatically underlined in the covenant renewal liturgy of Deut 30, where those obedient to the covenant are promised blessing and life, while those disobedient are cursed and handed over to death.

The Wisdom literature brings a new slant to this theme: it is Sophia who brings life (Prov 3:16; 8:35; 9:11; et al.), and who offers blessing in contrast to the way of folly, which leads to destruction and death (Prov 9:10-18). Later Wisdom writers speak of the gift of *eternal life* being received through the ministrations of Sophia (Wisd 8:13). Moving further ahead to Philo, we find that this thought is developed in an exegesis of Gen 3:20, where Sophia is called the Mother of the living: οἱ δὲ ζῶντες ὄντως μητέρα μὲν ἔχουσι σοφίαν (QuisRer, 53). He also describes Sophia as the tree of life, which empowers one to live: . . . τὸ τῆς ζωῆς ξύλον, τουτέστι σοφίας ἧ δυνήση ζῆν (Leg All III, 52). The importance of this chain of tradition lies in the emphasis on Sophia as the provider of life/eternal life, a claim previously made only on behalf of Yahweh. It is this claim which the Johannine Jesus now makes for himself.

We have already noted how in early Christian writing there was a certain amount of overlap between Wisdom and Apocalyptic speculation. Dunn has noted how the Fourth Gospel may offer a corrective at points over against the Apocalyptic and Merkabah mystical speculation concerning the idea of 'heavenly ascent', precisely by using a Wisdom motif<sup>47</sup>. Since the concept of resurrection was such an integral part

of Apocalyptic thought<sup>148</sup>, may it not be that also here the Fourth Evangelist offers a critique of such speculation through applying the very word used, ἀνάστασις, to the person of Jesus Sophia? We can, of course, only offer this as a suggestion, but it may not be so far removed from the Fourth Evangelist's purpose when we take other such polemic into account.

As a final point, we should also note one more text from Philo. The idea of resurrection may not be so far removed from the concept expressed in *De Fuga* 97, where the soul is encouraged to seek refuge in the Divine Logos (Sophia). This will go beyond death and grant eternal life:

τὸν . . . λόγον θεῶν, ὃς σοφίας ἐστὶ πηγή, ἵνα  
ἀρυσάμενος τοῦ νόματος ἀντὶ θανάτου ζῶν ἀίδιον ἄθλον  
εὕρηται. (De Fuga, 97)

The Johannine claim that Jesus is the ἀνάστασις may thus be seen as a development of the Wisdom theme of Sophia as the giver of life, and it is illustrated dramatically through the σημεῖον of the raising of Lazarus. The Logos/Sophia of the Prologue, who was announced as life (1:4), now demonstrates that he is the embodiment of that quality by giving life.

#### 3.2.4.1.5 ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ Η ΟΔΟΣ ΚΑΙ Η ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑ ΚΑΙ Η ΖΩΗ (14:6)

The first task in dealing with this threefold statement is to determine the relationship between the three substantives. Many attempts have been made at this, but Brown divides these into two basic options: [i] "Explanations wherein the way is directed toward a goal that is the truth and/or life." [ii] "Explanations wherein the

way is the primary predicate and the truth and the life are just explanations of the way"<sup>149</sup>. The first type would include most of the Greek and Latin Fathers as well as modern approaches such as Bultmann (Gnostic background)<sup>150</sup> and Dodd (Hermetic background)<sup>151</sup>. The Way is already in their midst and he is at the same time their goal of truth and life. At first sight this would appear to be another statement of the emphasis we have seen in other sayings: truth and life. However, it does not take account of the context in which 14:6 stands. In verse 4, Jesus has stated that, despite his departure, the disciples know the way he will take. This provokes the question from Thomas: πῶς δυνάμεθα τὴν ὁδὸν εἰδέναι; (14:5). It is in response to this question that the ἐγὼ εἰμι statement of 14:6 comes. When we add to this the evidence of the second half of 14:6, we see that the emphasis is indeed on ὁδός, which Jesus claims is δι' ἐμοῦ. We would therefore agree with Brown and de la Potterie<sup>152</sup>, that the second of the above options is the preferable one. Because Jesus is the life and the truth, he is the Way to the Father = the way of salvation.

Having established this interpretation of the statement we may now turn to the Wisdom literature to seek possible parallels. Firstly, we must note that ὁδός is not used in the same absolute Johannine manner in the Wisdom corpus. However, the need to follow in the ὁδός, or ὁδοί of Sophia is a constantly recurring theme of both biblical and post-biblical literature. We give but a few examples:

αἱ ὁδοὶ αὐτῆς (=σοφίας) ὁδοὶ καλαί  
καὶ πάντες οἱ τρίβοι αὐτῆς ἐν εἰρήνῃ (Prov 3:17)

νῦν οὖν, υἱέ, ἄκουέ μου  
καὶ μακάριοι οἱ ὁδοῦς μου φυλάσσοντες (Prov 8:32)

μακάριος ἀνὴρ, ὃς εἰσακούσεται μου  
καὶ ἄνθρωπος, ὃς τὰς ἐμάς ὁδοῦς φυλάξει (Prov 8:34)

έν πάση ψυχῇ σου πρόσελθε αὐτῇ  
καί έν ὅλῃ δυνάμει σου συντήρησον τὰς ὁδοὺς αὐτῆς  
(Sir 6:26)

Many more similar phrases can be found expressing the thought that following in the way of Sophia leads to salvation. Because Sophia is the giver of life and the true wisdom over against the false woman in Proverbs, one is encouraged to see her also as the Way, and to walk in her ways.

Turning to Philo we can see a development of this tradition. In the allegorical interpretation of Num 20:17-20, he sees Sophia as the Way (*QuodDeus*, 142ff), a development of the idea already present in Wisd 10, that Sophia led the way in the Exodus<sup>153</sup>. Sophia is the royal way which leads to God<sup>154</sup>, which has obvious similarities to Jesus as the way to the Father. In addition, Philo frequently speaks about the need for leadership on the way and lists as the true leader, the Logos (*Mig Abr* 174; *De Somn* I, 71). Admittedly this is not the precise description of Jesus as the Way, but there is no reason to deny to the author of John the ability to develop an already obvious trend of Wisdom thinking in an individual manner.

For the Qumran community, the 'Way' was "the strict observance of the Mosaic Law as it was interpreted by the great Teacher of the community"<sup>155</sup>. If there is any connection between the Fourth Gospel and Qumran, and there does seem to be at least a "familiarity with the type of thought exhibited in the scrolls"<sup>156</sup>, then at this point it is possible to see a definite polemic over-against the association of an absolute understanding of Way with Law. Once again, Jesus, Sophia

incarnate, is to be contrasted with a static understanding of revelation in the Torah.

Brown also points us to the fact that later medieval scribes at least interpreted the reference to Jesus as the 'Way' against a Wisdom background:

There is a very perceptive Christian interpolation into the words of Lady Wisdom in the Latin of Sir xxiv 25. Wisdom says, 'In me is the gift of every way and truth; in me is every hope of life and virtue'. It is almost as if the interpolator has associated the Johannine description of Jesus in xiv 6 with the claims of Wisdom<sup>57</sup>.

Despite the absence of the claim ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὁδός in the mouth of Sophia, we can nevertheless see that there is more than sufficient background within the Wisdom tradition on which the author of John could have based this claim. It is certainly unnecessary to look beyond the Jewish tradition to Gnostic materials, which probably come from a later date anyway. Jesus Sophia is life and, as we shall see, is truth, and thus also the Way by which one comes to God/salvation.

We have noted the recurring theme of truth and must now clarify its origin. Jesus is the true (ἀληθινός) bread from heaven (6:32); as light of the world, Jesus' witness is true (ἀληθής : 8:14); he is the good (καλός) shepherd as distinct from the false hireling (10:11,14); he is the true (ἀληθινός) vine (15:1). Truth is an important concept in John, as we already saw in the Prologue's assertion that the Logos is πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας (1:14). We observed there that ἀλήθεια can be related to the claims of Sophia (Prov 8:6-7; 14:22; 23:23; Wisd 6:22; Sir 4:24-25,28). In Jn 14:6 Jesus Sophia is seen to be the Way on account of his being the Truth, which in turn is a consequence of

his relationship with God (Jn 8:40,45-46). We shall consider this relationship with God further at a later stage, but for the moment we should at least note that Sophia, who claims to speak the truth, does so on the basis of her closeness to God. She was with God from the beginning (Prov 2:18; 8:22ff), enjoys intimate communion with God (Prov 8:30-31; Wisd 7:22ff), and has come down from heaven (Sir 24:4ff). She can thus stand in the street and appeal to men to hear the truth from her (Prov 8:6-7), rather than heeding the smooth words of the false woman (Prov 7:14ff; 9:16ff). In the same way, Jesus Sophia stands over-against the false or inadequate representations of Bread, Light, Life, Shepherd and Vine, and is him/herself *the Truth*<sup>158</sup>.

We have previously dealt with the background to Jesus Sophia as life. The one who claims to be the Way, on the basis of being both Truth and Life, can thus be identified as Sophia incarnate, whose claims in this respect have already been voiced through the Logos of the Prologue.

#### 3.2.4.1.6 ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ Ο ΑΜΙΕΛΟΣ Η ΑΛΗΘΙΝΗ (15:1)

The final 'I am' saying, like all the others<sup>159</sup>, is steeped in Old Testament tradition. Israel is frequently compared with a vine which needs Yahweh's attention in one way or another (Is 5:1-7; Jer 6:9; Ezek 15:1-6; 17:5-10; 19:10-14; et al.). Like the parallels to the Good Shepherd, some of the significant material is located in Ezekiel. However, even Ezekiel does not really match the imagery employed in John 15, where the main thrust is the description of the *relationship* between the vine and the branches. Here again the theme

of life is prominent, the life which flows from the True Vine to the disciples<sup>160</sup>. Recognising this emphasis, we turn to some passages from Sirach which may be seen to lead us closer to the Johannine concept. The most prominent Wisdom reference to Sophia as a vine occurs in Sir 24:17-19:<sup>161</sup>

- (17) ἐγὼ ὡς ἄμπελος ἐβλάστησα χάριν  
καὶ τὰ ἄνθη μου καρπὸς δόξης καὶ πλούτου  
(19) προσέλθετε πρὸς με, οἱ ἐπιθυμοῦντές μου  
καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν γεννημάτων μου ἐμπλήσθητε  
(Sir 24:17,19)

There is some evidence to suggest that the book of Sirach was known to the author of John<sup>162</sup>, and chapter 24 in particular seems to be paralleled at several points in the Gospel<sup>163</sup>. This heightens the possibility that the Johannine picture of the vine is influenced by the ascription of such a quality to Sophia in that chapter. She provides sustenance and abundance of life through the fruit of her branches and invites those who desire her to come and receive what she has to offer. Elsewhere in Sirach reference is made to the effects on the disciple of the fruit of this vine, Sophia: μεθύσκει αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ τῶν καρπῶν αὐτῆς (Sir 1:16). In the epilogue to the book, the author also likens the process of Sophia's influence in his life to the ripening of grapes (Sir 51:15). The importance of eating and drinking the words of Sophia as a means of sustenance in life is a recurring theme, as we noted in our comments on Jn 6:35, and although the parallels to John may not always be precise, they can hardly be disregarded lightly as a possible sphere of influence on Johannine thinking.

A fundamental part of the vine imagery in Jn 15 is the relationship of the vine to the branches. Here again one can find some traces of Sophia's influence. In Sir 1:20 her branches offer long life, while Sir 14:26 makes reference to the shelter which they provide. Perhaps most telling of all is the reference in Sir 24:16 to the spreading out of her branches laden with χάρις:

οἱ κλάδοι αὐτῆς μακροήμεροις (Sir 1:20)

θήσει τὰ τέκνα αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ σκέπῃ αὐτῆς  
καὶ ὑπὸ τοὺς κλάδους αὐτῆς αὐλισθήσεται (Sir 14:26)

οἱ κλάδοι μου κλάδοι δόξης καὶ χάριτος (Sir 24:16b)

In Sirach this fruitful picture of Sophia's branches stands in stark contrast to the warning against the woman who is unfaithful in her marriage relationship. Here her 'branches' will prove unfruitful: καὶ οἱ κλάδοι αὐτῆς οὐκ οὔσουσιν καρπὸν (Sir 23:25). The implication behind this kind of thinking is that those who are faithful *will* bear fruit, which is very similar to the image of the branches and their fruit-bearing relationship espoused by the True Vine in Jn 15:1-4<sup>164</sup>.

In a reference to the story of Joshua sending out the spies into Canaan, Philo also compares Sophia to a vine from which fruit may be taken (*De Somn* II, 171), and later in the treatise, he contrasts this vine with the vine of folly (*De Somn* II, 190ff). Just as Philo represents a development of the vine image from the Wisdom literature, so too in its own particular way does the Gospel of John.

Ultimately, as with the other ἐγώ εἰμι statements, we must allow that more than one influence may have been effective in the formation of the Johannine image of the vine. It may be, as Barrett says, that

"fragments of meaning obscurely hinted at by other vines, are gathered up and made explicit"<sup>165</sup> in the Gospel. There is not, however, any reason why we should deny the author of the Gospel the originality of thought which enabled the development of the themes in their application to the community's understanding of Jesus.

What is important in all of this for our present study, is the recognition that all these themes *do* reflect the strong influence of the Wisdom tradition and in particular the claims of Sophia. In addition to this, the ἐγώ εἰμι statements echo the principal themes of the Prologue: light, life and truth, all of which we have identified as qualities of the Logos/Sophia applied to Jesus. It would therefore not be unreasonable to say that the one who addresses these discourses in John is none other than Jesus Sophia incarnate.

#### 3.2.4.2 RELATIONSHIP TO GOD

Another peculiarly Johannine christological emphasis is the presentation of Jesus' relationship to/with God. While the Synoptics portray Jesus as the Son of God from their own obvious post-resurrection perspective, there is little material within those traditions to suggest that Jesus himself had any real consciousness of 'divine' Sonship<sup>166</sup>. By contrast, John expounds the Father/Son relationship from beginning to end of the Gospel. He pre-existed with the Father (1:1-2,15; 6:62; 8:58; 17:5), and descended from heaven at his Father's instigation (3:31f; 6:33,38-39,57; 8:42; 13:3; 16:27-28; 17:8). Those who see or hear Jesus see or hear the Father (5:19,23; 7:16-17; 8:19,26; 10:15,38; 12:45; 14:7,9; 15:24; 17:21). In addition to the ἐγώ εἰμι statements we have already seen, Jesus at times is

made to use the absolute form as a divine predicate after the manner, for example, of Is 43 (Jn 8:28,58). The glory of the Father comes through the works and suffering of the Son (1:14; 2:11; 11:40; 12:23,28; 17:4-5). Each of these themes is, in its own way, a working out of the themes of the Prologue, the claims concerning the Logos/Sophia. We shall deal briefly with each in turn.

#### 3.2.4.2.1 PRE-EXISTENCE

The Gospel of John is unique in terms of New Testament christology, as the only work which unequivocally asserts the pre-existence of Jesus Christ<sup>167</sup>. This is done initially through the Logos hymn, which transfers the qualities of Sophia as creatrix and companion of God from the beginning of time, to the Logos (1:1-2). The pre-existence of the Logos/Sophia is further emphasised in 1:15, where it is stated that the one who comes after John the Baptist was already before him. This does not mean to imply that the Logos/Sophia was some sort of heavenly being who existed before the Baptist in time, but rather that "Christ fully embodies the creative and saving activity of God, that God in all his fulness was in him, that he represents and manifests all that God is in his outreach to men (*sic!*)"<sup>168</sup>.

The theme of pre-existence extends beyond the Prologue to the body of the Gospel and is a sign both of Jesus' *superiority* and his *authority*. In 1:30, John the Baptist bases the superior ranking of Jesus (ἔμπροσθέν μου) on Jesus' pre-existence - ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν<sup>169</sup>. Jesus may come after John in terms of his earthly ministry, but he existed (εἶμι) before John came into being (γίνομαι). There would

appear to be an intentional contrast between the use of these two verbs, as we can also see from 8:58, where Jesus claims to have existed before even Abraham: πρὶν Ἀβραάμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμι<sup>170</sup>. Here again, the superiority of Jesus' knowledge and the authority of his words rests on the fact that he existed with the Father before the great patriarch of the Jewish race came into being. If they listened to Abraham, how much more should they listen to Jesus, who can speak with an authority rooted in his pre-existence with God. In 17:5, the time boundaries are pushed back even further: not only did Jesus exist before John the Baptist and Abraham, but also before the world itself came into being: πρὸ τοῦ τὸν κόσμον εἶναι. Here his pre-existence functions as a validation of his coming suffering and death as an hour of glorification. The δόξα which he shared with the Father before the world was formed will now be manifested in the world through the event of his suffering and death<sup>171</sup>.

In this motif of pre-existence we see one of the strongest linking-points between Prologue and Gospel. The opening statement of the Prologue, that the Logos/Sophia *was* God (1:1c), rests on the assertion of pre-existence: ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος. Throughout the Gospel as a whole there is a very definite progression towards the recognition of Jesus Christ for who he truly is, culminating in the climactic confession of Thomas, ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου (20:28). As the moment of pre-existence is pushed further and further back throughout the Gospel, it finally leads us to the point where the Prologue had already begun. In the same way that both Sophia in the Wisdom tradition and the Logos/Sophia in the Prologue could be seen to

function as God, or to be God, so too Jesus Sophia is finally confessed as such without any hint of compromise for monotheism<sup>172</sup>.

The pre-existence of Sophia functions in a very similar way within the Wisdom tradition. The call to listen to the words of life (Prov 8:32-36) is based on the authority which comes from Sophia's existence with God from the beginning, before the foundation of the world (Prov 8:22ff). Her gifts are seen to be worthwhile over against those of the false woman on this account. She was both before creation (Prov 8:23-25 - *πρό* as in Jn 17:5) and at God's side (Prov 8:30 - *παρά* as in Jn 17:5), thus affording a superiority and authority which no one else may claim.

Again in the book of Sirach we find Sophia's pre-existence used as a means of asserting her *ἐξουσία* among the people of Israel, with whom she dwells (Sir 24:9-11). She is also seen to be superior to all upon earth, since no one has ever fully been able to know or understand her (Sir 24:28). Similarly in Wisdom of Solomon we find that Sophia, who is the fullness of God in every possible way (Wisd 7:22ff), and who as the maker of all things clearly pre-existed them (Wisd 9:1-2), is now said to be able both to exercise power in every place (Wisd 8:1) and to enable the king to rule (Wisd 8:14). In all of this we see a very close parallel to the relationship between pre-existence and the authority/superiority of Jesus Sophia in the Fourth Gospel.

Apart from the explicit references to pre-existence which we have already noted, John also uses the motif as an additional implicit validation of Jesus' claims. In 6:62, the consternation expressed

over Jesus' promise to give life is met by reference to the Son of Man ascending to where he was in the first place: ὅπου ἦν τὸ πρότερον. Or again in 8:38, the testimony which Jesus gives and the words of life which he speaks are ultimately to be judged on their origin: ἃ ἐγὼ εἶρακα παρὰ τῷ πατρὶ λαλῶ. The perfect tense here surely implies Jesus' prior existence with the Father as the time when he 'saw'<sup>173</sup>, as does the word παρὰ, as in Prov 8:30.

It appears very much to be the case then, that the Fourth Gospel's assertion of Jesus' pre-existence, announced in the Prologue and developed in the Gospel as a whole, is grounded on the parallel tradition concerning Sophia, both in terms of agency (creation/life) and in terms of function within the Gospel (authority/superiority)<sup>174</sup>.

#### 3.2.4.2.2 DESCENT AND ASCENT

A second prominent feature of Jesus' relationship with God in the Fourth Gospel is the motif of descent and ascent. To some degree this is related to the idea of pre-existence, as can quickly be recognised from the text already mentioned concerning the Son of Man, in Jn 6:62. Jesus' origin is seen to be unique in that he is not of this world (3:13,31-32; 8:23; 17:14,16) and claims to have 'come down' (καταβαίνω) from above (6:33,38,41-42,51). More prominent still is the assertion that God has sent (πέμπω or ἀποστέλλω)<sup>175</sup> the Son into the world (3:17,34; 4:34; 5:23,24,30,36,37-38; 6:29,38-39,44,57; 7:16,18,28,29,33; 8:16,18,26,29,42; 9:4; 10:36; 11:42; 12:44-45,49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3,8,18,21,23,25). The purpose of this sending is defined in 3:16-17 - to impart eternal life and salvation. The authority of the one who is pre-existent is now further underlined

by the insistence that he has come down from heaven on God's mission to impart God's gifts. This coming can also be expressed directly as a gift from God (3:16 - ἔδωκεν), the use of δίδωμι being immediately parallel to that of ἀποστέλλω in 3:17<sup>176</sup>.

If Jesus has descended from above at God's instigation to fulfil his mission, then he will also 'ascend' to where he was before. This is strikingly affirmed through the Johannine reinterpretation of the Son of Man tradition (3:13; 6:62)<sup>177</sup>, but is more often described simply as a 'going away' or 'going up' (ὑπάγω - 7:33; 14:28; 16:5). The writer sees this 'ascent' to the Father as a process of glorification, which will involve an ascent of a different, scandalous (6:61) kind, namely the 'lifting-up' of the Son of Man (3:14; 8:28; 12:23,[32]; 13:31). The language of 'ascent' is much less frequent in the Gospel than that of descent, and we shall return to this imbalance shortly. For the moment we may note that it is attached to the Son of Man tradition and is a reinforcement of the claim concerning the Logos/Sophia in 1:14 - σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν.

It has been proposed that the motif of the sending of the Son is not confined to the writings of the Johannine community (cf. 1 John 4:9), but was also present already in Paul (Gal 4:4; Rom 8:3). Attempts have been made to show that these Pauline texts also show influence of features of Sophia tradition<sup>178</sup>. Dunn remains sceptical about this, suggesting that in Paul's use, where no doctrine of pre-existence as such exists, the references reflect material "more likely drawn from Jesus' own talk of himself as 'sent'"<sup>179</sup>. Bühner has also tried to apply the same kind of background which Dunn moots for Paul, that is, the prophetic tradition<sup>180</sup>, as a background for the Fourth

Gospel's 'sending' motif, but this too we will see to be problematic as an understanding for John. We contend that it is not on previous Christian usage (prophetic re-interpretation) that the Fourth Evangelist depends, but once again upon Sophia tradition

The most significant text relating to the descent of Wisdom is found in Wisd 9, but the idea was already inherent in the tradition of Proverbs long before Wisdom of Solomon was written. That Sophia was with God in the beginning of creation (Prov 8:22ff) and then subsequently appeared crying aloud in the public places (Prov 1:20ff) implies that she must first have descended from the place where she was, even if this is not explicitly stated. Sir 24:3-17 describes the movement of Sophia from her heavenly home down to earth, where she established her home in Israel. Here too we find the idea expressed that it is at God's instigation that Sophia descends to live with human beings (Sir 24:8 - τότε ἐνετείλατό μοι ὁ κτίστης πάντων), an understanding which comes to fuller expression in the sending motif of Wisd 9:

ἐξαπόστειλον αὐτήν ἐξ ἁγίων οὐρανῶν  
καὶ ἀπὸ θρόνου δόξης σου πέμψον αὐτήν  
ἵνα συμπαροῦσά μοι κοπιᾶσῃ  
καὶ γινῶ τί εὐάρεστόν ἐστίν παρὰ σοί (Wisd 9:10)

As in the case of the Johannine Jesus, so also Sophia is sent out from above to make known what is pleasing to God. Even the vocabulary is similar to the Johannine usage with the interchangeability of (ἐξ)ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω. This similarity also extends to the understanding of Sophia as given (δίδωμι) by God:

βουλήν δὲ σου τίς ἔγνω, εἰ μὴ σὺ ἔδωκας σοφίαν  
καὶ ἔπεμψας τὸ ἅγιόν σου πνεῦμα ἀπὸ ὑψίστων

(Wisd 9:17)<sup>181</sup>

Not only the manner of Sophia's sending/giving prefigures the coming of the Johannine Jesus, but also the *purpose*. Both descend in order that God's true will may be known (Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38-40; 7:17)<sup>182</sup>, which is ultimately going to lead to eternal life and salvation (Prov 3:16; 8:35; Wisd 8:13; 9:18; Jn 3:15-16,36; 5:24; 6:35,40,47,63; et al.). In both cases the combination of pre-existence and being sent by God gives authority to the claims and offers each makes.

The ascent of Jesus seems somewhat more difficult to explain with reference to Sophia. However, a closer examination of the Johannine motif shows that the actual 'ascension' references are very few in number. The assertion that Jesus will 'go up' (ἀναβαίνω) is made *only* in relation to the Son of Man sayings (3:13; 6:62), and by the risen Christ in his command to Mary Magdalene (20:17). Elsewhere, Jesus is said to be 'going' (ὑπάγω) to the place from which he has come (7:33; 8:14,21; 13:3,33; 14:28; 16:5,10,17), but although this may imply a return to the Father, it does not necessarily include the motif of *ascent*. By the same token Jesus may be said simply to 'go away' (πορεύομαι) in reference to his return to his home (14:2,3,12; 16:7,28), a usage which can hardly be construed as implying a necessary ascent<sup>183</sup>.

With the exception of the three above mentioned passages, the idea of an ascent as such is not present in John. What is clear, however, is that the forthcoming departure of Jesus to the place of his origin will be of benefit to the disciples in terms of salvation

(14:2,3,12,28; 16:7), in particular through the sending of the Spirit (16:7), which is the very life of Jesus himself (20:22). If we consider the direct references to ascent, we find that none is related to the theme of salvation. In 3:13, the Son of Man's ascent to heaven is significant insofar as it reinforces the veracity of his testimony about heavenly things, the question of salvation being related instead to the *descent* and *sending* in 3:16ff. In 6:62, the ascent seems to be a matter of some offense, whereas the life-giving words of Jesus, who *descended* and is present are the vital elements in salvation (6:63).

At the time of the writing of the Fourth Gospel, those practising within the Merkabah mystical tradition sought, by means of a mystical ascent into heaven, to obtain knowledge of the heavenly realm<sup>184</sup>. Such knowledge would, of course, be considered as saving knowledge. However, the Fourth Evangelist wants to stress the fact that it is the *descent* of Jesus which is the vital clue to salvation. Jesus does not need to ascend to find out about heavenly things because he has already come down from above, where he existed before the foundation of the world. Saving knowledge for the world comes through the encounter with Jesus himself, not from ascent into heaven. However, that saving knowledge will be more widely available precisely through Jesus departure, a departure which may, but need not necessarily be viewed as an *ascent*.

We should also note that Jesus' departure not only means salvation for those who believe, but at the same time also implies judgement for those who reject him (7:33; 8:14,21). Just as in the Prologue the Logos/Sophia finds only rejection from 'his own' (1:10-11), so too the rejection by the Pharisees means a withdrawal of the

Son to the place where he was, and the consequent working out of judgement (especially 8:21). Overall it must be said that John's emphasis rests more on the descent of Jesus as the focus of salvation, his going away being a supplement to this and to some extent a guarantee of its continuing effect (i.e., through the coming of the Spirit).

If we now return to the question of the relationship between Jesus and Sophia at this point, we are in a better position to seek adequate parallels. True, there is no real idea of an ascent of Sophia in the Wisdom corpus, with the possible exception of 1 Enoch 42. Here we must also note Schnackenburg's caution:

The notion of Wisdom herself ascending to heaven is not included and the passage to this effect in Enoch 42:1 has a different meaning, namely that Wisdom found no resting-place on earth and returned to her place. This is not a redemptive 'ascent', but a disappointed withdrawal<sup>185</sup>.

If we forget for a moment the insistence on a motif of ascent and look instead at the idea of withdrawal, or going away, we find that there are indeed similarities between Jesus and Sophia. Just as Jesus' going away means judgement on those who reject him, so too Sophia abandons to their fate, those who reject her call and counsel. Compare, for example, Jn 8:21 with Prov 1:28 -

ἐγὼ ὑπάγω καὶ ζητήσετε με, καὶ ἐν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ ὑμῶν  
ἀποθανεῖσθε (Jn 8:21)

ζητήσουσίν με κακοὶ καὶ οὐχ εὕρησουσιν (Prov 1:28b)

The same sentiment is also expressed in Sir 4:19, where Sophia's presence is said to be removed from those who fail to keep her ways.

That this idea was still current in Jewish circles around the time of the writing of the Fourth Gospel is clear from the apocalyptic vision of IV Ezra 5:9-10 -

Then shall reason hide itself, and wisdom shall withdraw into her chamber, and it will be sought by many but shall not be found, and unrighteousness and unrestraint shall increase on earth<sup>186</sup>.

Not only is the withdrawal of Sophia from the world similar to that of Jesus, but the result is to some extent parallel. Both bring about a situation where they will be sought after by those who ought to have known better, but will be unattainable, resulting in the abandonment of the faithless to the consequences of their sin. What the author of John appears to have added is the idea of the *beneficial* withdrawal of Jesus Sophia: if Jesus goes away, then those who have believed and accepted the revelation of God will receive the further benefit of his continued presence in the form of the Holy Spirit. There is no hint of such a spin-off from Sophia's withdrawal, but to deny John and the Johannine community the creativeness of mind to interpret the Christ event in this way would be, to use Dunn's words, "an implausible evaluation, considering the distinctive character of the Gospel"<sup>187</sup>.

We are dealing in John not so much with a motif of Descent - Ascent, as with a Descent - Withdrawal (Going-Away) scheme, which may certainly be seen as finding its roots in the Wisdom tradition. The direct references to ascent are connected in two instances with the Son of Man tradition, scarcely a dominant or peculiarly Johannine theme in christology, and are different in character and application from the 'going-away' material. The third ascent reference, 20:17, is influenced by other traditions, notably that of the Lukan

ascension<sup>188</sup>, a connection made all the more probable by the well-documented parallels between the Fourth Gospel and Luke<sup>189</sup>. To reject a Wisdom background to the Johannine Descent - Withdrawal scheme on the basis of the lack of material in Wisdom Literature reporting an *ascent* of Sophia is to misunderstand the Johannine scheme as primarily one of Descent - Ascent, which essentially it is not<sup>190</sup>! The emphasis in John, as also in Wisdom, is very heavily on the descent, which has the aim of bringing the saving revelation and knowledge of God, a task attributed previously only in this way to Sophia. The withdrawal element is also a reflection of Sophia's reaction to her rejection, but John, it would appear, has developed this in a new direction through the introduction of a beneficial side to the withdrawal. This is hardly surprising in the context of a Gospel which has at other points so radically reinterpreted traditions already well established in Christian circles<sup>191</sup>.

Our aim here is, of course, to show that the Fourth Evangelist has been influenced considerably by Sophia tradition in the shaping of the Gospel's christological picture. We would not wish to make this emphasis to the exclusion of all other influences, of which there surely were several. Here, for example, the whole area of speculation on divine agency, much wider than Sophia herself in Jewish thought, and the concern for heavenly knowledge would have been important. Nevertheless, we would assert that even in those areas where other influences can be traced, there are still consistent evocations and echoes of themes characteristic of Sophia. While the Fourth Evangelist has modified the Descent - Going Away motif as found in

Wisdom tradition, our surprise is less that it should have been altered than that it should have been altered so *little*.

#### 3.2.4.2.3 INTIMACY WITH GOD

It is obvious even from the most superficial reading of the Gospels that John presents the relationship between Jesus and God in a much more intimate way than do the Synoptics. So much so is this seen to be the case, that the one text in the Synoptic Gospels which really speaks of the closeness of their relationship, Mt 11:27=Lk 10:22, is commonly known as the 'Johannine Logion'! The whole Gospel is woven through with the theme of the unity of the Father and the Son<sup>192</sup>. This is perhaps most clearly expressed through the idea of their mutual love (3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 14:31; 15:9; 17:24-26), but is also seen in their oneness of knowledge (1:18; 7:29; 8:55; 10:15; 17:25) and unity of will (5:19-30)<sup>193</sup>.

The focal point of Jesus' relationship with God is the love which passes between them<sup>194</sup>. This is important as a basis for what the Son does and reveals (3:35; 5:20), and it is founded on the Son's eternal pre-existence (17:24-26). God's love for the Son can also be expressed as a response to the Son's work (10:17), but this should in no way be construed as a conditional response, being rather an expression of "the bond of love that exists between the Father and the Son: it involves the mission and obedient death of the Son"<sup>195</sup>. In other words, the unity of love is expressed in a unity of will and purpose. This is confirmed by the one instance in which the Son expresses his love for God (14:31), that love being denoted as

obedience to God's will: ἀλλ' ἵνα γνῶ ὁ κόσμος ὅτι ἀγαπᾷ τὸν πατέρα, καὶ καθὼς ἐνετείλατό μοι ὁ πατήρ, οὕτως ποιῶ.

Their unity of will is best expressed in 5:19-30, where the Son declares that all he does is performed in obedience to God. His words and works are not his own, but God's (3:34; 8:26; 9:4; 12:49). In 5:21 we see that there is an "exact parallelism"<sup>196</sup> between the will of God and the obedience of the Son, and it is from this that the Son derives the authority which he has over life and judgement<sup>197</sup>. While the love was based on pre-existence, the unity of will is based on his having been sent (5:23), as is also the unity of knowledge which they share.

In 8:55, Jesus' knowledge of God leads to his obedience to God's will, a motif which is further illuminated by the mutuality of knowledge expressed in the Parable of the Good Shepherd (10:15). Here we find a combination of all three elements: Jesus *knows* that the Father *loves* him, which leads to his *willingness* to lay down his life for the sheep (10:14-18). The final stage of this is expressed in 17:25-26, where Jesus' knowledge of God and union with him will be the foundation of love and knowledge being passed on to those who become his disciples. They recognise that Jesus has come from God precisely because of the knowledge of 'all things' (πάντα) which Jesus has demonstrated (16:30). This demonstration has taken many forms throughout the unfolding drama of the Fourth Gospel<sup>198</sup>, but it reaches its high-point in the expression of the intimacy which exists between the Father and the Son, and between the Son and the disciples. This

in turn is based upon Jesus coming from above and withdrawing again to the place of his origin (16:28).

When we consider the figure of Sophia and her relationship with God we discover a very similar picture. She shares an intimacy with God which corresponds to Jesus' relationship in terms of love, will and knowledge. Just as God's love for the Johannine Jesus is rooted in pre-existence, so too we see that the intimacy which existed between Sophia and God began before the creation of the world (Prov 8:30-31). It might be objected at this point that Sophia's 'playing' (εὐφραίνω - Prov 8:30) before God is not the imagery used of Jesus' intimacy with God in the Fourth Gospel, but as Lang has pointed out, "joyful play in the presence of the Creator is an unmistakable sign of intimacy"<sup>199</sup>. In later Wisdom tradition this understanding of Prov 8:30-31 is confirmed, as God is specifically reported to love Sophia:

- (3) εὐγένειαν δοξάζει συμβίωσιν θεοῦ ἔχουσα  
καὶ ὁ πάντων δεσπότης ἠγάπησεν αὐτήν
- (4) μύστις γὰρ ἐστὶν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιστήμης  
καὶ αἰρετις τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ (Wisd 8:3-4)

This text is particularly significant for our comparison with the Johannine Jesus, because it not only mentions God's love for Sophia, but also connects it with both our other themes, knowledge and will. She is privy to the knowledge that is God's, and she participates in his works. These themes appear also in their own right in the Wisdom corpus. Sophia is frequently placed in parallel with knowledge (Prov 2:6,10; 3:19,20), and even offers it as one of her gifts (Prov 8:12). More important still in terms of the intimate relationship between God and Sophia is the knowledge which they have of each other. Sophia

knows God because of her presence at creation (Wisd 9:9), and God knows Sophia's origin and extent (Job 28:23,27).

Like the Johannine Jesus, Sophia also knows 'all things' (πάντα - Wisd 9:11), a point which is underlined at other junctures in Wisdom of Solomon (7:17-22; 8:8). Because of this knowledge of the intimate things of God, Sophia, like Jesus, is in tune with God's will. While the author of John attributes authority over life and judgement to Jesus (Jn 5:19-25), the author of Proverbs allows this task to Sophia (Prov 1:20-33). This theme is dramatically developed in Wisdom of Solomon chapter 10, where Sophia becomes the force by which God works out salvation history in Israel. As Willet puts it: "Wisdom is God in action, God turned toward the world enacting his will among humanity"<sup>200</sup>.

By now we may be able to see that Sophia's relationship with God is not only parallel to that of the Johannine Jesus in some kind of vague terms of intimacy, but much more so in very specific areas which correspond almost exactly, namely love, knowledge and will. When taken along with the many other areas of overlap which we have noted between Sophia and the Johannine Jesus, this parallelism can hardly be dismissed lightly as mere coincidence. Rather, we may interpret it as another example of John taking up themes already present in the Wisdom tradition, and developing them into a highly sophisticated understanding of the relationship between Jesus Sophia and God. This understanding was present already in the introduction of the Logos in the Prologue and now finds its fuller outworking in the Gospel as a whole.

However, there remains a problem with the intimacy question in relation to our thesis that the Fourth Evangelist has consciously sought to resolve the gender problem involved in identifying the female Sophia with the male Jesus. Why is it that the Johannine language describing the relationship is so heavily weighted down with *male* imagery through the use of the Father - Son model? It is clear from both the frequency of this language and the stated purpose of the Evangelist (20:31), that "what is at stake for the Johannine community is the full significance of the confession 'Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God!'"<sup>201</sup>. But why must it be a *Father* - Son relationship which the Fourth Gospel presents?

We have already seen that the actual relationship between Father and Son itself probably depends heavily upon the Wisdom background which we identified in the Logos concept of the Prologue. The breadth of meaning contained in the title 'Son of God' has been well outlined in the past<sup>202</sup>, but the Johannine identification of the Logos/Sophia with the Son of God focuses this title much more sharply. Dunn summarises:

By reading the Father-Son language in the light of the Wisdom/Logos prologue, the range of options possible in the title Son of God is narrowed dramatically. Over against any who might be content with a prophet christology, or a merely Davidic Messiah christology, John insists unreservedly on a Wisdom christology<sup>203</sup>.

As we have seen, the choice of Logos as a title itself is already determined by the *gender* of Jesus rather than by the content of that title in pre-Christian Judaic thought, which content is virtually nil anyway! Thus we should not be surprised at the adoption of '*Son*' language to represent the human maleness of Jesus. Indeed, Sophia can

herself, on account of her gender, be referred to as the '*Daughter*' of God by Philo (Fuga 50-52), as we saw in the previous chapter.

Why then a concentration on a '*Father*' language to describe God, since the understanding of Sophia as equal to God lies so clearly at the heart of the Fourth Evangelist's picture of Jesus and would provide a vehicle for talking about God in female terms? The answer probably lies in the insistence of early Christian tradition upon Jesus' use of *Abba*-language to talk to God, particularly in prayer<sup>204</sup>. The Johannine author retains three instances in which Jesus addresses God in this way, 11:41; 12:27; 17:1<sup>205</sup>. The extent to which Jesus may have been conscious of a special kind of Sonship in relation to God has been a matter of much scholarly debate<sup>206</sup>, but there can be no doubt that the Fourth Evangelist wants the reader to *understand* Jesus as being so conscious throughout his ministry. Thus the Fourth Evangelist stresses the relationship through a repeated use of the very word which was most characteristic of Jesus' own prayers in the memory of the earliest Christians, *Abba* (πάτερ).

Having seen this, however, we do still have significant evidence also from Wisdom tradition that this intimate language could be used by the recipient of Sophia to address God. Those in whom Sophia dwells may call God '*Father*' and be themselves called '*Children*' of God:

- (13) ἐπαγγέλλεται γνῶσιν ἔχειν θεοῦ  
καὶ παῖδα κυρίου ἑαυτοῦ ὀνομάζει. . .  
(16d) καὶ ἀλαζονεύεται πατέρα θεόν (Wisd 2:13,16d)

These lines are reported as statements hurled in abuse against the 'wise ones' by those who are unrighteous, but presumably they do

reflect to some extent the claims made against those wise enough to follow the teaching of Sophia in real life. More direct evidence of calling God '*Father*' appears also in other places:

ἡ δὲ σή, πάτερ, διακυβερνᾷ πρόνοια. . . (Wisd 14:3)

κύριε πάτερ καὶ θεὸς ζωῆς μου. . . (Sir 23:4)

ἔπεκαλεσάμην κύριον πατέρα κυρίου μου. . . (Sir 51:10)

It may well be, then, that a double influence has exerted itself on the Fourth Evangelist's usage. While the *relationship* between Jesus Sophia and God in the Fourth Gospel is in itself thoroughly based upon that already known from the Sophia - God relationship, the *language* owes its usage to a combination of the gender of the human Jesus, the probable usage of the historical Jesus in prayer (*Abba*), and possibly also the background of the disciples of Sophia who could address God as '*Father*'.

#### 3.2.4.2.4 JESUS THE REVEALER

Since Jesus is privy to the knowledge of God, which is otherwise unavailable to human beings, the principle task of his mission is *revelation*. This was announced as a major theme in the Prologue (1:18), where the whole purpose of the descent of the Logos/Sophia is to make known (ἐξηγέομαι) the things of God<sup>207</sup>. This verse already indicates that Jesus' role as Revealer depends upon his intimacy with God: ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς is the one who reveals God.

If Jesus is the one who has been sent by God and who shares in the most intimate mysteries of God, what exactly does he reveal about

God during his sojourn on earth? This question has continued to vex scholars since Bultmann's famous assertion, that "Jesus as the Revealer of God reveals nothing but that he is the Revealer"<sup>208</sup>. We may attempt to put some flesh on the bones by saying that Jesus reveals what he has seen and heard (3:11,32; 8:26,38,40; 15:15); he reveals (φανερῶ) his glory (2:11); the works of God (9:3); God's name (17:6,26). He is said to speak (λαλέω) what God has taught him (3:34; 8:28; 12:49-50), but in the end we are really just left with the bare fact that Jesus is the Revealer. As Bultmann comments: "the astonishing thing about it is that Jesus' words never convey anything specific that he has seen with the Father"<sup>209</sup>. Everything which Jesus does or says is, in fact, part of his revelation of God, for "he speaks and acts constantly from within his *oneness* with God"<sup>210</sup>.

The lack of content in Jesus' revelation is paralleled by an unresolved mysteriousness about him during his ministry as Revealer. People dispute his origin, some claiming to know (7:27), others admitting they do not (9:29). He does not seek to relieve the mystery, but heightens it by announcing that even those who think they know, do not (7:28-29; 8:41-46)<sup>211</sup>. Both believers and unbelievers fail to understand fully the message which Jesus brings (Nicodemus [3:9]; the Samaritan Woman [4:11]; Philip [6:5-7]; Thomas [14:5]), and as a person he remains something of an unsolved riddle.

Another aspect of Jesus' role as Revealer is the equation between faith in Jesus and faith in God (12:44; 14:1). Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, John uses πιστεύειν + εἰς in connection with Jesus, or the name of Jesus<sup>212</sup>. To believe in Jesus is to receive eternal life (3:15,16,36; 6:40,47; 11:25-26), and to find one's needs cared for

(4:50; 6:35; 9:38), but to believe in God also results in the same thing (5:24).

In Wisdom thinking, Sophia is also seen as the focal point of revelation: "she makes God present for humanity"<sup>213</sup>. Again this sounds rather vague, and that is exactly how it remains, for the content of Sophia's revelation is no more concrete than that of the Johannine Jesus. The closest Sophia comes to any concrete revelation of hidden knowledge is in Wisd 7:17-22, but basically her role there is as a reflection of God (Wisd 7:25-27), a role which is given to Jesus in John 12:45; 14:9. The self-revelation of Sophia in Sirach 24 adds nothing in terms of content, instead merely effusing over her qualities as fragrance, sweet food, and flowing abundance of water. However, it is clear that at all times, what she imparts is what she knows from her intimate relationship with God (Prov 8:22; Wisd 7:25-28; Sir 24:8)<sup>214</sup>.

Once again with Sophia we find the corollary to the vagueness of her revelation in the dimension of hiddenness. The classic text is Job 28:12ff, which struggles with the question of where Sophia may be found. The answer is given in verses 23ff, when the author declares that only God knows her comings and goings. Gordis remarks, that "it is precisely the unavailability of Wisdom to man (*sic*) that is the theme of the poem"<sup>215</sup>, and this continues to be a theme for later Wisdom writers. There is a need to seek Sophia out (Prov 8:17; Wisd 6:12,14; Sir 4:13,17; 24:28-29), for she is somewhat elusive (Sir 6:22). Baruch also takes up the theme of Sophia's inaccessibility

(Bar 3:15,22,24) before declaring that she is now embodied in the Torah (Bar 4:1)<sup>216</sup>.

There is very little evidence which suggests that the Wisdom writers saw Sophia as an object of faith, the nearest approximation being Sir 4:16

εἰάν ἐμπιστεύσῃ κατακληρονομήσει αὐτήν  
καὶ ἐν κατασχέσει ἔσονται αἱ γενεαὶ αὐτοῦ (Sir 4:16)

However, it is clear that they saw one's relationship to Sophia as determinative in terms of one's relationship with God. To find her is to find life (Prov 8:35; Sir 4:12), to serve her is to serve God, with the reciprocal effect that those who love her are loved by God:

οἱ λατρεύοντες αὐτήν λειτουργήσουσιν ἀγίῳ  
καὶ τοὺς ἀγαπῶντας αὐτήν ἀγαπᾷ ὁ κύριος (Sir 4:14)

In Wisd 7:28 we reach a point where nothing other than the love of Sophia will make a person acceptable to God: οὐθέν γὰρ ἀγαπᾷ ὁ θεὸς εἰ μὴ τὸν σοφίᾳ συνοικοῦντα. Those who are friends of Sophia are friends of God (Wisd 7:14,27), a remarkably similar concept to that of Jn 15:13-15, where Jesus announces that those who keep his commandment (13:34; 15:12) will be his 'friends' (φίλοι).

Once again we are compelled to admit that the relationship between the Johannine Jesus and God, this time in the role of Revealer, is strikingly similar to that occupied by Sophia in the Wisdom corpus. Although the vocabulary of revelation may not always coincide<sup>217</sup>, the nature, function and basis of the relationship does so at almost every point.

Above all, the riddle of what it is that the Revealer reveals may satisfactorily be resolved through the connection with Sophia, for like her, Jesus Sophia comes simply to reveal *God*, not facts and figures! Dunn summarises:

the revelation which Jesus brings seems to be so limited precisely because what he reveals is not information but, quite simply, God, that he is God in his self-revelation<sup>218</sup>.

Taking the above quote, for 'Jesus' read 'Sophia', alter the pronouns to give God her appropriate gender, and we have a concise summary of the revelatory appearances of Sophia in the Wisdom tradition!

#### 3.2.4.2.5 ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ

Our next motif which reflects the relationship between Jesus and God in the Fourth Gospel brings us back to a subject on which we have already spent some time, the *ἐγώ εἰμι* sayings. Apart from the sayings with predications, which we have seen are influenced by the Wisdom tradition, there are several occasions on which Jesus is made to use the *ἐγώ εἰμι* as an absolute form (4:26; 6:20; 8:23,24,58; 13:19; 18:6,8). This usage reflects the divine origin of Jesus in the mind of the Evangelist, and is tantamount to making Jesus call himself God, as has been well demonstrated from the Old Testament background<sup>219</sup>.

Let us make some further observations on the manner in which these absolute *ἐγώ εἰμι* statements are made, particularly noting their context. In every case Jesus' use of this title relies upon, or is closely connected with some aspect of his relationship with God. In 8:58, the *ἐγώ εἰμι* rests entirely on the declaration of his *pre-*

*existence* (πρὶν Ἀβραάμ. . .). Earlier in the same chapter, Jesus Sophia urges the people to believe that ἐγὼ εἰμι precisely on the basis that what he teaches is 'from above' (ἐκ τῶν ἄνω : 8:23), thus basing his absolute claim on the *descent* motif (8:24). On three occasions (4:26; 8:28; 13:19) the use of ἐγὼ εἰμι is closely connected to the theme of *intimate knowledge*; twice Jesus Sophia shows knowledge of individuals which can only be explained on the basis of his divine insight (4:26 - the Samaritan woman's lurid past; 13:19 - Judas' imminent betrayal), and once his intimate knowledge of the things of the Father will cause people to know who he is following his 'lifting-up' (ὀψώσητε - 8:28).

The remaining four occurrences of the absolute ἐγὼ εἰμι in the Fourth Gospel (6:20; 18:5,6,8) are all related to the shared δόξα of the Father and Son. In 6:20 Jesus appears to the disciples walking on the sea, and in the "traditional formula of greeting used by the deity in his epiphany"<sup>220</sup>, identifies himself with an ἐγὼ εἰμι<sup>221</sup>. The arrest sequence of 18:1-11 provides us with a similar kind of revelation of the awesomeness of the δόξα of Jesus Sophia, where "the myrmidons of the law shrink back and fall to the ground, as a man sinks down before the epiphany of Deity"<sup>222</sup>.

Undoubtedly John's adoption of the ἐγὼ εἰμι style of address must owe something to the Old Testament tradition of the divine name, firstly in Exod 3:14, but more explicitly in Deutero-Isaiah. However, the *content* and *authority* of the statements lies much more in their relationship to Sophia, whose influence on the themes of pre-existence, descent, intimate knowledge and glory we have already seen in the course of our investigation. That Sophia does not introduce

herself with the predicate ἐγώ εἰμι matters little, for she clearly addresses her claims in first person style in Proverbs and Sirach. We would thus conclude that Sophia's influence also played a considerable role in the Fourth Evangelist's decision to give to the Johannine Jesus that most distinctive of divine characteristics, the divine name, ἐγώ εἰμι<sup>223</sup>.

#### 3.2.4.2.6 HUMANITY AND DIVINITY

The final part of our investigation of the relationship between Jesus Sophia and God concerns the question of humanity and divinity. The words of Jn 1:14 already pose the question of the relationship between Jesus the man and the divine origin he appears to display throughout his ministry, the so-called δόξα. It is at this point that we see most clearly the extent to which the Fourth Evangelist has gone in the development of earlier Christian tradition both as represented by the Synoptics and by Paul<sup>224</sup>. As Dunn remarks, "it is not so much the *content* of the Fourth Evangelist's distinctive christology which marks him out, as the *way* in which he formulates it"<sup>225</sup>. Thus, John is not stepping outside the tradition of the earliest Christian reflection on the significance of Jesus Christ, but is rather developing it in new ways to meet a changed and still-changing situation, a situation in which the imminent parousia has receded as a driving issue and the separation of Christianity and Judaism has emerged as a burning one.

For our present discussion, the question is to what extent Sophia influence has helped or even encouraged the development of the christological picture in the mind of the Fourth Evangelist. In her

perceptive examination of the humanity of Jesus in John, Thompson is able to conclude that, in the end, Jesus' "heavenly glory does not simply overshadow the earthly reality nor does it shine through the humanity of the earthly Jesus as a light through a transparent veil"<sup>226</sup>. There is then, a balance in the Fourth Evangelist's presentation of the humanity/divinity of Jesus Sophia. But this is already a development over against the Synoptics, who have a much stronger emphasis on the humanity, even when we take into account such motifs as the virgin birth and the 'supernatural' nature of some miracles. In the relationship of the Father and the Son we have an affirmation of Jesus' divine origins which is quite unparalleled in the Synoptic accounts or even in Paul's adoption of Wisdom categories to describe him.

This distinctive Father-Son relationship, however, is precisely what we have interpreted as an outworking of Sophia christology, announced in the Prologue and developed in the Gospel as a whole. The affirmation of Jesus' *divinity* derives directly from the identification of him with Sophia, who was *with* God, and who we believe, at least by implication from her activity and function in the later strand of Jewish speculation, was God. So it is that Philo, writing in the period leading up to the formation of the Fourth Gospel, can describe Sophia as ἡ θεία σοφία, the image (μίμημα) of God (QuisRer 127), or even more commonly refer to the θεῖος λόγος (QuisRer 191; DeMut 116; DeFuga 97,101,108,137, et al.). The adoption of a Sophia christology as the vehicle for explicating the nature of Jesus Christ lent itself to the proclamation of his divine origin and nature in a way which the Synoptics, from their viewpoint, could not. Commenting on Jn 1:14, Ashton summarises thus:

The writer's central insight is summed up here - the identification of Jesus Christ, revered and worshipped by Christians alone, with the figure of Wisdom. This stems from the realisation, expressed throughout the hymn, that the history of Wisdom has been re-enacted by Christ: the divine plan seen at work throughout the history of Israel has actually taken flesh in him<sup>227</sup>.

What then of the humanity question? Can Sophia also be seen as in some way influential in the presentation of Jesus Christ as the one who became flesh? Commenting on the humanity of Jesus, Thompson says:

For the evangelist, the accent does not fall on Jesus' 'pure and simple humanity'. Rather it falls on the peculiar path which Jesus walked - a path characterized by love for his own which led ultimately to his death - because the question the evangelist faces is whether the Logos is indeed one with Jesus of Nazareth. Inasmuch as the evangelist insists that one must look at the path which Jesus walked to see the revelation of glory, he insists that flesh constitutes an indispensable aspect of that revelation<sup>228</sup>.

Thus it is this "peculiar path . . . which culminates in his death"<sup>229</sup> which is the characteristic feature of Jesus' σάπη. Yet all the way through we have seen that this path is one which is most clearly illuminated when we shine on it the light of Sophia! It is Sophia who loves 'her own' (Prov 8:17,21; Wisd 7:28; Sir 4:14), who is no longer to be equated with Torah but with Jesus Christ/Jesus Sophia (Jn 1:17 vs Sir 24:23; Bar 3:37-4:1) come ἐν σαρκί. In our comments on Jn 1:14 we noted already that this development by the Fourth Evangelist of identifying Jesus Christ with Sophia *incarnate* was really only the last step in a long line of development which saw her importance and influence in the world growing in the Wisdom traditions. At least for the author of the Fourth Gospel, in Jesus Christ she finally finds her 'dwelling-place' on earth.

Thus we may see that our understanding and interpretation of both the humanity and divinity of the Johannine Jesus can be enhanced in the light of elements already present in the Sophia traditions of Israel.

#### 3.2.4.3 JESUS THE TEACHER

We have observed that the mission of the Johannine Jesus is primarily that of revealing what is known to him about God, or perhaps more simply, of revealing God. Part of this revelation is carried out through his role as teacher: indeed, this is the most common way in which people address Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. He is called ῥαββί by his disciples, or potential disciples (1:38,49; 3:2; 4:31; 9:2; 11:8), as well as by the people generally (6:25)<sup>230</sup>. On other occasions he is called διδάσκαλος, a direct equivalent of ῥαββί (1:38), by his disciples (1:38; 3:2; 11:28; 20:16), an appellation with which Jesus agrees (13:13,14). We shall look firstly at Jesus' role as teacher, noting the authority on which he rests his teaching and the effects which it has on those who receive it. Secondly, we will look briefly at the ones who are taught, the disciples, though we will be examining their role in much greater detail in our next chapter. Lastly, we will examine another important Johannine concept attached to the teacher-disciple relationship, namely that of 'abiding' (μενεῖν).

##### 3.2.4.3.1 JESUS AS TEACHER

Jesus' authority as teacher rests upon his relationship to God. He himself declares that his teaching is not his own, but is from the one who has sent him (7:16-17). It is not a secret form of

teaching, in the manner of Gnostic revelation, but is open for all to hear who wish to do so (18:20). This is reflected in the places where Jesus is said to teach: in the synagogue (6:59), or in the Temple court (7:14,28; 8:20; 18:20). He also makes it known to his disciples, that the Spirit, which he will send, will continue in the same tradition as Teacher (14:26).

In the first teaching episode in the Gospel (3:1-21), a contrast is made between Jesus, the teacher who, by Nicodemus' own admission, comes from God (3:2), and the Teacher of Israel, Nicodemus himself (3:10). In this sequence Jesus places the authority for his teaching upon the fact that he has 'seen' these things of which he speaks: he has come from heaven to reveal them. His teaching appears to consist of the need for new birth in the Spirit (3:5-8) and of God's saving love for the world (3:16ff), but as Bultmann points out, the real scandal of what he says lies in his "claim that his origins are in heaven, and it is this that man is called on to believe"<sup>231</sup>.

When challenged about his miraculous work on the Sabbath (5:1-15), Jesus again replies that the truth which he delivers is based on his relationship with the Father, whose work he does and without whom he can do nothing (5:19ff). In the following chapter, the Bread of Life discourse, we again find that the claim to be this quality is based on the fact that God has placed his seal on him (τοῦτον γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ἔσφραγισεν ὁ θεός - 6:27). This pattern continues in every instance where Jesus sets out to teach: his authority is clearly God-given.

It is worth stressing at this point the *continuity* between the God-given foundation of the teaching and the Son's delivery of it. On the basis of texts like Jn 14:28, it has been claimed that John's christology tends toward subordinationism. When we take into account what we have seen of the relationship between Jesus and God, their shared intimacy, and now the continuity in their revelation and teaching, we would want to echo Appold's rejoinder, that "John's christology leaves no room for even incipient subordination"<sup>232</sup>. Rather, using the traditions of Sophia, the Fourth Evangelist wants to show,

the *continuity* between Father and Son, the continuity of Wisdom/Logos: he is doing the same work as God (5:17); his hand and the Father's hand are one (10:28-29); he speaks with the authority of God (14:10)<sup>233</sup>.

A notable effect of Jesus' teaching is that it brings about a division among the hearers. Some believe and others refuse to believe. Dodd calls chapters 2-12 "a story of sifting and selection"<sup>234</sup>, which leads to the emergence of a small group of disciples who remain faithful and receive teaching in 13-16. This division between believers and unbelievers takes place after nearly every major incident in Jesus' ministry (2:11,23-25; 4:39-42; 5:18,46-47; 6:15,60-61,66; 7:43; 8:30,59; 9:16; 10:19; 11:45-53), and reflects the persistent dualism which pervades the Gospel as a whole. For those who deliberately and obstinately refuse to accept the truth which Jesus teaches, the result is clear: they will die in their sin (8:21). For those who accept and believe, the offer is eternal life.

Although we noted the difficulty of determining the content of Jesus' revelation, it is clear that his invitation is open to all who

will respond, and it is made entirely on his own initiative. On several occasions he approaches people to make an offer: the Samaritan Woman (4:7,10); the man cured on the Sabbath (5:14); the blind man (9:35). On other occasions his offer is directed to the crowd: the bread of life (6:35,51); living water (7:37-38). Only rarely do people seek out Jesus and when they find him they show a marked lack of understanding, which is only cleared up at Jesus' discretion: Nathanael (1:47ff); Nicodemus (3:1ff).

What of Sophia the Teacher? Nowhere is she directly addressed as such, but there can be little doubt that her primary function is the instruction of her disciples. Like the Johannine Jesus she rests her authority as teacher on her relationship with God, and in particular stresses her origin with him before the foundation of the world. This is clear in Prov 8:22ff, where she first of all establishes her credentials as the pre-existent helper at creation, then turns to appeal to her children to listen to her words of wise teaching (Prov 8:32 -  $\nu\tilde{\upsilon}\nu\ \omicron\tilde{\upsilon}\nu$ ,  $\nu\tilde{\iota}\acute{\epsilon}$ ,  $\acute{\alpha}\chi\omicron\upsilon\acute{\epsilon}\ \mu\omicron\upsilon$ ). Again in Sir 24 she claims to be the one who embodies the very words which God speaks (Sir 24:3)<sup>235</sup>, and in Wisd 8 her ability to initiate disciples into the knowledge of God (Wisd 8:4ff) rests on the fact that God loves her (8:3). In all of this we see that her authority for teaching has the same basis as that of the Johannine Jesus.

Sophia's teaching is made publicly available to all who will pay heed to it. She cries out in the public places such as the street, the gate or the market place (Prov 1:20,21; 8:1-3). These are the areas which: "constitute the arena of public life. . . . They are the places where the careful observer can acquire knowledge. They are the

places where speakers used to seek an audience"<sup>234</sup>. Some later Wisdom tradition does not have Sophia appearing in such public places, confining her activity to the Holy places (Sir 24:23), and ultimately to the Torah (Bar 4:1). At first sight this later tradition might seem closer to the Johannine Jesus' appearance in the restricted areas of synagogue and Temple, but the availability of his teaching to the people generally, and in particular to *women*, may represent a polemic against the later Wisdom attempts to shut Sophia up in the Torah, preferring the more open approach of Proverbs<sup>237</sup>. It is in just such open places that we have seen the Johannine Jesus teaching freely.

Like Jesus' teaching, Sophia's instruction brings a separation between those who accept and those who reject it. This is most vigorously expressed in the picture of the false woman, Dame Folly, who appears in contrast to Sophia in Proverbs 7 and 9, and whose way leads down to death. It can, however, simply be a refusal to listen (Prov 1:24-25) which leads to an abandonment similar to that of Jn 8:21 (Prov 1:26-27). Following Sophia leads to life, while refusal to follow leads to abandonment and death (Sir 4:18-19).

All in all, the pictures of Sophia and the Johannine Jesus in their role as teacher overlap in both content (or lack of it!) and function. In both cases it is the teaching role which is the primary means of disseminating revelation. Their authority is God-given and the effect of their teaching is to bring about a division leading to life or death.

### 3.2.4.3.2 THE TEACHER'S DISCIPLES

The whole issue of discipleship in the Fourth Gospel is a complex matter. Unlike the Synoptic tradition we do not have an individually named set of disciples who follow Jesus around and interact with him in the various stages and individual acts of his ministry. Instead we have three principle types of follower: a shadowy group of folk called the μαθηταί, who appear at various points but whose role is never quite clearly defined; the Beloved Disciple, who appears only in the second half of the Gospel beginning at the foot-washing scene in chapter 13, but who clearly holds a special position in the mind of the Fourth Evangelist as a witness to the Jesus tradition; thirdly, various non-defined individuals, particularly women, who interact with Jesus more than either of the other categories at crucial christological points of the Gospel. In our next chapter we will hope to show that this third category function as paradigms of true discipleship for the community whom the Fourth Evangelist is addressing in the Gospel. Since we will be examining this whole question in more detail later, for the moment we will draw only some general conclusions as to the relationship between the Johannine concept of discipleship and that of Sophia's disciples.

Brown has already noted a number of parallels between the call to discipleship in the Fourth Gospel and that of Sophia's method of seeking out her followers<sup>238</sup>. Firstly we may note the way in which the Johannine Jesus calls disciples: he seeks them out in public places, be it the men of chapter 1 or the Samaritan woman of chapter 4. In the course of the final farewell speech to those who have been chosen, Jesus makes it clear that it is on his initiative that they

have been brought to the place where they are: οὐχ υμεῖς με ἐξελέξασθε, ἀλλ' ἐγὼ ἐξελεξάμην ὑμᾶς (Jn 15:16). So it is also with Sophia, who appears in the public places to call out to people to respond and follow her ways (Prov 1:20-21; 8:1-4; Wisd 6:16). There may even be a direct parallel between the idea of Wisd 6:16 and that of Jn 1:47, Sophia seeking out those worthy of her, and Jesus Sophia seeking out Nathanael, in whom there is no δόλος. Certainly, both Sophia and the Johannine Jesus are very open in their search and appear to know exactly who they want to be their disciples.

A second aspect of Jesus' call is that it is directed towards the enlightenment of those who respond. As his friends they are called so that they may know what Jesus is about (Jn 15:15) and they are purified by the working of his word in them (Jn 13:10; 15:3). In the same way Sophia "selects her followers by testing them, then revealing to them her secrets (Sir 4:11ff; Wisd 7:12ff)"<sup>239</sup>. In the end this means that her disciples can also be called her 'friends' (Wisd 7:14; 8:18).

The relationship of teacher and disciples goes much deeper than mere *superficial* friendship. Jesus loves those who love him and this leads also to their being loved by God (Jn 14:21; 16:27). The promise given to them is that he will come and dwell in them (14:23). This again reflects what was already known of Sophia's relationship with her followers, as we can see from a comparison of Sir 4:14 with Jn 14:21 -

καὶ τοὺς ἀγαπῶντας αὐτὴν ἀγαπᾷ ὁ κύριος (Sir 4:14)

ὁ δὲ ἀγαπῶν με ἀγαπηθήσεται ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς μου  
(Jn 14:21)

The indwelling of Sophia in those who love her is also a feature of Wisdom of Solomon's understanding of the relationship between her and those who follow her teaching (Wisd 1:4).

In all three of these aspects we may see that there is a very close parallel between the call of Sophia and the resulting relationship between her and her disciples, and the picture given by the Fourth Evangelist of the Johannine Jesus and his disciples. Once again, Sophia may well be seen as the inspiration for the Fourth Evangelist's christological reflection.

#### 3.2.4.3.3 THE MOTIF OF 'ABIDING' (Μένειν)

One of the commonest ways of describing the relationship between teacher and disciples in the Fourth Gospel is through the use of the verb μένειν<sup>240</sup>. Indeed, well over half the appearances of this word in the New Testament occur in the Johannine writings<sup>241</sup>. In other New Testament writings, particularly in Paul, there is a parallel in the ἐν Χριστῷ language, which implies a relationship which "makes possible a quality of life which shows the character of Christ"<sup>242</sup>. However, the word μένειν is never used by Paul, and the Johannine usage is more closely connected to the intimate relationship we have just examined between Jesus and God, which expresses the "closest possible relationship between Father and Son"<sup>243</sup>. It is from this relationship that the disciple's closeness to Jesus and God emerges, in such characteristic expressions as that found in Jn 15:10 - μενεῖτε ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ μου, καθὼς ἐγώ. . . μένω αὐτοῦ (=τοῦ πατρὸς) ἐν

τῆ ἀγάπῃ. This 'abiding' relationship is something dynamic between Father and Son and between Father → Son → Disciple. As Dodd comments: "It is nothing so external as mere obedience or imitation. It is the sharing of one life, which is of course life eternal or absolute"<sup>244</sup>.

This pattern of Father → Son → Disciple is important for understanding the Fourth Evangelist's use of μένειν. The Fourth Evangelist sees their unity as dependent on a constant flow of love in the direction indicated by our arrows. As far as the disciple is concerned, to 'abide' means to keep the commandment which Jesus gives, which commandment is based on the mutual love of the Father and Son (15:9-12). This Son → Disciple μένειν relationship is also described as 'bearing fruit' (15:4,5), which is only possible when the disciples, as 'branches', are connected to the 'true vine' (15:1-4)

Where does this motif of 'abiding' stem from? In the Old Testament there is a tradition which speaks of God's will, righteousness or word abiding (Ps 33:11; 112:3,9; Is 40:8), but this really bears little relation to the Johannine usage<sup>245</sup>. Much more striking is the reference to Sophia, which talks of her 'abiding' nature and her indwelling of her disciples, again based on her relationship with God:

μία δὲ ὄνσα πάντα δύναται  
καὶ μένουσα ἐν αὐτῇ τὰ πάντα καινίζει  
καὶ κατὰ γενεάς εἰς ψυχὰς ὅσας μεταβαίνουσα  
φίλους θεοῦ καὶ προφήτας κατασκευάζει (Wisd 7:27)

Here we find all the main elements of Jn 15:1-17 combined: Sophia, who abides in herself, which in the context of Wisd 7:22ff clearly means she abides in God, is involved in a recreative work (like the

'pruning' of the vinekeeper), by entering into the lives of the disciples and making them friends of God (=Jn 15:14). We could scarcely find a better functional parallel to the Johannine image than that offered by Wisdom of Solomon here.

Thus we may conclude that the 'abiding' motif of the Fourth Gospel, though obviously developed by the Fourth Evangelist to a greater extent than the similar idea seen in traditions concerning Sophia, shows signs of influence from the same background which we have seen for Jesus' role as Teacher and the disciples' role as followers, namely the traditions concerning Sophia and her disciples.

#### 3.2.4.4 THE REJECTION OF JESUS

We have already touched on this issue at several points along the way, but it is worthwhile drawing the material together in order to see how the theme of rejection, announced in the Prologue (1:10-11), works out in the Gospel as a whole.

It is Jesus' own people who reject him, making plans throughout his ministry how they may be rid of him (5:43; 7:19,32,45-52; 8:37; 9:22; 10:31,39; 11:47-53; 12:37). The whole Passion Narrative is an account of the final rejection of Jesus, but the onus of responsibility is placed on the 'Jews' (18:38-40; 19:6-16). The irony is that the very ones who should have known better are the ones who reject God in their midst.

It is the rejection of Jesus by his own people which leads to his withdrawal (8:59). The withdrawal takes place of his own accord (12:36), even when, in the case of the trial and execution, it appears

that his withdrawal has been enforced (15:13; 19:11). Because the 'Jews' have rejected him, they will no longer be able to find him (8:21), but those who have believed, experience that he is still available to them in the gift of the Spirit (16:7; 20:22).

When we compare this with Sophia we find that she is also rejected by those who should have known to accept her (Prov 1:24-25,29-30; 8:36; Bar 3:10-11,23; I Enoch 42:1-2), and this leads to her unavailability on account of her withdrawal from the world. This is hardly an enforced withdrawal, but it leads to judgement on those who rejected her, and in the case of I Enoch 42:3, to the appearance of Iniquity in her place, a theme which is further developed in IV Ezra 5:9-11.

The theme of Jesus' rejection by his own people is a constant theme in all the writings of the New Testament. What is important for our study is the fact that John's interpretation of this rejection shows signs of being constructed against the background of the rejection of Sophia. It is one more tint from the Wisdom palette used to embellish the growing picture of Jesus, Sophia incarnate.

#### **3.2.4.5 JESUS AND THE LAW**

From the moment that Jesus is set in contrast to the Mosaic Law in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel onwards (1:17), we have noted several occasions on which the Fourth Evangelist's presentation of Jesus as Sophia incarnate may be interpreted as a polemic against the later Jewish Wisdom tradition concerning the confinement of Sophia to the Torah. While other New Testament writers, notably Paul, conduct a very explicit critique of Jewish adherence to the Law, it would appear

that the Fourth Evangelist has chosen a more subtle approach to this cornerstone of division between first century Jew and Christian. Brown comments that, in contrast to Paul, "John does not treat the Law as either a problem for Christians or as an enemy: it is simply something that has been superseded by the great act of divine covenant love in Jesus Christ (1:17)"<sup>246</sup>. Is there, then, an intended contrast between Jesus and Torah in the Fourth Gospel, and if so, why has the Evangelist chosen this more subtle challenge rather than a more direct form of opposition?

Perhaps the best starting point in looking for an answer to these questions lies in reminding ourselves of the *context* of the Fourth Gospel. The arguments for a late first century dating of the final form of John's Gospel are overwhelming<sup>247</sup>, not least because the text itself seems to presuppose a time after the exclusion of Christian Jews from the synagogue (ἀποσυνάγωγος - 9:22)<sup>248</sup>. This being the case, the situation of the Christian community has changed from that addressed by Paul, namely, "whether the law was binding on all believers. . . Paul maintaining that those in Christ have been liberated from the yoke of the law"<sup>249</sup>. For the late first century Johannine community the question is much more: how can we come to terms with the fact that what 'the Jews' claim for Torah, we claim as part of our experience of who Jesus Christ was and is? Such a question may be answered by presenting Jesus Christ in such a way that his words and actions are seen and understood as replacing, or even superseding what has been claimed for Torah: it need not involve a direct or explicit confrontation.

To what extent, then, may we see such a subtle polemic being conducted in the Fourth Gospel? Much will depend on our understanding of the initial reference to νόμος in Jn 1:17. We have already noted how this verse appears at the end of a Prologue to the Gospel which has set out the claims of the Logos in terms which can readily be equated with Sophia. We also saw that the understanding of who Sophia was and of the extent of her influence varied, even among the later Jewish Wisdom writers themselves. As Ashton comments in relation to the difference between Sirach and the withdrawn Sophia of 1 Enoch:

There were alternative (and opposing) views about Wisdom held by at least some Jewish thinkers and these are closer in certain respects to the spirit of the Prologue which, while using terminology highly reminiscent of Ben Sirach, resists any suggestion that the wisdom who finally found a home on earth was to be identified with the Torah<sup>250</sup>.

John's claim in 1:17 is that the Logos/Sophia has found a home ('taken on flesh' [1:14]) in Jesus Christ, and that this may be verified by the fact that two of the great characteristics of Sophia, χάρις και ἀλήθεια<sup>251</sup>, are embodied in him. These terms, as Lindars reminds us, "are revealed in the Law according to rabbinic exegesis"<sup>252</sup>. Thus what 1:17 shows us is a deliberate contrast between the old order - law given through Moses - and the new order - that by which the Law may be characterised present in Jesus Christ. What is important for our present thesis is the recognition that John chooses to make this contrast through the use of material closely related to Sophia tradition. We may therefore echo Dunn's assessment of Jn 1:17 -

Compared with the climactic revelation of Christ, the revelation given through Moses, Sinai and the whole wilderness period is deficient (3,9-15; 5,37-47; 6,35-58; 7,14-24; 10,34-6). The Wisdom of God is present in Torah, but present in fullness only in Christ.

Christ, *not* the Torah, is the embodiment of divine Wisdom, the incarnation of God's Word<sup>253</sup>.

Now if it is the case, as we have argued, that the polemic in the Prologue is one of Jesus Christ = Sophia incarnate, over-against Torah = Sophia contained (confined?), we would expect to find further evidence of similar polemic throughout the body of the Gospel. On several occasions we have already seen this: Jesus Sophia the Bread of Life rather than Torah as the embodiment of Manna; Jesus Sophia the Light in contrast to Torah as such; as the Revealer, Jesus Sophia is seen as accessible to all, rather than as inaccessible (Bar 3:15,22,24) or contained exclusively in the Torah (Bar 4:1; Sir 24:23); as the great Teacher, Jesus Sophia rivals the same role applied to Sophia in Sir 24:3, which is later related further to Torah in Sir 24:23; in contrast to the shutting up of Sophia in Torah, Jesus Sophia appears openly in the streets and public places, meeting with all manner of people (including women and Samaritans). We shall go on in the next chapter to see how this contrasting of Jesus Sophia with Torah/Sophia is developed in the theme of New Wine at Cana (2:1-11); as Living Water (4:10; 7:37-39), Jesus Sophia is contrasted with the similar epithet applied to Torah; and in the response of Martha to the *word* of Jesus Sophia rather than to the following *sign*, we will note a parallel to the appeal to heed the words of Sophia entombed in the Torah.

All of this points us to the strong possibility that the contrast drawn between Jesus Christ and Torah in the Prologue and subsequently in the body of the Fourth Gospel, is best understood when seen as a development of the theme of Jesus as Sophia incarnate. For John, the

true (ἀληθινός) Sophia may be seen incarnate in Jesus, "while the Torah offers only the shadow"<sup>254</sup>.

#### 3.2.4.6 JESUS AND THE SPIRIT

As in many other areas of the Fourth Gospel, the Fourth Evangelist has also developed a distinctive understanding of the Holy Spirit. Over against other New Testament descriptions this is shown both in the adoption of a singularly individual name, παράκλητος<sup>255</sup>, and in the quite different understanding of the way in which the Spirit was given to the disciples (Jn 20:22 vs Acts 2:1ff). The search for the Johannine usage has often tended to concentrate too much on the discovery of a background for the word παράκλητος<sup>256</sup> and not enough on examining the *function* of the Spirit in John. We shall place our emphasis more on this search for parallels to the function, since it is quite possible that the Fourth Evangelist only used in παράκλητος a term which already existed in the community to describe the Holy Spirit<sup>257</sup>.

The first thing we may notice about the Fourth Evangelist's presentation of the *work* of the Holy Spirit is that it is identical with that of Jesus: "indeed, we can put it more strongly, he continues the *presence* of Jesus"<sup>258</sup>. Their unity begins with their *origins*, since both are seen to be from the Father (3:16 - the Son; 14:16 - the Spirit). It continues in a unity of purpose, which is climaxed in 20:22 by the gift of the Spirit to the disciples through the action of Jesus breathing upon them. Given the association between life and breath in the Old Testament, both English words being translated by the same Hebrew word נָשַׁם, we may see that in this portrayal, the

Fourth Evangelist wants us to see the gift of the Holy Spirit as the gift of the continuing life of Jesus in the life of the believer. The presence of God's  $\Pi \cdot 17$  at creation also lends credence to the idea that "John 20:22 means that the disciples are reborn and given power for the new apostolic service of God in a re-creation scene"<sup>259</sup>. Indeed the motif of rebirth is already connected in the Fourth Gospel with the Spirit in 3:5<sup>260</sup>.

The Johannine Holy Spirit is also the πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας (14:17; 15:26; 16:13), in parallel to Jesus who is the 'truth' (14:6), the 'true' Bread, etc., as we have noted already. In this role, the Holy Spirit will teach the disciples as Jesus himself has done (14:26), causing them to remember his words. The words which the Spirit speaks, however, will not be self-inspired, but will be those which have already been 'heard', in the same way that Jesus reveals what he has seen and heard (Jesus - 5:19; 8:28; Spirit - 16:13-14).

The Johannine Holy Spirit comes to *dwell* in the believer, using that favourite Johannine word, μένειν (14:17). Since we have already seen how important this word is for the community, summing up the Father → Son → Disciple relationship, we can see that there is every justification for declaring that "the personality of Jesus has become the personality of the Spirit. . . (affording) an immediate and direct continuity between believers and Jesus"<sup>261</sup>.

Now when we begin to ask after the origins of this Johannine concept of the Holy Spirit, we must immediately be struck by the fact that all the elements of overlap between Jesus and Spirit in the Fourth Gospel are things which we have already identified as having

come under the influence of Sophia tradition: indeed, as being very much *rooted* in Sophia tradition. They are both sent by God; are both bearers of truth; both indwell their disciples. In particular, in relation to the disciples, we notice the re-emergence of the theme of creation (20:22), a theme so closely tied in Johannine thinking to the role of the Logos/Sophia in the Prologue. It would be fair to say in the light of this that the continuing life of the Spirit is the continuing life of Jesus, that is Jesus *Sophia*, in the world<sup>262</sup>.

We noted in passing before that there is a connection made in Wisdom literature between Logos, Sophia and Pneuma<sup>263</sup>, all three appearing together in Wisd 9:1-2,17. Since the Fourth Evangelist is drawing so heavily upon Wisdom traditions in the picture of Jesus Christ, it is highly likely that this interchangeability of terminology was known to her/him. Of course, the Evangelist would also have known of the gift of the Spirit from wider Christian tradition towards the end of the first century, but it may well be helpful for our understanding of the Fourth Gospel's particular portrayal of the Spirit's role to look at it again in the light of Sophia tradition.

It may also be worthwhile noting in relation to the peculiarity of the Johannine word παράκλητος, that at least one other Jewish writer familiar with Wisdom tradition and living in the first century of the Christian era uses the word frequently - our old friend Philo, who uses it on numerous occasions<sup>264</sup>. His usage, however, is not directly related to Sophia, nor indeed to Pneuma<sup>265</sup>.

We may say in conclusion, then, that the Johannine Holy Spirit may be seen as nothing other than the continuing life of Jesus Sophia in the believer, in the world.

#### 3.2.4.7 THE ΣΗΜΕΙΑ OF JESUS

Another distinctive feature of the Johannine presentation of Jesus' ministry is the use made of the term σημεῖον to describe miracles performed by him. While the Synoptics do use the term, they do so only in a negative way to berate those who come to see miracles for the sake of them (Mt 12:38-39; 16:1-4; Lk 23:8): "the motives and character of the generation that seeks it"<sup>266</sup> are questioned and condemned. At first sight the Fourth Evangelist's attitude seems somewhat ambiguous towards the σημεῖα: on the one hand, some are upbraided in Synoptic style for seeking miracles (4:48 σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα; 2:18; 6:30), or are not trusted because of such belief (2:23-24; 6:26). However, others clearly do believe because of the signs and are accepted as having done so (2:11; 4:53). This apparent ambiguity, however, does not mean that the Fourth Evangelist wants to denigrate the σημεῖα in themselves, but rather that she/he points to the ambiguity of the *responses* which people make to them<sup>267</sup>. To some the σημεῖα bring blessing, even faith: to others, judgement, or unbelief.

There is some discussion as to the number of σημεῖα in the Fourth Gospel, as also about their origin<sup>268</sup>. The most likely origin of the σημεῖα as far as the Fourth Evangelist is concerned, is some form of pre-Johannine σημεῖα-source<sup>269</sup>, but the composition and order of this source is a matter of some discussion<sup>270</sup>. Although only two signs are

actually enumerated in the Gospel, it is likely that six main miracles belonged to the collection: the wine miracle at Cana (2:1-11); the healing of the royal official's son (4:46-54); the healing at Bethsaida (5:1-17); the multiplication of the loaves [probably including the walking on the water] (6:1-21); the healing of the blind man (9:1-41); the raising of Lazarus (11:1-44)<sup>271</sup>. Clark argues that to this list should be added also the greatest σημεῖον of all, the hour of Jesus' glorification, his death and resurrection, as a seventh sign "both fulfilling and surpassing the first six which point to it"<sup>272</sup>. Although some might want to dispute this, Fortna is sure that at least at σημεῖα-source level, the resurrection of Jesus was seen as the "last and greatest of his Christological deeds"<sup>273</sup>.

What then is the purpose of these signs in the Fourth Gospel? Are they meant to *prove* Jesus' identity? Do they really, in themselves, elicit faith in Jesus? Certainly Käsemann sees them as "'proofs' of divine power"<sup>274</sup>, but acknowledges also that they are still ambiguous and do not convince all who see them. Bultmann, who sees the faith aroused by the sign as inadequate in Johannine terms, points out that "in reality faith should not have to rely on miracles"<sup>275</sup>, a view informed by Jn 4:48 and 20:29. Thompson, however, wants us to look again at why the Fourth Evangelist would use signs if they were *not* pointers to Jesus. She comments:

Not only is it important to know that Jesus did signs, but it is also important to know what signs he did. Because the individual signs establish more specifically who he is (bread of life; light of the world; resurrection and life), their materiality can scarcely be considered a stumbling-block to faith, or even merely irrelevant to it. John is not so much concerned with the simple fact that Jesus did signs;

he is much more concerned with the particular signs that Jesus did<sup>276</sup>.

Bearing this comment in mind, let us now turn to look at the Sophia tradition as a background for the Fourth Evangelist's understanding of the σημεῖα and their use in the Fourth Gospel. Douglas Clark has shown that in Wisdom of Solomon 11-19, in the re-interpretation of the Exodus tradition under the influence of Sophia, the original ten plagues visited upon Egypt have been reduced to six 'ordinary' plus one 'extraordinary' signs<sup>277</sup>. He bases his use of the word 'sign' to describe Sophia's actions on the appearance of the word σημεῖον in Wisd 10:16 -

εἰσῆλθεν εἰς ψυχὴν θεράποντος κυρίου  
καὶ ἀντίστη βασιλεῦσιν φοβεροῖς ἐν τέρασι καὶ σημείοις  
(Wisd 10:16)

This text, of course, refers to the work of Moses, who under Sophia's inspiration defeated Pharaoh<sup>278</sup>. It might on this evidence alone seem a very slender link to describe the plagues in Wisd 11-19 as σημεῖα under the influence of Wisd 10:16, especially as this is all the evidence which Clark brings. However, if we look more closely at the tradition which is being adapted by the author of Wisdom of Solomon, we find much more compelling evidence to support Clark's thesis. For when we look at Exod 4:8,9,17,28,30, we find that the word σημεῖον is used repeatedly by the LXX writer to report Moses' miraculous work in calling down the plagues. This adds considerable strength to Clark's argument and allows us to identify the inspired works of Sophia in Wisd 11-19 as σημεῖα with more confidence. Whether or not the author of Wisdom of Solomon actually intended the reader to understand the miraculous deeds of Sophia as σημεῖα or not, on reflection we may see

that the possibility was there for someone, perhaps even the Fourth Evangelist, to recognise them as such in the light of the Exodus tradition.

Clark goes on to compare the six plus one signs of Wisdom of Solomon with the six plus one of the Fourth Gospel<sup>279</sup>. He finds a number of very convincing parallels between the 'signs' in the order in which they appear in the Gospel. For example, the first sign, Wisd 11:5-14, concerns the undrinkable water of the Nile and the gift of drinkable water to the Israelites in the desert journey. Comparing it with the wine miracle at Cana, he finds that in both cases the "transformation renders the water more drinkable"<sup>280</sup>. However, some of the comparisons which he makes are rather strained, especially 'signs' two and three, suggesting that in his enthusiasm to make the point he has stretched the evidence further than it is possible to go with any degree of security.

Since we have already seen numerous ways in which the Fourth Gospel's Sophia christology parallels the traditions of Wisdom of Solomon, this further connection seems to strengthen the claim that the Fourth Evangelist may well have known and used that book as part of her/his background material. Even if we allow that the Evangelist used an already existing  $\sigma\mu\epsilon\iota\alpha$  source, it may very well either have been considerably re-worked in the light of Sophia traditions contained in Wisdom of Solomon, or else already have contained hints of that tradition. Once again, Sophia's influence can be traced behind a major feature of the Fourth Gospel's presentation of Jesus Christ. Jesus Sophia performs his  $\sigma\mu\epsilon\iota\alpha$  in parallel to those attributed to Sophia, culminating like hers in the deliverance and

salvation of the people: through the drowning of Pharaoh's charioteers and the miraculous availability of a crossing for the Israelites in the sea in Wisd 19:1-9, and through the death and resurrection of Jesus in John 18-20. Ashton's comments on the relationship of Wisdom of Solomon 11-19 to the Prologue of John are also applicable here: "with this portrayal of wisdom as the active agent in salvation history. . .the stage is set for her transformation into the Johannine Logos"<sup>281</sup>.

### 3.3 SOPHIA AND THE JOHANNINE JESUS

We have now considered a wide range of themes, rehearsed in the Prologue and developed in the body of the Gospel, which may be seen as reflecting the influence of Wisdom thought and in particular the figure of Sophia, on the Fourth Evangelist's understanding of Jesus<sup>282</sup>. In doing so we have seen that the Prologue's introduction of the Logos/Sophia is no unconnected preface, but is actually a preparation for the presentation within the Gospel as a whole of a Jesus who is the embodiment of that Logos/Sophia. All the major themes of the Prologue are worked out in the ministry of Jesus Sophia.

Thus we may see that there is hardly a Johannine theme which does not reflect the influence of Sophia to one degree or another, although in some instances the author has naturally developed what is said of her in new ways to meet the experience of the community to which the Gospel is addressed.

We have been able to point to a number of areas where Sophia's influence may be identified, which have not previously been recognised or given their full weight in discussions of her relationship to the

Johannine Jesus. The ἐγὼ εἶμι sayings were shown to be more thoroughly *rooted* in Sophia speculation than merely touched by it. Several new elements in the relationship between Jesus and God the Father were identified as showing signs of Sophia's influence. The Descent-Going Away motif may perhaps be more clearly understood when viewed against a Sophia background and when the emphasis on ascent as such is dropped in favour of the idea of 'going away'. The enigmatic Revealer, who reveals only God, begins to make more sense also when viewed in Sophia's light. The content and authority of the absolute ἐγὼ εἶμι, a theme clearly derived to some extent from the Old Testament tradition concerning the name of God, was further clarified also with reference to Sophia, as were elements of the interpretation of the humanity/divinity question. In addition, we were helped in our understanding of the Fourth Evangelist's presentation of the Spirit, through its very close identity with Jesus Sophia in the Fourth Gospel and through the overlap in meaning between Logos → Sophia → Pneuma in Wisdom literature, by the background material in the Sophia tradition. Lastly, we saw how even the σημεῖα material, pre-Johannine though it most probably is, may well have been re-interpreted under the influence of the 'signs' attributed to Sophia in Wisdom of Solomon.

While it would be wrong to deny that other influences have been at work in the process of the formation of Johannine christology as we now know it through the Gospel, we can nevertheless see from our survey, that the Fourth Evangelist, at almost every turn, has found in Sophia tradition useful material to help clarify our understanding of Jesus Christ. Thus, Johannine christology is truly a thoroughgoing

Sophia christology: Jesus Christ is none other than Jesus Sophia incarnate.

We need, then, now to re-open the question which we posed towards the beginning of the chapter: why does John never make an explicit connection between Jesus and Sophia? If it was intended that the reader should indentify Jesus with Sophia, would not the easiest way to ensure this have been through a direct statement like, for example, ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ σοφία? Yet this is clearly not the approach which the author has adopted, as the absence of any word of the σοφός/σοφία group shows. There must be some important reason for the adoption of the more subtle presentation of Jesus as the embodiment of Sophia. We hope now to uncover that reason and at the same time to find some pointers to the solution of another Johannine mystery, namely the disappearance of the Logos.

### 3.3.1 JESUS AND SOPHIA : A GENDER PROBLEM RESOLVED?

The author of the Fourth Gospel was perhaps more conscious of the gender of the human Jesus than we generally have been willing to concede. In a Gospel which puts such stress on *incarnation*, the 'becoming-fleshness' of Jesus, to use the figure of Sophia, clearly a woman in the Wisdom literature and tradition, as an appropriate vehicle for exegeting that event meant a problem of gender. How could the man Jesus be seen as the embodiment of the woman Sophia? This is almost certainly the way in which John sees Jesus, yet the direct identification of Jesus with Sophia cannot be made, because Jesus is a man.

It is difficult for us to know precisely what was in the mind of the Fourth Evangelist, but at least from our perspective we have produced sufficient evidence to suggest that the way in which the author got around this problem was both ingenious and sophisticated. The title Logos is used in the introduction to present Jesus, "the immanent Son who makes the transcendent Father visible"<sup>283</sup>. Yet the Prologue is, at the same time, an introduction to Jesus as Sophia, the feminine face of God. The rest of the Gospel then goes on to outline, in discreet but emphatic fashion, the ministry of Jesus Sophia. This essential and fundamental influence from the figure of Sophia, can very well help us to make progress toward understanding the relationship between the Prologue and the rest of the Gospel. Nowhere is it possible to find a Logos in either Jewish or Greek thought who functions in precisely the same way as the Jesus who stands at the centre of the unfolding drama of the Fourth Gospel. Yet the themes of the Prologue are manifestly worked out in the body of the Gospel. In the figure of Sophia we may find the vital link in the author's mind between Prologue and Gospel. The Logos is Jesus Sophia, whose life and ministry mirror so much of the experience previously attributed by the Wisdom writers to Sophia. Of course, the history of interpretation of the Fourth Gospel shows that the patriarchal interpreters have chosen to ignore this subtle shift, preferring to compress the feminine expression of the Godhead into the all-male picture of Jesus: the man who makes the heavenly Father known! But was this understanding really what the author of the Fourth Gospel, who consistently wants to bring an understanding of Jesus as the incarnation, the embodiment of Sophia, intended? Our findings may at

least cast some doubt upon this, and allow us to redress the balance from our perspective today.

Having attempted to establish that the Gospel is a presentation of the life and ministry of Jesus Sophia, we must now go on to ask what concrete evidence may be brought forward from the Gospel to support the thesis that the author has made a *deliberate* switch to accommodate the problem of aligning the female Sophia with the man Jesus. If John wishes to maintain the feminine aspect of the divine in Jesus, is it not reasonable to expect that there would be some evidence of this, for example, in 'feminine' aspects of the Gospel. A brief glance at the Fourth Gospel shows that *women* do play an important role in the ministry of Jesus Sophia. Why is it that John develops the interaction between Jesus and women in a way in which none of the other Gospels, not even Luke, really comes near to doing? Why is it also in the encounter between Jesus and women that many of the most significant Christological revelations and statements are made? Is there evidence that these stories about women were themselves influenced by that same Sophia tradition? These are questions to which we must address ourselves in the next chapter.

It is perfectly plain to see that Jesus was a man, but the Fourth Gospel allows us the possibility of understanding that this maleness is not an ontological statement about the nature of God<sup>284</sup>. Just as Sophia could express the feminine face of God without making God into a woman, so too the male figure Jesus does not make God into a man. In Jesus we are supposed to see the fullness of God revealed, and that includes both male and female, but within the obvious limitations of the human body in terms of gender! John may thus be seen as already

anticipating the problems of the second century: what is not assumed cannot be redeemed. If Jesus is mere *man*, what happens to the other half of the human race? Yet the point of John's Wisdom Christology is precisely that Jesus Sophia is not mere man, but rather the incarnation of both the male and the female expressions of the divine, albeit within the limitations of human flesh<sup>285</sup>.

Johnson goes on to draw some christological conclusions from this recognition, conclusions which John not only *leads* to, but to which, we would want to assert, we are *intended to come*, through the deliberately close identification made between Jesus and Sophia:

If the deity of Christ is the deity of Wisdom incarnate, then to recognize the deity of Christ is to recognize that in Christ God manifested herself, her power as Creator, her love as Saviour, in a full and final way. The gender particularity of Jesus does not reveal that God must be imaged exclusively as male. In Jesus Christ we encounter the mystery of God who is neither male nor female, but who as source of both and Creator of both in the divine image can in turn be imaged as either. Through wisdom christology we see that their saving power and love are poured forth in the world through this crucified human being - a coincidence of opposites in every dimension<sup>286</sup>.

We must go on in the next chapter to ask what tangible results this has for the relationships which Jesus Sophia has with those encountered during the earthly ministry, and see the ways in which the Fourth Evangelist's use of the figure Sophia has influenced the picture of those relationships.

### 3.3.2 THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE LOGOS

Our findings in this chapter may also point us to a possible solution to an age-old problem of Johannine exegesis: the mysterious

disappearance of the Logos. Why is the Johannine Jesus introduced so dramatically as the Logos in the Prologue, but then never again referred to as such in the rest of the Gospel? On the basis of our observations we offer the following proposal.

Having introduced Jesus as the Logos/Sophia, the author proceeds to present him within the Gospel as Jesus Sophia in action. The Logos is not important as a title in itself, being merely a vehicle by which it is possible to introduce Sophia incarnate as a man. To state this in the Prologue is sufficient, for the rest of the Gospel is both an exposition of the themes announced in the Prologue and at the same time an unfolding tale of Jesus Sophia's interaction with the world. Outside of the Stoic tradition and the philosophical framework of Philo, neither of which can be shown with any kind of certainty to have been influential in the formation of the Fourth Gospel, the first century reader had no background picture of a 'Logos' against which to understand the Johannine Jesus. But there was Sophia, whose intimacy and continuity with God could provide a clear pattern for the relationship between Jesus and God as portrayed in the Fourth Gospel. This intimacy was the root of all speculation on Sophia, just as it was the foundation stone of the Johannine community's understanding of Jesus Christ. Having set out the terms in the introduction, Jesus the Logos = Jesus Sophia, the author goes on to portray the life of Jesus Sophia lived in intimate communion with God. This finds expression in the Father-Son relationship, which dominates the Fourth Gospel's Christology. This relationship takes its terms not from the gender of God, but from that of the earthly Jesus. Thus the Logos disappears after the brief introduction for two reasons. Firstly, it is merely a

vehicle accomodating the introduction of Jesus Sophia, whose progress is then mapped throughout the Gospel and is therefore immediately dispensable. Secondly, it gives way to a more adequate description of the intimacy of the Jesus Sophia - God relationship appropriate to the human gender of Jesus, namely that of the Father - Son language in the Fourth Gospel.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### WOMEN IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Our investigation of the influence of Sophia traditions on the Christology of John's Gospel has led us to see that the differences in style, language and content between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics goes much deeper than we would notice on the level of a superficial reading. The Fourth Gospel is indeed an extremely complex and sophisticated presentation of the claims of Jesus Sophia incarnate. Since the focal point of the Gospel is the christological claims of Jesus, we shall now ask if this influence of Sophia in that crucial realm bears also on other features of the Gospel as a whole. Since we have been stressing that the Fourth Evangelist may have been *conscious* that the gender of Jesus and that of Sophia posed a problem in terms of direct identification, and have offered an interpretation of how this was tackled through the medium of presenting a Jesus Sophia who is a unique blend of the male and female (Jesus is a *man* who exhibits all the characteristic traits of the *woman* Sophia), we are now interested to view in detail anything which might be seen as unusual over against other New Testament traditions in terms of gender roles within the Fourth Gospel as a whole. We turn to this task through an examination of the role of women as characters in the Fourth Gospel.

Among the more notable features of John's presentation of the earthly ministry of Jesus Sophia is the prominent role played by women throughout. Indeed, when one compares the Fourth Gospel with the other three, it becomes clear that almost all of the stories involving women are unique to that Gospel, even if the characters involved appear elsewhere. What is even more striking is the frequency with

which these stories involving women occur in the context of a significant christological statement. A woman is present at the beginning of his ministry [2:1-11]; it is to a woman that the Messiah first reveals his true identity [4:26]; it is a woman who first makes the true confession of Jesus as the Christ [11:27]; it is a woman who anticipates the sign of true discipleship in the anointing of Jesus' feet [12:1-8]; the women are found to be faithful to the end at the cross [19:25-27]; and finally it is to a woman that the Risen Christ first makes himself known. Thus we can see that throughout the Gospel, women feature at some of the most important points, often, as we shall see, to the exclusion of the male disciples and certainly in a better light than them. We shall now begin to examine each of these incidents in turn to ascertain the significance of each within the Gospel and to determine the relationship each bears to the christology presented by the Fourth Evangelist.

#### **4.1 JESUS SOPHIA AND HIS MOTHER, AT CANA (Jn 2:1-11)**

At first sight the story of the appearance of Jesus at the wedding of a friend in Cana seems an inauspicious beginning for a consideration of the effect of Sophia christology on the role of women in the Fourth Gospel. The brief, but blunt dialogue between Jesus and his mother in verses 3-4 might lead us to the conclusion that the Johannine Jesus had little time for women in his ministry, especially if he could dismiss his own mother with such apparent aloofness. However, a proper examination of the text and its context may well open our eyes to quite a different conclusion.

The Wine Miracle at Cana is an important landmark in the unfolding drama of the Fourth Gospel for several reasons. Firstly, it is the initial act of Jesus' public ministry, what the author calls the first σημεῖον, and thus of particular interest for understanding what follows in the rest of that ministry. Secondly, following as it does hard on the heels of the 'call' issued to Nathanael and the promise given to him of 'greater things' to come (μείζω τούτων ὄψη 1:50), it must be seen as an important pointer to that promise. Thirdly, the opening line of the story indicates that it occurred τῆ ἡμέρᾳ τῆ τρίτῃ, which, given the significance of this phrase in early Christian proclamation<sup>1</sup>, must point to a special significance in the miracle itself. From the point of view of our particular interest, it is important also that the opening 'sign' offers the first opportunity for the appearance of a woman in relation to Jesus Sophia.

The text itself seems to be based on a traditional miracle story, possibly from a "signs source"<sup>2</sup>, which has been the subject of redactional activity. It is not the purpose of this present study to discuss the merits or demerits of such a theory, but it may provide an important insight into the way in which the final compiler of the Gospel understood both the miracle itself and the role of Jesus' mother in it. We note, for example, that many commentators suggest that the dialogue between Jesus and his mother in 2:3-4 was not part of the original story, but has been inserted by the redactor in order to serve a theological/christological purpose<sup>3</sup>: such a purpose would be of obvious interest to our present investigation, and matters of this sort will be discussed as they arise in the course of our examination of the story.

#### 4.1.1 EXEGETICAL COMMENTS

The opening temporal reference (τῆ ἡμέρᾳ τῆ τρίτῃ) of 2:1 presents a problem when read as a mere chronological marker in the sequence started in 1:29,35,43. Various attempts have been made to reconcile the dating of chapters 1 - 2, most seeing it as a sequence making up a 'week', so that the first miracle occurs on the first day of the week<sup>4</sup>. While these attempts are interesting, it is much more likely that the reference to the third day is meant to be understood as the Day of Resurrection<sup>5</sup>, the day on which the δόξα of Jesus is revealed<sup>6</sup>. The intention would then be to indicate the purpose of the ministry upon which Jesus now embarks, to reveal the δόξα which will ultimately become established through his death and resurrection. Although Schnackenburg feels such an interpretation goes "beyond what can be gathered from the narrative itself"<sup>7</sup>, two things are in its favour. Firstly, the σημεῖον reaches its goal in 2:11 with the revelation of Jesus' δόξα, which in turn elicits belief on the part of the μαθηταί. Secondly, the following pericope about the attack on the Temple specifically mentions the 'three days' as the period in which Jesus would be 'destroyed and rebuilt'. Thus, although the Fourth Gospel does not refer to the resurrection itself as taking place on the third day, it was clearly understood in these terms by those in the Johannine community responsible for the Gospel who reflected on the ministry of Jesus after the event (2:22). The reference to τῆ ἡμέρᾳ τῆ τρίτῃ in 2:1 becomes unnecessarily difficult when treated as just another chronological marker, being better understood as setting the tone for both the miracle and ministry of Jesus Sophia which follow.

The appearance of the μαθηταί in 2:2 poses another problem: to whom does John refer? Unlike the Synoptic tradition, we have no record of a call of the 'Twelve', although they do suddenly appear out of the blue in 6:67ff. More likely we should regard 2:2 as a reference to those called in 1:35ff<sup>8</sup>, although it may also be possible that they stand here in some contrast to the disciples of John the Baptist<sup>9</sup>. Whoever is meant, we must note their essential *passivity* in the story over against the *activity* of Jesus' mother, a point to which we shall return below. Their purpose in the story is fulfilled in the final statement of 2:11 - και ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ.

#### 4.1.2 THE ROLE OF JESUS' MOTHER

Jesus' mother<sup>10</sup> is one of the principal characters in the short drama of 2:1-11, being mentioned specifically in the opening verse. Not only is she identified directly, in contrast to the anonymous group of μαθηταί, but she also plays a prominent and active role in what follows. She is involved in a dialogue with Jesus and even beyond that maintains an interest in the miracle itself by instructing the servants to follow the commands of Jesus. This should perhaps surprise us, since we have no evidence that the wedding takes place in a home where Jesus' mother would have influence, and certainly not where she would have authority over servants: she apparently takes charge where she is not in charge! This matter will later require an explanation<sup>11</sup>.

Having set the scene and listed the players, the author proceeds immediately to the meat of the story by means of a simple statement from Jesus' Mother: οἶνον οὐκ ἔχουσιν. This brief phrase has been the

subject of intense discussion by scholars over the years: does it show any expectation of the miraculous on the part of the son by the mother? Has Mary already shown recognition of who Jesus is in this statement? Since this is the first miracle in John's Gospel, to have expected a miracle from Jesus would be an indication of some special insight on Mary's part. This has led a number of commentators to reject the suggestion<sup>12</sup>, though why Mary should be viewed any differently from either John the Baptist or Nathanael<sup>13</sup>, both of whom have already shown knowledge of who Jesus is, is at least open to question!<sup>14</sup> Others see in the statement a direct request for a miracle<sup>15</sup>, but this may be going too far on the evidence of the text. Clearly Jesus' answer implies that Mary expected something of him, but we should be cautious about claiming expectation of a *miracle*.

Our contention is that the answer to the meaning of her statement may be found in understanding it in the light of Jesus as Sophia incarnate. The disciple of Sophia knows whom to ask for wine! "Come eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed" (Prov 9:5). "Whoever drinks from me will thirst for more" (Sir 24:21)<sup>16</sup>. Mary knows where to go when the wine runs out, to the one who offers a supply of it to those who will drink; to her son, Jesus Sophia<sup>17</sup>. Like both John the Baptist and Nathanael before her, Mary recognises who Jesus is, and shows her recognition by her action. However, unlike the μαθηταί, who are shadowy figures in the background, Mary recognises this *before* the miracle occurs and prepares herself and others for the provision of all that Jesus Sophia can offer. The μαθηταί only come to faith *after* the miracle/sign has occurred. Mary's discipleship is therefore truly

Johannine in its character (20:29), in that it shows a faith *without signs*, rather than one which needs them in order to be convinced<sup>18</sup>.

The dialogue continues with Jesus' reply: τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; οὐπω ἤκει ἡ ὄρα μου. Due to the difficulty in finding an appropriate English equivalent to γύναι, this appears at first sight to be a very impolite response. However, although the use of γύναι in relation to his *mother* is somewhat strange, it is in no way impolite or unusual as an address to women<sup>19</sup>. Indeed, it is the most common address used toward women by Jesus in the Fourth Gospel (4:21; 8:10; 19:25; 20:13). Its use again towards his mother in the pathos-laden scene at the foot of the cross (19:25-27) indicates clearly that the term does not show a lack of affection<sup>20</sup>. There is, however, no precedent in any source, either Jewish or Greek, for a son to address his mother in this somewhat formal manner<sup>21</sup>. Does this, then, imply a rejection by Jesus of his mother? Evidently not, since she is fully accepted, though similarly addressed in the crucifixion account. What we see here is rather a deliberate playing down of Mary's motherhood as a *significant influence* on the ministry of Jesus. She remains his mother, as the consistent use of the title 'Mother of Jesus' in John suggests, but in common with the Synoptic Gospels<sup>22</sup>, John takes the view that the driving-force behind Jesus' life and ministry is not family expectations, but doing the will of God<sup>23</sup>. This theme is discussed further in 7:1-10, where it is made clear that family cannot interfere with his ministry on the basis of their kinship. There is, therefore, no *rebuke* of Mary, but, as Fiorenza puts it:

The address distances Jesus from his biological mother and rejects any claims she might have on him because of her family relationship to him. At the same time, it places Mary of Nazareth at the same level as the

Samaritan woman (4:21) and Mary of Magdala (20:13), both of whom were apostolic witnesses and exemplary disciples<sup>24</sup>.

The distancing effect is enhanced by the use of the Semitic phrase τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, which is probably best translated: "What has this concern of yours to do with me?"<sup>25</sup> Apparently, at least on the Johannine level, Jesus wants to ensure the impression is given that what follows in terms of a miracle does so because he has decided to get involved and not because it was his business to do so in the first place at the bidding of a family member. The supply of wine for the wedding guests is the province of others, not of Jesus. In addition, Mary has not understood that the 'hour' of Jesus has not yet arrived<sup>26</sup>: that is, the hour of glorification in which the gift of the Spirit would be made, supplying the on-going need of the disciples<sup>27</sup>. This statement makes sense when placed alongside the refusal of Mary Magdalene's 'clinging' in 20:17 - the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus are all part of one process in John's understanding, his 'lifting-up' (12:32-33), which is completed only in the giving of the Spirit (20:22)<sup>28</sup>. Just as Mary Magdalene misunderstands the resurrection as a restoration of the old-style bodily relationship and is accordingly told to back-off<sup>29</sup>, so too Jesus' mother, who correctly understands Jesus Sophia as the true source of 'wine', needs to see that such wine will only be 'on-tap' after the hour of glorification: that is, after the coming of the Spirit and the inauguration of the new age. Of course, the miracle occurs on the 'third day' and as such is part of the Johannine scheme of signs of the 'not yet', so the wine which will be supplied in the miracle is a sign of what will be freely available when that 'not

yet', the 'hour', finally comes. To understand the phrase οὐπω ἔχει ἡ ἄρα μου in this light has the virtue of both maintaining a consistent Johannine understanding of the hour as that of Jesus' final glorification, and of referring what he says directly to what his mother has said: "we have *no wine*" (*not*: "we need a *miracle*!").

What follows Jesus' distancing of himself from family pressure is a statement of his mother's *new* role (2:5). No longer is she viewed as important because of her family ties to Jesus Sophia, but is seen as a model of true discipleship. She acts in faith upon the knowledge which she has, that Jesus Sophia will provide wine for those who come to drink. She thus assumes a position of responsibility/leadership and tells the servants to do as Jesus instructs them. We noted above how this action reflects the Johannine understanding of true discipleship in its anticipatory nature, but it also goes further in this respect by demonstrating the pattern μαρτυρεῖν → πιστεύειν. Although we acknowledge that her intervention is not the *reason* for the miracle, it nevertheless prepares the way for it. Her faithful response in preparation for what is to come (2:5) will ultimately lead others to an encounter with the δόξα of Jesus and a consequent expression of πίστις on their part (2:11). This pattern is consistent with the Johannine understanding of the witness/encounter schema applied throughout the Gospel: the μαρτυρία may lead to an initial response, but that leads on to an encounter with Jesus Sophia, which is the point at which full understanding (πίστις) occurs. We shall see this again in clearer form in the case of the Samaritan Woman<sup>30</sup>.

We may now understand the reason for Mary taking charge in a situation where she apparently has no actual authority or

responsibility. Faith demands that she exercise a role of leadership, whether or not she is entitled to do so according to societal rules and regulations. Such barriers are of no consequence to faith, which must respond to the presence of Jesus Sophia. We can only assume that this to some extent reflects the situation in the Johannine community, where there is no sign of a hierarchical form of leadership, but of a leadership exercised on the basis of calling and response, regardless of the value placed on the individual by others (21:21-22). It speaks for the possibility that women actually were free to exercise such leadership within the community itself - but more of that later!

The most striking of all features relating to discipleship in this story is the marked contrast between the role of Mary and that of the μαθηταί. It is Mary who actively engages in dialogue and who exercises faith, while the μαθηται play no active role at all, being mere bystanders whose only response is to believe because of what they have seen. This is unquestionably a secondary form of response in that it requires the 'sign' in order to be activated. Barrett comments that "manifestations of δόξα during the incarnate life are exceptional and are not granted to all"<sup>31</sup>, but what is more important is that their necessity is already a sign of a weakness of faith not seen in the case of Mary. That the μαθηταί do come to an encounter with the δόξα and thus to belief, is due in no small measure to the faithful insight and preparation of the true disciple of Jesus Sophia, his mother.

#### 4.1.3 THE INFLUENCE OF SOPHIA CHRISTOLOGY

Having seen the influence of Sophia Christology on the role of Mary in the Wine Miracle, we cannot leave the story without looking further at the way in which such influence has acted on other elements of the account. We observed already how Mary recognised in Jesus Sophia the one who was able to offer wine to those who sought it, but the influence of Sophia carries further with regard to the wine itself.

There has been much discussion both of the *amount* of wine provided, some 120 gallons<sup>32</sup>, and of the fact that it replaced the water in the *purification jars*<sup>33</sup>. Both of these matters are affected by the influence of Sophia. Wisdom writers praise the *abundance* of Sophia's provision (Sir 1:16; 6:19; 24:19-21; Wisd 7:11,14)<sup>34</sup>, not only in terms of wine, but in all of life's needs. This abundance of wine is also easier to explain when we understand the implications of Jesus Sophia replacing the purification water. Already in the Prologue to the Gospel the author has emphasised that Jesus Sophia has superseded the Torah (1:17). There is probably a continuation of the hidden polemic here which we have noted before against the current Jewish understanding of Sophia's embodiment in the Torah. The trend towards this is already implicit in Proverbs' equation between keeping the commands of God and calling Sophia a friend (Prov 7:1-5). It becomes explicit in the later wisdom school in the oft-cited passages in Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon and Baruch (Sir 15:1-8; 19:20; 24:23ff; Wisd 6:18; Bar 3:36 - 4:4)<sup>35</sup>, and is finally a subject of considerable discussion in Rabbinic circles<sup>36</sup>. Picking up the threads of the Prologue, the author now recalls in the Wine miracle the alternative

posed in Jesus: no longer is Sophia to be seen as boxed up in the confines of the Torah, but is incarnate in Jesus Sophia, who offers "the wine of His revelation in place of the water of the Torah"<sup>37</sup>.

The same comparison appears in a different form in the parable of the wine skins in the Synoptic tradition (Mk 2:22 par). Just as the new cannot be forced into the confines of the old, so too the new is infinitely more suited to the feast and more desirable in its abundance. The volume of wine shows how extensive this gift of Sophia incarnate is: far more than even the most exuberant wedding guests could hope to consume! The 'water' of the Torah is limited in its scope, but the 'wine' of Jesus Sophia is unlimited in its supply.

Thus we may see that both the picture of Jesus' Mother, her role in the account of the Wine Miracle, and the miracle itself have been the subject of influence from the Fourth Evangelist's Sophia christology.

#### **4.2 JESUS SOPHIA AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN (4:1-42)**

The story of Jesus' encounter with a woman at the well of Jacob in Samaria is an example of Johannine editorial skill at its peak. The account is so full of nuance and symbolism that any treatment of it will only be provisional in nature. Having said that, however, its beauty lies in its essential clarity and simplicity: a tired and thirsty Jesus sits down by a well and asks a woman for a drink. He engages her in conversation leading ultimately to a revelation of his true nature. This evokes faith in the woman, who then fulfils the task of discipleship by calling others to a similar encounter and response. In the midst of all this the author inserts a dialogue on

the nature of the Christian mission, which illuminates the theory of the task which the woman actually undertakes. Our main interest lies in the role of the woman in this scene, but in order to understand it fully we must first look at some pertinent exegetical points.

#### 4.2.1 EXEGETICAL COMMENTS

The Samaritan incident belongs in the immediate context of chapters 2 - 4. In this section there is a concern for the question of faith, and a definite movement can be discerned from lack of faith, through inadequate faith, to complete faith in the person of Jesus<sup>38</sup>. In 2:18-20, following Jesus' act of cleansing the temple, the 'Jews' openly express their disbelief, challenging Jesus' authority. In the following chapter (3:1-21), Nicodemus, a leading Jewish figure, expresses some measure of faith in coming to see Jesus, but never adequately comes to grips with what Jesus has to say to him. This is followed closely (3:22-36) by the witness of John the Baptist, who shows complete faith in Jesus as the 'bridegroom', and understands the need for the diminishing of his own role in relation to Jesus. Through these three accounts, the author indicates the variety of faith/non-faith responses to Jesus within Judaism. Chapter 4 then steps beyond this circle to the question of faith outside Israel and follows a similar pattern, which we shall examine in more detail in relation to the Samaritan woman's movement towards faith.

There is a clear allusion to Old Testament tradition in the meeting between a principal character and a woman at a well<sup>39</sup>. That this connection is intentional can be seen in the reference to 'Jacob's well' (4:6) and the woman's question in 4:12. Other elements

of the story also point us in this direction, not least the temporal reference in 4:6 ὥρα ἣν ὡς ἔστη. Some have tried to find special symbolic meaning in this hour<sup>40</sup>, but when placed alongside Gen 29:7, where Rachel arrives in the middle of the day at the well, the inference becomes clear. Just as the Patriarch Jacob met and found a relationship with a woman at a well, so too Jesus meets with a woman at a well (Jacob's!), and forms what will eventually be a 'fruitful' (4:39-42) relationship with her<sup>41</sup>. Neyrey has also compiled considerable evidence to support the thesis that both Jews and Samaritans used Jacob traditions as a basis for their understanding of worship<sup>42</sup>, and if, as he suggests from later Rabbinic materials, there was an expectation that the Messiah would "have greater knowledge than Jacob"<sup>43</sup>, we would have a firm basis for understanding 4:25.

The setting at the well may also suggest that some matrimonial imagery is intended. Already in the previous chapters, such imagery has been used to describe Jesus' actions and relationships (2:1-11; 3:29). Here the question of the woman's marital and extra-marital relationships is raised by Jesus, but beyond that there seems to be an underlying inference that Jesus, like the Old Testament characters at the well, is offering to the woman something in terms of a fulfilling relationship. We shall look further at this in the course of our examination of the woman's role.

The matter of sources lying behind the story may also shed light on its significance for our study. All the major commentators agree, that despite the historical problems which accompany the present form of the story<sup>44</sup>, behind it lies a traditional account of a conversation between Jesus and a woman. Bultmann<sup>45</sup> identifies this tradition in

verses 5-9,16-19,28-30 and 40, and this analysis has found a fair consensus among subsequent commentators<sup>46</sup>. If it is accepted as at least reasonably accurate, it becomes significant for us to note that the evangelist has expanded the story to include both a revelation of Messianic status by Jesus to the woman (4:26), and an account of her subsequent confession/witness to others, leading to their initial faith and later personal encounter with ὁ σωτήρ τοῦ κόσμου (4:39-42). The import of such a conclusion will be apparent as we consider the woman's role.

#### **4.2.2 THE SAMARITAN WOMAN'S ROLE**

Like the Mother of Jesus in 2:1-11, the Samaritan Woman is a central character, second only to the figure of Jesus in the story. She engages in a lengthy theological discourse with him, is confronted by his claim to Messianic status, goes and shares her discovery and brings others to the encounter of faith. Again, like Mary, she holds the main stage while the shadowy μαθηταί only briefly and confusedly appear in the wings. We shall examine each of these aspects in turn.

##### **4.2.2.1 THE THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION**

The discussion between Jesus and the woman divides into two distinct sections: firstly, the question about water/living water; secondly, the issue of worship. In the first instance she shows little understanding, failing to grasp either who Jesus is, or the nature of the gift which he is offering to her. In this respect she starts off from a position of no faith<sup>47</sup>. However, we should not miss the fact that she is portrayed as sufficiently aware of the Jewish/Samaritan antithesis to recognise it as unconventional that

Jesus should even address her<sup>48</sup>, much less ask if he may use her drinking vessel<sup>49</sup>. She is also sufficiently open in her attitude to allow Jesus to share his insight with her, even although she fails to comprehend it initially.

Her main contribution to the opening section of dialogue is the ironic question about Jesus' relationship to Jacob. She recognises in Jesus' claim to give water, to which he has no access without a miraculous occurrence, an implicit assertion that he is at least on a par with the Patriarch. Since it is possible that the traditions regarding Jacob's miraculous water-drawing from the well were known at the time of the writing of the Gospel<sup>50</sup>, this would indicate that the author wishes to portray the woman as having some theological knowledge or understanding. Contrary, then, to the conclusions of later Rabbinic writers, that women should neither be taught theology nor engage in discussion of it with men, this woman is seen to know something and to be prepared to discuss it openly, with a *male Jew!*

In the second part of the dialogue we see a further hint that the woman is not to be seen as a fool with regard to theological insight. Having been challenged about her marital status, and having received a surprisingly knowledgeable run down on her past from Jesus, she engages him in discussion about the rights and wrongs of worship. Here she shows knowledge of both Jewish and Samaritan tradition and practice, as well as giving voice to speculation regarding the coming Messiah (Taheb)<sup>51</sup>. It is this discussion which moves the woman from the initial 'no faith' position to one of 'incomplete faith'<sup>52</sup>, as she

calls Jesus a 'prophet' (4:19) and opens up the way for the revelatory ἐγώ εἰμι of 4:26.

What influence of Sophia tradition can we see in this dialogue? In the first part of the discourse the central theme is that of 'living water', which will be a πηγή within the life of the one who receives it. In Wisdom Literature there are several references to Sophia as the 'spring of life' (eg, Prov 13:14; 18:4), and the parallel between Sir 24:21 and John 4:14 has often been noted<sup>53</sup>. The book of Sirach also mentions the ὕδωρ σοφίας in conjunction with ἄριστος in Sir 15:3<sup>54</sup>. However, it is Philo who makes most frequent allusion to Sophia as the θεία πηγή, almost always in allegorical interpretations of the well-scenes from Genesis. In *Fuga* 195 and *Post* 136 he clearly describes Rebecca, the mother of Jacob, as the recipient of Sophia through her drawing at the well. Again in *QG IV*, 98, he describes the water-jar which she carries as a symbol of Sophia (also in *QG IV*, 101,107)<sup>55</sup>. We are again able to see that at the time of the writing of the Fourth Gospel there was a well-developed understanding of Sophia similar to that which we discern within the Gospel. Most interesting also is the observation of Bernard, who notes:

In v.10 the thought is of God as the eternal fountain; but it was also a Hebrew thought that the man who has assimilated the Divine Wisdom becomes himself, as it were, a fountain from which streams of the water of life proceed (Is 58:11)<sup>56</sup>.

This thought is also the theme of the last few verses of Sirach 24, where Sophia speaks of her flow of water expanding from a canal to a river and then to a sea (Sir 24:30-31). The last two verses (24:33-

34) indicate that this gift is for future generations and for those who seek Sophia (τοῖς ἐκζητοῦσιν αὐτήν). Here in the conversation with the Samaritan Woman in John 4 we see Jesus Sophia making the offer of such flowing water to a woman, whose openness to that offer allows it to grow in her and ultimately to flow out to others (Jn 4:39-42).

There may be a further pointer to Wisdom influence in the 'living-water' dialogue through the use of the phrase ἡ δωρεὰ τοῦ θεοῦ (4:10). There is evidence to suggest that the 'Gift of God' in Judaism was seen above all to be the Torah<sup>57</sup>, which is also referred to in Qumran literature as 'living-water'<sup>58</sup>. Once again the implicit criticism of the Jewish view that Sophia is embodied in the Torah comes to the fore in John's picture of Jesus Sophia: the true gift of God which the woman receives is not the old water of the Torah, but the living-water which is the gift of Jesus, Sophia incarnate.

The Jacob traditions alluded to in John 4 may provide us with an interesting link with Wisdom traditions. The Samaritans certainly held the Patriarchs in the highest esteem<sup>59</sup>, and they interpreted Mount Gerazim as the place in which many of the great events of the Patriarchal Narrative, including Jacob's vision<sup>60</sup>, took place. This vision was particularly important in the establishment of another place of worship than Jerusalem, since it was on awakening from his dream that Jacob declared the Lord to be "in this place (Gen 28:16)"<sup>61</sup>. Having already compared Jesus with Jacob in the first part of the theological discussion, the Samaritan Woman then turns to discuss the place (τόπος - as in Gen 28:16 ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τοῦτο) of true worship with him. It is striking to notice that three of the major

passages concerning Sophia in the Apocryphal literature make mention of Jacob. Sirach 24 reports that she came to "dwell in Jacob" (24:8 - cf. Jn 1:14), and having become embodied in the Torah she would become the "inheritance of the assembly of Jacob" (24:23). Among the divine acts of Sophia in Israel's history listed in Wisdom of Solomon 10 we find her care and protection extended to Jacob (10:10-12). Through her care he discovered "Godly conduct (εὐσέβεια)" to be the greatest power of all (10:12). Lastly in Baruch 3:37 Jacob is again mentioned and in 4:2 he is encouraged to grasp hold of Sophia, who is the book of the Law. Now in John's account of the incident at Jacob's well, the Samaritan Woman, whose tradition and theology focus significantly on Jacob tradition, is confronted by the 'inheritance of Jacob' who has come to 'dwell among Jacob', and who uncovers her 'ungodly conduct' (Jn 4:16-18). This one offers her something 'greater than Jacob': not the book of the Law, as in Baruch, but the gift of living-water, from one who can say, ἐγὼ εἶμι! As Neyrey puts it: "The woman's question in 4:12 seems to contain a pun, implying that Jesus is supplanting Jacob, the Supplanter, thus doing to Jacob what he did to Esau"<sup>62</sup>.

The very setting of the theological discussion between Jesus and the woman is evocative of Sophia tradition. It is in the public places that she cries out to those who will hear her (Prov 9), and she offers understanding to those who will listen and learn. This is precisely what Jesus Sophia does at the well of Samaria, and the response is just that which is expected of the true disciple of wisdom: she listens, discusses and learns. What is even more astonishing is that she then goes on to become the 'maidservant', as

expected in Prov 9:3 (  $\eta' \sigma\eta\gamma\gamma$  ), who goes out to call others to Jesus Sophia. We will return to this theme later in our study.

The theological discourse of John 4:10-26 thus offers us a picture of Jesus Sophia calling and teaching the disciple, and of the responsive disciple of Sophia who listens and becomes her maidservant. The dialogue itself is also laden with traits of Sophia, whose teaching is to be shared as a spring of living-water flowing through the disciple to others.

#### 4.2.2.2 THE RECIPIENT OF REVELATION (4:26)

At the climax of Jesus' conversation with the woman comes the classic self-revelatory formula  $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omega \acute{\epsilon}\iota\mu\iota$ . This is the first appearance of this important piece of Johannine vocabulary in the Gospel and comes as a clear response to the prompting of the woman in 4:25 concerning  $\acute{\omicron} \text{Μεσσι}α\varsigma$ . . .  $\acute{\omicron} \text{λεγόμενος χριστός}$ . Despite its obvious context, some major commentators have refused to recognise in it any divine revelatory function<sup>63</sup>, but as we noted in the previous chapter<sup>64</sup>, in every instance where  $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omega \acute{\epsilon}\iota\mu\iota$  is used apart from the 'I Am-sayings', its usage is based on some aspect of Jesus Sophia's relationship to God. In this instance, as in 8:28 and 13:19, it depends upon the role of Jesus as Revealer or imparter of intimate knowledge<sup>65</sup>. The woman's response to this statement in itself also bears out our conclusion with regard to its revelatory function: she leaves what she is doing forthwith and goes about the task of spreading the good news<sup>66</sup>.

One might ask why the Johannine Jesus is willing to accept the title Messiah at this point where at other times it seems to be

refused<sup>67</sup>, but the explanation may well lie in the fact that the Samaritans did not look to the Taheb as a king, but more as a teacher and lawgiver<sup>68</sup>.

The Samaritan Woman is therefore the first recipient of a direct revelation of who Jesus is. We need not rehearse again here the evidence for understanding ἐγώ εἰμι as a statement of Jesus *Sophia*. Is it surprising that it should be to a woman, a Samaritan with a very shady background, that Jesus should first entrust this information and not to the μαθηταί? Clearly it already raised some eyebrows among that very group (4:27!), but in the dramatic structure of the evangelist, they are made to accept the fact passively. Apparently, for at least one early Christian community, it was quite acceptable to have Jesus reveal his essential nature to a 'shady lady'! Whatever conclusion is drawn with regard to the historicity of this scene, the evangelist clearly pictures Jesus *Sophia* as the breaker down of natural, social and sexual barriers. To some degree this acts as a polemic against the entombed *Sophia* of the Torah in Sirach, who expresses antipathy both towards women (eg. Sir 42:14)<sup>69</sup>, and towards Samaritans (Sir 50:25-26).

#### 4.2.2.3 THE WOMAN AS MISSIONARY/WITNESS

The result of the revelation, ἐγώ εἰμι, is that the woman undertakes the task of witnessing to others. Μαρτυρία and the verbal form μαρτυρεῖν are important words in the Gospel of John<sup>70</sup>. The purpose of witness is always that others might come to faith, a purpose most clearly expressed in the Evangelist's own statement of intent in writing the Gospel: ἵνα πιστεύσητε (20:31). We must ask,

then, if the witness of the woman fulfils this requirement or whether the inadequacy suggested by 4:42 is sufficient for us to declare the woman's role to be inferior, or her witness incomplete.

The first thing we note is that her witness is preceded by a typically apostolic<sup>71</sup> reaction to the encounter and call of Jesus: she leaves the present mundane task in order to take up the role as witness. A brief comparison of 4:28 with the Synoptic accounts of the call of the fishermen reveals a very similar pattern of response to the encounter with Jesus:

Mk 1:18 - καὶ εὐθὺς ἀφέντες τὰ δίχτυα. . . (cf Mt 4:20,22).

Lk 5:11 - καὶ . . . ἀφέντες πάντα. . . .

Jn 4:28 - ἀφῆκεν οὖν τὴν ὑδρίαν αὐτῆς ἢ γυνή. . . .

Barrett suggests quite another motive for leaving the jar behind - that Jesus might have the drink which he had earlier requested and that he might show his disregard for the levitical cleanliness regulations<sup>72</sup>. However, we find this an inadequate solution on two counts. Firstly, by asking the woman for a drink in the first place, Jesus had already shown his disregard for these laws. Secondly, the discussion of water/living water has already been left well behind and the detail seems to fit much more logically with the woman's urgency to bear witness to the one whom she has encountered, than with a request for a drink.

A second apostolic feature of the woman's witness is the result: the people of the village ἤρχοντο πρὸς αὐτὸν (4:30), and many believe δια τὸν λόγον τῆς γυναικός. This coming to Jesus is what Schneiders calls the "first movement of saving faith in Jesus"<sup>73</sup>. This becomes

clear when we consider the words attributed to Jesus by the evangelist in the speech concerning the Bread of Life:

ἐγὼ εἶμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς  
ὁ ἐρχόμενος πρὸς ἐμὲ οὐ μὴ πεινάσῃ  
καὶ ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ οὐ μὴ διψήσῃ πώποτε (6:35)

There is a clear parallel to be drawn between 'coming' and 'believing', and it is the task of the witness to initiate this movement toward belief, though as 6:44-45 points out, this work is really from God<sup>74</sup>. Thus, when we read that the villagers 'come to him' (4:30), we realise that the harvest, of which Jesus will shortly speak (4:35-38), is made possible through the witness of the woman. This is further underlined by 4:39, which directly attributes the belief of some of the villagers to the word of witness given by the woman. This type of witness and the consequent belief of the hearers is exactly what Jesus prays about in the prayer of John 17. Note the parallel between the witness of the woman, that of Jesus, and that of those for whom he prays:

<u>Woman</u>	πολλοὶ	ἐπίστευσαν διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς γυναικὸς	(4:39)
<u>Jesus</u>	πολλῶν πλείους	ἐπίστευσαν διὰ τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ	(4:41)
<u>Others</u>	τῶν	πιστευόντων διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν	(17:20)

The Samaritan Woman's witness is not merely linguistically identical to that of Jesus, but is seen from further comparison with John 17 to be correct in terms of its outcome. Jesus' request concerning those who believe through the word of the disciples (17:21) is important for our understanding of this aspect of the woman's work. He prays that they 'might be one' in him, and that θεωρῶσιν τὴν δόξαν τὴν ἐμήν. In other words, in Johannine missiological terms there is a stage beyond

mere belief on the basis of the witness of a believer, that being the *personal encounter* with the Redeemer himself. Witness is the vital initial stage before the believer encounters the δόξα of Jesus. This is exactly what happens in the case of the Samaritan Woman's missionary endeavour: she tells the villagers about her encounter with Jesus and causes them to go out and see for themselves. The people then no longer believe simply on the basis of the word of witness from the disciple, but because they themselves have heard (ἀκηκόαμεν) and know (οἶδαμεν). Bultmann remarks: "just as the Baptist's mission was nothing of itself, its only purpose being to bear witness to Jesus (3:22-30), so too the witness of Jesus' messengers is nothing of itself, but finds meaning only in him"<sup>75</sup>.

That there is no qualitative difference between the witness of the woman and that of men in the Fourth Gospel can be seen through a brief comparison of the Baptist's witness, Philip's witness and that of the woman herself.

<u>John the Baptist</u>	<u>Samaritan Woman</u>
1:7-8 Came to bear witness that all might believe	
1:32-34 Receives revelation and witnesses to what he has seen and heard	4:26 Receives revelation 4:29(39) witnesses to what she has seen and heard
(1:39) ἔρχεσθε καὶ ὄψεσθε (Jesus)	4:39 δεῦτε ἴδετε
1:42 Simon is led to Jesus as a result of witness	4:39 Many people believe as a result of witness.
1:36 Disciples of John are led to Jesus through witness	4:40 Villagers are led to Jesus through witness.
1:37 They follow Jesus	4:41 More believe
1:41 They confess him as Messiah	4:42 They confess him as Saviour of the World

3:30 "He must increase, I must decrease" (John Baptist)

4:42 Basis of belief alters from the woman's word to the encounter with Jesus.

Philip

Samaritan Woman

1:43	Jesus calls Philip	4:7-26	Jesus calls the woman
1:45	Philip seeks out Nathanael	4:28	Woman seeks out the townspeople.
1:46	Nathanael doubts Philip	4:39	<i>[In contrast]</i> Many believe her.
1:46	Philip calls Nathanael to 'come and see'	4:29	Woman calls the townspeople to 'come and see'
1:47-48	Leads to an encounter with Jesus	4:40-41	Leads to an encounter with Jesus
1:49	Nathanael believes	4:41	More people believe
1:49	Confession of faith	4:42	Confession of faith

The dialogue between Jesus and the disciples in 4:31-38 furnishes us with an explanation of the task which the woman is busy undertaking. It is significant that the verb  $\kappa\omicron\mu\iota\delta\upsilon\upsilon$  is used to describe this task, since by the end of the first century this was a well-established technical term for the work of Christian mission<sup>76</sup>. Paul uses it frequently (19 times) to describe both his own work and that of others, judging it "worthy of the highest esteem"<sup>77</sup> in I Cor 16:16 and I Th 5:12. Fiorenza is thus justified in her assessment of the Samaritan Woman's work: "since the term is used here in a technical missionary sense, the woman is characterized as the representative of the Samaritan mission"<sup>78</sup>.

Thus the woman's witness, despite being superseded by the encounter of the villagers with Jesus, is exactly what is expected of a disciple in the Johannine school. In no sense is there any implication of her witness being secondary or inferior: rather it is parallel to the task undertaken by the maidservant of Sophia in Prov 9:3. She goes out to invite others in, at which point they too may learn from Sophia the treasure she has to offer. Indeed, the offer is of something to drink and of life (cf. Prov 9:5-6)! The disciple of Jesus Sophia is thus seen here at her daily work.

That the villagers have encountered Sophia incarnate in Jesus is reflected in the title by which they confess him in their encounter following the woman's witness: ο σωτήρ τοῦ κόσμου (4:42). Foerster is able to state quite categorically that "there is no evidence that 'Redeemer' or 'Saviour' was a current Messianic title in the New Testament period"<sup>79</sup>, an assessment which finds more or less unanimous accord amongst commentators. This leaves us with the problem of where the title comes from, since it is neither suggested by the Samaritan Woman herself (4:29), nor by Jesus' own revelation of his Messiahship (4:26). Brown suggests that we should "seek the meaning of the term in the Greek world where it was applied to gods, emperors and heroes"<sup>80</sup>, but this seems an unnecessary leap from the world of Jewish Sophia speculation which we have seen dominating the christological thought of the Fourth Gospel. The idea of a 'Saviour of the World' is already contained in Jn 3:17, where the motif of the sending of the Son into the world is directly connected with the purpose: ἵνα σωθῆ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ. We have noted in our previous chapter how this sending motif is itself a feature of Sophia's role in Jewish Wisdom

speculation<sup>81</sup>, and we may find further evidence of her influence in the sphere of 'salvation' in the chronicles of Sophia in Wisd 10-11.

The introduction to the account of Sophia's saving acts in Wisd 10-11 occurs in 9:18 with the words: καὶ τῇ σοφίᾳ ἐσώθησαν. There then follows the famous reinterpretation of Israel's history as the history of the manner in which Sophia has preserved her people. A number of verbs are used by the LXX writer to describe this action, including σώζω (10:4)<sup>82</sup>, but there can be little argument that their meaning points to Sophia as the 'saviour' of Israel. This is a role normally associated with the God of Israel, particularly in texts such as Is 43:3<sup>83</sup>, and indeed the title σώτηρ is used only directly with reference to God even in the Book of Wisdom (16:7). However, since the Fourth Evangelist has made such a clear effort to portray Jesus as Sophia incarnate, and is also willing to identify this same Jesus Sophia as ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου (20:28), this need not be an obstacle to our identification of the 'saviour' of Jn 4:42 with the great Saviour Sophia of Wisd 10-11. Just as the saving role of Sophia and God runs into one in the Book of Wisdom, so too does that of Jesus Sophia and God in the Gospel of John.

Thus we find that in 4:39-42 the maidservant of Jesus Sophia fulfils her task of discipleship by bringing her 'harvest' to an encounter of faith in the saving presence of Jesus, Sophia incarnate.

#### 4.2.2.4 THE WOMAN AND THE ΜΑΘΗΤΑΙ

Before leaving this story we should note again the contrast between the prominent role played by the woman and the background part of the μαθηταί. The Fourth Evangelist clearly deemed their reaction

to Jesus' action in talking to a woman significant enough to mention (4:27). Their astonishment is not brought about by the fact that he is in conversation with a Samaritan, but with a woman. The comment of verse 9 might have led us to expect otherwise! However, despite their surprise, the μαθηταί say nothing, and Jesus also remains silent on the issue. This contrasts with his apparent ability, shown in other parts of the story, to 'know' what people are thinking (4:17,34). Here again we may see the influence of Sophia tradition on the story: since Jesus Sophia is the embodiment of Sophia, who sends out her maidservants to do her work, there is no need to justify such action to a group of male disciples, who as yet have not expressed any real understanding or faith other than that based on 'signs' (2:11). Despite their own in-built prejudices, the μαθηταί of Jesus Sophia must come to realise that he goes beyond human bias and legal institution to break down the barriers of division. They are about to be a party to reaping a harvest for which they have certainly not done any work, so they are in no position to demand an explanation of Jesus' action!

We may, with some justification, speculate that the surprise of 4:27 mirrors the reaction of some within (and without) the Johannine community, who doubted the suitability of women for the role of leadership, witness or teaching in the Christian community. They would be confronted here with the simple fact that Jesus Sophia saw neither a need to justify this, nor a reason to stop it: on the contrary, he both encouraged and accepted it without question or comment.

4.3 JESUS SOPHIA AND THE WOMEN AT BETHANY (11:1-44; 12:1-8)

The account of Jesus' relationship with the two sisters of Bethany, Martha and Mary, divides into two distinct stories, in each of which one woman plays a major role and the other a minor, background part. These two women, along with Mary of Magdala and Jesus' mother, are characters known to us also from the Synoptic tradition (Lk 10:38-42), which has raised the question of the relationship between the different traditions<sup>84</sup>. While some have noted similarities between the portrayal of the women in both Gospels<sup>85</sup>, there remain a number of important stumbling-blocks to any theory of direct dependence, not least the fact that Luke knows nothing of a brother, Lazarus, nor of his remarkable excursion into the realm of the dead<sup>86</sup>! If there has been any borrowing of material by the Fourth Evangelist from Luke in relation to these women, it has been so masterfully retouched and couched in Johannine language, thought and symbolism, as to be almost irretrievable. In terms of this present study, we are best to consider the stories on the basis of their appearance as *Johannine* accounts, rather than attempting any comparison with possible Synoptic parallels.

These two stories mark the climax of Jesus' ministry 'in the world', the former being the culmination of the 'signs' (11:1-44), and the latter a precursor of the coming hour of glorification through the death of Jesus on the cross (12:1-8). It is obviously noteworthy that at such a crucial stage in the unfolding drama of the Fourth Gospel, we again find women in a prominent role. We shall consider the two

stories separately before drawing some overall conclusions related to both.

#### 4.3.1 MARTHA AT THE TOMB OF LAZARUS (11:1-44)

The story of the resuscitation of Lazarus is undoubtedly the most problematic account in the entire Gospel tradition in terms of historicity and sources<sup>87</sup>. On the other hand, its theological/christological purpose is quite clear, as Schnackenburg indicates: "together with the healing of the man born blind, the raising of Lazarus expresses the central Christological idea of the fourth gospel, that Jesus is the light and life of the world (cf. 1:4)"<sup>88</sup>. While this is an accurate assessment of the present form of the narrative, it reflects a tremendous switch in emphasis from what must have been the original miracle story<sup>89</sup>. There the resuscitation of Lazarus was the central element of the account, but in its present Johannine re-formulation, the miracle has become almost incidental, the emphasis lying much more on the dialogue between Jesus and Martha, culminating in his revelation of himself as the giver of life and her confession of him as the Son of God.

The story bears comparison with that of the Samaritan Woman in terms of its structure. Both stories have an introduction followed by an extended theological discussion between Jesus and a woman reaching a climactic point of revelation. There then follows a brief interlude (Jesus and the μαθηταί in 4:31-38; Jesus, Mary and the mourners in 11:28-38), before the woman reappears and the story is played out to its conclusion in another encounter with Jesus. Like John 4:31-38, in chapter 11 we have a dialogue between Jesus and the μαθηταί (11:6-16),

which shows their lack of understanding of both Jesus' message and his intention. We shall also see, as we turn to Martha's role, how she too becomes a model for the Johannine community.

#### 4.3.1.1 MARTHA'S ROLE

The opening verses of the chapter give us an introduction to the main characters involved in the story. It is significant that within this introduction there is an insistence on Jesus' affection for these folk, not least in verse 5: ἠγάπα δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν Μάρθαν καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτῆς καὶ τὸν Λάζαρον. Some have suggested that this emphasis was made simply to make the reader aware that Jesus was not being callous in delaying visiting and dealing with the problems of close friends: he actually did love them despite his action<sup>90</sup>. This does not, however, do justice to the Johannine use of the verb ἀγαπάω, which elsewhere is used to describe the intimacy of relationship which Jesus shows with his disciples<sup>91</sup>. The prominence of this usage prompts Witherington to comment:

In the light of the theological significance of such language elsewhere in John and its use to describe the relationship between Jesus and His disciples, it seems the Evangelist is implying that these women and Lazarus were disciples of Jesus; and that there were women prominent among the disciples even during Jesus' earthly ministry<sup>92</sup>.

While we would agree in principle with this conclusion, we would see the relationship as more clearly defined through the figure of Jesus *Sophia*. The Wisdom writers frequently speak of Sophia's love for her disciples, as well as of the love which God has for both Sophia and those who love her:

Prov 8:17 - ἐγὼ τοὺς ἔμε φιλοῦντες ἀγαπᾶ (cf 8:21)

Wisd 7:28 - οὐθέν γὰρ ἀγαπᾷ ὁ θεὸς εἰ μὴ τὸν σοφίᾳ συνοικοῦντα

Sir 4:14 - καὶ τοὺς ἀγαπᾶντος αὐτὴν ἀγαπᾷ ὁ κύριος

Indeed, Sir 4:12 makes a direct connection between those who love Sophia and those who love life: ὁ ἀγαπᾶν αὐτὴν ἀγαπᾷ ζωὴν. In the great hymn of Sophia in Sir 24 she is also said to dwell among those (in the city) who are beloved (Sir 24:11). Once again, in this use of ἀγαπάω to describe the relationship of God to Sophia and the Disciple, we may see the touch of Sophia's influence upon the figure of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel and on his relationships with his disciples.

#### 4.3.1.1.1 THE RECIPIENT OF REVELATION (11:25)

For the second time in the Gospel of John, we find within this account, that Jesus makes a significant revelation about his divine nature in the context of a conversation with a woman. The content and background of the saying, ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωὴ, has already been discussed<sup>93</sup>, and we noted that the emphasis lies on the gift of life, initially the province of Yahweh in Israel's tradition, then attributed to Sophia, and now finally to Jesus Sophia. The revelation of this important facet of Jesus Sophia's nature comes in response to Martha's expression of her understanding of resurrection (11:24): οἶδα ὅτι ἀναστήσεται ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει ἐν τῇ ἑσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ. In this she appears to be presenting a form of one particular Jewish theology of the resurrection, possibly that of Pharisaic groups<sup>94</sup>, though it may also be addressing the eschatological viewpoint of the Christians to whom John's Gospel is written<sup>95</sup>. As in the case of the Samaritan Woman, so also with Martha we find that women are accepted as worthy participants in theological

discussion, and are sufficiently well-versed in it to be able to present a representative viewpoint<sup>96</sup>.

The initial Judaeo-Christian confession of 11:24 falls short of the realized eschatological expectation of the Fourth Evangelist, that "the gift of life which conquers death is a present reality in Jesus Christ"<sup>97</sup>. However inadequate it may be, it is not openly rejected by Jesus, but rather opens up an opportunity for a revelation of the true life-giving power of Sophia incarnate. It seems as though Sophia is tutoring her disciple, recalling some of the Proverbial and Sapiential sayings about those seeking Sophia finding life (Prov 3:16; 8:35; 9:11; Wisd 8:13). That Jesus' statement is intended both as revelation of his nature and as teaching is confirmed by the use of ἐγώ εἰμι, and by the following question addressed to Martha to ensure her understanding of what has been said: πιστεύεις τοῦτο;. It is that question which leads on to the most remarkable piece of Johannine re-interpretation of Christian tradition yet encountered - Martha's confession of faith in Jesus (11:27).

#### 4.3.1.1.2 MARTHA'S CONFESSION OF FAITH

In the discussion of the role of women in the Fourth Gospel, there can hardly be a single verse which is more significant than Jn 11:27. In the words attributed to Martha at this point we perceive a movement from the initial Judaeo-Christian confession of 11:24 to a statement of *the* confession of the early Church in general and the Johannine community in particular. Culpepper assesses it in the following manner:

Martha moves from the affirmation of traditional eschatological expectations ('the last day') to the

climactic confession, which is echoed in 20:30-31. This is the confession which in other traditions was made by Peter. Here it is made by a female disciple and tied securely to the Johannine affirmation of Jesus as the resurrection and the life (11:25)<sup>98</sup>.

Like Jesus' Mother at the feast in Cana, Martha, in her confession, also demonstrates the Johannine principle of true faith, in that it anticipates the sign rather than following it. It is a response to the *word* of Jesus Sophia rather than to the *sign*. Bultmann is correct in dismissing those exegetes who claim that Martha has failed properly to understand Jesus, acknowledging instead that she recognises that "in Jesus the eschatological invasion of God into the world has come to pass"<sup>99</sup>. In the moment of confession, Martha truly becomes "the model for full Christian confession"<sup>100</sup>. We shall see this clearly as we examine the relationship of her confession both to that of Peter at Caesarea Philippi and to that of the Johannine community, as reflected in the summary statement of purpose in Jn 20:30-31.

#### 4.3.1.1.2.1 MARTHA AND PETER

Even the most superficial reading of the Gospels will reveal that Martha's confession in Jn 11:27 bears a striking similarity to that normally attributed to Peter in the Synoptic tradition. A comparison of the relevant texts confirms this to be the case:

Mt 16:16 σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος

Mk 8:29 σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς

Lk 9:20 . . . τὸν χριστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ

Jn 11:27 σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὃ εἶς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος

It is noticeable that the Petrine incident associated with Caesarea Philippi is absent in the Johannine tradition, thus allowing us to see Martha's version as a replacement. Indeed, the only confession which is attributed to Peter by the Fourth Evangelist (6:68-69) neither clearly parallels that of Mt 16:16 at Caesarea Philippi<sup>101</sup>, nor expresses the Johannine community's recognised confession of faith (20:31). This leads Fiorenza to remark that Martha's statement

is a christological confession in the fuller Johannine messianic sense. . . . Thus Martha represents the full apostolic faith of the Johannine community, just as Peter did for the Matthean community"<sup>102</sup>.

It is unlikely that there is any real attempt on the part of the author of John to denigrate Peter through this substitution<sup>103</sup>. The Fourth Evangelist is neither interested in the prominence of individuals, nor in a hierarchy of offices, but rather in "disciples in their common responsibility of mutual love and mission"<sup>104</sup>. Martha is not to be accorded a special place of prominence in the community on account of her confession any more than Peter should be, but she *is* representative of the confessing believer within that community. That she is used as a representative in this way by the Gospel writer is helpful for our understanding of the role which women may have occupied in the Johannine community, for as Schneiders remarks with reference to Martha's role: "it is difficult to understand unless women in John's community actually did function as community leaders"<sup>105</sup>. The Evangelist therefore does not have to explain, or apologise for her confession, but accepts it as a matter of fact that a woman, "in her own responsibility"<sup>106</sup>, may receive the revelatory teaching of Jesus Sophia, make the appropriate Christian response, and

so stand as a symbol of faithful discipleship and confession for the whole community.

4.3.1.1.2.2 Jn 11:27 = Jn 20:31

We have already asserted that Martha's confession is representative of the faith of the Johannine community: but how can we be sure of this? Fortunately the Evangelist has provided us with a clear statement of the intention behind the writing of the Gospel in 20:30-31. In doing so, it is indicated that the purpose is the elicitation of the belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. When we place this statement of intent alongside the words of Martha's confession we can immediately see their similarity:

Jn 11:27 σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος  
Jn 20:31 Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ

This summary remark of 20:31 goes on to record the goal of such a confession: καὶ ἵνα πιστεύοντες *ζῶν* ἔχετε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ. Not only does Martha's confession parallel the 'true' confession of the Johannine community, but it also leads on to the prescribed goal in the demonstration of Jesus as the giver of life!

We have not come far enough, however, in merely noting the linguistic parallel between 11:27 and 20:31. We noted above, that Martha does not respond to the *sign* which Jesus performs, but to the *word*. Throughout the Gospel there is a continuing emphasis on the fact that the σημεῖα do not in themselves evoke true confession or belief<sup>107</sup>. In 2:23-25, following the first of the signs at Cana, Jesus does not entrust himself to those who believe because of the

sign. In 4:48 Jesus rebukes those who will not believe without a sign. On seeing the sign in 6:14-15, the people try to make Jesus their king, showing complete misunderstanding of what has happened. Instead of the requested sign in 6:30, Jesus offers *words*, namely the revelation of his character as the Bread of Life. In 9:16 the sign causes division and misunderstanding, and finally in 11:47, as a result of the sign presently under examination, the decision is made to kill Jesus. By contrast, however, it is the *word* of Jesus which offers life and to which the believer is expected to respond (4:39,42; 6:63; 8:30). Within the context of the Lazarus account Jesus again makes this point clear (11:40): it is not those who see the sign who will believe, but those who respond in belief to the *word* who will see and *understand* the sign. Indeed, this is the present reality for the community to whom Martha's confession is addressed: Jesus is no longer physically present to perform signs, but through the word belief is possible, thus opening the way to the revelation and perception of his glory<sup>108</sup>. Martha shows us how the community understands this faith → seeing/understanding process by anticipating the sign in her responsive confession on the basis of the word.

We must now consider to what extent the words of the confession itself actually reflect the Sophia influence which we have seen plays such a major role elsewhere. It is important to recall the observation of Culpepper, that the confession of 11:27 is "tied securely to the Johannine affirmation of Jesus as the resurrection and the life"<sup>109</sup>. In other words, for the Johannine community, the one who is confessed as Son of God equals the one who makes the claim to be the giver of life. We have already noted the connection between

these concepts in 20:31, and at the same time we have consistently seen that the one who gives such life is none other than Jesus Sophia. We may therefore draw the equation - Son of God = Jesus Sophia. This is not surprising when we consider the intimate relationship which exists in the Gospel between Jesus and the 'Father'. Placed alongside the intimacy of relationship we have already observed between God and Sophia, we find a solid basis for making this equation. There is a sense in which both Jesus and Sophia are still subordinate to God, but at the same time they are both fully in union with God. So we find that Sophia can be called the "Daughter of God"<sup>110</sup>, and treated almost as a lover, certainly the "beloved" of God<sup>111</sup>. The Johannine Son of God stands in the same position before God (the 'Father'), and confession of him as such (11:27) by a 'maidservant', is governed by the previous self-revelation of his character as Jesus Sophia, the giver of life (11:25). It is because of the existing model of Sophia's relationship with God that the author of the Fourth Gospel has no problem with the idea of what looks like 'subordination' to the 'Father' being placed in the same context as apparent equality with God. Schnackenburg comments:

Johannine Christology allows for the prayer by Jesus because the subordination of the Son to the Father is never denied (cf 14:28,31), but because the Son lives completely in union with the Father, whose will he knows and carries out, his prayer is always sure of being heard. It is because he is one with God that he prays, and because he prays he is one with God<sup>112</sup>.

However, as we noted previously, the term 'subordination' is an inappropriate one in relation to what the Fourth Evangelist wants to say about Jesus Sophia's relationship with God. The point is rather

one of *continuity* in both authority and revelation rather than the superiority/inferiority of one over the other.

We may now conclude with certainty that Martha's confession of Jesus as the Son of God is both fully Johannine in its language and in its christological insight. It is consistent with the pattern of revelation of Jesus as Sophia incarnate, and once again allows a woman to stand as the true representative of "discerning faith" within the Christian community<sup>113</sup>.

#### 4.3.1.2 MARY'S ROLE

Mary's role within the Lazarus narrative is almost insignificant in comparison with that of her sister. It nevertheless merits brief comment. Pollard, who correctly assesses Martha's role in the story, sees in Mary the *contrast* to believing discipleship: "Mary's faith crumbled entirely in her grief"<sup>114</sup>. This is not altogether fair, since there is no discussion of her faith, or lack of it, in the text. What was taken as an open-ended statement showing the confidence of her faith in the case of Martha<sup>115</sup> - 'if you had only been here my brother would not have died' (11:21) - is construed, for some inexplicable reason, as *lack* of faith in Mary's mouth (11:32)<sup>116</sup>! If Mary's weeping is a sign of lack of faith, then we must note that, in the words of the shortest verse in the Bible, ἐδάκρυσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς (11:35).

We would contend quite the opposite with regard to Mary, there being small pointers even in 11:32-33 that Mary was anything but lacking in faith. Her grief over the death of her brother is hardly a matter for surprise, but it does not prevent her, immediately on

seeing Jesus, from falling at his feet in an act of apparent devotion. This feature is not unlike the picture we have of her from Lk 10:38-42 (Μαριάμ καὶ παρακαθεσθεῖσα πρὸς τοὺς πόδας τοῦ κυρίου [Lk 10:39])<sup>117</sup>, but perhaps more telling still is the picture which follows in Jn 12:1-8 of Mary at Jesus' feet devotedly anointing them and wiping them with her hair. As we turn now to that account we will see how her role is also an example of discipleship for the Johannine community, again constructed under the influence of Sophia christology.

#### 4.3.2 MARY OF BETHANY - THE ANOINTING (12:1-8)

Although we have briefly encountered Mary in the events surrounding the resuscitation of her brother, it was for her part in the anointing of Jesus' feet in her home at Bethany that she was particularly remembered in the Johannine community. This is clear not only from the fact that the story is recorded in 12:1-8, but also earlier from 11:2, where she is identified not only as the sister of Lazarus and Martha, but more specifically as the one who 'anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair'<sup>118</sup>.

This incident is one of the very few accounts in the Fourth Gospel for which we have direct Synoptic parallels (Mk 14:3-9; Mt 26:6-13; [Lk 7:36-50?])<sup>119</sup>, but even so it is clear that the story has been considerably influenced by Johannine thought in its present form in the Gospel<sup>120</sup>. Although Mark and Matthew both site the incident at Bethany, neither names the woman involved. If we examine the act of anointing itself, we find that, despite the marked difference in the purpose and setting of the story, there is at least as much overlap

with the account of Lk 7:36-50 as with the more similar setting of the other Synoptic accounts:

	Mt 26:6-13	Mk 14:3-9	Lk 7:36-50	Jn 12:1-8
<i>Location</i>	Bethany	Bethany	?	Bethany
<i>House of</i>	Simon	Simon	Simon	Mary (etc.)
<i>Anointed</i>	Head	Head	Feet	Feet
<i>Material</i>	Expensive Ointment	Expensive Ointment	Tears and Ointment	Expensive Ointment
<i>Further Action</i>	-	-	Wipes away tears with her hair	Wipes away ointment with hair
<i>Purpose</i>	Preparation for burial	Preparation for burial	Response to forgiveness	Preparation for burial

All of this might lead us to the conclusion that the Fourth Evangelist has simply been involved in a hopeless confusion of sources<sup>121</sup>. Certainly there are some signs that the two traditions might have been conflated, but that is hardly a result of confusion, rather of intention on the part of the author. We are not intended to look so much at the literal detail of the type or amount of the ointment used in the account, but rather "we are virtually forced to attach primary significance to its symbolism"<sup>122</sup>. This is a typically Johannine approach to tradition, as we can see from, for example, the story of the miraculous feeding in Jn 6. There, as in the anointing story, the detail of the feeding is not the central point, the emphasis being on that to which the event points, namely Jesus as the Bread of Life. Here in this present case, as we shall see, the act of footwashing in chapter 13 is the point to which the anointing is being addressed.

In the context of our present investigation it is precisely this symbolism which is important for our understanding of the text. It comes at the beginning of the end of Jesus' public ministry in John, his departure from 'the world' being imminent<sup>123</sup>. In content it is both a "prophetic action"<sup>124</sup> anticipating the death and burial of Jesus, and a precursor of the action performed by Jesus in washing the feet of the μαθηταί (13:1-20). We shall turn to an examination of these features in an attempt to discern both the significance of Mary's action for our understanding of the role of women in the Johannine community, and to determine any influence which Sophia tradition has brought to bear upon its formation.

#### 4.3.2.1 MARY'S ROLE

The first problem we have in determining Mary's role in the story of the anointing comes in understanding the purpose to which that action is directed. Ostensibly it is an act of preparation for burial (εἰς τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ ἐνταφιασμοῦ μου - 12:7), but as such it appears rather strange. Why should she anoint his *feet* to that end in such a public display? Is this simply an assimilation to the Lukan narrative with its emphasis on devotion and penitence, thus suggesting a similar theme in the Fourth Evangelist's mind? Is it merely an attempt to avoid the implication of the Markan/Matthean accounts, where a sign of kingship, the anointing of the *head*, is given<sup>125</sup>? Certainly there would have been justification for a kingship anointing just prior to the Entry into Jerusalem (12:12ff), but John shies away from any identification of Jesus as king (6:15) even in the entry narrative itself (12:14-16).

The anointing of feet was a virtually unknown action in the Palestinian setting<sup>126</sup>, although the writer Athanaeus states that it was an Athenian custom in places where people "lived luxuriously"<sup>127</sup>. Even if this is true, it is highly questionable if John (or Luke) would have known of such a tradition, and it certainly would have been quite out of place in rural Palestine<sup>128</sup>! This compels us to look at the action in the light of Johannine symbolism. Only a few paragraphs later (13:1-20) the author recounts for the community that most distinctive of Johannine actions of Jesus symbolising discipleship, namely the footwashing. In that incident Jesus undertakes to wash the feet of the μαθηταί and then wipes them dry with a towel. There is an immediate similarity between this incident and Mary's action in anointing Jesus' feet, so we must ask whether or not it was the author's *intention* to suggest to the reader that a direct connection be made between the two.

There are two pointers within the anointing story itself which lead us toward an affirmative answer to this question. Firstly, as we have already noted, John changes the anointing from one of the *head* to one of the *feet*. This would suggest that it was particularly significant for the author (and reader) that the *feet* were anointed! It is difficult to find any significance in this change other than in its proximity to the footwashing account, but the matter is further clarified by our second pointer: she wipes the feet dry again with her hair. This really is an astonishing action on two counts: firstly, it must have been a hideously messy thing to do; secondly, it necessitated what could have been seen as a notably 'disgraceful' piece of behaviour on her part in loosing her hair in public.

Jeremias comments that "it was the greatest disgrace for a woman to unbind her hair in the presence of men"<sup>129</sup>, and quotes a number of Rabbinic sources to support this claim<sup>130</sup>. The picture of Mary as a virtuous, believing member of the household in which Lazarus had been raised from the dead, not to mention the devoted Mary of Luke's account, may be tainted by the impropriety of such an action. This strange turn of events forces us to consider the motive behind this presentation of Mary in the mind of the Fourth Evangelist.

The act of footwashing was normally performed by a servant of the household as a sign of welcome and hospitality, or by guests themselves using water provided by the host<sup>131</sup>. It would appear that, in Jewish circles, the servant could not be forced to wash feet, but often did so as an act of devotion or loyalty towards the master<sup>132</sup>. In the foot-washing scene in John 13 there are a number of breaks with the traditional form of footwashing: (i) Jesus performs the act *during* the meal and not immediately on arrival. (ii) As Brown puts it, "Jesus humiliates himself and takes on the form of a servant"<sup>133</sup> (iii) It was specifically cited as an example to be followed by others in the future (13:14-15), the sign *par excellence* of the exercise of true discipleship (13:12-17). Now when we compare these details with the action of Mary in 12:1-8, we discover a remarkable similarity between the two: (i) Her action takes place *during* the meal as Jesus is reclining as the guest of honour at table. (ii) She potentially humiliates herself by loosing her hair in a manner which could have been associated with women of 'easy virtue', in order to complete the task normally associated with a servant. (iii) Following the spurious objections of Judas Iscariot (one of the

μαθηταί (!]), Jesus implicitly recommends her action by the double-sided saying of 12:8, which we may paraphrase: "You won't have me with you much longer, so it is good to take this opportunity; but at the same time, you will have plenty of opportunity in the future to serve the poor who are always with you". When considered in this way, the parallel between Mary's action and that of Jesus towards the μαθηταί in 13:1-20 is unmistakable.

Perhaps the most important point to emerge from this comparison for our present consideration, is the reminder that the emphasis in John 13:1-20 lies upon the exercise of *true discipleship*. It is significant that the Johannine Jesus has to point out the path of true discipleship - preparedness for humiliation and servanthood - to the μαθηταί, and indeed has to argue with the archetypal μαθητής, Peter, before they are able to grasp its significance. Mary, by contrast, already knows the way to show her devotion and loyalty to Jesus Sophia, and does so in an unsolicited act which presages Jesus' own action. Her anointing of Jesus' feet is thus evocative of true discipleship in three ways. Firstly, it shows a knowledge of what needs to be done without first having to 'see' it done by Jesus. Secondly, it accepts the potential for humiliation as part and parcel of the exercise of loyalty and devotion to Jesus Sophia. Thirdly, it takes on the role of servanthood in the execution of the task. We must, therefore, agree with Schneiders' conclusion, that in the anointing scene "we have a presentation of Mary as a disciple of Jesus in the *strict sense* of the word"<sup>134</sup>.

4.3.2.2 MARTHA'S ROLE [12:2]

Although Mary clearly has the major role in 12:1-8, she is not the only woman to serve as an example of true discipleship for the community. In our urgency to deal with the main body of the account, we should take care not to pass over the short phrase in 12:2 - καὶ ἡ Μάρθα διηκόνει. The immediate impression here is that she is maintaining the classic 'feminine role' of waiting on the men at table, but to leave our understanding on this level would be to miss completely the point which we believe the Fourth Evangelist is making here.

By the end of the first century the words διακονέω, διακονία and διάκονος had come to take on special meaning for the Christian community, being associated with particular offices of ministry within the Church<sup>135</sup>. In Paul's writing we find reference to διάκονοι in both the Churches at Philippi and Rome<sup>136</sup>. The book of Acts recognises the necessity of setting aside certain people within the Christian community for the task of διακονία<sup>137</sup>, and by the time of the writing of the Pastoral Epistles, there appears to be a distinct office established under the title διάκονος<sup>138</sup>. Thus, by the time the Fourth Evangelist compiled the Gospel, there was an established context for the use of the term.

The verb διακονέω appears only *three* times in John's Gospel, *all* of these being in chapter 12 [12:2,26(x2)]. It is generally acknowledged that the Johannine community was not concerned with ecclesiastical offices, but at the same time, the author of the Gospel could hardly have been unaware of the implications of using the verb

διακονέω. We must, therefore, examine how John understands the word and clarify its meaning in the mouth of Jesus Sophia. Here 12:26 gives us an important insight: the one who 'serves' Jesus, 'serves' God<sup>139</sup>, and will be rewarded by sharing in the δόξα of Jesus<sup>140</sup>. Brown comments that the Synoptics do not speak of the disciples as 'serving' Jesus, but of the *women* doing so (Mk 15:41; Lk 10:40)<sup>141</sup>, so once again we may have an example of the way in which the Fourth Evangelist adapts tradition to show a different perspective on the role of women in the community. If it is the *servant* who truly follows, i.e. who is the true disciple, then Martha has already shown that quality, again in advance of any instruction to do so.

In answer to those who might dismiss this interpretation as an over-emphasis of a small detail we must also stress the following points. Firstly, since the Johannine account is clearly parallel to the *anonymous* Synoptic anointers, there was no need for the Evangelist to mention Martha at all<sup>142</sup>. Secondly, the picture given in John 11-12 of the household of Mary, Martha and Lazarus suggests it was a reasonably prosperous Jewish home. There was, therefore, no need for Martha to have been serving at table, this being the duty of a servant in the household rather than of the householder herself. Indeed, Witherington notes that "in a Jewish context, women were not allowed to serve at meals if men were in attendance, unless there were no servants to perform the task"<sup>143</sup>. Thirdly, since the whole anointing story is, as we have suggested, an anticipatory example of the task of true discipleship revealed in the word and action of Jesus Sophia, it would hardly be surprising to find a similar sequence in the case of Martha's διακονία, especially given its close proximity to 12:26.

Thus, in Martha's brief appearance in 12:2 we see another example of the involvement of women as the true symbols for Christian discipleship in the Johannine community. We would submit that it is at least possible that the Fourth Evangelist has *consciously* chosen to use the verb διακονέω as a means of both reinterpreting established Christian tradition and promoting women in the role of exemplary true disciples.

#### 4.3.2.3 SOPHIA INFLUENCE ON THE MARTHA/MARY ACCOUNTS

We have already noted in the course of our examination of the stories in chapters 11 and 12, that Sophia tradition has influenced the development of the Johannine accounts at several points, not least in the designation of the Bethany circle as 'beloved' (11:5) and in the overarching theme of Jesus as the giver of life (11:25). There are, however, further pointers to such influence in the portrayal of Martha and Mary.

Firstly, we note the emphasis on the response Martha makes to the *word* of Jesus, rather than to the *sign* which follows. Throughout the canon of Wisdom literature, there is an insistence on the need to respond to the words/speech of Sophia. In the opening chapter of Proverbs we find that Sophia cries out in the street and raises her voice in the public places (Prov 1:20). In the great hymn of praise to her in chapter 8 we again find reference to her 'lifting her voice' (8:1,4); 'calling out' (8:3,4); the clarity or truth of her speech (8:6,7,8); and there is a persistent injunction to 'listen' to what she has to say (8:6,32,33,34). To those who do listen the promise is given of finding life (8:35). This pattern is repeated in the book of

Sirach, where in chapter 24 the call goes out to listen to the words which come from Sophia's mouth (Sir 24:1-3), and ultimately, in the identification of her with the Torah (24:23), there is clear indication that her words must be heeded and obeyed.

It is precisely this kind of attitude that the Fourth Evangelist seeks in the disciple of Jesus Sophia: to respond to the word which he brings is to be seen as a true disciple. This is exactly what Martha does in the dialogue which *precedes* the sign of the raising of Lazarus. In listening to the words of Jesus Sophia regarding the gift of life (Jn 11:25), she is able to respond with words of faith which need no sign to elicit them (11:27). This is a parallel process to that expected of the disciple of Sophia in the Wisdom tradition.

We may also here see another instance of the subtle Johannine polemic against the view that Sophia is bound up in Torah. Jesus Sophia is the one to whom the disciple comes for life, and the one whose word brings a response, in contrast to the view of Sirach which we noted above. Taken on its own, this instance might be a difficult case to argue, but when seen alongside the various stages of this polemic we have remarked upon from 1:17 onwards it may be taken as further grist to the mill in the argument.

Secondly, the question of service and devotion to the master lies at the root of the picture of Mary in both accounts and Martha in 12:2. To be at someone's feet as a deliberate act could well be understood as a sign of devotion or reverence toward that person<sup>144</sup>. It was certainly an indication on the part of those behaving thus, that they accepted a position of servanthood in relation to the one at

whose feet they placed themselves'<sup>45</sup>. Martha is explicitly referred to as one who 'served', so in both women we see this attitude of accepting the role of devoted self-offering in relation to Jesus. Both these women's service, of course, reflects that which Jesus himself offers his disciples in Jn 13 and indeed throughout his life, death and resurrection.

We hear frequently in the Wisdom tradition of the way in which Sophia also offers herself to those who will love her, and how her disciples are called to offer devoted service to her. While the word *διακονεῖν* is not used of the relationship between Sophia and her disciples, there is a clear and constant insistence on the need for a thoroughgoing devotion to her ways and teachings, which we may rightly call 'service'. Prov 4:7, for example, emphasises that even though it costs everything, the disciple should pursue the cause of Sophia. Devotion to her involves sitting daily at her door, and her maidservants go out and call others to the tables which have been prepared (Prov 9:2-3).

Once again in the stories of the women of Bethany, we may see the influence of Sophia's hand at work. Her disciples are attentive, obedient, self-giving servants, just as Jesus Sophia also calls his servants to be.

#### **4.4 JESUS SOPHIA AND THE WOMEN AT THE CROSS (19:25-27)**

The incident at the foot of the cross in the Fourth Gospel (19:25-27) remains a difficult passage to interpret for a number of reasons. Firstly, the presence of women close enough to the cross to be involved in a conversation stands in direct contradiction to the

Synoptic picture of the women observing from a distance<sup>146</sup>. Secondly, this difficulty in aligning the Johannine and Synoptic accounts, allied to the already considerable symbolism noted in the Fourth Gospel, has led most scholars to treat the scene symbolically rather than historically: but *what* does it symbolise<sup>147</sup>? Thirdly, none of the Synoptics mentions the Mother of Jesus in the vicinity of the cross, although specifically mentioning other women: why is she suddenly introduced by the Fourth Evangelist at this point for the first time since the Wine Miracle at Cana? Fourthly, the question remains as to who is actually being placed in charge of whom: does the Beloved Disciple replace Jesus as a son to be cared for, or is the emphasis more on the new role of the Mother of Jesus in 'adopting' the Beloved Disciple as a son? We shall look at these questions briefly in turn, before attempting to determine any influence of Sophia Christology on the scene as a whole.

#### 4.4.1 EXEGETICAL COMMENTS

The Synoptic Gospels are clear in their assertion that none of Jesus' followers were at the foot of the cross at the time of his death. In Mk 14:50 and Mt 26:56 we hear that the disciples (μαθηταί) fled, leaving Jesus to face his final hours alone. Even the Johannine tradition implies this in the prediction of Jn 16:32, that they would be scattered and Jesus left alone. In addition, the women in Mk 15:40/Mt 27:55/Lk 23:49 are also said to be "at a distance" (ἀπὸ μακρόθεν), thus leaving none of Jesus' closest companions at his side. While it is true that some theological considerations on the part of the authors of the other Gospels may have, at least in part, influenced their picture of events<sup>148</sup>, it would be difficult to

explain either the absence of a reference to Jesus' Mother at the cross, or the omission of the very significant words of Jesus concerning her future and that of the Beloved Disciple. In placing the women, and in particular the Mother of Jesus *παρὰ τῷ σταυρῷ*, the Fourth Evangelist is setting the scene for the coming last will of Jesus for his Mother and the Beloved Disciple.

Jn 19:26-27 must certainly have stemmed from the hand of the Fourth Evangelist and not from either the Synoptic tradition or some other source<sup>149</sup>. In it, as Brown remarks, "are brought together the two great symbolic figures of the Fourth Gospel whose personal names are never used by the evangelist"<sup>150</sup>. At the critical hour of Jesus' life, his death, two representative disciples are to be found at the centre of proceedings. This is again at variance with the Synoptic tradition, where the women onlookers are mentioned only *after* Jesus has expired. In contrast, Jesus' Mother stands and receives the final words of Jesus before he declares his work complete (19:30). In other words, the words spoken to the Mother of Jesus and the Beloved Disciple are part of the completion of the earthly ministry of Jesus, after which he is able to hand over his spirit and die.

It is difficult to assess the extent to which the presence of the women at the cross involved *courage*. While some have doubted the accuracy of the report on the basis that Roman soldiers would not have allowed relatives to approach the foot of the cross for fear of attempts to relieve the suffering of the victim<sup>151</sup>, still others have been able to produce evidence to the contrary, suggesting that relatives were often present and close by at such events<sup>152</sup>. However, Ochsorn's comment that "in its cultural setting, the presence of

women at the cross or at the tomb of Jesus was not exceptional, and in itself might not have signified exceptional courage or devotion"<sup>153</sup>, needs to be weighed against its relevance to the intent of the Gospel writer. The women stand in contrast to the *male* disciples at the cross, rather than out of any virtue of their own. They showed a faithfulness to the end which was singularly lacking in the traditional male disciples according to the tradition, even allowing that the Beloved Disciple was a man.

In our examination of the role played by Jesus' Mother at the Wedding in Cana, the opening of Jesus' earthly ministry, we saw that Jesus was deliberately distancing himself from any kind of familial pressure to perform 'signs', in order to be free to exercise the ministry for which he had been sent by God. This was done partly through the formality of the address to his mother, *γύναι*, and the avoidance by the Evangelist of her proper name. Here again, in the scene at the close of his earthly ministry, we see exactly the same technique applied: *ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ* (19:25,26); *γύναι* (19:26). As also in 2:1-11, where Jesus' *ἑώρα* had not yet arrived, here again we find reference to its imminent arrival and the role of the Beloved Disciple and Jesus' Mother in it (19:27)<sup>154</sup>. Just as the Cana account was imbued with symbolism, so too the scene at Golgotha has similar overtones. It is thus no surprise when Lindars remarks, that in these verses "John's creative hand is more evident than any signs of historical tradition"<sup>155</sup>. But as in the Cana account, so here we must also be careful in defining the symbolism more closely. Many suggestions have been made, notably: that Mary evokes the New Eve, or Lady Zion, who brings forth her offspring in the new age<sup>156</sup>; that Mary

represents the Jewish-Christian Church while the Beloved Disciple represents the Gentile Church, the text being an indication of their need for unity in the new age<sup>157</sup>; or that Mary represents the Church and the Beloved Disciple the Christian in the new community<sup>158</sup>. Whatever direction we take in this matter, it is worth noting Lindars' observation regarding the interpretation of that symbolism:

Considering what has been said in the Supper discourses about the new relationship which is to follow Jesus' death, it is natural to interpret this in the light of 16:7 'It is to your advantage that I go away'. From this point of view the mother/son relationship of Mary and the Beloved Disciple has a quality which could not have existed if Jesus had not been crucified<sup>159</sup>.

It is only as a result of Jesus' 'going away' that any need arises to deal with his mother's and the Beloved Disciple's future. It must be significant that Jesus does not say "Mother", but prefers "Woman", thus continuing the trend we have already noted in relation to his family members<sup>160</sup>. Since his mother's acceptance in the first instance (2:1-11) was on the basis of her true discipleship and not family ties, here again as the "γύναϊ" appears, it is as a representative disciple. With her stands another of the great symbols for true discipleship in the Fourth Gospel, namely the Beloved Disciple, and it is these two who are called into a new relationship. On the basis of this, the evangelist has Jesus Sophia's dying words as a call to mutual relationship and dependency: neither is more or less dependent on the other, but each is called to a new and interdependent relationship.

This echoes many of the themes already outlined in the Gospel, not least that of the final meal with its footwashing, and the talk of

the vine and the branches. The scene at the cross is a reminder to the community that both male and female disciples stand equally before Jesus, and are to be mutually accepting of each other in the new kingdom which is inaugurated with the death (and ultimately the resurrection) of Jesus Sophia. The Mother of Jesus and the Beloved Disciple stand as symbols of the new community on the basis of their faithful discipleship and service of Jesus Sophia. Brown comments:

This seems to have been a community where in the things that really mattered in the following of Christ there was no difference between male and female - a Pauline dream (Gal 3:28) which was not completely realised in the Pauline communities<sup>61</sup>.

It is clear that the Fourth Evangelist has gone beyond the existing Synoptic tradition (whether or not she/he was aware of it), by adding Jesus' Mother and the Beloved Disciple to those reported at the cross. In the process of doing so, the Fourth Evangelist has made Jesus' mother a symbol of true discipleship in her service and faithfulness, which encompasses the earthly ministry of Jesus Sophia. While we might almost have anticipated such a role on account of her intimate relationship to Jesus as his mother, we find that instead, it is not at all on this basis, but rather on the basis of her *new* family commitment - to the emerging Christian community - that she is able to be called forth as an example to be remembered.

#### 4.4.2 THE INFLUENCE OF SOPHIA

The picture of Jesus' Mother as the faithful disciple who stands at the foot of the cross to the very end and becomes the symbol, along with the Beloved Disciple of the new age community, may again be interpreted against the background of the Sophia christology

which we have seen dominates the Fourth Gospel as a whole. It is important to remember that the Passion Narrative in John's Gospel is seen as being part of the process of Jesus' glorification and the fulfillment of the Prologue's theme of the rejection of Jesus Sophia by his own people. We have observed that the rejection theme contains elements which may well have been carried over from the traditions concerning Sophia and her rejection<sup>162</sup>. It is this Jesus, who has revealed himself as Sophia incarnate, who now experiences the final act of rejection in the brutality of the cross.

In this context, the behaviour of the μαθηταί, and of those whom Jesus 'loved', calls for a degree of scrutiny. As in so many situations we have examined already, the μαθηταί are conspicuous by their absence (whether in body or in understanding!), while the women are present and faithful in the exercise of the task of discipleship. Among these women stands the Mother of Jesus, added to the traditional lists by the Fourth Evangelist, an addition which, whatever else it means, has "heightened (her) dramatic importance and given Mary a greater role"<sup>163</sup>. That role we have identified as symbolic for the discipleship of the new age community, to whom the Gospel is addressed. It is a discipleship which is *faithful* even at the point of greatest rejection of Jesus Sophia. This is precisely what the Wisdom writers encourage in their call to follow Sophia:

- (3) ἔλεημοσύνην καὶ πίστει μὴ ἐκλιπέτωσάν σε  
ἄφασαι δὲ αὐτάς ἐπὶ σφὶ τραχήλῳ, καὶ εὐρήσεις χάριν  
(Prov 3:3-4)
- (4) καὶ προνοεῖ καλά ἔνώπιον κυρίου καὶ ἀνθρώπων  
μηδὲ ἐγκαταλίπῃς αὐτήν, καὶ ἀνθέξεται σου  
ἐράθητι αὐτῆς, καὶ τηρήσει σε  
(Prov 4:6)

There is a parallel drawn between the faithfulness of the disciples of Sophia and her faithfulness toward them. She will take care of those who follow her, a theme which finds its final triumph in the re-interpretation of Israel's history as the history of the saving acts of Sophia in Wisdom of Solomon 10-11. It is the Mother of Jesus, who knew where to go for wine as a disciple of Jesus Sophia even before the μαθηταί in the earliest stages of his ministry, who now faithfully goes to the end without forsaking (ἐγκαταλείπω)<sup>164</sup> him. The resultant provision for her is not so much as a result of familial relationship as on the basis of her endurance as a faithful disciple.

It may be of interest in this context to note the 'family' terms used in addressing the disciples of Sophia in Wisdom Literature. There is a frequent use of words like υἱός or παῖδες to address the pearls of Sophia's wisdom to those seeking her teaching. Among the opening verses of Proverbs (1:8-9) we hear the call to receive the teaching of 'father' and 'mother', which teaching is of course the very things which Sophia herself has imparted to them. There is a continuing emphasis on the passing on of Sophia's gifts within the context of the family relationships. It is such a relationship which Jesus Sophia establishes as the basis for future care and communication among those whom he loves, so once again it may be that we see here a touch of Sophia's influence coming through in the type of relationship which is established.

Thus, at the foot of the cross, in that most devastating moment of Jesus Sophia's rejection, we find that his disciples are present and receive even then the care and concern which she/he has promised.

#### 4.5 JESUS SOPHIA AND MARY OF MAGDALA (20:1-18)

The final encounter between Jesus Sophia and a woman in the Fourth Gospel comes in the context of that most dramatic and climactic event of Christian experience, the resurrection story. As in the other instances in John's Gospel where an overlap exists with material familiar to us from the Synoptic tradition, we seem to be faced with a strange mixture of Johannine and Synoptic source material. We are also faced with the temptation to read the Johannine account in the light of the Synoptic tradition, as though we might presuppose it in the background as a basis for what the Fourth Gospel now presents. We must therefore exercise care, above all in relation to this particular story, when approaching our interpretation of the Johannine material, to allow that community's viewpoint, represented in the Fourth Gospel tradition, to speak for itself. We thus begin by examining some points relevant to our understanding of the role exercised by Mary Magdalene and Jesus Sophia in these verses, before examining Mary's contribution and the influence which John's Sophia christology has exercised on it.

##### 4.5.1 EXEGETICAL COMMENTS

There can be no doubt that 20:1-18 in its present form represents a combination of at least two, and possibly three different accounts connected to the empty tomb/post-resurrection appearance tradition<sup>165</sup>. There are some inconsistencies and duplications which point us in this direction. Firstly, we find that Mary Magdalene opens the account by discovering the empty tomb and calling the male disciples to come and see for themselves. However, she appears to be

forgotten in the rush of the two toward the tomb, and is left standing alone without any explanation as they return home, in a rather unperturbed manner. A second and clearly connected inconsistency lies in the reported believing attitude of the Beloved Disciple (20:8), despite his ignorance of the scripture and Peter's unawareness of the possible consequences of the empty tomb. If he really *did* believe that Jesus was risen from the dead with such assurance, why was it necessary for Mary Magdalene to go and report her sighting of the Lord as though no one knew anything about it? Thirdly, we note the "entirely superfluous"<sup>166</sup> duplication of material in verses 11-13 and 14-15, due to the apparent insertion of an angel motif, perhaps in sympathy with the Synoptic descriptions of the presence of the angels at the tomb<sup>167</sup>.

Many theories have arisen with regard to the way in which the Fourth Evangelist has used the sources in the compilation of the final form of 20:1-18<sup>168</sup>. What is perhaps most striking is the relatively small amount of specifically Johannine language in the passage, the reference to 'darkness' (σχοτία) in 20:1 being one of the few examples<sup>169</sup>. This would suggest that most of the material used, with the obvious exception of the peculiarly Johannine Beloved Disciple tradition, stems from other sources. Bultmann's contention, that verses 1,11-13 form the original basis of the tradition concerning the women at the tomb, to which the Evangelist has added both the Petrine incident and verses 14-18<sup>170</sup>, seems attractive, but is not borne out by the text itself<sup>171</sup>. More commentators are now of the opinion that there are good grounds for supposing a tradition existed which mentioned a visit of Peter (and Mary?) to the tomb, of which our text

represents a developed example<sup>172</sup>. Schnackenburg, following particularly G.Hartmann<sup>173</sup>, presses for an underlying story of Mary and Peter visiting the tomb, which has been re-worked by the writer of the Gospel to include the Beloved Disciple<sup>174</sup>. This theory has the virtue of making sense of the fact that Mary Magdalene is reported as remaining (20:11) while Peter goes off back home still puzzled: both saw the empty tomb and were distressed in their own way. We will argue that this is highly significant in the Evangelist's mind, since it allows Mary to be singled-out, rather than Mary *and* Peter, to be the recipient of the first post-resurrection appearance.

Before turning to Mary's own role in the story we would do well to establish the primary focus of attention intended by the Fourth Evangelist in presenting the account in this particular form. Most commentators agree that John's main thrust is to emphasise the new relationship of faith which now characterizes the post-resurrection disciple's attitude to Jesus. Barrett sums up by saying that we "must not regard the risen Jesus as simply the old Jesus all over again. Sight plays its part; but the Christian life is lived by faith"<sup>175</sup>. Here we see that John is very much concerned for the community to whom the Gospel is addressed, a community for whom the resurrection and appearance story traditions now lie well in the past, but who must nevertheless come to terms with their meaning in their present situation. They are no longer in the privileged position of being able to 'see' the Risen Christ, but must depend on the chain of witness which begins with the confession 'I have seen the Lord!'. The Fourth Evangelist is concerned in this story to open up that possibility for the community, so we would agree with Lindars' summary of the author's intent in these verses:

The essential point for him is that the Christian is in a vital personal relationship with the Risen Christ, the mutual indwelling expounded in the Supper discourses. The Resurrection Narratives are handled in such a way as to lead to the response of faith by which this relationship is established<sup>176</sup>.

What is striking for our study at this point is the fact that the vital link in this whole process is not one of the traditional male figures of the early Christian tradition, but a woman, Mary Magdalene. It is to her role in the account that we must now turn.

#### 4.5.2 THE ROLE OF MARY MAGDALENE

There is unanimous agreement in the traditions of all four Gospels that Mary Magdalene was present as a witness to the empty tomb (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10; John 20:1). While this gives her presence a high degree of historical probability, there is considerable variation in the assessment of her role among the different accounts<sup>177</sup>. It is the Fourth Evangelist, however, who gives to her the most prominent and indeed significant profile. This is achieved through a number of special devices: firstly, the focus at the tomb is narrowed from a number of women in the Synoptic tradition, to a single woman in the Johannine account. Secondly, she is singled out and recognises Jesus Sophia by the calling of her name, in an episode which provides a beautiful parallel and illustration of the parable of the Good Shepherd. Thirdly, Mary Magdalene is given a double apostolic role when, as the first witness to the empty tomb, she goes to call Peter and the Beloved Disciple, then following their departure and her encounter as the first witness to the Risen Christ, she is sent with the message of her experience to the group of disciples. Fourthly, she is given the classic apostolic claim to

authority in the words of 20:18 - ἑώρακα τὸν κύριον. Through the combination of these elements, Mary Magdalene is given a role unparalleled in any of the Synoptic accounts of the empty tomb or appearance stories. We shall examine each element in turn.

The narrowing of focus on the figure of Mary Magdalene is surprising not only in relation to the *Synoptic* accounts of the empty tomb, but also in relation to John's own preceding account of the crucifixion, at which event there was clearly knowledge of the presence of several women, including Mary Magdalene (19:25). We note Schnackenburg's comments on John's editorial work at this point:

If v.1 may well be from a source akin to the Synoptics, then the failure to mention the other women is noticeable. Was John following a source which only mentioned Mary Magdalene (cf. Bultmann)? But οἶδαμεν in v.2 speaks rather for the supposition that, at least at the beginning, other women were mentioned together with her. If so, the evangelist would have carried through his concentration on Mary Magdalene, which is wholly understandable because of his preference for bringing single persons (disciples) to the fore<sup>178</sup>.

We therefore see the singling out of Mary Magdalene as a deliberate act on the part of the Fourth Evangelist, even given that a tradition may well have existed which placed Mary and Peter together at the tomb. It is Mary Magdalene who comes alone to the tomb in the first instance, and then returns to call Peter and the Beloved Disciple.

We should remind ourselves at this point of the question mark which many contemporaries of John might have placed against the reliance of faith upon the witness of a *woman* to such an event. While it would be naive to simply accept the conclusion of Jeremias, that a woman's witness was only very rarely accepted in legal cases<sup>179</sup>, there

is nevertheless clear evidence from the discussions of the second century Rabbis, that her uncorroborated witness was liable to a suspicion not necessarily accorded to a similar act of witness on the part of a *male Jew*<sup>180</sup>. If then, as appears quite possible, there was a tradition placing Mary and Peter together as witnesses at the tomb, we may have a second instance in the Fourth Gospel where a woman replaces Peter in his apostolic role, parallel to that of Martha's confession in 11:27.

The role of the Beloved Disciple seems to some extent to 'threaten' Mary Magdalene's position as the primary witness when we consider the statement of 20:8, that he looked and *believed*. There are, however, some problems in taking this statement as an indication that the Beloved Disciple actually believed in the *resurrection* of Jesus. Schnackenburg is quite certain that ἐπίστευσαν here refers to "full faith in the resurrection of Jesus"<sup>181</sup>, and sees this as an exemplary kind of faith which has not seen yet believed. However, as we already noted in our exegetical comments, this exemplary faith neither leads to any excitement in the manner of departure of the disciple, nor to his sharing it with the rest of the group, to whom Mary Magdalene is sent with the message of resurrection! Apparently he does not even share it with his partner, Peter! Here the suggestion of Minear seems to lend a better explanation of the events as recorded by John: "They now 'believed' in Mary's report and thus joined in her confession of ignorance, 'we don't know where!'"<sup>182</sup>. The Beloved Disciple and Peter thus appear as a corroborating factor in Mary Magdalene's witness to the empty tomb, rather than as a platform for allowing the Beloved Disciple precedence over Peter, or exemplary

status as a believer in the resurrection<sup>183</sup>. The way is thus still left open for Mary Magdalene to be singled out as the primary witness to the Risen Christ, her primacy being in no way challenged by the presence of the Beloved Disciple, but rather enhanced by his belief in her testimony concerning the tomb.

The singling out process is most narrowly focused in the encounter between Mary Magdalene and the Risen Christ, where he calls her specifically by name. In her initial encounter she fails to recognise Jesus, mistaking him for the gardener, but it is on hearing her own name spoken that she finally realises who it is. This initial failure to grasp who the Risen Christ is, is a common feature of New Testament appearance stories<sup>184</sup>, but its significance is heightened by the following recognition on account of her *name* being spoken. When compared with the parable of the Good Shepherd, we can see that Mary Magdalene is being accorded a position as an example to the community of how Jesus Sophia knows his own and they know him. Jn 10:3 reports that the Good Shepherd calls his own by name, and it is on this basis that they recognise who he is. Brown's comments take this a little further:

Mary Magdalene could serve as an example to Christians of the Johannine community at the end of the 1st Century, whose contact with the risen Jesus is through the Paraclete who declares to them what he has received from Jesus (16:14)<sup>185</sup>.

There can be little doubt that the Fourth Evangelist intended this cameo to be an example to the community of how the relationship between the believer and the Risen Christ functions in the days when actual contact with his 'physical' presence is no longer possible.

This is further reflected, as we shall shortly see, in the command to refrain from touching him (20:17). Thus, having singled Mary Magdalene out, she is now allowed by the Fourth Evangelist to stand as a paradigm for the believing disciple in the community to whom the Gospel is addressed.

We now turn to that aspect of 20:1-18 which has gained for Mary Magdalene the title *Apostola Apostolorum* <sup>186</sup>. Firstly, we note that her apostolic function is two-fold. As the first witness to the empty tomb itself, she goes and calls the disciples, in the persons of Peter and the Beloved Disciple, to come and see for themselves. Secondly, following their departure she performs the far more important part of her role, in encountering the Risen Christ and carrying out his command to take the news of his rising to the rest of the gathered disciples. Of course, her tidings of resurrection are superseded by the subsequent encounter with the Risen Christ himself in 20:19-23, but this is no more than we would expect from the Johannine pattern of witness. As in the case of the Samaritan Woman, Mary Magdalene's witness is only a stage which leads on to a personal encounter with Jesus Sophia and thus to faith in its fullest sense, as we hear in the confession of Thomas (20:28). Thus, the following incidents of 20:19-23 in no way detract from the importance or primacy of her mission in 20:18. Judging by the attitudes of some New Testament writers to the role of women in the early Church, we may share something of Fiorenza's surprise at this Johannine account:

She calls Peter and the Beloved Disciple to the empty tomb and then is sent to the 'new family' of Jesus. . . . She communicated the message to them which he had given to her. Thus she is the primary apostolic witness to the resurrection. . . . Since the tradition of Mary Magdalene's primacy in apostolic

witness challenged the Petrine tradition, it is remarkable that it has survived in two independent streams of the Gospel tradition. Moreover, later apocryphal writers reflect the theological debate over apostolic primacy of Mary Magdalene and Peter explicitly<sup>187</sup>.

That debate in the apocryphal writings<sup>188</sup> is an indication to us that the kind of questions we pose with regard to Mary Magdalene's 'suitability' as a primary witness to the resurrected Christ are not merely a twentieth-century issue, but were clearly perceived already in the early centuries of the Christian Church.

The final seal on Mary's apostolic witness is the confession with which she delivers her news to the other disciples: ἑώρακα τὸν κύριον. That this confession was recognised as one of the hallmarks of apostleship in the early Christian Church is seen from Paul's argument in I Cor 9:1 - οὐκ εἰμι ἀπόστολος; οὐχὶ Ἰησοῦς τὸν κύριον ἤμῶν ἑώρακα;. Evidently Paul's understanding of apostleship included the necessity of having 'seen the Lord', a fact which Conzelmann stresses in his commentary on this passage:

In verse 16 his claim to this standing (apostleship) is based on his vision of Christ. This is a conclusive argument, inasmuch as the receiving of a commission from the risen Lord is constitutive for the concept of apostleship<sup>189</sup>.

The confession of 20:18 is thus the final seal on Mary Magdalene's apostolic commissioning, but it is also the culmination of her movement towards faith, an important emphasis, as we noted, in the Johannine construction of the resurrection narrative. On hearing her name, Mary Magdalene responds with the title, ῥαββουνί, which Brown correctly describes as "characteristic of the beginning of faith

rather than of its culmination"<sup>190</sup>. However, like the Samaritan Woman and Martha before her in the Fourth Gospel, Mary Magdalene also shows a movement from this incomplete understanding of faith to the confession of full faith in the  $\chi\rho\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$  of 20:18. The title 'teacher' (20:16) is an expression of the old clinging which Jesus refuses from Mary in 20:17. It reflects a faith which wants to hold on to the bodily presence of Jesus, which would restrain him from the possibility of giving his permanent presence in the power of the Spirit<sup>191</sup>. This power will become a living reality in the life of the disciples only after he has breathed on them and finally ascended to the 'Father'. Lindars comments of 20:17:

The desire to hold Jesus must be restrained, because it is an attempt to recapture the conditions of incarnate life in place of the universal and abiding relationship which is the object of his mission. Mary has experienced something of this in the moment of recognition. . . . It is important to explain that the new relationship is not dependent on physical contact<sup>192</sup>.

The Johannine account makes clear that Mary Magdalene understood what the Risen Christ was trying to communicate, by showing her take the message to the disciples and confess Jesus  $\text{Sophia}$  no longer as  $\rho\acute{\alpha}\beta\beta\omicron\upsilon\nu\acute{\iota}$  but as  $\chi\rho\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ .

In summary, then, we may safely conclude that Mary Magdalene is the final link in a chain of female disciples who stand as paradigms for the Christian community to which the Fourth Gospel is addressed. Her faithfulness in coming to the tomb; her calling of others to come; her response to the call of the Good Shepherd, and her obedience to his command culminate in her confession of him in an act of faithful witness to the Christian community. Herein lies the pattern for the

Christian disciples whom the Fourth Evangelist seeks to encourage in the new age of the Spirit, for whose coming Mary Magdalene is preparing the way.

#### 4.5.3 THE INFLUENCE OF SOPHIA CHRISTOLOGY

We must finally reflect on the way in which the Sophia christology adopted by the Fourth Evangelist as a vehicle for expressing the relationship of the earthly Jesus to God and to his disciples has influenced the particular approach to the narrative of the empty tomb and resurrection appearance stories. We must firstly acknowledge again the major role which traditional material must have played in the formation of the Johannine account, since these two events constituted one of the most central blocks of teaching and faith-engendering material in the early Church traditions. Having said that, however, we must still concede that the Fourth Evangelist has used the traditional material in a most individual way. It is in the realm of this redactional work that we must seek the influence of Sophia christology.

The first thing we should note is the question with which Jesus addresses Mary Magdalene: τίνα ζητεῖς;. It is notable that this particular question only comes from Jesus and not from the angels who have previously asked the first part of the question which Jesus also repeats: γύναι, τί κλαίεις;. The question about 'seeking' is thus reserved for the mouth of the one who is being 'sought'<sup>193</sup>! The idea of 'seeking' Jesus has already played a crucial role in the Fourth Gospel, particularly in 8:21, where we noted parallels between the withdrawal of Sophia and the unavailability of Jesus to those who

reject him and then come seeking later<sup>194</sup>. Culpepper reminds us that the process of seeking could only begin after the resurrection, and that through their "observing the new commandment and remembering the words of Jesus (15:10;16:4), they were distinguished from the Jews and able to seek (and find) Jesus (the Word)"<sup>195</sup>. It is precisely this 'Word' (=Λόγος/Σοφία) whom Mary Magdalene seeks in the Garden, albeit with an incomplete knowledge of the significance of her search, but nevertheless, as she would discover, in the context of the *post-resurrection*.

The Old Testament speaks frequently of the need to seek God, not least in the book of Psalms<sup>196</sup>. Link sums up the development of the understanding of seeking by saying: "To seek God acquires the meaning to seek after God, where he is to be found, in temple and cult. Seeking finds its fulfillment in oracles, instructions and adoration"<sup>197</sup>. This seeking after God was transferred also to Sophia fairly early on in the Wisdom tradition, as is reflected in the words of Proverbs (8:17). There is an important connection already made in that verse between love for Sophia and seeking after her. In addition, that seeking is met with a promise of success: Sophia may be found by those who love her and take the trouble to seek her out. This is precisely what Mary Magdalene is doing in the scene at the tomb. Her love for Jesus can scarcely be doubted both in her initial devotion in coming to what she assumes to be the dead body of Jesus and also in her evident distress on discovering it missing (κλαίω 20:13,15). It is not important that one already has knowledge before seeking Sophia: that knowledge will come as a result of finding her. Just so, it matters little that Mary Magdalene comes in ignorance of

the resurrection, but in the act of seeking Jesus Sophia she is given much more than she could ever have expected. Fiorenza summarises: "As the faithful disciple who 'seeks' her Lord-Sophia, Mary of Magdala becomes the primary apostolic witness to the resurrection"<sup>198</sup>. Since this seeking and finding by Mary Magdalene is directly and closely tied to the new relationship emerging between the risen Jesus Sophia and his disciple, rather than to the relatively anonymous 'angel - women' dialogue of the Synoptic tradition, we would see it as another instance of the Fourth Evangelist's application of Sophia christology.

The use of the title ῥαββουνί is also interesting in relation to the influence exerted by Sophia speculation. It is clear that this title, be it in the form ῥαββί, ῥαββουνί, or διδάσκαλε, was a common address used of teachers by their pupils in New Testament times<sup>199</sup>, and is indeed used elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel by the disciples of John the Baptist to address their master (3:26). However, we saw already in our examination of the outworking of Sophia christology in the Gospel, that the role of teacher is one of the most prominent attributes applied to Sophia<sup>200</sup>: indeed it is her *raison d'être* to pass on her wisdom to the wise. It is as such a teacher that Mary Magdalene recognises Jesus Sophia: yet her faith and recognition must move beyond that ascription to the ultimate point of confessing him as κύριος (20:18). Both the Johannine Jesus and Sophia have as the focal point of their teaching the revelation of the things of God (Jn 7:16-17; Wisd 6:12-19; 7:22-28), but in the *manner* of their teaching and revelation also draw attention to themselves. Jesus assures the disciples that his presence as teacher will continue in the form of the gift of the Spirit, even after his departure from them (14:26).

The Spirit's purpose again is to reveal the things of God<sup>201</sup>, but also to bring people ultimately to the confession of Jesus as κύριος (20:18) or as the υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (20:31).

Looking at this text from the point of view of our question as to Sophia's influence, we may offer the following suggestion as to its interpretation. What appears to happen in the recognition process in which Mary Magdalene is involved, is that she firstly sees him as the Jesus Sophia incarnate whom she had known before the Cross (teacher), but subsequently comes to see this same Jesus Sophia as none other than God him/herself present in a radically new way. It is this experience which brings the confession, Ἐώρακα τὸν κύριον (20:18). Just as the initial recognition of Sophia as teacher leads on to a knowledge of God, so too the recognition of the risen Jesus Sophia, the teacher, must lead on to a confession of his true identity.

A third pointer to Sophia's influence on the resurrection/appearance account comes in the parallels between the parable of the Good Shepherd and Mary Magdalene's response to Jesus Sophia calling her by name (20:16). In our reflection on the parable of John 10, we noted that the Johannine stress on the intimacy of the Shepherd and Sheep owed much to the similar intimacy shown between Sophia and her disciples (Wisd 7:27;8:2-16; Sir 24:19-22)<sup>202</sup>. In 20:16 the Fourth Evangelist makes it clear that it is on the basis of such a relationship with Jesus Sophia that Mary Magdalene recognises who he is and makes her response. Her initial lack of recognition (20:14) is broken through by the Good Shepherd, Jesus Sophia, who knows his own and calls her by name.

Thus we can see, that although the Fourth Evangelist has used traditional material as a basis for the account in 20:1-18, the influence of Sophia christology has once again contributed to a very individual version of events being put forward. As in the other stories of women in the Fourth Gospel, here in this final account, we may with some justification suggest that it is none other than Jesus Sophia who calls and to whom the maidservant responds with a faithful example of discipleship.

#### 4.6 CONCLUSIONS

In the course of this chapter we have reflected in some detail on the roles given by the Fourth Evangelist to various women in relation to the ministry of Jesus Sophia. In every case we have seen that they illustrate for the Christian community to whom John writes, various aspects of Christian discipleship. This is hardly surprising when we consider Raymond Brown's claim, that "discipleship is the primary Christian category for John"<sup>203</sup>. The second half of his claim, however, that "the disciple par excellence is the Disciple whom Jesus Loved"<sup>204</sup>, may now be open to some challenge. Certainly in terms of the ἀγάπη<sup>3</sup> shared between Jesus Sophia and the Beloved Disciple we may see an exemplary point for the disciples whom the Gospel addresses: but we must now also take into account those women who stand by Jesus throughout his ministry, final hours, death itself and ultimately at his resurrection. While the Beloved Disciple holds a special place in the pattern of discipleship, he does so no more than the women of the Fourth Gospel. We may now draw some important conclusions on the basis of our study.

4.6.1 The matter of Christian discipleship is of utmost importance for understanding both the purpose served by the women of the Fourth Gospel and the meaning of the accounts to which they belong as a whole. From the various stories about the call and response of disciples and from Jesus' own teaching and example we may elicit several characteristics of Johannine discipleship.

(a) In the first instance, the disciple is one who has an *encounter* with Jesus. We see this already in the call of Andrew and Peter (1:35-42) and that of Philip and Nathanael (1:43-51). It is in this encounter that the disciple comes to know who Jesus Sophia actually is and makes a decision to follow.

(b) The second stage is the decision to *follow* Jesus Sophia, a decision which involves a willingness to abandon the immediate interest of the individual in favour of the call. Unlike the Synoptic tradition, we do not hear of fishermen leaving their nets in John, but an immediate response is presupposed in the reaction of John the Baptist's disciples in 1:37. Brown comments: "In John, once the disciples are called, they remain Jesus' disciples without the slightest suggestion of their returning to normal livelihood"<sup>205</sup>.

(c) The third phase of discipleship is the necessity to share the experience of the encounter with others: what the Fourth Evangelist calls *μαρτυρία*. We saw this process in the case of John the Baptist's disciples, then also with Philip and Nathanael. The importance of *witness* as an aspect of discipleship in the Fourth Gospel was seen to be reflected also in the high proportion of

occurrences of words from the μαρτυρεῖν group in John over-against the rest of the New Testament.

(d) A fourth aspect of the relationship of the disciple and Jesus Sophia is the *intimacy* shared between them. This was observed in the case of Nathanael (1:47-48) and also in a negative way in Jesus' foreknowledge of Judas' actions (13:18-30). It is illustrated clearly in the parable of the Good Shepherd and the Sheep, and announced as the crucial opening to the farewell discourses in 13:1 - 'Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end'.

(e) A fifth vital aspect of discipleship is found in the summary purpose statement of 20:31 - *confession* of Jesus as Son of God and belief in him. It is in this direction that the Fourth Gospel is pushing the reader all the time, though as we saw it came as a confession within the Gospel itself only in the mouth of Martha (11:27). The movement towards this full believing confession may be a gradual one, but the anticipated ultimate response is nevertheless clear.

(f) A final stress given to the task of discipleship by Jesus' own teaching and example is that of *service*. The disciple is called to serve God by serving others. This is most beautifully illustrated by Jesus' example of washing the disciples' feet, but is also explicitly stated as a task of discipleship in the discourse surrounding that event (13:12-17).

Our study has shown that while some of these features are sketched briefly in the opening chapter of the Fourth Gospel, the

major illustrations are made in the body of the Gospel through the example and practice of the Johannine women. For the community whom John addresses, it is the Samaritan Woman who most clearly demonstrates the pattern of *encounter* → *response* → *witness*, which leads others to a similar encounter and response. It is Martha who shows most fully the process of moving towards a full belief in Jesus as the Son of God, replacing Peter in her *confession* of Jesus as such. Her sister, Mary, provides us with a classic picture of the *servant* disciple, who puts aside personal pride and position to serve the one whom she loves, and this in anticipation of the example set by Jesus himself. Then we have Jesus' Mother, who is an obedient and faithful disciple, framing the earthly ministry at start and finish, who is accepted not on the basis of blood-ties, but because of her exemplary discipleship. Finally we see Mary Magdalene who *encounters* the Risen Jesus Sophia, *obeys* his command to tell others, and goes *confessing* him as the Risen Lord. For the Johannine community, then, the central issues of discipleship are best seen through the women who met with and followed Jesus Sophia.

**4.6.2** The second conclusion we may draw from this present chapter is that this discipleship pattern presented through the role of women owes much in its origins to the same Sophia tradition which has so vitally shaped the christology of the Fourth Gospel. This has already been recognised in part by some scholars, including Brown, who identifies in the call of Andrew and Peter to discipleship a number of features of Wisdom language<sup>206</sup>. In Wisdom 6:12-16, Sophia is seen by those who love her and found by those who seek her; she makes herself known to those whom she anticipates will desire her; she graciously

appears to those who receive her on her way. Again, we noted the tradition of Sophia who cries aloud in the streets so that she may attract followers (Prov 1:20ff; 8:22ff). Then there is the reference to Sophia sending her maidservants out to call others to come and meet with her (Prov 9:3), to feast on her food and drink her wine. The intimacy of Sophia with her loved ones, her care for them, and her call to devoted service are all aspects which we have seen to be prominent features of both the Wisdom tradition and the concept of discipleship in the Fourth Gospel. In the course of our investigation we have shown that the influence of Sophia language, thought and tradition already hinted at in findings related to Jn 1:35ff, in fact permeates the *whole* presentation of the women as disciples of Jesus Sophia throughout the course of the Gospel.

**4.6.3** Our first two conclusions lead us further to ask if there is any connection between the Fourth Evangelist's adoption of a Sophia christology and the choice of *women* as paradigms for discipleship in the Christian community. In the previous chapter we suggested that the author of the Fourth Gospel could have been aware of a gender problem involved in identifying the male Jesus with the female figure Sophia. We interpreted the adoption of the Logos concept in the Prologue as the Fourth Evangelist's resolution of this gender problem and then went on to see how the presentation of Jesus in the Gospel as a whole could be legitimately interpreted as a presentation of Jesus *Sophia* incarnate. Now even if we cannot be sure exactly what the Fourth Evangelist had in mind in giving women such a prominent role in the Gospel, we may nevertheless allow the text itself to be read under the influence of the discerned Sophia christology. In doing so, we

would propose that the Fourth Evangelist was also aware that Sophia was said to send out 'maidservants' (Prov 9:3), being unrestricted by the conventions and restrictions of either religious practice or society at large. Since this was not a problem for Sophia, there is equally no problem in allowing Jesus Sophia to send out his maidservants as the ambassadors of discipleship to the Christian community. In a way this gives the Fourth Evangelist an opportunity to redress the balance of male and female within the structure of the Gospel as a whole, or at least to be seen as doing so. If Sophia must by reason of the limits of incarnation be confined to the male Jesus, her disciples at least need not be confined by such a restriction, but may freely be seen as God's maidservants. On this basis, Raymond Brown would be well justified in his assertion that the Fourth Gospel provides a "perceptive corrective . . . to some ecclesiastical attitudes of its time"<sup>207</sup>.

While we would not contend that the Fourth Gospel sets out to demean the role of the traditional male disciples, it does clearly leave it largely undiscussed and on the margin in comparison with the central position given to the women as exemplary disciples. If we allow that the Gospels all reflect to some extent the community for whom they were written, we would see in John's community people who expressed in the practice of discipleship what they saw in their christology. Sophia, the feminine dimension of the divine within Jewish tradition, was made flesh in Jesus Christ: so too, there is a valid feminine dimension within the leadership structures of the Christian community in terms of discipleship, witness and service. Probably conscious of the overload of male examples in other Christian

traditions, the Fourth Gospel allows many of the traditional male figures to be replaced in their function by women, so reflecting a balance of female and male already inherent in its christology.

4.6.4 It is difficult to assess the extent to which sexual attraction plays a role in the formation of the stories about women disciples in the Fourth Gospel. It is clear that much of the appeal of Sophia tradition rests on her overt sexuality, which is meant to attract *men* over-against the wiles of the sluttish Dame Folly. It may be dangerous simply to suggest that the Fourth Evangelist reverses this role by having the women attracted to Jesus Sophia incarnate as a *man*. That is certainly not the emphasis which the Fourth Evangelist wants to make, but it may be something of a sub-plot which results from the technique used. There are undoubtedly sexual overtones in the meeting of a man and a woman at a well, especially when the discussion gets round to her previous sex-life! We might also find hints of sexual innuendo in the scene where Mary anoints Jesus' feet. Just as her sexuality was intended by the Jewish writers as a positive point of interest in Sophia, so too it may have been a factor in the emergence of women as prominent followers of Jesus Sophia, although not on a conscious level. For the author of the Fourth Gospel, however, the primary focus of the accounts remains one of discipleship.

4.6.5 It cannot have escaped the readers' notice that one story has been omitted from the list of those concerning women in the Gospel of John, namely the account of the Woman taken in Adultery (7:59 - 8:11). This story has long been recognised as a later accretion to the Gospel, usually on the basis of its absence in the earliest

textual witnesses<sup>208</sup>. Our present study gives us further grounds for rejecting it as an original part of the Fourth Gospel. In the first place it is unlike the other stories about women in that it has nothing whatsoever to do with the overriding theme of discipleship, which we have seen to be the central theme of all the other accounts. Secondly, there is no evidence of influence from Sophia tradition in the verses, something which we have noted to a greater or lesser extent in all the other incidents concerning women. We therefore have left this story aside, as it adds nothing to the substance of our present thesis. Its attachment to John's Gospel rather than to Luke<sup>209</sup>, may in the end, however, show how much even the earliest readers of John's Gospel noticed the sympathetic emphasis put on women by the author.

4.6.6 One final piece of speculation may be offered at this point. We noted already that the openness to women shown by the Fourth Evangelist may well reflect the role which women actually played in the community which the Gospel addresses. Could it not also reflect something even more radical, namely that the Fourth Gospel was written by a *woman*? Of course, we may only ever speculate on such a matter, but if women did participate prominently in the Johannine community, would they not have found it easy enough to accept a Gospel written by a woman? We can only wonder that a Gospel so radical as we have seen survived at all in the patriarchal structures of the early Church, so to take this further speculative step may not be going too far: at least our conclusions do not allow the suggestion simply to be dismissed as lightly as it once might have been!

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

'And now the end is near. . . .' With it comes the opportunity to summarise briefly the main points to which we have directed our investigation, to engage in further reflection on the conclusions we reached, and finally to look at some issues raised by these conclusions which have not yet been dealt with and remain beyond the scope of this present thesis, but which may well need to be more fully investigated as a result of it. Johannine christology remains as controversial today as it has been since the first appearance of the Gospel, and perhaps our work has revealed another twist in the ongoing dialogue between author and interpreter, but in doing so it does not seek to claim for itself a definitive status. Rather, this thesis is submitted as a contribution to an unfinished and unfinishable task. As Dunn puts it:

In a real sense the history of the Christological controversy is the history of the Church's attempt to come to terms with Johannine Christology - first to accept it and then to understand and re-express it. The latter task will never end<sup>1</sup>.

#### 5.1. SUMMARY

Without question the boldest and most frequent emphasis of our thesis has been upon the extent of Sophia's influence on the christology of the Fourth Evangelist. What we have attempted to demonstrate is that her role is not merely influential, but more accurately *fundamental*: the Fourth Gospel's christology is nothing other than a *Sophia* christology. Our movement towards this conclusion raised a number of important issues, not least the question of the

gender problem involved in the identification of the female figure, Sophia, with the male human being, Jesus.

In *chapter two* we set out the context for understanding the Fourth Evangelist's dilemma in using a Sophia-based christology. There we showed, *firstly*, that Sophia's gender was the single most important factor in her selection as a personification of God's appeal to *men* in the book of Proverbs. The gender of the Hebrew word (as also of the Greek) allowed for the possibility of giving to Sophia attributes otherwise associated with the Goddesses of the ANE fertility cults, though without infringing monotheism. Her appeal in Proverbs is clearly dependent on her gender as she competes with the so-called 'Dame Folly' in chapters 1-9.

In the *second* instance, we were able to see how this gender of Sophia probably raised problems for some Jewish writers as her role in Wisdom literature developed towards the first century of the Christian era. For Sirach and Baruch, the threat of a quasi-Goddess figure emerging from Sophia tradition was countered by the association of her with the book of the Law, the Torah. It is possible that the authors saw this as a kind of exaltation of Sophia, giving her acclaim as that most coveted part of Israel's heritage, but at the same time it acted as a clear way of defining her parameters and so of 'protecting' monotheism. In the Wisdom of Solomon, however, we saw how one Jewish theologian, living in the hellenistic environment of Alexandria, could see the gender of Sophia as a *positive* means of attracting people to Judaism, over-against the cult of Isis. This author elevated her to a position in which she became a female expression of God, co-terminus

with the more commonly used male image, Yahweh. At this point Sophia reaches her pinnacle in Jewish speculation.

That her gender was indeed an issue at the time of the emergence of the Fourth Gospel was further highlighted from the writings of Philo, who at one point finds it necessary deliberately to mention her gender and controvert it, lest there be any misunderstanding among his readers! We saw how Philo replaced Sophia's function in the world by that of the Logos, leaving her as an hypostasis of God's wise counsel in the upper realm of the κόσμος νοητός. Although Philo probably had no direct influence on the Fourth Evangelist, he nevertheless helped us to point up the gender significance of Sophia in the early first century, and to highlight the potential problem facing the Johannine author in identifying Jesus with her.

In *chapter three* we moved on to examine the way in which the Fourth Evangelist based his/her christological reflection on the traditions of Sophia and the way in which that author also dealt with the gender problem. While we retraced a lot of ground already covered by others in relation to the Logos/Sophia of the Prologue, we were nevertheless able even here to suggest that, at its most radical point in Jn 1:14a, the Prologue was only really drawing out the logical final step of the process of Sophia's development as an active force involved in the affairs of the world. At every turn of this opening hymn of the Gospel we were able to see Sophia's influence as a fundamental factor. In addition, we suggested that within the Prologue (1:17) the Fourth Evangelist began a subtle polemic against the late Wisdom tradition which saw Sophia as embodied in the Torah,

seeing her instead as incarnate in the man Jesus Christ, who demonstrated her qualities of 'grace and truth'.

Turning to the main body of the Fourth Gospel we found that there was both a *thematic* link and a *fundamental* link (Sophia!) between it and the foregoing Prologue. *Firstly*, we noted that the Johannine Jesus declares himself, in terms otherwise associated with Sophia, through the ἐγώ εἰμι speeches. Many of these reflect material already noted in the Prologue, especially the themes of light, life and truth. While other Old Testament reminiscences may well have been included by the Fourth Evangelist in the final compilation of these speeches, we nevertheless saw that they all show signs of a determinative influence from material previously dedicated to Sophia.

*Secondly*, we looked at the recurring Johannine theme of the intimate relationship enjoyed between Jesus Christ and God, once again noting its close relationship to Sophia speculation. In no other sphere of Jewish thought do we find anything which quite so well parallels the Fourth Evangelist's portrayal of the Jesus ⇌ God relationship as that of the Sophia ⇌ God relationship expounded in the Wisdom tradition. Both can lay claim to an existence before the foundation of the world, to a descent with salvific purpose into the world, and to a unique role as the Revealer of God to the world. Even in the absolute use of the ἐγώ εἰμι, a theme taken from the much wider tradition concerning the divine name, we saw that the *content* and *authority* of the statements, if not also their first-person style, owed some debt also to that same Sophia tradition.

*Thirdly*, in our examination of the teaching role of the Johannine Jesus we discovered clear similarities to the same role in Sophia and in the relationship between both and their respective disciples. In all of these Johannine themes we saw not only the possibility of direct links between Jesus and Sophia, but also the firm cementing together of Prologue and Gospel as a unit.

Our third chapter continued with a brief look at the role of the Johannine Holy Spirit as the continuing life of the one identified as Jesus *Sophia* in the life of the believer. Here again, whilst acknowledging the dependence of the Fourth Evangelist on wider Christian tradition and experience for the idea of a Holy Spirit present in the Christian community, we nevertheless saw that the Johannine understanding of the role, function and even the giving of that Spirit could not help but owe something in its presentation to the same source that had so much influenced the Evangelist's picture of Jesus, namely Sophia. *Lastly*, we saw how even the established source material available to the Fourth Evangelist, in the form of the  $\sigma\mu\epsilon\iota\alpha$  material, may well have been reworked and ordered in the light of Sophia's influence.

All of this pushed us to ask how the Fourth Evangelist dealt with the problem of the gender switch between Sophia and Logos/Jesus the man. Our emphasis on the tight-knit relationship between Prologue and Gospel led us to suggest that the Evangelist has introduced Jesus as the Logos because of that word's ability to satisfy both the requirements of the *maleness* of the human Jesus and the *equivalence* to the female Sophia. Since the Gospel as a whole expounds all the main themes of the Prologue, it may be seen as presenting to us fully the

one introduced briefly in that preface, namely the 'Logos', but doing so in terms of his better known counterpart Sophia. We further suggested that the author may well have intended the reader to see Jesus as Sophia incarnate, abandoning the Logos as a title referring to Jesus after the introduction, and continuing the reference to his words and actions in ways associated with Sophia. We were thus able to maintain that the Fourth Evangelist's switch was conditioned by the *maleness* of Jesus rather than by any attempt to confine or delineate the parameters of Sophia's influence in the manner of some Wisdom writers whom we examined before. Again, we noted that the maleness of Jesus need not be understood as a statement about God's gender, but that in the combination and expression of Jesus and Sophia as Jesus Sophia, the Fourth Evangelist was, in New Testament terms, uniquely able to portray the all-encompassing nature of God incarnate, despite the limitations of human flesh. Even if the Fourth Evangelist was not fully conscious of the implications of adopting such a Sophia christology, we nevertheless put forward this interpretation as a legitimate reading of the text for today.

In the *fourth chapter*, we moved on to examine the possibility of a connection between Jesus, Sophia incarnate, and the prominent role played by *women* in the Gospel. We noted that each of the women in the Fourth Gospel appears at a crucial christological point: Jesus' Mother at the first σημεῖον and at the last moments of her son's earthly life, beneath the cross; the Samaritan Woman at the point of Jesus' first direct revelation of his Messiahship; Martha and Mary at the revelation of Jesus as the 'resurrection and the life' in both word and deed; Mary at the anointing in anticipation of both Jesus'

footwashing and his burial; Mary Magdalene at the first appearance of the Risen One in the garden.

In all of these accounts we were able to see some influence from Sophia, both on the christological content of the stories and on the shaping of the characters themselves. Jesus' Mother showed herself a disciple of Jesus Sophia in her knowledge of where to go when the wine, a gift of Sophia, ran out. Just as Sophia can send her maidservants out into the streets to call others to her feast, so too the Johannine Jesus Sophia's maidservant, the Samaritan Woman, goes out to call others to an encounter with him. Sophia loves her disciples in the same way that Jesus Sophia loves Mary, Martha and Lazarus, and they in turn show the attentiveness, obedience to his word, and self-giving service expected also of Sophia's disciples. In their faithfulness to the bitter end, the women at the Cross exemplify the kind of discipleship expected by both Sophia and Jesus Sophia, while the same faithfulness takes Mary Magdalene to the tomb even after his death. There she learns that Jesus Sophia is no longer merely  $\rho\alpha\beta\beta\omicron\upsilon\nu\acute{\iota}$  but is now her  $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ , who knows her and calls her by name, just as the Good Shepherd, Jesus Sophia, had promised beforehand.

Apart from the christological importance of Sophia's influence on the role of women in the Fourth Gospel, we also noted the ecclesiological significance of the women's function. Each served in her own way as a representative of a particular aspect of Christian discipleship as understood by the Johannine community. This caused us to reflect on the meaning of their prominence for that community to whom the Gospel is addressed, and we suggested that it may be

understood as a "perceptive corrective"<sup>2</sup> to the dominant stream of the Early Church, which excluded women from positions of authority and leadership. In this respect, we may also see the influence of Sophia at work, for if she is seen to be the one incarnate in Jesus, representing the wholeness of God's creative power expressed in both male and female terms, then equally so the disciples who follow him/her must also reflect that completeness in a way hitherto unrecognised by other streams of the Church.

Throughout our three main chapters, then, we have seen the problem of gender which faced the Fourth Evangelist in identifying Jesus so completely with Sophia, the way in which that was resolved, and the resultant effect which it had on the view of women in the Fourth Gospel and probably also in the community which it addressed.

## 5.2 FURTHER REFLECTIONS

As we reflect further upon our main conclusions in this thesis, there are a number of related points which arise indirectly out of them, but which must also bear some more consideration.

**5.2.1** At various points we have suggested that the Gospel reflects the situation of the Johannine community, not least in terms of the role of women. To what extent can we be sure that this is the case and not merely wishful thinking in response to a modern issue? Perhaps the best approach to this question is to begin with the christological claims of the Gospel to see how they relate to the community, since the confession of Jesus as the Christ is the stated

goal of the Fourth Evangelist and the explicit hallmark of the Johannine Christian (Jn 20:30-31).

There is no question but that the Fourth Gospel is radically different in its christological methodology from that of the Synoptic writers. We have observed this particularly in relation to the Fourth Evangelist's adoption of a thoroughgoing Sophia christology, but it was already evident even on a superficial level in the 'glorified' nature of Jesus. In contrast to the Synoptics, the Fourth Gospel presents a Jesus who appears already to be equated with the Risen One during his earthly ministry: "The Jesus of John's gospel is thus also the risen Christ living perpetually as the center of the Christian community"<sup>3</sup>. This is seen at various points of the Gospel, not least in the ἐγώ εἰμι statements with their emphasis on the continuing, present nature of the Revealer, and in the method of the giving of the Spirit as breath, continuing life, in the believer. There is an unwritten assumption behind the whole Johannine account that it somehow represents not merely the 'history' of Jesus Sophia, but also his present relationship with the Christian community.

Now if we take the implications of this christological picture seriously, we will see that it must also affect our understanding of the role of those around Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. If Jesus Sophia really is also representative of the Risen Christ in the community, then those who surround him in his 'ministry' must presumably also, in some measure, represent that community. This would render even more important our assertion that the *women* of the Fourth Gospel stand as the paradigms of Christian discipleship for the community. In them we would be seeing a reflection of the Johannine community itself, which

could only mean that it had at the centre of its life, women who exercised influential, or leadership roles. The word leadership is carefully chosen here, since in Johannine terms, 'authority' is based not on 'office' but on the encounter with Jesus, and authenticity of discipleship: "By this shall all people know that you are my disciples, that you have love one for another" (Jn 13:35). It is for their authentic discipleship that the women of the Fourth Gospel stand out, so in Johannine terms they must be seen as leaders in that community. We saw already that the surprise some might have had at such a situation existing in the Early Church is registered even within the Fourth Gospel itself, as the μαθηταί return from their trip to the Samaritan village to find Jesus Sophia talking with a *woman*!

Thus, although we can never say with complete certainty that women functioned in leadership roles in the Johannine community, the indications of the Gospel itself, such as they are, are very much that they did so, with all the implications which that may have for the modern debate on the role of women in the Church.

5.2.2 A second point for reflection arising out of our study comes in the area of the relationship between women and Sophia. We noted that in at least two of the major Wisdom writings of the Jewish tradition, the author's attitude to women is far from positive. Proverbs, while containing some encouragement for the 'good wife', has much more to say about the 'bad' one! Sirach is even more explicit in its denigration of women: "Better a man's wickedness than a woman's goodness; it is a woman who brings shame and disgrace" (Sir 42:14)! Thus, in the midst of the material which offers such high praise to

the female Sophia, we find an attitude to her human counterparts which is far from complimentary.

Can we detect in the life and ministry of Jesus Sophia an attitude of restoration in relation to women over-against the attitude of the Wisdom writers? Is not Sophia incarnate demonstrating that such negative and derogatory attitudes toward the female sex have no place in the community of the new age, but that women and men are equally accepted and equally treated within that community? Surely the Fourth Evangelist could not have been unaware of the consequences of reporting dialogues between Jesus Sophia and women such as we have noted. It may well be that in them we have not only a polemic against other Christian attitudes of the time, but also against those of the Jewish Wisdom tradition. At least in relation to Sophia embodied in the Torah we noted such a polemic. Certainly the Sophia of the Fourth Gospel offers to women acceptance and affirmation which they could not find within the traditional books in which she features.

**5.2.3** In our introduction we stated that one of our presuppositions was that the twenty-first chapter of John was a later addition to the Gospel. Given the conclusions we have reached regarding the role of women in the Johannine community, this takes on a new significance in relation to the re-emergence of Peter in that appendix chapter. While we have not tried to argue that the Fourth Evangelist deliberately sets out to denigrate Peter, it can hardly be doubted that his role as *the* influential disciple in the Synoptic tradition is very much reduced in the Fourth Gospel. Why then does he

make a reappearance in chapter 21, in what appears to be almost a ceremony of 'rehabilitation'?

The first clue to the possibility that part of chapter 21 represents an attempt to reinstate Peter as an 'authority' figure in line with the mainstream of early Christian thought, is the reference to the 'third' appearance of Jesus in 21:14. This almost certainly "evinces the primitive outlook, attested in I Cor xv 5-8, whereby the appearances to apostolic witnesses have special rank"<sup>4</sup>. The two previous appearances would thus be those mentioned in 20:19, to the group in the upper room, and 20:26, to a similar group plus the previously absent Thomas. The inference would then be that of "the appearance to Mary Magdalene being discounted, because the writer is concerned with appearances to the disciples"<sup>5</sup>. If this is the case, the writer of the appendix has misunderstood, or misrepresented the previous tradition in two ways. Firstly, the *disciples* in Johannine terms are not necessarily to be equated with the apostolic group known from the Synoptic tradition. We already saw this clearly in the use of women as the paradigms of discipleship within the Gospel and noted the possible parallels to that within the community itself. Secondly, the appearance to Mary Magdalene is the *primary* witness for the Fourth Evangelist in which her role as 'apostle' is confirmed. To introduce other 'apostles' as *necessary* to the validity of the tradition, while at the same time ignoring her role, is to miss the Johannine point completely.

The chapter then goes on to give Peter the opportunity for a three-fold reinstatement, probably meant to parallel his three-fold denial<sup>6</sup>. Although it is balanced to some extent by the reference to

the Beloved Disciple as an equally 'authoritative' witness for the community, this special emphasis on Peter does not tie in with the relatively minor and somewhat inadequate role he has played in the Gospel. We saw that his confession (6:69) was superseded in Johannine terms by that of Martha in 11:27. He also fails to understand the footwashing, in contrast to Mary who has previously performed a similar act without needing to be told. His denial, though a non-Johannine traditional element, is nevertheless just as real in the Fourth Gospel. Yet here in chapter 21 he receives a position which reflects much more the Synoptic appraisal of him than the Johannine. The absence of the women, so important elsewhere, combined with the blatant ignoring of Mary Magdalene as primary witness, seems to suggest that the appendix chapter at least partially intends to reinstate Peter in line with other ecclesiastical traditions of the time.

In our points for further study we will return to a possible reason for this rehabilitation of Peter, when we attempt to relate the Johannine community and its writings to other groups engaged in the struggle towards some form of 'orthodoxy' at the end of the first century. For the moment we note that chapter 21 may represent the first step on the road towards a misunderstanding of the Johannine traditions concerning women which prevails to the present day.

5.2.4 One final point arising from our conclusions needs brief discussion, namely the question of how 'feminine' the Johannine Jesus, as the embodiment of Sophia, remains. Engelsmann claims that the Fourth Gospel "can ultimately be characterized as the most feminine of the Gospels"<sup>7</sup>. She also thinks that "John continually portrays Jesus

as a caring, nurturing person in a way that is evocative of the great virgin goddesses Demeter and Isis"<sup>8</sup>! While this last statement grossly overstates the case, it is nevertheless true that the Johannine Jesus exhibits a caring attitude towards individuals, particularly women, and at points shows his emotions quite openly. Perhaps the best example is his open weeping at the tomb of Lazarus, drawing comments from the crowd on his affection.

Whether or not we agree with Engelsmann's assertion will depend a lot on our assessment of what 'feminine' traits are. Because a man weeps or shows emotion openly does not necessarily mean he is less masculine or more feminine than other men. More likely the femininity of Jesus Sophia is to be seen reflected in the consistent emphasis on women as his main dialogue partners, the principal foils for major christological events, and the paradigms of discipleship for the community. Here something of a balance is maintained between the maleness of Jesus and the femaleness of so many of the main Gospel figures.

### 5.3 THE WAY AHEAD

It remains only for us to mention a few issues which arise from this thesis, which may need closer scrutiny in the future as a result of it. Some of these have already been touched on by scholars in the past, but now need sharpening in their focus in further research. We can only here begin to pose questions rather than suggesting answers.

5.3.1 We have seen that the Johannine portrayal of women as disciples of Jesus and paradigms for the community probably reflects a high status given to women as leaders in that community. This stands

in contrast to much of the rest of New Testament tradition, and certainly to the structures which were developing towards the end of the first and the beginning of the second centuries. What is even more remarkable in the light of this, is the fact that early church traditions place the Johannine community, at least by the time of the final compilation of the Fourth Gospel, in *Ephesus*<sup>9</sup>. In his commentary, Brown states that "the question of the place of the Gospel's composition is not an extremely important one"<sup>10</sup>, but when we consider what other New Testament documents are also associated with that city, we may begin to see its importance more clearly.

New Testament and ancient church traditions suggest that Ephesus contained communities to whom were directed, the Letter to the Ephesians<sup>11</sup>, the Pastoral Epistles<sup>12</sup>, and the Johannine writings, especially Revelation. Now if these traditions are correct, we are left with a rather divergent set of opinions on the place of women in the Christian community in that city! Especially striking is the fact that the Fourth Gospel and the Pastorals were probably written fairly close together in time. It would be worthwhile asking whether or not we see in these writings the shadows of an inter-church debate on the role of women in the Christian community. On the one hand 1 Tim 2:9-15 appeals to the Old Testament in the form of the creation narrative to back up its assertion that women should not teach and should remain submissive, while on the other hand the Fourth Evangelist can be viewed as arguing from the ministry of Jesus Sophia, founded upon Old Testament tradition concerning Sophia (as creatrix!), that women should be given a role at least equal in status to men. Since Eph 5:22ff also raises the question of women submitting to their husbands,

we might ask if already at that time the same questions were beginning to be formulated over against a nascent Johannine 'sect'.

5.3.2 Related to this question of the variety of views on women in Ephesus is the vital question, what happened to the Johannine women? If there was indeed a community which gave to women prominent positions of leadership, what became of it as the tide of 'orthodoxy' swept their freedom away? It would certainly appear that any inter-church dispute on this subject had very clear winners and losers: namely men and women respectively!

One interesting possibility which needs to be looked at more seriously is that the Johannine women somehow were pushed into another Christian 'sect' which could then be more easily marginalised by the patriarchal Fathers. The most promising such group would appear to be the Montanists, who emerged in the second century in Asia Minor. Patristic writers show us that this so-called sect was particularly condemned for its *female prophetesses*, most prominently, Maximilla, Priscilla, Ammia and the daughters of Philip<sup>13</sup>. As Fiorenza correctly points out, "everything we know about the Montanist movement comes from very biased and often slanderous sources, since their own writings were burned by an imperial edict in 398 CE"<sup>14</sup>, but it is quite clear that they did have women in prominent leadership roles. An investigation of the relationship between these and the Johannine women might well solve two problems: *firstly*, the disappearance of the Johannine women leaders; *secondly*, the question as to why the Montanists, who were a relatively 'orthodox' group in many ways, were

so vigorously persecuted by the patriarchal writers of the early church.

5.3.3 A final point which needs further investigation is the relationship between the Johannine tradition and Gnostic speculation concerning Sophia. It is significant that many of the Nag Hammadi writings draw heavily upon Johannine language and imagery for their own speculation. Notably, of course, the Valentinian Gnostic Heracleon wrote a commentary on the Fourth Gospel. Not only that, but we find that women were again prominent in some Gnostic sects, and the Gospel of Peter reflects a dialogue between Mary Magdalene and Peter on the authority of women apostles. This whole area of relationship between the Fourth Gospel, Women, Sophia and Gnosticism certainly merits serious attention in the near future. Ultimately, both that and the question of the relationship to Montanism may hopefully lead us back to further reflection on the Johannine women and their great forerunner and champion, Jesus Sophia.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

- <sup>1</sup> BROWN, R.E., "Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel" in: The Community of the Beloved Disciple (1979) 183-198.
- <sup>2</sup> BROWN, R.E., The Gospel According to John (1966) 2 vols, *passim*.
- <sup>3</sup> DUNN, J.D.G., Christology in the Making (1989[27]) 163-212; "Let John be John: A Gospel for its Time" in: P Stuhlmacher (ed.) Das Evangelium und die Evangelien (1983) 309-339.
- <sup>4</sup> SCHNACKENBURG, R., The Gospel According to St John 1 (1968) 110. For a review of the research on the linguistic origins of the Gospel see pages 105-111.
- <sup>5</sup> In the conclusions to Chapter Four (4.6.6) we will speculate on the possibility that the Fourth Gospel was written by a woman, rather than simply adopting the traditionally held view of male authorship. We recognise, of course, that it is more likely, given the historical situation of the early Church and the very limited educational opportunities afforded to women of that era, that the author was male. However, if we take into account the nature of our later conclusions regarding the role of women in the Johannine community, we would wish at least to leave the issue of the gender of the author open through the designation adopted (him/her) on the few occasions throughout the thesis when a personal pronoun is required by English usage.
- <sup>6</sup> BROWN, Community, 186.
- <sup>7</sup> SANDERS, E.P., Jesus and Judaism (1985) 3.
- <sup>8</sup> For the fullest recent discussion of the variety of both Old Testament and New Testament approaches to methodology see MORGAN, R. & BARTON, J., Biblical Interpretation (1988) *passim*.
- <sup>9</sup> Cf. Ibid, 203-268 (*including selected bibliography*).
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid, 215.
- <sup>11</sup> Cf. CHILDS, B., An Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (1979); The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction (1984).
- <sup>12</sup> CHILDS, New Testament, 52.
- <sup>13</sup> CHILDS, Old Testament, 15.
- <sup>14</sup> It is perhaps surprising that Childs' 'canonical' approach still allows him to deal quite separately with the Old and New Testaments. On this level alone he would appear not to have taken his own method seriously enough.
- <sup>15</sup> Cf. MORGAN & BARTON, Biblical Interpretation, 133-166.

- <sup>16</sup> FIORENZA, In Memory of Her (1983) xx.
- <sup>17</sup> FIORENZA, E.S., "You Are Not to be Called Father: Early Cristian History in a Feminist Perspective" Cross Currents 30 (1979) 302.
- <sup>18</sup> We are *not* implying that this is a danger to which Fiorenza herself has succumbed.
- <sup>19</sup> HEINE, S., Women and Early Christianity (1987) 5.
- <sup>20</sup> MORGAN & BARTON, Biblical Interpretation, 158-159.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid, 159.
- <sup>22</sup> FIORENZA, E.S., In Memory of Her, xvii.
- <sup>23</sup> We do not demand that the reader shares these convictions, but state them in order that they may be "taken into account for exactness"!
- <sup>24</sup> FIORENZA, In Memory of Her, 207.
- <sup>25</sup> WILES, M., "Christianity without Incarnation?" in: J.Hick (ed.) The Myth of God Incarnate (1977) 3. [Emphasis mine]
- <sup>26</sup> DUNN, Christology, 213-250.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid, 250. Though notice Dunn's somewhat revised formulation in the second edition, xxviii ff.
- <sup>28</sup> SANDERS, Jesus and Judaism, 9.
- <sup>29</sup> See above, section 1.1.
- <sup>30</sup> VON RAD, G., Wisdom in Israel (1972) 9.
- <sup>31</sup> Examples of this approach include, ALBRIGHT, W.F., "The Goddess of Life and Wisdom" AJSL 36 (1919-1920) 258-294; OESTERLEY, W.O.E., The Wisdom of Egypt and the Old Testament (1927); FICHTNER, J., Die altorientalische Weisheit in ihrer israelitisch-jüdischen Ausprägung (1933); RINGGREN, H., Word and Wisdom (1947); GESE, H., Lehre und Wirklichkeit in der Alten Weisheit (1958).
- <sup>32</sup> So, for example, WHYBRAY, R.N., Wisdom in Proverbs (1965); MACK, B.L., Logos und Sophia (1973); CRENSHAW, J.L., Old Testament Wisdom: an Introduction (1982); LANG, B., Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs (1986).
- <sup>33</sup> For example, SCOTT, R.B.Y., The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament (1971); MORGAN, D.F., Wisdom in the Old Testament Traditions (1981).
- <sup>34</sup> Cf. ALBRIGHT, AJSL 36, [Ishtar/Astarte]; BOSTROEM, G., Proverbialstudien. Die Weisheit und das Fremde Weib in Sprüche

- 1-9 (1935) [Ishtar/Astarte]; KAYATZ, C., Studien zu Proverbien 1-9 (1966) [Maat]; MACK, Logos und Sophia [Isis]; KLOPPENBORG, J.S., "Isis and Sophia in the Book of Wisdom" HThR 75 (1982) 57-84.
- 35 MACK, Logos und Sophia, 60.
- 36 DUNN, Christology, 176. (*italics mine*)
- 37 CAMP, C., Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs (1985).
- 38 Ibid, 255. For an example of how this functions see her analysis on pages 191-207.
- 39 Ibid, 256.
- 40 Ibid, 290.
- 41 BAER, R.A., Philo's Use of the Categories Male and Female (1970).
- 42 Cf. REESE, J.M., Hellenistic Influence on the Book of Wisdom and its Consequences (1970).
- 43 See the critique offered of Reese's work by KLOPPENBORG, HThR, 60ff.
- 44 Cf. On Proverbs, LANG, Wisdom and Proverbs; on Sirach, KNOX, W.L., "The Divine Wisdom" JThS 38 (1937) 230-237; on Wisdom of Solomon, KLOPPENBORG, HThR, *passim*.
- 45 DALY, M., Beyond God the Father. Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation (1985<sup>2</sup>) 93. For further examples of this theory see the literature cited later in this thesis, Chapter Two, note 48.
- 46 OCHSHORN, J., The Female Experience and the Nature of the Divine (1981) 92-132.
- 47 BROWN, R.E., The Epistles of John (1982) 64.
- 48 Ibid, 104-106.
- 49 Cf. PAGELS, E.H., The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heraclion's Commentary on John (1973).
- 50 On the history of the early reception of the Fourth Gospel see, SANDERS, J.N., The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church (1943).
- 51 KAESEMANN, E., The Testament of Jesus (1968) 26.
- 52 THOMPSON, M.M., The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel (1988).
- 53 BULTMANN, R., The Gospel of John (1971) 62.
- 54 KAESEMANN, Testament, 73.

- <sup>55</sup> It is worth pointing out that the humanity/divinity question in Johannine christology is not unrelated to the question of its origin. If, as we shall argue, the background to the Logos and the entire picture of Jesus Christ in the Fourth Gospel is indeed Sophia, the place which we grant to her in Jewish theology will affect our understanding of the humanity/divinity question.
- <sup>56</sup> While most scholars accept that the Prologue existed in *some* form before its present structure in the Gospel, there is considerable diversity in their assessment of what the Vorlage actually consisted of. For discussion see, BROWN, John 1, 18-23; DUNN, Christology, 239ff.
- <sup>57</sup> Cf. BULTMANN, R., "Die religionsgeschichtliche Hintergrund des Prologs zum Johannes-Evangelium" reprinted in: Exegetica: Aufsätze zur Erforschung des Neuen Testaments (1967) 10-35; John, *passim*.
- <sup>58</sup> Cf. BULTMANN, John, 11-83; Theology of the New Testament (1955) II, 12-14.
- <sup>59</sup> BULTMANN, John, 22-23. See further our critique in section 3.2.
- <sup>60</sup> Cf. PERCY, E., Untersuchungen über den Ursprung der johanneischen Theologie (1939); SCHWEIZER, E., Ego Eimi (1939); SCHNACKENBURG, R., "Logos-Hymnus und johanneischer Prolog" BZ 1 (1957) 69-109; John 1 (1968) 481-493; BROWN, John 1, lvi-lvi.
- <sup>61</sup> Cf. SCHULZ, S., Komposition und Herkunft der johanneischen Reden (1960) Das Evangelium nach Johannes (1975).
- <sup>62</sup> RUDOLPH, K., Gnosis (1983) 276.
- <sup>63</sup> BROWN, John 1, lvi.
- <sup>64</sup> ARGYLE, A. W., "Philo and the Fourth Gospel" ET 63 (1951-1952) 385-386; "The Logos of Philo: Personal or Impersonal" ET 66 (1954-1955) 13-14. Cf. the reply by WILSON, R. McL., "Philo and the Fourth Gospel" ET 65 (1953-1954) 47-49, who argues that they both develop from similar backgrounds without a necessary dependence.
- <sup>65</sup> DODD, C. H., The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (1953) 54-73.
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid, 277.
- <sup>67</sup> HARRIS, J. R., The Origin of the Prologue to St John's Gospel (1917).
- <sup>68</sup> BROWN, John 1, cxxii-cxxv.
- <sup>69</sup> Cf. GESE, H., "The Prologue to John's Gospel" in: Essays in Biblical Theology (1981) 167-222.

- <sup>70</sup> DODD, Interpretation, 274ff.
- <sup>71</sup> DUNN, Christology, 161-250; "Let John be John", 309-339.
- <sup>72</sup> WILLETT, M.E., Wisdom Christology in the Fourth Gospel (1985).
- <sup>73</sup> Several commentators take it for granted that the Fourth Evangelist would simply change the gender to suit Jesus' masculinity, without any further reflection on the consequences of such a switch. Cf. BROWN, John 1, 523, who says: "If we ask why the hymn of the Prologue chose to speak of 'Word' rather than 'Wisdom', the fact that in Greek the former is masculine and the latter feminine must be considered"; SCHNACKENBURG, John 1, 492, states that the Fourth Evangelist may have found "the masculine noun Logos. . . more fitting than the feminine noun Sophia to present his pre-existing and incarnate Christ".
- <sup>74</sup> For example: BOUCHER, M., "Some Unexplored Parallels to 1 Cor 11:11-12 and Gal 3:28: the New Testament and the Role of Women" CBQ 31 (1969) 50-58; SCROGGS, R., "Paul and the Eschatological Woman" JAAR 40 (1972) 203-303; JAAR 42 (1974) 532-537; MEEKS, W.A., "The Image of the Androgyne: Some uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity" in: History of Religions 13 (1974) 165-208; MUNRO, W., "Patriarchy and Charismatic Community in 'Paul'" in: J. Plaskow/J.A. Romero (eds.) Women and Religion (1974) 189-198; Authority in Peter and Paul (1983). It is noticeable, however, that the majority of studies in this period are still by men. Note the penetrating critique of Meeks and Scroggs by FIORENZA, E.S., In Memory of Her (1983) 205ff.
- <sup>75</sup> SCHNEIDERS, S.M., "Women in the Fourth Gospel and the Role of Women in the Contemporary Church" BibThBull 12 (1982) 35. For a very similar argument see PAGELS, E.H., "Paul and Women: A Response to Recent Discussion" JAAR 42 (1974) 538-549.
- <sup>76</sup> For example: FIORENZA, E.S., "Die Rolle der Frau in der urchristlichen Bewegung" Concilium 2 (1976) 3-9; "The Study of Women in Early Christianity: Some Methodological Considerations" in: Critical History and Biblical Faith: New Testament Perspectives (1979) 30-58; "Word, Spirit and Power: Women in Early Christian Communities" in: R.R. Ruether/E. McLaughlin (eds.) Women of Spirit (1979) 29-70; "Feminist Theology and New Testament Interpretation" JSOT 22 (1982) 32-46; and especially, In Memory of Her.
- <sup>77</sup> My use of the word here is copied from the style adopted by Mary Daly in her devastating analysis of the patriarchal myth in DALY, M., Gyn/Ecology: the Metaethics of Radical Feminism (1978).

- 78 FIORENZA, In Memory of Her, xvii.
- 79 Ibid, xviii-xix.
- 80 Ibid, 316.
- 81 Ibid, 323-334.
- 82 BROWN, Community, 183-198.
- 83 SCHNEIDERS, "Women in the Fourth Gospel", 35-45.
- 84 FIORENZA, In Memory of Her, 333.
- 85 It is worth pointing out at this juncture, that the author had actually undertaken a brief study of the role of women in John, as indicated in the introduction, *prior* to the appearance of Fiorenza's work (and that of Schneiders). Since he reached very similar conclusions with regard to their role, the work of Fiorenza served more as a confirmation and encouragement to pursue the questions with which we are now dealing.
- 86 MOLTMANN-WENDEL, E., The Women Around Jesus (1982).
- 87 Ibid, 61-90.
- 88 Ibid, 10.
- 89 Ibid, 11 (emphasis mine).
- 90 HEINE, S., Women and Early Christianity (1987) 55.
- 91 Though, note the critique of Ibid, 52-54 of the dangers highlighted by the approach of WOLFF, H., Jesus der Mann (1975), who sought to investigate the psyche of Jesus, discovering him to be an 'integrated man', balanced between *animus* and *anima*, in contrast to the patriarchal society of his day! Again, like the Old Quest, such studies tend to uncover what we want to hear rather than basing themselves on the text of the New Testament.
- 92 For example: QUALLS-CORBETT, N., The Sacred Prostitute (1988), assumes a matriarchal prehistoric society where the function of the Goddess was mirrored in the life of the Sacred Prostitute to such an extent that, in the sexual act, "the union of masculine and feminine, spiritual and physical - the personal was transcended and the divine entered in. . . . Her human emotions and her creative, bodily energies were united with the supra-personal. She touched basic regenerative powers, and thereby, as the goddess incarnate, assured the continuity of life and love. The sacred prostitute was the holy vessel wherein chthonic and spiritual forces united"!! (p.40).

- <sup>93</sup> ENGELSMANN, J.C., The Feminine Dimension of the Divine (1979);  
QUALLS-CORBETT, Sacred Prostitute.
- <sup>94</sup> OCHSHORN, J., The Female Experience and the Nature of the Divine  
(1981) xv.
- <sup>95</sup> WITHERINGTON, B., Women in the Ministry of Jesus (1984).
- <sup>96</sup> WITHERINGTON, B., Women in the Earliest Churches (1988).
- <sup>97</sup> WITHERINGTON, Ministry, 108.
- <sup>98</sup> Ibid, 109. After all, Jesus weeps too without being accused of  
such over-indulgent sorrow!
- <sup>99</sup> Ibid, 129.
- <sup>100</sup> WITHERINGTON, Earliest Churches, 174-182, devotes a paragraph to  
each of the stories in Jn 2;4;11;12, while giving more  
than five pages on Mary Magdalene's role in Jn 20:1-18.
- <sup>101</sup> Ibid, 177-181.
- <sup>102</sup> Ibid, 181.
- <sup>103</sup> Cf. The introductory chapter by BROWN, Community, 13-24.
- <sup>104</sup> For arguments see, BROWN, John 1, lxxx-lxxxvi; BARRETT, John,  
105-109. Cf. DUNN, "Let John be John", 318-321, who  
also indicates the significance of this conclusion for  
the study of Johannine Christology.
- <sup>105</sup> For various theories thereon see: BROWN, John 1, xxiv-xl; FORTNA,  
R., The Gospel of Signs (1970); The Fourth Gospel and  
its Predecessor (1988); CULPEPPER, R.A., The Johannine  
School (1975).

## NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

- <sup>1</sup> Cf. REED, W.L., "Asherah" in: IDB 1, 250-252; ALBRIGHT, W.F., Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan (1968) 105-107; 126ff; GRAY, J., The Canaanites (1964) 123-124.
- <sup>2</sup> For texts in transliteration and translation see, DRIVER, G.R., Canaanite Myths and Legends (1956); PRITCHARD, J.B., Ancient Near Eastern Texts (1955) 129-155. Cf. SCHAEFFER, C.F.A., The Cuneiform Texts of Ras Sharma (1939); GRAY, J., The Legacy of Canaan. The Ras Sharma Texts and Their Relevance to the Old Testament (1965[2]); KAPELRUD, A.J., "Ugarit" in: IDB 4, 724-732.
- <sup>3</sup> Cf. KAPELRUD, IDB 4, 724-732.
- <sup>4</sup> Cf. GRAY, Canaanites, 87ff; 119ff; POPE, M.H., "Fertility Cults" in: IDB 2, 265. In his book on the purges of Josiah, MCKAY, J.W., Religion in Judah Under the Assyrians 732-609 BC (1973) shows how the influence of these cults of Canaan was still strong in that period.
- <sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this present study it is impossible to differentiate between the variety of fertility cults in the ANE, so reference is made to the cult in a very general manner, recognising the limitations of such a generalisation.
- <sup>6</sup> Cf. POPE, IDB 3, 265.
- <sup>7</sup> ANET, 108.
- <sup>8</sup> In fact the text of this particular cycle does not make this restoration of fecundity explicit, largely due to the fact that it is incomplete. However, the last line of the text implies that such a thought is indeed the logical follow-through: "On the day when Tammuz comes up to me . . . may the dead rise and smell the incense" (ANET, 109).
- <sup>9</sup> JAMES, E.O., The Ancient Gods (1960) 79.
- <sup>10</sup> Cf. Ibid, 87; ALBRIGHT, Yahweh and the Gods, 108-109; GRAY, Canaanites 120-121.
- <sup>11</sup> DRIVER, Canaanite Myths, 109 [Baal I\* vi 26-31].
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid, 111 [Baal III ii 6-7].
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid [Baal III ii 30-37].
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid, 117 [Baal IV i 5-6, 12-13].
- <sup>15</sup> QUALLS-CORBETT, Sacred Prostitute, 30-31.
- <sup>16</sup> POPE, IDB 3, 265. One of the oldest accounts available to us of Sacred Prostitution occurs in the 'Gilgamesh Epic'. For the text see, ANET, 73-99.

- <sup>17</sup> Cf. JAMES, Ancient Gods, 134-147; QUALLS-CORBETT, Sacred Prostitute, 39-40.
- <sup>18</sup> HEINE, S., Christianity and the Goddesses (1988) 50-53.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid, 52.
- <sup>20</sup> WINTER, U., Frau und Göttin (1983) 367.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid, 367-368.
- <sup>23</sup> QUALLS-CORBETT, Sacred Prostitute, 79.
- <sup>24</sup> We would recognise that Isis especially was identified with many other attributes than simply that of the Goddess of Love. Venus was, of course, the Roman name for the Greek Aphrodite. For material on Aphrodite see: OTTO, W.F., The Homeric Gods (1979=1955) 91-103.
- <sup>25</sup> Cf. ENGELSMANN, Feminine Dimension 28-29; QUALLS-CORBETT, Sacred Prostitute, 59.
- <sup>26</sup> ENGELSMANN, Feminine Dimension, 28. Cf. QUALLS-CORBETT, Sacred Prostitute, 58-59.
- <sup>27</sup> WINTER, Frau und Göttin, 197-198, 462.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid, 194.
- <sup>29</sup> For an illustration of such cakes see, MCKAY, Religion in Judah, 128 fig. 12.
- <sup>30</sup> RUEATHER, R.R., Sexism and God-Talk (1983) 52.
- <sup>31</sup> Cf. OTTO, Homeric Gods, 91-103, giving full documentation of sources.
- <sup>32</sup> Within the confines of this present thesis we cannot hope to deal with the breadth of Old Testament condemnation of the cult in any form other than the most general terms. For literature see particularly the bibliographies of, GRAY, J., I & II Kings (1970[2]) 777-802; WOLFF, H.W., Hosea (1974) 245-247.
- <sup>33</sup> GRAY, Kings, 342.
- <sup>34</sup> Cf. GRAY, J., Joshua, Judges and Ruth (1967) 300-301; SOGGIN, J.A., Judges (1981) 123-128.
- <sup>35</sup> The Old Testament has an ambivalent attitude to *non-cultic* (secular) prostitution, which is frequently tolerated (e.g. Rahab in Josh 2; Tamar and Judah in Gen 38) as part of everyday life. *Cultic* prostitution, on the other hand, is always "rejected on moral and religious grounds, and

totally prohibited" : BRENNER, A., The Israelite Woman (1985) 78-83. Cf. BIRD, P., "Images of Women in the Old Testament" in: R. R. RUETHER (ed.) Religion and Sexism (1974) 41 - 88.

- <sup>36</sup> Cf. BAAB, O. T., "Prostitution" in: IDB 3, 931-934.
- <sup>37</sup> For a full analysis see, MCKAY, Religion in Judah, 28-44.
- <sup>38</sup> Cf. WOLFF, Hosea, 14, 33-34.
- <sup>39</sup> RUETHER, Sexism and God-Talk, 56.
- <sup>40</sup> Cf. SETEL, T. D., "Prophets and Pornography: Female Sexual Imagery in Hosea" in: L. M. Russell (ed.) Feminist Interpretation of the Bible (1985) 86-95.
- <sup>41</sup> Cf. WOLFF, Hosea, 14; RUDOLPH, W., "Präparierte Jungfrauen?" ZAW 75 (1963) 65-73.
- <sup>42</sup> GRAY, J., "The Queen of Heaven" in: IDB 3, 975.
- <sup>43</sup> MCKANE, W., Jeremiah I (1986) 171, suggests this was probably a reference to the practice at Jerusalem during the period of the exile.
- <sup>44</sup> It is interesting that the majority of Old Testament anti-cult polemic is directed against the male god Baal, who is to be supplanted by the male god, Yahweh. RUETHER, Sexism and God-Talk, 56, believes that "for many people, Yahweh simply replaced Baal as the husband of the Goddess. Asherah . . . continued to be worshiped alongside Yahweh in the Solomonic temple for two-thirds of its existence".
- <sup>45</sup> QUALLS-CORBETT, Sacred Prostitute, 54
- <sup>46</sup> In a perverse sort of way, even Hosea recognises the need for a feminine dimension in the twisted imagery of taking a cultic prostitute as a wife in parallel to the Yahweh-Israel relationship!
- <sup>47</sup> OCHSHORN, Female Experience 34. While accepting her conclusion in relation to Israel's understanding of monotheism in the form of the patriarchal God, Yahweh, we will later argue that monotheism in itself need not be a bar to the expression of the feminine principle.
- <sup>48</sup> BOSTROM, Proverbiastudien, *passim*.
- <sup>49</sup> Cf. MCKANE, Proverbs, 284-286; CAMP, Wisdom and the Feminine, 115-120; ALETTI, J.-N., "Seduction et Paroles en Proverbes I-IX" VT 27 (1977) 129-144.
- <sup>50</sup> Cf. especially the allegory concerning the unfaithfulness of Jerusalem in Ezekiel 16.

- 51 For example: DAVIS, E.G., The First Sex (1973); DALY, M., Beyond God the Father (1985[2]) 92-95; SPRETNAK, C., Lost Goddesses of Early Greece (1978); QUALLS-CORBETT, Sacred Prostitute, 30ff. Note the critique of this position by, HEINE, Christianity and the Goddesses, 44-48; RUETHER, Sexism and God-Talk, 52.
- 52 POMEROY, S., Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves (1975) 15.
- 53 OCHSHORN, Female Experience, 90, remarks on the fact that "what is striking in much of the extant literature is the representation of divinities and mortals of both sexes in a wide variety of roles". Thus we find that Isis teaches Osiris the art of agriculture (cf. JAMES, Ancient Gods, 81), and Baal does the same for his sister/lover, Anath (cf. OCHSHORN, Female Experience, 75). Cf. Ibid, 87-91; HORNUNG, E., Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt (1983) 66-99.
- 54 See under section 2.4.1.2, Sophia and the Goddesses.
- 55 Cf. GORDIS, R., The Book of Job (1978) 298.
- 56 Cf. DUNN, Christology, 168.
- 57 MCKANE, Proverbs, 264.
- 58 Cf. KAYATZ, Studien zu Proverbien, 120, who lists many prophetic parallels to Prov 1:20-33.
- 59 This is a remarkable claim when one considers the prominence given to Yahweh as the Lord of Life in the covenant renewal liturgy of Deut 30.
- 60 The meaning of  $\text{בָּרָא}$  in this instance is difficult to determine precisely, though the LXX translates with  $\kappa\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\nu$  ("created"). RINGGREN, Word and Wisdom, 100-102 argues for 'begat' on the basis of other Semitic languages. MCKANE, Proverbs, 352-354 opts for 'created'.
- 61 While we shall discuss this in greater detail at a later stage, for the present we note the major contributions to the field: ALBRIGHT, W.F., "The Goddess of Life and Wisdom" AJSL 36 (1919-1920) 258-294; RINGGREN, Word and Wisdom; BOSTROM, Proverbiastudien; WHYBRAY, Wisdom in Proverbs; BAUER-KAYATZ, Studien zu Proverbien; MACK, Logos und Sophia; LANG, B., Frau Weisheit (1975).
- 62 CAMP, Wisdom and the Feminine.
- 63 Ibid, 28.
- 64 Ibid, 291.
- 65 Ibid.

- <sup>66</sup> See also section 2.4.2. For the arguments and literature see, DUNN, Christology, 168ff.
- <sup>67</sup> Ibid, 176.
- <sup>68</sup> NICKELSBURG, G.W.E., Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah (1981) 64. Cf. SNAITH, J.G., Ecclesiasticus (1974) 1.
- <sup>69</sup> Fragments of early Hebrew manuscripts have been recovered at Qumran and Masada, but the Greek text remains our only complete source. Cf. NICKELSBURG, Jewish Literature, 64-65.
- <sup>70</sup> The influence of Hellenistic thought and the possible polemic against it in Sirach is discussed at length in HENGEL, M., Judaism and Hellenism I (1974) 131-153.
- <sup>71</sup> McKEATING, H., "Jesus Ben Sira's Attitude to Women" ExT 85 (1973) 85-87; SWIDLER, L., Biblical Affirmations of Woman (1979) 123-129.
- <sup>72</sup> NICKELSBURG, Jewish Literature, 62.
- <sup>73</sup> Cf. CAMP, Wisdom and the Feminine, 255-281.
- <sup>74</sup> Cf. McKEATING, "Ben Sira's Attitude", 86, cites numerous texts showing the need for a man to 'control' his wife and daughters.
- <sup>75</sup> This identification of Sophia with the Torah is further developed by Baruch 3:37 - 4:2, which sees her as gifted to humanity in the form of the book of the Law.
- <sup>76</sup> WINSTON, D., The Wisdom of Solomon (1979) 22; NICKELSBURG, Jewish Literature, 184. Others suggest the beginning of the first century BCE, for example, CLARKE, E.G., The Wisdom of Solomon (1973) 2.
- <sup>77</sup> Cf. REESE, Hellenistic Influence, *passim*.
- <sup>78</sup> NICKELSBURG, Jewish Literature, 175.
- <sup>79</sup> See particularly, KLOPPENBORG, J.S., "Isis and Sophia in the Book of Wisdom" HThR 75 (1982) 57-84.
- <sup>80</sup> Ibid, 63-78. We return to this matter in more detail later in the chapter.
- <sup>81</sup> JOHNSON, E.A., "Jesus, the Wisdom of God. A Biblical Basis for Non-Androcentric Christology" ETHL 61 (1985) 267.
- <sup>82</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>83</sup> VON RAD, Wisdom in Israel.

- <sup>84</sup> LANG, Frau Weisheit.
- <sup>85</sup> WHYBRAY, Wisdom in Proverbs.
- <sup>86</sup> RINGGREN, Word and Wisdom. For an extensive review of all these various positions see, CAMP, Wisdom and the Feminine, 23-68; JOHNSON, "Non-Androcentric Christology", 271-276.
- <sup>87</sup> See above, n.11. Others committed to a similar viewpoint include, BROWN, John 1, cxxii-cxxv; MOLLENKOTT, V., The Divine Feminine: the Biblical Imagery of God as Female (1984).
- <sup>88</sup> VON RAD, Wisdom in Israel, 163. Cf. Old Testament Theology 1 (1962) 444.
- <sup>89</sup> JOHNSON, "Non-Androcentric Christology", 275.
- <sup>90</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>91</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>92</sup> Ibid, 287. Cf. DUNN, Christology, 15. In much more detailed analysis see the traditional basic reference works: GOODENOUGH, E.R., By Light, Light: the Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism (1935); WOLFSON, H.A., Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam (1947) 2 vols.
- <sup>93</sup> BAER, Philo's Use of Male and Female, 44.
- <sup>94</sup> Ibid, 48-49.
- <sup>95</sup> Ibid, 62.
- <sup>96</sup> Ibid, 63.
- <sup>97</sup> There is evidence to suggest that Philo was quite familiar with the preceding traditions of Jewish Wisdom speculation. Cf. LAPORTE, J., "Philo in the Tradition of Biblical Wisdom Literature" in: R.L. Wilson (ed.) Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity (1975) 103-141.
- <sup>98</sup> ENGELSMAN, Feminine Dimension, 102.
- <sup>99</sup> MACK, Logos und Sophia, 121. Cf. Ibid, 120n.23.
- <sup>100</sup> Cf. the text quoted above from Fuga 51-52.
- <sup>101</sup> ENGELSMANN, Feminine Dimension, 75
- <sup>102</sup> LANG, Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs, 132.
- <sup>103</sup> FOHRER, G./WILCKENS, U., "σοφία, κτλ." TDNT VII, 476.

- 104 BDE, 315.
- 105 FOHRER/WILCKENS, TDNT VII, 496, note the exceptions, which are remarkably few in number. Cf. BROWN, C., "Wisdom/Σοφία" NIDNTT III 1027.
- 106 Ibid, 497-498.
- 107 MORENZ, S., Egyptian Religion (1973) 113.
- 108 Ibid, 113ff; FOHRER/WILCKENS, TDNT VII, 478-480; ENGELSMANN, Feminine Dimension, 70-72; OCHSHORN, Female Experience, 64-66.
- 109 ALBRIGHT, W. F., "The Goddess of Wisdom and Life" AJSL 36 (1919-1920) 258-294; From Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process (1957[2]); Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan (1968).
- 110 BOSTROM, Proverbiastudien, *passim*.
- 111 ALBRIGHT, AJSL, 260.
- 112 See above, section 2.2.1., and the full text of "Innana's Descent to the Nether World" in: ANET, 52-57.
- 113 ALBRIGHT, AJSL, 285.
- 114 ALBRIGHT, From Stone Age to Christianity, 368.
- 115 RINGGREN, Word and Wisdom, 137-138.
- 116 WHYBRAY, Wisdom in Proverbs, 83-87.
- 117 LANG, Frau Weisheit, 149-152.
- 118 WHYBRAY, Wisdom in Proverbs, 84-85.
- 119 LANG, Frau Weisheit, 149-152.
- 120 RINGGREN, Word and Wisdom, 131. Cf. CAMP, Wisdom and the Feminine, 23-25.
- 121 This Goddess was known by various names throughout the ANE, Astarte being the Greek form, Ashtoreth (אֲשֶׁת־אֲשֹׁרֵת) the Hebrew usage in I Kings 11:5, 37. See further under GRAY, J., "Ashtoreth" IDB 1 (1962) 255-256.
- 122 BOSTROM, Proverbiastudien, 161-168.
- 123 Ibid, 173.
- 124 RINGGREN, Word and Wisdom, 133ff.
- 125 MCKANE, W., Proverbs (1970) 286-288, 312, 315-317.

- <sup>126</sup> WHYBRAY, Wisdom in Proverbs, 89-92.
- <sup>127</sup> Ibid, 92.
- <sup>128</sup> For example, ALBRIGHT, W.F., "Some Canaanite-Phoenician Sources of Hebrew Wisdom" in: Wisdom in Israel and the Ancient Near East (1955) 1-15, states on page 3 that "it is most unreasonable to assume that didactic literature appeared any later in Syria-Palestine than in any other area", but cannot produce any!
- <sup>129</sup> The literature on such sources is legion: see for example, OESTERLEY, W.O.E., The Wisdom of Egypt and the Old Testament in the Light of the Newly Discovered Teaching of Amenemope (1927); GESE, H., Lehre und Wirklichkeit in der alten Weisheit (1958); MCKANE, Proverbs, 51-150; CRENSHAW, J.L., Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction (1982) 213-235.
- <sup>130</sup> BAUER-KAYATZ, Studien zu Proverbien; Einführung in die alttestamentliche Weisheit (1969).
- <sup>131</sup> DONNER, H., "Die religionsgeschichtliche Ursprünge von Sprüche 8" ZASA 82 (1958) 8-18.
- <sup>132</sup> This critique is succinctly performed by LANG, Frau Weisheit, 149-152.
- <sup>133</sup> KAYATZ, Einführung, 74.
- <sup>134</sup> Ibid, 87-90.
- <sup>135</sup> Ibid, 45-48.
- <sup>136</sup> KAYATZ, Studien zu Proverbien, 136 (*trans. mine*).
- <sup>137</sup> Ibid, 138-139.
- <sup>138</sup> MACK, Logos und Sophia, 34-39, follows Kayatz's analysis of MAAT and Sophia before turning to look at Isis. Similarly, RINGGREN, Word and Wisdom, 45-49, had explored MAAT and the Babylonian *Mesaru* as possible background to Sophia.
- <sup>139</sup> CAMP, Wisdom and the Feminine, 31-34.
- <sup>140</sup> We need only cite the well-known parallels between Prov 22:17 - 23:14 and the Egyptian teaching of Amenemope. For the text of this work see, ANET, 421-424. Cf. the discussion of WHYBRAY Wisdom in Proverbs, 15-16; MCKANE, Proverbs, 102-117 and *ad loc.*.
- <sup>141</sup> The very presence of the texts which talk of the woman of folly in Prov 1-9 indicate this awareness, quite apart from the various injunctions against apostasy in the historical and prophetic writings.

- <sup>142</sup> For literature see: HENGEL, Judaism and Hellenism II, 101-102, [n.331]; DUNN, Christology, 326n.26; KLOPPENBORG, HThR, 58n.7-9.
- <sup>143</sup> Cf. PFEIFER, G., Ursprung und Wesen der Hypostasenvorstellung im Judentum (1967) is the only recent advocate of such an extreme position, described by KLOPPENBORG, HThR, 59 as "exaggerated and ill-considered."
- <sup>144</sup> HENGEL, Judaism and Hellenism I, 158.
- <sup>145</sup> Ibid, II, 102n.331.
- <sup>146</sup> KNOX, W.L., "The Divine Wisdom" JThS 38 (1937) 230-237; see later also, St Paul and the Church of the Gentiles (1939) 53-89. Cf., The even earlier work of REITZENSTEIN, R., Zwei religionsgeschichtlichen Fragen (1901) 104-112.
- <sup>147</sup> KNOX, JThS, 236.
- <sup>148</sup> Ibid, 237.
- <sup>149</sup> In seeing Wisdom of Solomon as the zenith of pre-Gnostic Sophia speculation we are not disregarding the New Testament references outside of the Johannine corpus. These will be dealt with in Chapter Three. See particularly the reference to Col 1:15-20 in section 3.1.1. note 6.
- <sup>150</sup> Cf. MACK, Logos und Sophia, 63-107.
- <sup>151</sup> REESE, Hellenistic Influence, *passim*.
- <sup>152</sup> KLOPPENBORG, HThR, 57-84.
- <sup>153</sup> Ibid, 61.
- <sup>154</sup> These he lists as: "activity at creation, her close relation to God, teacher of humankind". Ibid, 78.
- <sup>155</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>156</sup> Cf. BLEEKER, C.T., "Isis as Saviour Goddess" in: S.G.Brandon (ed.) The Saviour God (1967) 1-16.
- <sup>157</sup> Ibid, 70.
- <sup>158</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>159</sup> Ibid, 71.
- <sup>160</sup> Ibid, 73-78.
- <sup>161</sup> Ibid, 78.
- <sup>162</sup> Ibid, 79-84.

- 163 Ibid, 84.
- 164 GOODENOUGH, By Light, Light, 263ff; 275ff.
- 165 Ibid, 277.
- 166 For references and citations see, MACK, Logos und Sophia, 111n.2.  
For other parallels to Isis see, Ibid, 153n.130-135.
- 167 From, "The Aretalogy from Cyme", reproduced in: ENGELSMANN, Feminine Dimension, 64-66.
- 168 MACK, Logos und Sophia, 144-146; 155ff.
- 169 Ibid, 185.
- 170 Cf. ENGELSMANN, Feminine Dimension, 99-102, who notes, quite correctly that Philo's Sophia ends up as a "pale and sickly copy of her sister Isis, who is a robust and powerful goddess, unlikely to be intimidated by the vicissitudes of earthly life" (102).
- 171 DUNN, Christology, 170.
- 172 For example: SCHENCKE, W., Die Chokma (Sophia) in der jüdischen Hypostasenspekulation (1913); BOUSSET, W., Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter (1926/37); RANKIN, O. S., Israel's Wisdom Literature (1936) 342-354; RINGGREN, Word and Wisdom, (1947)
- 173 LANG, Wisdom in Proverbs, 139.
- 174 Ibid.
- 175 Cf. MACK, Logos und Sophia, 179-184; LANG, Wisdom in Proverbs, 139-140.
- 176 LANG, Wisdom in Proverbs, 132.
- 177 Ibid, 134-135.
- 178 Ibid, 136.
- 179 CAMP, Wisdom and the Feminine, 215.
- 180 We must in fairness emphasise that neither Lang nor Camp were addressing the figure in Wisdom of Solomon, but only that found in Proverbs.
- 181 OCHSHORN, Female Experience, 139-140.
- 182 HENGEL, Son of God, 73.
- 183 For further reflection on this see, ENGELSMANN, Feminine Dimension, 119-120

<sup>184</sup> This may also be reflected in the theme of 'withdrawal' of Sophia from the world, for example in Enoch 42:1-2.

### NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

- <sup>1</sup> Cf. BROWN, John 1, cxxii-cxxv; DUNN, "Let John be John", 330-331.
- <sup>2</sup> Cf. DUNN, Unity and Diversity, 221.
- <sup>3</sup> On the emergence of this idea see particularly the seminal article by SCHWEIZER, E., "Zur Herkunft der Praeexistenzvorstellung bei Paulus" EvTh 19 (1959) 65-70; reprinted in: Neotestamentica (1963) 105-109.
- <sup>4</sup> It is perhaps interesting to note at this point that the author of Ephesians at least sees the maleness of Jesus as important for his illustration in 5:21ff. Then again, the whole 'Father-Son' language which dominates so much of New Testament Christology depends largely on the gender of Jesus.
- <sup>5</sup> Cf. SCHWEIZER, E., "Aufnahme und Korrektur jüdischer Sophiatheologie" in: Neotestamentica (1963) 110-113; PEARSON, B.A., "Hellenistic-Jewish Wisdom Speculation and Paul" in: R.L. Wilkin (ed.) Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity (1975) 59.
- <sup>6</sup> The two hymns most commonly lumped together in assessment of the pre-Pauline Wisdom tradition are Phil 2:6-11 and Col 1:15-20. GEORGI, D., "Der vorpaulinische Hymnus Phil 2,6-11" in: E. Dinkler (ed.) Zeit und Geschichte (1964) 291, sees the Philipian text as based partly on Wisdom speculation. While neither of these two hymns is based solely upon Sophia christology, Col 1:15-20 clearly has the more obvious connection with Wisdom (cf. SCHWEIZER, E., The Letter to the Colossians (1982) 63-81). In his earlier writing, DUNN, Unity and Diversity, 135, was convinced that both Phil 2 and Col 1 were "thoroughly rooted in or sprang from Hellenistic Judaism", recognizing in those roots the influence of Wisdom thinking. More recently he has asserted the need to differentiate between the *Wisdom* christology of Col 1 and the *Adam* christology of Phil 2. Cf. DUNN, Christology, 114-121, and particularly the forthcoming second edition of Unity and Diversity.
- <sup>7</sup> See the discussion of the various texts in, DUNN, Christology, 176-196.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid, 179.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid, 194-196.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid, 196.
- <sup>11</sup> We note the question of the crowd in Mk 6:2 - πῶθεν τοῦτω ταῦτα, καὶ τίς ἡ σοφία ἢ δοθεῖσα τοῦτω;. But Mark presents Jesus at best as a *teacher* of Wisdom and not as the *embodiment* of Sophia herself. Cf. CHRIST, F., Jesus Sophia (1970) 61-62, 66.

- <sup>12</sup> For a detailed analysis of all the relevant material see Ibid, 61-154.
- <sup>13</sup> The most important texts are: Mt 11:16-19 = Lk 7:31-35; Mt 11:25-27 = Lk 10:21-22; (Mt 11:28-30 [Q?]); Mt 23:34-36 = Lk 11:49-51; Mt 23:37-39 = Lk 13:34-35. SCHULZ, S., Q. Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten (1972) traces all of these texts back to their source form in Q, with the exception of Mt 11:28-30, which remains dubious in origin, having no parallel in Luke. For a detailed study of the influence of wisdom on the Q tradition see the recent volume by PIPER, R.A., Wisdom in the Q-Tradition (1989) *passim*.
- <sup>14</sup> Cf. DUNN, Christology, 197-204; CHRIST, Jesus Sophia, *ad loc.*, 154; SUGGS, M.J., Wisdom, Christology and Law in Matthew's Gospel (1970) *ad loc.*.
- <sup>15</sup> For example, at Lk 7:35 the author almost certainly adds the word πάντων to the Q source, thus including the disciples among the 'children of Wisdom'. Cf. CHRIST, Jesus Sophia, 79; DUNN, Christology, 197-198; MARSHALL, I.H., The Gospel of Luke, (1978) 304.
- <sup>16</sup> DUNN, Christology, 201.
- <sup>17</sup> Cf. BROWN, R.E., The Birth of the Messiah (1977) 154-163.
- <sup>18</sup> Cf. DUNN, Christology, 204-206.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid, 205.
- <sup>20</sup> For discussion of the hymnic qualities of Heb 1:1-3 see: WENGST, K., Christologische Formeln und Lieder des Urchristentums (1972) 166-170; ZIMMERMANN, H., Das Bekenntnis der Hoffnung: Tradition und Redaktion im Hebräerbrief (1977) 53-60.
- <sup>21</sup> For fuller discussion of the Wisdom elements see: HAMMERTON-KELLY, Pre-Existence, 243ff; DUNN, Christology, 51-56, 206-209.
- <sup>22</sup> DUNN, Christology, 208.
- <sup>23</sup> Cf. Ibid, 208-209.
- <sup>24</sup> BULTMANN, John, 22. Bultmann also sees the Wisdom myth as rooted in the same Gnostic Redeemer myth (23ff).
- <sup>25</sup> Cf. BROWN, John 1, lix-lxiv; cxxii-cxxv; 521-523; DUNN, "John", 330-332.
- <sup>26</sup> Cf. DEANE, W.J., The Book of Wisdom (1881) 1-23; REESE, Hellenistic Influence, 1-31; WINSTON, Wisdom of Solomon, *passim*.
- <sup>27</sup> MACK, Logos und Sophia, 63-107.

- 28 Cf. REESE, Hellenistic Influence, 12-17.
- 29 DUNN, Christology, 220.
- 30 *Fuga*, 109.
- 31 Ibid, 97.
- 32 Cf. MACK, Logos und Sophia, 111ff; DUNN, Christology, 221-223.
- 33 COLSON, F.H., "General Introduction" in: Philo 1 (1962=1929) xix.
- 34 See particularly Prov 1-9; Sir 24; Wisd 6-10.
- 35 Cf. KLEINKNECHT, H., "λέγω, λόγος, κτλ." TDNT IV, 84-86; FRIES, G., "Word/λόγος" NIDNTT III, 1084.
- 36 COLSON, op cit., xvii, note b..
- 37 DUNN, Christology, 227-230 rightly cautions against seeing this intermediary figure as exercising any function distinct from God, emphasising the context of Philo's writings within the boundaries of Jewish monotheism. He sums up: "in the end of the day the Logos seems to be nothing more for Philo than God himself in his approach to man, God himself insofar as he may be known by man." (228).
- 38 For the Logos as guide see: *OpMund*, 118f; *Fuga*, 199f; *DeMut*, 113-120, 128, et al.. Cf. MACK, Logos und Sophia, 135-138.
- 39 For Sophia as the embodiment of God's knowledge see: *Mig*, 40, 41; *LegAll* I, 77-78.
- 40 *Ebr*, 31.
- 41 *Conf*, 146; *Agr*, 51; *Somn* I, 215. Cf. MACK, Logos und Sophia, 142-144.
- 42 *Mig*, 130.
- 43 There are innumerable references to the Logos' activity in the world in which replacement of Sophia's role has clearly taken place. For a detailed outline of these instances see, MACK, Logos und Sophia, 150-153.
- 44 *Somn* II, 242, 245; *Quis Rer*, 315. Cf. the excursus, "Die Sophia im Philonischen Denken" in: FREUCHTEL, U., Die kosmologischen Vorstellungen bei Philo von Alexandrien (1968) 178.
- 45 *Fuga*, 109 as the mother of the Logos. See also *Cher*, 49; *Fuga*, 52; *Cong*, 36; *QuesGen* III, 21-32; et al., as the wife of God or of the wise man.
- 46 *QuesGen* IV, 97; *Fuga* 50ff.

- 47 *QuesGen* III, 3; *Fuga*, 50,52. She is also inferior to man, *SpLeg* I, 200-201.
- 48 Most recently see the review in ASHTON, J., "The Transformation of Wisdom: a Study of the Prologue of John's Gospel" *NTS* 32 (1986) 161-186.
- 49 Cf. BULTMANN, *John*, 25-31, 61-66; *Theology* II, 12-13.
- 50 Cf. HOWARD, W.F., *Christianity According to St. John* (1943) 51.
- 51 DODD, *Interpretation*, 275ff, proposes that the Logos in Philo offers much closer parallels to the Prologue than does Wisdom literature, and to this end cites several examples.
- 52 This is not just a recent idea, as witness the work of HARRIS, R., *The Origin of the Prologue to St John's Gospel* (1917). For more recent treatments see particularly the commentaries of BROWN, *John I & II*; LINDARS, *John*; and HAENCHEN, E., *John* (1984) 109-140; ASHTON, "*Transformation*", *passim*. See further the literature cited in Chapter 1 section 1.2.2.
- 53 SCHULZ, S., *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (1975) 15, comments: "Die Grundlage des heute vorliegenden Prologs ist mit einem christlichen Lied oder Hymnus identisch, den der Evangelist der Überlieferung seiner Gemeinde entnommen und für den Beginn seines Evangeliumsbuches benutzt hat."
- 54 SCHNACKENBURG, *John 1*, 234.
- 55 RINGGREN, *Word and Wisdom*, 102. He goes on to assert that "Wisdom is here not an abstraction or a purely poetic personification but a concrete being, self-existent beside God" (104), a viewpoint which must be criticised in the light of the strongly monotheistic tradition within Judaism. WHYBRAY, R.N., *Wisdom in Proverbs* (1965) 92ff, refutes the idea of any polytheistic trend in Prov 1-9, pointing to the tradition that Yahweh is wise. See also the conclusion of DUNN, *Christology*, 176.
- 56 *BDF*, §239<sup>(1)</sup>. Cf. the discussion in BROWN, *John 1*, 4-5.
- 57 *BDF*, §227<sup>(3)</sup>, which also cites Heb 12:14 and 2 Tim 2:22 as other New Testament examples.
- 58 vs. SCHNACKENBURG, *John 1*, 234 who maintains a qualitative difference between the 'with' of the Logos and that of Sophia
- 59 DODD, *Interpretation*, 276-277.
- 60 Cf. BROWN, *John I*, 520.

- 61 DUNN, Christology, 241; cf. BROWN, John I, 24, who pertinently reminds us that "the reader must divest himself of a Post-Nicene understanding of the vocabulary involved."
- 62 BROWN, John 1, 24.
- 63 Ps 118:89 (LXX) makes a similar assertion with regard to the Logos: εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, κύριε, ὁ λόγος σου διαμένει ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. The personification of the Logos is probably not intended here, as the use of the possessive pronoun μετ' αὐτοῦ may indicate.
- 64 Cf. LINDARS, John, 85.
- 65 The theme of the embodiment of Sophia in the Torah is known from Sir 24:23ff, and it is the Torah which gives life in Sir 17:11 - νόμος ζωῆς ἐκληραδότησεν. BARRETT, John, 157 notes the Rabbinical parallels which continue the idea of the Torah as life-giving. However, DODD, Interpretation, 271-274, warns against seeing John's Logos as a precise equivalent of either the Hebrew word חָכְמָה or חֵן. We should emphasise again that such speculation on the Torah is already a development of the Wisdom tradition, so to say that the Logos is a forerunner of the concept of the life-giving Torah is equivalent to identifying the Logos with Sophia.
- 66 Cf. Prov 8:22; Sir 1:4. Cf. BARRETT, John, 336.
- 67 ASHTON, "Transformation", 173.
- 68 BULTMANN, Theology II, 17, asserts that "John's concepts, light and darkness, truth and falsehood, freedom and bondage, life and death, come from Gnostic dualism."
- 69 Cf. the "War Scroll" from Qumran, IQM, which makes a persistent contrast between the 'sons of darkness' and the 'sons of light'. Cf. I Enoch 89:8; 104:8; 108:11.
- 70 DUNN, Christology, 242.
- 71 ROWLAND, C., The Open Heaven (1982) 14.
- 72 Cf. Prov 1:20ff; 8:32-36; Sir 24:1ff., et al.
- 73 There is no suggestion here that Apocalyptic is merely a development of the Wisdom tradition, as mooted by VON RAD, G., Wisdom in Israel, 281-282; Old Testament Theology II, 306-307. However, as ROWLAND, The Open Heaven, 203-208, has recently reminded us, there is more than a mere chance relationship between Wisdom and Apocalyptic. While reaching quite different conclusions, for example, with regard to the question of the mode of revelation, their differences in approach are more in terms of 'degree' than 'kind' (205).

- 74 BULTMANN, John, 46.
- 75 SCHNACKENBURG, John 1, 246
- 76 LINDARS, John, 87.
- 77 Since the purpose of this present study is the establishment of the exact nature of the relationship between the Logos and Sophia, rather than examination of the structure of the Prologue, no discussion of the scope of the original Logos-Hymn has been given. We should here note that several commentators see 1:9 as part of the original hymn, including Bultmann, Haenchen and Schnackenburg. BROWN, John I, 28, sees it as an editorial transition from the Baptist material to the next strophe of the hymn (1:10-12), a view with which we would agree.
- 78 Cf. ASHTON, "Transformation", 174-175.
- 79 BROWN, John I, 29.
- 80 SCHNACKENBURG, John 1, ad loc.; cf. "Logos-Hymnus und johanneischer Prolog" BZ 1 (1957) 88.
- 81 The line, καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, is certainly an editorial insertion. This is apparent on two counts: [1] 1:3 already emphasises the role of the Logos in creation, thus rendering this repetition redundant; [2] it interrupts the parallelism of the couplet ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν / ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω.
- 82 We shall note this influence in more detail in our discussion of the rejection of Jesus.
- 83 Cf. MACK, Logos und Sophia, 32-33; 60-62.
- 84 Translation from CHARLESWORTH, J.H., (ed) The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha I (1983) 33. On the withdrawal of Wisdom, we might also note IV Ezra 5:9-10. Since this latter document probably dates from around the end of the 1st Century (Ibid, 520) we have evidence that this role was still attributed to Sophia at the time of the writing of the Fourth Gospel. A further pointer is found in Syriac Baruch 48:36 - "Where did the multitude of intelligence hide itself, and did the multitude of Wisdom depart" (Ibid, 637).
- 85 It is not our intention to argue that the whole of 1:12 is original. The phrase τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ must surely be an editorial addition, not least on account of its typically Johannine vocabulary and Christological slant (cf. 2:23; 3:18). Cf. BROWN, John I, 11,30; BULTMANN, John, 59; LINDARS, John, 88,91.
- 86 While it is not essential to the argument here, it is worthwhile noting the overlap in meaning possible between παῖς and

παιδίον. Cf. LIDDELL & SCOTT, A Greek-English Lexicon (1940) II, 1287, 1289. There is no compelling reason to translate παῖς as 'servant' in Bar 3:37 rather than as 'child'.

- <sup>87</sup> SCHULZ, S., Komposition und Herkunft der Johanneischen Reden (1960) 34 also lists Wisd 6:12 as a possible parallel to Jn 1:12. It may be that there is also a parallel in the references which see the embodiment of Sophia in the Torah as leading to people becoming children of God: Cf. DUNN, Christology, 242. GESE, H., "The Prologue to John's Gospel" in: Essays on Biblical Theology (1981) 218 notes that the "wise man came to be a Son of God" in Wisdom literature. Cf. Sir 4:10; Wisd 2:13, 16, 18.
- <sup>88</sup> LINDARS, John, 83.
- <sup>89</sup> BULTMANN, John, 60-66 re-asserts his view that the evangelist uses Gnostic language against the Gnostics at this point. He is followed by SCHULZ, Johannes, 28, who sees the personified Logos concept of 1:14a as stemming from hellenistic Gnosticism rather than Jewish-hellenistic Wisdom tradition, which he admits has influenced the early structure of the hymn. He concludes: "Es dürfte also mehr als wahrscheinlich sein, daß der Titel, Logos, auf die Mittelwesensspekulation eines von der Gnosis beeinflussten Hellenismus zurückgeht". This type of conclusion is quite unnecessary when one considers the close connection between Logos and Sophia in the late Wisdom tradition and Philo.
- <sup>90</sup> Cf. DE PINTO, B., "Word and Wisdom in St. John" in: Scripture 19 (1967) 24-25.
- <sup>91</sup> The case for a direct influence from Sirach on the literary structure of the Prologue has been put forward by SPICQ, R.P.C., "La Siracide et la structure littéraire du Prologue de Saint Jean" in: Memorial Lagrange (1940) 183-195. Spicq is at least able to show that Sirach was probably known to the Evangelist's community.
- <sup>92</sup> BUESCHEL, F., "μονογενής" TDNT IV, 737-741 maintains that the word always means 'only-begotten' in the New Testament on the basis of the component parts μονο - γενής. This is not always a trustworthy method for defining the meaning of words as, for example, the English word 'greenhouse' (not a green coloured house) shows! BROWN, John 1, 13-14 correctly points out that Isaac was not the 'only-begotten' of Abraham, but was 'uniquely precious' (μονογενής). The English 'only-begotten' stands under the influence of the Vulgate *unigenitus* instead of *unicus*. There is therefore no problem in seeing the references to Sophia (Wisd 7:22) and Jesus (Jn 1:14) as directly parallel in meaning.

- <sup>93</sup> Cf. DODD, Interpretation, 175ff; KUYPER, L.T., "Grace and Truth. An Old Testament Description of God and its Use in the Johannine Gospel" Interpretation 18 (1964) 3-19.
- <sup>94</sup> Cf. (LXX) Ps 24:10; 39:12; 60:8; 84:11; 88:15; 137:2 et al..
- <sup>95</sup> The interesting textual variant of Sir 6:18, where χάρις replaces σοφία at least shows that the copyist of Codex Sinaiticus saw the two words as equivalent enough to cause confusion. KENYON, F.G., The Text of the Greek Bible (1975<sup>3</sup>) 41 notes the importance of this manuscript and particularly its corrections which provide us with another parallel between Sophia and χάρις in Prov 8:17 - οἱ δὲ ἐμὲ ζητοῦντες εὐρήσουσιν χάριν.
- <sup>96</sup> We should perhaps note that Esther 2:9,17 are the only two places in the entire LXX where χάρις is used to translate the word תִּזְנֶה. Cf. HATCH-REDPATH, II, 1455.
- <sup>97</sup> Cf. ESSER, H.-H., "Grace/χάρις" NIDNTT II, 119-121.
- <sup>98</sup> DUNN, J.D.G., Romans 1 - 8 (1988) 169.
- <sup>99</sup> There are a number of texts in Wisdom literature which associate χάρις with finding God. Cf. Prov 3:4,34; 11:27; 12:2; Wisd 3:9,14; 4:15; Sir 1:13; 3:18; et al.
- <sup>100</sup> BULTMANN, R., "ἀλήθεια, κτλ." TDNT I, 232-251. As usual he uses it to reinforce his idea of a Gnostic Redeemer myth.
- <sup>101</sup> DODD, Interpretation, 170-178.
- <sup>102</sup> THISTELTON, A.C., "Truth/ἀλήθεια" NIDNTT III, 877.
- <sup>103</sup> Ibid, 889.
- <sup>104</sup> SCHNACKENBURG, John 1, 273.
- <sup>105</sup> DE LA POTTERIE, I., "L'arrière-fond du theme johannique de verité" in: Studia Evangelica 1 (=TU 73) 279.
- <sup>106</sup> The Greek text for this verse is missing from the major LXX manuscripts and this text is taken from the edition of collected references to Origen's *Hexapla*, HEXAPLORUM ORIGINIS QUAE SUPERSUNT MULTIS PARTIBUS AUCTIONIORA (1713) 41.
- <sup>107</sup> DE LA POTTERIE, "L'arrière-fond", 279-281.
- <sup>108</sup> Most commonly attempts are made to relate the use of this phrase in 1:14,17 to the אֱלֹהִים תִּזְנֶה of Exodus 34:6 (Cf. BROWN, John 1; KUYPER, "Grace and Truth"). It must, however, be stressed that such a connection is based upon the Hebrew text and not on the LXX, which does not use χάρις (or ἔλεος) καὶ ἀλήθεια at this point.

- <sup>109</sup> Cf. BULTMANN, John, 77n.1; BARRETT, John, 168.
- <sup>110</sup> Cf. (LXX) Ps 49:12; 88:12; 95:11; 97:7.
- <sup>111</sup> Cf. references to 'feeding the mouths of the hungry' ([LXX] Ps 80:11); 'filling the land' ([LXX] 79:10).
- <sup>112</sup> Cf. (LXX) Ps 47:10-11; Sir 42:15-16, where the connection is made between the λόγοι of the Lord and the πλήρης τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ.
- <sup>113</sup> BROWN, John 1, 36.
- <sup>114</sup> Cf. Gen 16:5; Deut 13:7; 28:54,56. The closest the LXX comes to the imagery of Jn 1:18 is the reference to the all-powerful hand of God, which the Psalmist urges him to bring forth from his κόλπος in judgement ([LXX] Ps 73:11).
- <sup>115</sup> Cf. LINDARS, John, 99, who notes that in 1:18, the use of the preposition εἰς "implies that Jesus has access to the inmost being of God", a notion parallel to that of 1:1b. We have already seen that that verse is related to the Sophia tradition.
- <sup>116</sup> WINK, W., John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition (1968) 89.
- <sup>117</sup> See above, section 3.1.2.
- <sup>118</sup> Cf. Wisd 7:1ff, where Solomon is made to declare that his own life and kingship are dependent on Sophia. Cf. Prov 8:15, 16; 9:3; Wisd 6:20-21 for witnesses to Sophia.
- <sup>119</sup> For example, SCHLATTER, A., Der Evangelist Johannes (1930) *ad loc.*
- <sup>120</sup> For example, NORDEN, E., Agnostos Theos (1913).
- <sup>121</sup> For example, SCHWEIZER, E., Ego Eimi (1939); BULTMANN, John, *ad loc.*
- <sup>122</sup> BROWN, John 1 & 2, *ad loc.*, and particularly 535-538. Cf. DODD, Interpretation, 93-96.
- <sup>123</sup> BROWN, John 1, 537-538.
- <sup>124</sup> BRAUMANN, G./LINK, H.-G., "I am/ἐγώ εἰμι" NIDNTT II 280.
- <sup>125</sup> Cf. SCHWEIZER, Ego Eimi, 129-131; BULTMANN, John, 224ff; BARRETT, John, 291; BRAUMANN/LINK, NIDNTT II, 281.
- <sup>126</sup> It has been suggested that the author's intention was polemical. BULTMANN, John, *ad loc.*, in particular sees them as a correction of false Gnostic teaching. However, the caution of various commentators listed by BRAUMANN/LINK, NIDNTT II, 280 should be noted.

- <sup>127</sup> BROWN, John 1, 269. Cf. FEUILLET, A., Johannine Studies (1965) 86-87; LINDARS, John, 259-260.
- <sup>128</sup> BROWN, John 1, 327-328; LINDARS, John, 298.
- <sup>129</sup> On the bread of life, see also Sir 34:21.
- <sup>130</sup> Cf. DODD, Interpretation, 336-337; BARRETT, John, 293.
- <sup>131</sup> For discussion of the epexegetical genitive "of life" see under 14:6.
- <sup>132</sup> For the theme of light at Tabernacles see, BROWN, John 1, 344-345; BARRETT, John, 335; LINDARS, John, 315.
- <sup>133</sup> BROWN, John 1, 344.
- <sup>134</sup> Cf. (LXX) Ps 118:105, which makes the connection between φῶς and λόγος. There is no suggestion, however, that the Psalmist is using the word Logos in any kind of quasi-hypostatic manner such as that of Philo.
- <sup>135</sup> That Jesus can be thought of as 'light' is not only a Johannine theme. The Synoptic tradition also makes this association: Mt 5:15; Mk 4:21; Lk 2:32; 8:16-17; 11:33. Cf. BROWN, John 1, 344; BARRETT, John, 337; LINDARS, John, 314-315.
- <sup>136</sup> The interesting parallel cited by BISHOP, E.F., "The Door of the Sheep - John x.7-9" ET 71 (1959-1960) 307-309, where the shepherd lies down across the entrance to the fold in order to be the door, may go some way towards a resolution of the tension between these two images.
- <sup>137</sup> BARRETT, John, 372.
- <sup>138</sup> For a discussion of the background see, Ibid, 372-373.
- <sup>139</sup> For example, 1 Enoch 33-36; 72-76; 2 Enoch 13-16; 3 Baruch 3:1; 6:13.
- <sup>140</sup> Lk 13:24, 25 (θύρα); Mt 7:13, 14 (πύλη).
- <sup>141</sup> BARRETT, John, 373.
- <sup>142</sup> vs. BULTMANN, John, 279, whose obsession with a Gnostic background forces him to exaggerate the divergence of symbolism between the Old Testament and John. See further the discussion of BROWN, John 1, 396-398.
- <sup>143</sup> Cf. BROWN, John 1, 397-398; DODD, Interpretation, 358-361; BARRETT, John, 373-374.
- <sup>144</sup> DODD, Interpretation, 57, also notes the passage at DePost 67-68.

- <sup>145</sup> For a concise summary of the Old Testament 'resurrection' material see BROWN, C./COENEN, L., "ἀνάστασις/Resurrection" NIDNTT III, 261-275.
- <sup>146</sup> For a summary of 'life' in the Old Testament see LINK, H.-G., "ζωή/life" NIDNTT II, 476-484; VON RAD, G., "ζάω, κτλ." TDNT II, 832-875, and the further literature cited in these articles.
- <sup>147</sup> DUNN, "Let John be John", 322ff.
- <sup>148</sup> ROWLAND, Open Heaven, 34 notes that in parallel with Apocalyptic thought, Pharisaic eschatology held "of prime importance among (its) beliefs the notion of resurrection from the dead."
- <sup>149</sup> BROWN, John 2, 620-621.
- <sup>150</sup> BULTMANN, John, 603-612.
- <sup>151</sup> DODD, Interpretation, 10-53.
- <sup>152</sup> DE LA POTTERIE, I., "Je suis la Voie, la Vérité, et la Vie (Jn 14,6)" NRTh 88 (1966) 929. He concludes that the phrase means: "je suis le chemin, parce que je suis la vérité, et donc aussi la vie". Cf. BARRETT, John, 458.
- <sup>153</sup> Sophia can also be seen as the goal of the Way in *QuisRer* 315. For a full discussion of Philo's understanding of the Way, and the role of the Logos and Sophia, see MACK, Logos und Sophia, 133-154. Cf. EBEL, G., "ὁδός/Way" NIDNTT III, 935-943.
- <sup>154</sup> For Sophia as the Guide on the Way see also *DeSomn I, 66; QG II, 12; IV, 46, 125*.
- <sup>155</sup> BROWN, John 2, 629.
- <sup>156</sup> BROWN, John 1, lxiii.
- <sup>157</sup> BROWN, John 2, 630.
- <sup>158</sup> BROWN, John 1, 500-501 also notes the contrast between the Old Testament 'type' and the New Testament reality, Jesus the Bread, conveyed through the use of ἀληθινός.
- <sup>159</sup> We also note the important ἐγώ εἰμι statements at 8:18, 23, 58, and these will be dealt with later in the course of our study.
- <sup>160</sup> Note the comment of BULTMANN, John, 530, that Jesus might just as well have said, in parallel to the statement in 6:35, ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἀμπελος τῆς ζωῆς.
- <sup>161</sup> Verse 18 is omitted by most major LXX manuscripts.

- <sup>162</sup> Cf. SPICQ, Memorial Lagrange, 183-195; BROWN, John 2, 671.
- <sup>163</sup> For example, Jn 1:10 = Sir 24:6; Jn 1:14 = Sir 24:8; Jn 6:35 = Sir 24:21.
- <sup>164</sup> Although Sirach and the Fourth Gospel use different terms for the word 'branches' (κλάδος and κλήμα respectively), there can be no question but that their *meaning* is identical.
- <sup>165</sup> BARRETT, John, 473.
- <sup>166</sup> Cf. DUNN, J.D.G., Jesus and the Spirit (1975) 21-40; Christology, 26-29. The suggestion here is not that Jesus had no sense of intimacy with God, but merely that this was not a full-blown notion of divinity.
- <sup>167</sup> Cf. DUNN, Christology, 209-212; 239ff.
- <sup>168</sup> Ibid, 212.
- <sup>169</sup> Attempts to avoid seeing this text as an affirmation of pre-existence are misplaced and tortuous: e.g., DODD, Interpretation, 274. BROWN, John 1, 56, points out the intended contrast in precedence between John and Jesus. The use of ἦν also provides a link with the pre-existence language of 1:1-2. LINDARS, John, 110 calls the theme of pre-existence "an essential element in the build-up towards the full testimony of verse 34".
- <sup>170</sup> Cf. BROWN, John 1, 56; WILLET, M.E., Wisdom Christology in the Fourth Gospel (1985) 116-117.
- <sup>171</sup> Cf. WILLET, Wisdom Christology, 119.
- <sup>172</sup> Note again the comments of DUNN, Christology, 241 regarding the possibility of speaking of the Logos as 'God' without infringing monotheism. Cf. the quote cited from Brown in n.56 above.
- <sup>173</sup> Cf. BROWN, John 1, 356.
- <sup>174</sup> On the relationship between pre-existence Christology and Wisdom see, DUNN, Christology, chapters VI & VII.
- <sup>175</sup> There is no real distinction between these two terms, as can be seen from their immediate parallelism in Jn 20:21. Cf. BROWN, John 1, 134; BARRETT, John, 569-570; WILLET, Wisdom Christology, 128. RENGSTORF, K., "ἀποστέλλω (πέμπω), κτλ." TDNT I, 405, tries to distinguish between the words without any substantial basis for doing so.
- <sup>176</sup> Cf. BROWN, John 1, 134; LINDARS, John, 159.
- <sup>177</sup> On the Johannine reinterpretation of the Son of Man tradition see, HIGGINS, A.J.B., Jesus and the Son of Man (1964) 153-

184; HAMMERTON-KELLY, Pre-existence, 224-231; SCHNACKENBURG, John 1, 529-542; DUNN, Christology, 88-90.

- 178 SCHWEIZER, E., "Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund der 'Sendungsformel' Gal 4:4f; Röm 8:3; Joh 3:16f; I Joh 4:9" in: Beiträge zur Theologie des Neuen Testaments (1970) 83-95.
- 179 DUNN, Romans, 420.
- 180 BUEHNER, J. A., Der Gesandte und sein Weg im vierten Evangelium (1977) *passim*, but especially 93-103 where he argues against Sophia influence, and the conclusions, 422ff.
- 181 Cf. Wisd 8:21 - . . . εἶν μὴ ὁ θεὸς δῶ.
- 182 The word βουλή, used here of Sophia, does not appear in John, the term θέλημα being preferred.
- 183 Compare Jn 20:17, where Mary is told to go and tell the disciples (πορεύομαι) that Jesus is ascending (ἀναβαίνω) to the Father.
- 184 Cf. DUNN, "Let John be John", 322-327, with the literature cited there.
- 185 SCHNACKENBURG, John 1, 552.
- 186 Translation by B.M. Metzger, in: CHARLESWORTH, J. H., (ed.) The Old-Testament Pseudepigrapha (1983) I, 517-559.
- 187 DUNN, "Let John be John", 330n.80.
- 188 The whole of 20:1-18 shows influence from the Synoptic tradition, as does the entire Passion narrative (cf. the 2 tables in BROWN, John 2, 968,974. It is therefore not unlikely that the Ascension motif has been influenced by Luke's material in Acts 1:9-11 (Lk 24:51?), although John treats it in a typically distinctive fashion.
- 189 Cf. BAILEY, J. A., The Traditions Common to the Gospels of Luke and John (1963).
- 190 vs. for example, the conclusions of BUEHNER, Der Gesandte, 87-103, who rejects a Wisdom background precisely on this basis.
- 191 In the next chapter we will note this radical transformation of some existing Christian tradition in relation to the role of women in the Gospel.
- 192 Cf. APPOLD, M. L., The Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel (1976).
- 193 Cf. WILLET, Wisdom Christology, 149-158.

- <sup>194</sup> There is no need to distinguish between the use of ἀγαπεῖν and φιλεῖν in John: the words are used synonymously. Cf. BROWN, John 1 497-499.
- <sup>195</sup> Ibid, 399. Cf. BARRETT, John, 377.
- <sup>196</sup> ὥσπερ . . . οὕτως, BARRETT, John, 260.
- <sup>197</sup> Cf. BROWN, John 1, 218-219.
- <sup>198</sup> In 1:48 Jesus knows about Nathanael; 2:25, knows what people are like; 4:18, knows all about the Samaritan lady's past; 6:15, knows that they want to make him king; 6:61,64, knows what people think and who has faith.
- <sup>199</sup> LANG, Wisdom and Proverbs, 79.
- <sup>200</sup> WILLET, Wisdom Christology, 144.
- <sup>201</sup> DUNN, "Let John be John", 322.
- <sup>202</sup> Cf. HENGEL, M., The Son of God (1976) *passim*; DUNN, Christology, 12-22 with further literature on 272n.3.
- <sup>203</sup> DUNN, "Let John be John", 334.
- <sup>204</sup> Cf. JEREMIAS, J., The Prayers of Jesus (1967) 29-65; Theology of the New Testament (1971) 61-68; DUNN, J.D.G., Jesus and the Spirit (1975) 21-26; DUNN, Christology, 26-29.
- <sup>205</sup> Cf. BROWN, John 1, 436 and *ad loc.*
- <sup>206</sup> For the debate and literature see, DUNN, Jesus and the Spirit, 11-40.
- <sup>207</sup> The Revealer role has long been recognised as a central motif in the Johannine presentation of the ministry of Jesus, not least by BULTMANN, John, whose commentary is structured around it. Cf. BULTMANN, Theology, II, 49-69.
- <sup>208</sup> BULTMANN, Theology, II, 66.
- <sup>209</sup> Ibid, 62.
- <sup>210</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>211</sup> Note the suggestion by BROWN, John 1, 357,374, that 8:41 may be a reference to a dispute over the legitimacy of Jesus' birth. Cf. STAUFFER, E., Jesus and His Story (1960) 23-25.
- <sup>212</sup> Cf. BROWN, John 1, 512-513. Of Jesus it is used 31 times; of his name 4 times; of the Father twice. The Synoptics never urge faith in Jesus, but in God (Mk 11:22).
- <sup>213</sup> WILLET, Wisdom Christology, 163.

- <sup>214</sup> Note again the use of  $\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\gamma\epsilon\nu\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$  to denote her relationship to God, Wisd 7:22.
- <sup>215</sup> GORDIS, R., The Book of Job (1978) 311.
- <sup>216</sup> We have already noted that in the Johannine Jesus we have a polemic against the idea of Sophia's embodiment in the Torah. No longer is she to be confined to Israel, but is now available to others, e.g., Samaritans (Jn 4); Greeks (Jn 12); and especially women (Jn 2; 4; 11; 12; 20). We shall discuss this thesis at greater length in our next chapter.
- <sup>217</sup> The Johannine vocabulary of revelation is quite varied:  $\phi\alpha\nu\epsilon\rho\acute{\omega}$  (2:11; 9:3; 17:6);  $\mu\alpha\rho\tau\upsilon\rho\acute{\epsilon}\omega$  (3:11, 12, 32; 8:18; 18:37);  $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\chi\nu\upsilon\mu\iota$  (10:22; 14:8-9);  $\gamma\nu\omega\rho\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$  (15:15; 17:26);  $\lambda\alpha\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\omega$  (3:34; 8:26, 28; 12:49, 50). Cf. WILLET, Wisdom Christology, 158-159.
- <sup>218</sup> DUNN, "Let John be John", 331-332.
- <sup>219</sup> For a summary of the background, opinions and further bibliography see BROWN, John 1, 535-538.
- <sup>220</sup> BULTMANN, John, 216.
- <sup>221</sup> vs. BARRETT, John, 281, who thinks this is merely a means of identification, "It is I". It is highly probable that in this story the Fourth Evangelist preserves the oldest form of the account in the New Testament. Certainly Matt 14:22-33 alters it considerably because of the possibility of misinterpretation of Jesus as a  $\theta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma$   $\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\rho$ . There the story is presented as a parable of faith, including the Matthean addition of a Petrine incident. The Fourth Evangelist, however, presents us with a divine epiphany. See further, HEIL, J.P., Jesus Walking on the Sea (1981).
- <sup>222</sup> BULTMANN, John, 639.
- <sup>223</sup> See further in the two volumes by BROWN, John 1 & 2, *ad loc.*; APPOLD, Oneness Motif, 82-83.
- <sup>224</sup> Cf. DUNN, "Let John be John", 338-339.
- <sup>225</sup> Ibid, 338.
- <sup>226</sup> THOMPSON, Humanity of Jesus, 118.
- <sup>227</sup> ASHTON, "Transformation", 179.
- <sup>228</sup> Ibid, 37.
- <sup>229</sup> Ibid, 52.
- <sup>230</sup> He is also called  $\rho\acute{\alpha}\beta\beta\omicron\upsilon\nu\epsilon\acute{\iota}$  in 20:16.

- 231 BULTMANN, John, 145.
- 232 APPOLD, Oneness Motif, 22.
- 233 DUNN, "Let John be John", 335-336.
- 234 DODD, Interpretation, 353.
- 235 Here again we might note the potential for see Jesus as Sophia incarnate as a polemic against the speculation of Wisdom writers concerning her embodiment in the Torah.
- 236 LANG, Wisdom and Proverbs, 29, and the evidence he offers on pages 22-33.
- 237 See further above, n.201.
- 238 BROWN, John 1, cxxiii, 79, 106-107. Cf. DILLON, R.J., "Wisdom Tradition and Sacramental Retrospect in the Cana Account (Jn 2:1-11)" CBQ 24 (1962) 268-296; FEUILLET, Johannine Studies, 89-91.
- 239 DILLON, "Wisdom Tradition", 277.
- 240 Cf. HEISE, J., Bleiben: Menein in den iohanneische Schriften (1967); HAUCK, F., "μένω, κτλ." TDNT IV, 574-588; MUNZER, K./BROWN, C., "Remain/μένω" NIDNTT III, 223-229.
- 241 Cf. BROWN, John 1, 510 who lists statistics for New Testament usage.
- 242 DUNN, Romans, 324. Cf. DUNN, Jesus and the Spirit, 326-338.
- 243 MUNZER/BROWN, NIDNTT III, 227.
- 244 DODD, Interpretation, 194.
- 245 Cf. MUNZER/BROWN, NIDNTT III, 224.
- 246 BROWN, John 1, lxxii
- 247 See the arguments of any of the major commentators on John, with the obvious and isolated exception of J.A.T. Robinson. Most recently in detail, WENGST, Bedrängte Gemeinde, has re-emphasised the need to place a late first century date on the final form of the Gospel. For a succinct review of the major arguments see DUNN, "Let John be John", 318-321.
- 248 On the importance of this term in dating the Gospel see, BROWN, John 1, 379-380.
- 249 DUNN, Unity and Diversity, 245.
- 250 ASHTON, "Transformation", 169

- <sup>251</sup> See our discussion of these terms above.
- <sup>252</sup> LINDARS, John, 97.
- <sup>253</sup> DUNN, "Let John be John", 333.
- <sup>254</sup> DODD, Interpretation, 84. Note also the materials cited by Dodd, pp 75-86, which reinforce this view of Jesus as Wisdom in contrast to Torah as Wisdom.
- <sup>255</sup> This word occurs only in the Johannine corpus in the New Testament: Jn 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 Jn 2:1.
- <sup>256</sup> Cf. the reviews of the various approaches in JOHNSTON, G., The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John (1970) 88-118; BROWN, R. E., "The Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel" NTS 13 (1966-1967) 115-126; SCHNACKENBURG, John 3, 144-150.
- <sup>257</sup> Cf. SCHNACKENBURG, John 3, 140.
- <sup>258</sup> DUNN, Jesus and the Spirit, 350. For an in-depth view of the role of the Spirit in John see: PORSCHE, F., Pneuma und Wort: Ein exegetischer Beitrag zur Pneumatologie des Johannesevangeliums (1974); and especially the excellent and detailed study by BURGE, G. M., The Anointed Community. The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition (1987).
- <sup>259</sup> JOHNSTON, Spirit-Paraclete, 99.
- <sup>260</sup> Cf. BURGE, Anointed Community, 158-178.
- <sup>261</sup> DUNN, Jesus and the Spirit, 351.
- <sup>262</sup> Cf. PORSCHE, Pneuma und Wort, 62ff, 139-145; BURGE, Anointed Community, 102-104, both of whom note the importance of Wisdom tradition in the Johannine picture of the Holy Spirit.
- <sup>263</sup> Cf. DUNN, Christology, 219ff; 266.
- <sup>264</sup> *OpMund* 23, 165; *VitMos* II, 134; *Flacc* 13, 22, 151, 181; *DeIos* 239; *SpLeg* I, 237.
- <sup>265</sup> On the background to παράκλητος see further, BURGE, Anointed Community, 20-31.
- <sup>266</sup> THOMPSON, Humanity of Jesus, 69.
- <sup>267</sup> This ambiguity of response is characteristic of John's presentation of the Gospel. For example, see the division caused by the coming of the Light in 3:19ff.
- <sup>268</sup> Cf. BULTMANN, John, *ad loc.*; BECKER, U., "Wunder und Christologie: zum literarkritischen und christologischen Problem der Wunder im Johannesevangelium" NTS 16 (1970) 130-148;

FORTNA, Gospel of Signs, *passim*; The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor, *passim*.

- <sup>269</sup> There is almost universal consensus among scholars that a source of some kind predates the Gospel in its present form. See most recently, FORTNA, The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor.
- <sup>270</sup> Compare the orders adopted by BULTMANN, John; DODD, Interpretation, 298; FORTNA, The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor, 48ff.
- <sup>271</sup> Cf. CLARK, D.K., "Signs in Wisdom and John" CBQ 45 (1983) 205; SMALLEY, S., John: Evangelist and Interpreter (1978) 86-87.
- <sup>272</sup> CLARK, "Signs in Wisdom and John", 205. SMALLEY, John, 87-88 argues that the seventh sign is the miraculous catch of fish in Jn 21:1-14, but FORTNA, Gospel of Signs, 87-98 places this back in the order at number three in the original sequence, a position he maintains more recently in The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor, 65-79.
- <sup>273</sup> FORTNA, The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor, 208.
- <sup>274</sup> KAESEMANN, E., Testament of Jesus, 53.
- <sup>275</sup> BULTMANN, John, 131.
- <sup>276</sup> THOMPSON, Humanity of Jesus, 62.
- <sup>277</sup> CLARK, "Signs in Wisdom and John", 202-204.
- <sup>278</sup> Contrary to the New English Bible translation of 10:16, and its accompanying commentary, CLARKE, Wisdom of Solomon, 71, the verb in 10:16b refers quite clearly to *Sophia* and not to Moses. The σημεῖον is therefore hers not his!
- <sup>279</sup> CLARK, "Signs in Wisdom and John", 205-208.
- <sup>280</sup> Ibid, 206.
- <sup>281</sup> ASHTON, "Transformation", 168.
- <sup>282</sup> There is a further theme which might have been mentioned at this point namely, the role of witnesses in the Gospel. This is stated as a theme in the Prologue through John the Baptist, but we shall be dealing with it at length in the next chapter. In it we will see the role of the disciples, in particular the female ones, as an out-working of *Sophia* christology in the Gospel and in the Johannine community.
- <sup>283</sup> DUNN, Christology, 250.

- <sup>284</sup> Cf. RUETHER, Sexism and God-Talk, 117; JOHNSON, "Non-Androcentric Christology", 262.
- <sup>285</sup> We note the caution which RUETHER, Sexism and God-Talk urges with respect to simply seeing a 'feminine side' of God: "The female side of God then becomes a subordinate principle underneath the dominant image of divine sovereignty" (p.60). However, we have to recognise the problems which the author of John must have faced, writing in the context of a totally patriarchal society. While John's solution may not be a progressive enough response to the issues we face today, it must be seen for what it was in its setting: a radical re-appraisal of christology, and a real attempt to deal with the problem of gender which had apparently gone unrecognised by other mainstream writers who picked up Wisdom as a vehicle for talking about Jesus Christ.
- <sup>286</sup> JOHNSON, "Non-Androcentric Christology" 280.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

- <sup>1</sup> One need only recall the pre-Pauline formula of I Cor 15:3-4 to confirm that 'The Third Day' was established as specially significant for Christian teaching long before the writing of the Fourth Gospel.
- <sup>2</sup> Cf. FORTNA, Gospel of Signs, *passim*, for an attempted reconstruction of the entire source. A text of the 'pre-Gospel' miracle 2:1-11 is found on page 38.
- <sup>3</sup> BROWN, John I, 103; DILLON, R.J., "Wisdom Tradition and Sacramental Retrospect in the Cana Account (Jn 2:1-11)" CBQ 24 (1962) 268-296; FORTNA, Gospel of Signs, 38; BROWN, R.E. (ed) Mary in the New Testament (1978) 182-194.
- <sup>4</sup> For a review of the various theories see BROWN, John I, 105-106.
- <sup>5</sup> Cf. DODD, Interpretation, 300.
- <sup>6</sup> On the resurrection as the day on which the  $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$  is finally revealed in its fullness see BROWN, John I, 100-101, 503-504, John II, 979-1017.
- <sup>7</sup> SCHNACKENBURG, John I, 325.
- <sup>8</sup> Cf. BROWN, John I, 98; SCHNACKENBURG, John I, 326; BARRETT, John, 190. BULTMANN, John, 115n.5 supports the opposite view that it refers to the 'Twelve', as does LINDARS, John, 128, who suggests that "it is natural to think of the twelve."
- <sup>9</sup> GEYSER, A., "The *Semeion* at Cana of the Galilee" in: Studies in John (1970) 12-21, argues for a number of polemical points versus the disciples of John the Baptist. He sees the story as a culmination of a 'week' of polemic beginning in chapter 1. Though ingenious, his analysis presses the text too far. More likely is the viewpoint held by a number of scholars, that whatever subtle polemic there may be is confined to the level of "eating and drinking" vs "asceticism", and the superceding of "water" (John's baptism) by "wine" (with possible eucharistic overtones). Cf. BROWN, John I, 98.
- <sup>10</sup> It is notable that John never refers to Jesus' mother by the name Mary, a fact which is surprising in the light of the number of personal names used in the Gospel, not least that of Mary on 15 occasions. Cf. BROWN, Mary, 179n. 405.
- <sup>11</sup> BULTMANN, John, 117n.2, is the only commentator to note this strange fact, but offers no explanation for it.
- <sup>12</sup> For a list of those rejecting any expectation of the miraculous see BROWN, John I, 98, and further comments in BROWN, Mary, 187-188.

- <sup>13</sup> There is no introduction to, or marvelling at the words of John the Baptist in 1:29. Again, Nathanael's confession of Jesus in 1:49 is met with surprise even by Jesus (1:50) but is nevertheless accepted as showing insight.
- <sup>14</sup> Cf. BROWN, Mary, 188, who comments that to deny Mary any understanding of Jesus' possible powers of intervention is "not to do justice to the literary genre or to the atmosphere of the Johannine narrative."
- <sup>15</sup> For example, BULTMANN, John, 116, simply states: "of course, she does this with the aim of getting him to perform a miracle."
- <sup>16</sup> See above, section 3.2.4.1.1.
- <sup>17</sup> Cf. GIBLIN, C.H., "Suggestion, Negative Response, and Positive Action in St John's Portrayal of Jesus (Jn 2:1-11; 4:46-54; 7:2-14; 11:1-44)" NTS 26 (1980) 204, hints at this conclusion, but without reference to Sophia, when he states that, "the genuine 'source' of the wine seems to be not only Jesus' word, but Jesus himself - as the one whose word is heeded (v9)".
- <sup>18</sup> Cf. MOLONEY, F.J., "From Cana to Cana (John 2:1 - 4:54) and the Fourth Evangelist's Concept of Correct (and Incorrect) Faith" in: StBib II (1978) 191.
- <sup>19</sup> Cf. BAG, 168; BROWN, Mary, 188; SCHNACKENBURG, John I, 328.
- <sup>20</sup> Cf. BROWN, John I, 99; Mary, 189.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Cf. Mk 3:33-35 (par); Lk 2:49; 11:27-28.
- <sup>23</sup> Cf. BROWN, John I, 102; Mary, 189; FIORENZA, In Memory of Her 327.
- <sup>24</sup> FIORENZA, In Memory of her, 327. We have already noted Mary's "Exemplary discipleship" and shall return to this theme in relation to the others mentioned in the course of this study.
- <sup>25</sup> This is the translation used by BROWN, John I, 97. For a full review of the possibilities see SCHNACKENBURG, John I, 327-328.
- <sup>26</sup> This phrase has been the subject of intense scholarly debate, centred particularly on the consistency of Johannine usage of the term 'hour'. The explanation offered below, we believe, offers both a measure of consistency and allows for a logical reading of the text as it stands as an answer to Mary's statement. For the debate on 'hour' see BROWN, John I, 99-100, 517-518; SCHNACKENBURG, John I, 328-331.

- <sup>27</sup> For this understanding of 'hour', see particularly BROWN, John I, 517-518.
- <sup>28</sup> Cf. BROWN, John II, 1011-1017, who gives an excellent analysis of this whole process in John's resurrection narrative.
- <sup>29</sup> Cf. BROWN, John II, 1014.
- <sup>30</sup> For the moment we merely note that there is a relationship between the two concepts of *witness* and *belief*. A fuller examination is given in the investigation of the woman's role as witness in John 4:39-42.
- <sup>31</sup> BARRETT, John, 193.
- <sup>32</sup> Cf BROWN, John II, 100. Each jar would have contained between 15 and 25 gallons, giving a total in the region of 120 gallons in the six jars.
- <sup>33</sup> We note also the considerable discussion in respect of the reason for the shortage of wine. DERRETT, J.D.M., "Water into Wine" in: Law in the New Testament (1970) 228-246, argues at length that it was due to the disciples poverty and resultant failure to provide a gift. This is not a matter of interest for the author of the Gospel, the focal point being the 'sign' itself, rather than the reason for its occurrence. DILLON, "Wisdom Tradition", 291-292, sees the absence of wine as indicative of the need of Israel for the refreshment offered by the wine of Wisdom, and sees Mary as representative of the "impoverished longing" of Israel. This seems to overstep the mark with regard to Johannine symbolism, but it may tie in with our expressed view of Mary as the one who has seen in Jesus the presence of Sophia incarnate.
- <sup>34</sup> The Old Testament prophets see wine as a symbol of eschatological joy: Amos 9:13-14; Hosea 14:7; Jer 31:12. Cf. BROWN, John II, 105.
- <sup>35</sup> Cf. DILLON, "Wisdom Tradition", 287; BROWN, John I, 523; DUNN, Christology, 170-172, and the discussion at various stages of our previous chapter.
- <sup>36</sup> For references see DILLON, "Wisdom Tradition", 287-288n.58,59.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid, 288.
- <sup>38</sup> For a full examination of this movement of faith see, MOLONEY, "Cana to Cana" 185-213; BROWN, John I, 185.
- <sup>39</sup> One need only recall the incidents related to the Patriarchs, Isaac (Gen 24); Jacob (Gen 29); Moses (Exod 2). Cf. CULPEPPER, R.A., Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel (1983) 136.

- <sup>40</sup> LIGHTFOOT, R.H., St. John's Gospel: A Commentary (1956) 122, for example, sees the reference to the sixth hour and Jesus' thirst as parallel to the thirst expressed on the cross at the same time (19:28). BROWN, John I, 169 gives other possible approaches.
- <sup>41</sup> Cf. CARMICHAEL, C.M., "Marriage and the Samaritan Woman" NTS 26 (1980) 336-337, 343-344; NEYREY, J.H., "Jacob Traditions and the Interpretation of John 4:10-26" CBQ 41 (1979) 426.
- <sup>42</sup> NEYREY, "Jacob Traditions", 426-430.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., 431-432.
- <sup>44</sup> The problem raised by the anti-Samaritan references attributed to Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels is discussed by BROWN, John I, 175-176; SCHNACKENBURG, JOHN I, 458-460.
- <sup>45</sup> BULTMANN, JOHN, 180. He ascribes this to the  $\sigma\mu\epsilon\iota\alpha$  source.
- <sup>46</sup> Cf. FORTNA, Gospel of Signs, 189-195; SCHULZ, Johannes (1975); BECKER, J., Das Evangelium nach Johannes I (1979). BROWN, John I; SCHNACKENBURG, JOHN I; and BARRETT, John, offer no analysis of sources other than in the section 4:31-38. LINDARS, John (1972) 174, maintains that *only* 4:31-38 comes from a separate source, the rest being an integral whole. It is worth noting that FORTNA, 193, sees Jn 4:26 as part of the *source*, but even this would leave us with considerable and significant redactional work.
- <sup>47</sup> Cf. MOLONEY, "Cana to Cana", 197.
- <sup>48</sup> It is difficult to be certain to what extent the regulations of *Pirque Aboth* 1.5; 'Erubim 53b (Bab Tal) were applicable at the time of composition of the Fourth Gospel. They do reflect a trend with regard to women in the late first century, also witnessed to in Christian circles (I Tim 2:11ff).
- <sup>49</sup> There is some discussion as to the meaning of  $\sigma\upsilon\gamma\chi\rho\delta\upsilon\nu\tau\alpha\iota$  in 4:9. DAUBE, D., "Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: the Meaning of  $\sigma\upsilon\gamma\chi\rho\delta\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ " JBL 69 (1950) 137-147, translates it as "do not use vessels together with . . ." (p 139), making reference to *Mishnah Niddah* 4.1 regulation that "the daughters of the Samaritans are menstruants from their cradle." (Cf BARRETT, John, 232). While this may have been in force as early as 65 AD, we cannot say with any certainty that the meaning is so precise. Thus HAENCHEN, John I, 220, translates: "The Jews have no dealings with Samaritans". In either case, Jesus is breaking a taboo by talking to a Samaritan *and* a woman.
- <sup>50</sup> NEYREY, "Jacob Traditions", 421-424, outlines material pertinent to this in which legends about Jacob speak of a "mir-

acle whereby water would automatically surge to the top of Jacob's well and overflow" (p 422).

- <sup>51</sup> On Samaritan expectations of the Taheb see, McDONALD, J., The Theology of the Samaritans (1964) 362-371.
- <sup>52</sup> Cf. MOLONEY, "Cana to Cana", 198.
- <sup>53</sup> BROWN, John I, 178-179; BULTMANN, JOHN, 186-187; SCHNACKENBURG, JOHN I, 430; BARRETT, John, 234; LINDARS, John, 183-184; HAENCHEN, John I, 220; most recently, BEASLEY-MURRAY, G., John (1987) 60-61.
- <sup>54</sup> This is notable because the next reference to 'never thirsting' in John comes in the context of the Bread of Life discourse (6:35).
- <sup>55</sup> Cf. NEYREY, "Jacob Traditions", 435.
- <sup>56</sup> BERNARD, St John I, 140.
- <sup>57</sup> Cf. SCHNACKENBURG, JOHN I, 426; BARRETT, John, 233; and the texts cited in ODEBERG, H., The Fourth Gospel (1929) 150-152.
- <sup>58</sup> I QH 8,7; CD 19,34.
- <sup>59</sup> McDONALD, Theology of the Samaritans, gives numerous references under the individual names of the Patriarchs.
- <sup>60</sup> Cf. Ibid, 329.
- <sup>61</sup> Cf. NEYREY, "Jacob Traditions", 427-428.
- <sup>62</sup> Ibid, 424.
- <sup>63</sup> BARRETT, John, 239; FORTNA, Gospel of Signs, 191.
- <sup>64</sup> See above sections 3.2.4.2.4 + 3.2.4.2.5.
- <sup>65</sup> Cf. LINDARS, John, 191.
- <sup>66</sup> SCHULZ, Johannes, 76, agrees with this analysis when he states:  
"Jesus antwortet mit dem absoluten, direkten „Ich bin es“ der Selbstoffenbarung. Das heißt, derjenige, auf den man wartet ist da und beansprucht nichts anderes als den Glauben seiner Geschöpfe." Cf. BULTMANN, JOHN, 192.
- <sup>67</sup> Cf. BROWN, John I, 172-173.
- <sup>68</sup> Cf. McDONALD, Theology of the Samaritans, 362.
- <sup>69</sup> Cf. McKEATING, H., "Jesus Ben Sira's Attitude to Women" ExT 85 (1973) 85-87; SWIDLER, L., Biblical Affirmations of Woman (1979) 123-129.

- <sup>70</sup> Purely from a statistical viewpoint, μαρτυρεῖν appears 33 times in John and only twice in the whole of the Synoptic tradition (Mt 23:31; Lk 4:22): μαρτυρία appears 14 times in John and 4 in the Synoptics. For an extensive treatment of the use of μαρτυρία in John see: BEUTLER, J., Martyria: traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Zeugnisthema bei Johannes (1972). Unfortunately he fails to deal with the reference in 4:39, other than to give a brief grammatical note on the use of ὅτι + μαρτυρεῖν.
- <sup>71</sup> Cf SCHNEIDERS, S.M., "Women in the Fourth Gospel and the Role of Women in the Contemporary Church" BibThBull XII,2 (1982) 40.
- <sup>72</sup> BARRETT, John, 240.
- <sup>73</sup> SCHNEIDERS, "Women in the Fourth Gospel", 40. Cf. MOLONEY, "Cana to Cana", 196-198.
- <sup>74</sup> The converse of 'coming and believing' is found in Jn 5:40 - καὶ οὐ θέλετε εἰσελθεῖν πρὸς με ἵνα ζωὴν ἔχητε.
- <sup>75</sup> BULTMANN, John, 200.
- <sup>76</sup> Cf. HAUCK, "κόπος, κοπιᾶω" TDNT III, 829; SEITZ, M./LINK, H.-G., "Burden / κόπος" NIDNTT I, 262-263.
- <sup>77</sup> HAUCK, TDNT III, 829.
- <sup>78</sup> FIORENZA, In Memory of Her, 327. Cf. BULTMANN, John, 201; CULPEPPER, Anatomy, 137.
- <sup>79</sup> FOERSTER, W./FOHRER, G., "σῶζω, κτλ." TDNT VII, 1014.
- <sup>80</sup> BROWN, John I, 175. Cf. BULTMANN, John, 201n.4, who believes it "is taken from Hellenistic eschatology"; BARRATT, John, 244; SCHNACKENBURG, John I, 457-458.
- <sup>81</sup> See above section 3.2.4.2.2.
- <sup>82</sup> Among those verbs used are: ἐξαίρεω (10:1 - also used of God in Bar 4:18,21); διαφυλάσσω (10:1,12); ἐξαπολύω (10:6); ῥύομαι (10:9,15).
- <sup>83</sup> Cf. LINDARS, John, 198.
- <sup>84</sup> For discussion see the commentaries ad loc., and BAILEY, Traditions.
- <sup>85</sup> Cf. BROWN, John I, 433, who notes the activity of Martha in both accounts, and Mary's passivity. In both stories Mary comes to Jesus' feet; SCHNACKENBURG, John II, 342. Others deny any kind of dependence between the Lukan and Johannine accounts, e.g., WITHERINGTON, Women in the Ministry, 104.

- 86 Luke does know of a Lazarus in the parable of Lk 16:19-31, but as POLLARD, T.E., "The Raising of Lazarus (John xi)" StEv VI (1973) 435, states: "It is interesting, but ultimately fruitless to speculate 'Is the narrative a development of the parable, or has the parable grown out of a tradition which contained a story of Jesus raising from the dead a man called Lazarus?' For discussion see, DUNKERLEY, R., "Lazarus" NTS 5 (1958-1959) 321-327; POLLARD, art. cit.; and the commentaries ad loc..
- 87 The commentators are almost universally agreed upon this point!
- 88 SCHNACKENBURG, John II, 316.
- 89 Cf. FIORENZA, In Memory of Her, 329.
- 90 Cf. BROWN, John I, 423; BARRETT, John, 390; LINDARS, John, 388. BULTMANN, John, 397n.3, sees the reference to Martha and Mary (*not* Lazarus) as a "secondary insertion".
- 91 This is particularly evident in the Farewell discourses (13:1,23, 34; 4:15,21-28; 15:9,12,17), at the Cross (19:26), and in the reflective appendix to the Gospel (21:7,15-16).
- 92 WITHERINGTON, Women in the Ministry, 108.
- 93 See Chapter 3, section 3.2.4.1.4.
- 94 Cf. BROWN, John I, 434; SCHNACKENBURG, John II, 330; LINDARS, John, 394-395; BARRETT, John, 395.
- 95 BARRETT, John, 395.
- 96 SCHNEIDERS, "Women in the Fourth Gospel", 41, may well be correct in her assertion that Martha is "representative of the community left behind which must face the challenge to its faith in Jesus as the life".
- 97 BROWN, John I, 434.
- 98 CULPEPPER, Anatomy, 141.
- 99 BULTMANN, John, 404.
- 100 DUNN, Unity and Diversity, 41.
- 101 BROWN, John I, 301-302, argues at length that the confession of 6:68-69 is based on the Synoptic tradition of Caesarea Philippi. A case may perhaps be made out for some surviving elements of this tradition in John's account, but any attempt to align the *confession* of 6:69 with Matt 16:16 remains unconvincing, since, by Brown's own admission (p.302), the direct parallel to Mt 16:16 is in Jn 11:27. The statement σὺ εἶ ὁ ἄγιος τοῦ θεοῦ remains an inadequate expression in Johannine terms. It is even interesting to note that it is the *demons* who

confess Jesus as ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ in the Synoptic tradition (Mk 1:24 = Lk 4:34)!

- <sup>102</sup> FIORENZA, In Memory of Her, 329. Cf. WITHERINGTON, Women in the Ministry, 109.
- <sup>103</sup> Even the incident in Jn 20:2-10 probably does not have this intention. Cf. BULTMANN, John, 684.
- <sup>104</sup> DUNN, Unity and Diversity, 119.
- <sup>105</sup> SCHNEIDERS, "Women in the Fourth Gospel", 41.
- <sup>106</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>107</sup> Cf. BROWN, John I, 527-531.
- <sup>108</sup> Cf. SCHNEIDERS, "Women in the Fourth Gospel", 41. We should also note that the whole purpose of the post-resurrection story of Thomas (20:24-29) is precisely to establish this point for the community at large.
- <sup>109</sup> CULPEPPER, Anatomy, 141.
- <sup>110</sup> Cf. Philo: QG IV, 97; De Fuga 50ff. See Chapter 3, section 3.2.2.
- <sup>111</sup> Wisd 8:3; 9:4. Cf. Chapter 2, section 2.2.2.
- <sup>112</sup> SCHNACKENBURG, John II, 339.
- <sup>113</sup> CULPEPPER, Anatomy, 142.
- <sup>114</sup> POLLARD, "Lazarus" 441.
- <sup>115</sup> Ibid., 439.
- <sup>116</sup> Ibid., 441.
- <sup>117</sup> Cf. BROWN, John I, 435; BARRETT, John, 398 notes that Mary, like Martha in this statement "emphasises the confidence of the two women, partial though it is, (*which*) is contrasted with the hesitant question of the bystanders"; LINDARS, John, 397; SCHNACKENBURG, John II, 334.
- <sup>118</sup> It is possible that the 'fame' of Mary in Jn 11:2 provides a parallel to the statement at the end of Mark's account of the anointing story, that the woman would be remembered wherever the Gospel was preached (Mk 14:9). Mark, of course, does not name the woman involved.
- <sup>119</sup> Most commentators are agreed that the story of an anointing in Lk 7:36-50 belongs to a separate tradition, even although some features of it are present in the Johannine account.

- <sup>120</sup> For discussion of the history of tradition and its problems see, SCHNACKENBURG, John II, 370-373; WITHERINGTON, Women in the Ministry, 110-114. Most recently, see the important analysis of COAKLEY, J.F., "The Anointing at Bethany and the Priority of John" JBL 107 (1988) 241-256, who wants to give more credence to the *historical tradition* in John's account.
- <sup>121</sup> Cf. BARRETT, John, 409.
- <sup>122</sup> SCHNEIDERS, "Women in the Fourth Gospel", 42.
- <sup>123</sup> Commentators agree that chapter 12 marks the close of Jesus' public ministry, with chapter 13 marking the start of Jesus' departure from the world. Cf. DODD, Interpretation, 189; BROWN, John I & II, whose commentary is divided up on this basis; BARRETT, John, 11; BULTMANN, John; SCHULZ, Johannes; BECKER, Johannesevangelium; SCHNACKENBURG, John I - III.
- <sup>124</sup> BROWN, John I, 454.
- <sup>125</sup> For anointing the head of the king see, for example, I Sam 10:1ff.
- <sup>126</sup> SCHNACKENBURG, John II, 367, comments that even if it had been normal practice, it was "certainly not during a meal"! COAKLEY, "Anointing at Bethany", 247-248, brings forward eight examples from ancient sources, but none of these matches the Johannine account and only two have any kind of Jewish connections.
- <sup>127</sup> ATHANAEOUS, Deipnosophistae V (LCL, 1961) 553.
- <sup>128</sup> COAKLEY, "Anointing at Bethany", 248, states that "Mary's reported act may be strictly 'unparalleled', but it was not unthinkable". However, there is nothing in any of the sources he quotes to suggest they might have been known to the Fourth Evangelist. His argument for a more careful assessment of the priority of John's tradition in the account remains valuable.
- <sup>129</sup> JEREMIAS, J., The Parables of Jesus (1963) 126.
- <sup>130</sup> Ibid, 126n.5; WITHERINGTON, Women in the Ministry, 163n.20, 194n.209. Whatever date we place on such Rabbinic sources, it is clear from at least one writing in the New Testament before the time of John's Gospel, that the 'exposure' of a woman's hair was considered undesirable in public (I Cor 11:5ff). However, we do note the caution of COAKLEY, "Anointing at Bethany", 250-251, who reminds us that the scene in Jn 12:1-8 is a fairly intimate gathering of friends, rather than a public occasion.
- <sup>131</sup> BROWN, John II, 564; BARRETT, John, 440.

- <sup>132</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>133</sup> BROWN, John II, 564.
- <sup>134</sup> SCHNEIDERS, "Women in the Fourth Gospel", 42 (emphasis mine).
- <sup>135</sup> Cf. BEYER, H.W., "διακονέω, κτλ.", TDNT II, 81-93; HESS, K., "Serve/διακονέω" NIDNTT III, 544-549.
- <sup>136</sup> HESS, NIDNTT III, 546 comments: "In Phil 1:1 and I Tim 3:8-13 διακονος is used of a man holding the office of deacon in the Church; the same title is applied to a woman, Pheobe, in Rom 16:1". Cf. BEYER, TDNT II, 89-90.
- <sup>137</sup> There is some discussion over the origin of the term διακονία in Acts 6:1-6, but whatever its origin, it is almost certain that it reflects an office to which certain individuals were set aside. On the tasks and qualities thereof see further, HESS, NIDNTT III, 548; BEYER, TDNT II, 84-85.
- <sup>138</sup> I Tim 3:1ff makes this office clear by distinguishing it from that of the επίσκοπος. On the relationship between the two see, BEYER, TDNT II, 90. Cf. HESS, NIDNTT III, 548.
- <sup>139</sup> The saying in John 12:26 has parallels in the Synoptic tradition: Mk 8:34; Mt 10:38=Lk 14:27, but the structure is typically Johannine (BROWN, John I, 467; BULTMANN, John, 425). John also supplements the Synoptic ακολουθεῖν with διακονεῖν.
- <sup>140</sup> The word δόξα does not appear in the text here, but the context is that of Jesus' coming 'glorification' in which the one who serves will participate. There is good evidence elsewhere in the New Testament that τιμάω and δόξασθαι can be used in parallel (II Pet 1:17; Heb 2:7,9;3:3). For further detail on the use of these terms see: SCHNEIDER, J., "τιμή; τιμάω" TDNT VII 169-180, in particular p.179.
- <sup>141</sup> BROWN, John I, 475.
- <sup>142</sup> This observation also leads SCHNEIDERS, "Women in the Fourth Gospel", 42, to suggest that the whole incident has Eucharistic overtones, with Martha and Mary both serving Jesus. She finds a further pointer to this in the temporal reference of 12:1 - six days before the Passover, on the previous Sunday.
- <sup>143</sup> WITHERINGTON, Women in the Ministry, 101, where he also cites evidence and sources.
- <sup>144</sup> Cf. SCHNACKENBURG, John II, 335; BARRETT, John, 398, commenting on 11:32. For a review of the biblical material see WEISS, K., "ποῦς" TDNT VI, 624-631, who lists the action

of Mary in John 12 under the heading of acts expressing "veneration of Jesus" [p.629-630].

- <sup>145</sup> The classic example of this understanding was Abigail in I Sam 25:24, who takes for herself the role of a servant by falling at David's feet in an act of loyalty and devotion. Cf. WEISS, TDNT VI, 631.
- <sup>146</sup> Although there has been considerable scholarly discussion of the number of women intended by John in 19:25, this is of little importance for our present study. For detailed arguments of the various positions see BROWN, John II, 904-906; BEASLEY-MURRAY, John, 348.
- <sup>147</sup> We note the caution of BROWN, Mary, 209-210, that the claim to historicity cannot be dismissed simply because John contradicts the Synoptics. However, the objections listed on these pages do point us towards a symbolic rather than a literal interpretation.
- <sup>148</sup> It may well be, for example, that the ἀπό μακρόθεν of Mk 15:40 *par*, is influenced by a desire to tie the account to Ps 37:12 (LXX): καὶ οἱ ἐγγιστά μου ἀπό μακρόθεν ἔστησαν. Cf. MARSHALL, I.H., The Gospel of Luke, 877; BROWN, John II, 904; BROWN, Mary, 68n.127.
- <sup>149</sup> For a full treatment of the verses 26-27 from a historical-critical perspective see, DAUER, A., Die Passionsgeschichte im Johannesevangelium (1972) 196-201.
- <sup>150</sup> BROWN, Community, 196.
- <sup>151</sup> Cf. BARRETT, John, 551.
- <sup>152</sup> STAUFFER, E., Jesus and His Story (1960) 111, 179n.1; OCHSHORN, Female Experience 169-170.
- <sup>153</sup> OCHSHORN, Female Experience, 169.
- <sup>154</sup> "From that hour" (19:27) cannot mean that the Beloved Disciple took the Mother of Jesus off *immediately* to his home without waiting for Jesus to die, especially as he appears to be present at the scene still in 19:35. For the significance of "hour" here and its relation to the Cana miracle see further, BROWN, John II, 906, 925.
- <sup>155</sup> LINDARS, John, 573.
- <sup>156</sup> Cf. BROWN, John II, 922-927.
- <sup>157</sup> Cf. BULTMANN, John, 521.
- <sup>158</sup> A view held by many of the early Christian 'Fathers'. See the review in BROWN, John II, 924.
- <sup>159</sup> LINDARS, John, 579.

- <sup>160</sup> It is also noticeable that the evangelist lists another member of Jesus' family as being present at the cross, but again does not use her personal name, simply, 'his mother's sister'.
- <sup>161</sup> BROWN, Community, 198.
- <sup>162</sup> See above, chapter 3, section 3.2.4.4.
- <sup>163</sup> BROWN, Mary, 208.
- <sup>164</sup> We may note the contrast between the one who does not forsake and the cry of dereliction reported by Matt and Mark: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken (ἐγκατέλιπες) me" (Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34); a cry omitted by John.
- <sup>165</sup> Cf. BROWN, John II, 998ff; SCHNACKENBURG, John III, 302ff; LINDARS, John, 595; BARRETT, John, 560-562.
- <sup>166</sup> BULTMANN, John, 682.
- <sup>167</sup> An Angelophany is reported in various degrees of expansion in Mt 28:2-7; Mk 16:5-7; Lk 24:4-7, in each case the Angel giving the information that Jesus is risen and commanding the women to spread this news to the disciples.
- <sup>168</sup> For summaries of the discussion see: BROWN, John II, 996-1004; SCHNACKENBURG, John III, 302-307; NEIRYNCK, F., "John and the Synoptics: the Empty Tomb Stories" NTS 30 (1984) 161-165.
- <sup>169</sup> See further, SCHNACKENBURG, John III, 304-305. For a summary of the characteristics of Johannine language and style see, BROWN, John I, cxxxv-cxxxvi. There is also the above mentioned use of πιστεύειν in 20:8, but we shall return to this at a later stage of our discussion.
- <sup>170</sup> BULTMANN, John, 681-683.
- <sup>171</sup> Cf. the critique of SCHNACKENBURG, John III, 303.
- <sup>172</sup> Cf. LINDARS, B., "The Composition of John XX" NTS 7 (1960-1961) 142-147; LINDARS, John, 596-597; BENOIT, P., "Marie-Madelaine et les disciples au tombeau selon Jn 20:1-18" in: Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche (1960) 141-152; HARTMANN, G., "Die Vorlage der Osterberichte in Joh.20" ZNW 55 (1964) 197-220. In his examination of the Lukan account, LEANEY, A.R.C., "The Resurrection Narratives in Luke (xxiv.12-53)" NTS 2 (1955-1956) 110-114, also supports the idea of a pre-Johannine (and pre-Lukan) tradition of a Petrine visit to the tomb.
- <sup>173</sup> HARTMANN, ZNW 55 (1964) 197-220.
- <sup>174</sup> SCHNACKENBURG, John III, 303-307.

- <sup>175</sup> BARRETT, John, 562.
- <sup>176</sup> LINDARS, John, 598.
- <sup>177</sup> In *Mark's* account she comes with other women to anoint the dead body of Jesus, but on finding the empty tomb and hearing the Angel's message, goes off with them in fear and says nothing to the disciples. In *Matthew*, she receives the Angel's message together with the other women and goes with fear and joy to tell the disciples. In *Luke's* version, she and the other women hear the Angel's message, but think of it only as an idle tale, which they do not believe.
- <sup>178</sup> SCHNACKENBURG, John III, 304-305. It is also worth noting, however, that Minear sees in the οἶδαμεν of v.2 a parallel to other uses of "we" as representative of the voice of the Christian community in John 1:14; 3:11; 4:22; 9:31 - MINEAR, P., "'We don't know where. . . .' John 20:2" Interpretation 30 (1976) 126.
- <sup>179</sup> JEREMIAS, J., Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus (1969) 375.
- <sup>180</sup> Cf. WITHERINGTON, Women in the Ministry, 9-10 (and notes).
- <sup>181</sup> SCHNACKENBURG, John III, 312.
- <sup>182</sup> MINEAR, P., Interpretation 30 (1976) 127.
- <sup>183</sup> Cf. Ibid, 127-128, where Minear gives 3 reasons in support of this conclusion.
- <sup>184</sup> For example, the Emmaus Road account in Lk 24:13ff; the appearance to the disciples in Lk 24:37; Matt 28:17 reports that some continued to doubt. In the theophanic account of the Walking on the Water, they also fail to recognise him, Matt 14:26; Mk 6:49-50. John also reports such a lack of recognition in the account of the lakeside appearance, Jn 21:4.
- <sup>185</sup> BROWN, John II, 1010. Cf. SCHNACKENBURG, John III, 316; LINDARS, John, 606.
- <sup>186</sup> For documentation of the appellation see, BROWN, Community, 190n. 336.
- <sup>187</sup> FIORENZA, In Memory of Her, 332.
- <sup>188</sup> One of the most explicit accounts of this debate concerning the relationship between Peter and Mary Magdalene occurs in the *Gospel of Mary*, where Peter appears jealous of the fact that Jesus preferred Mary Magdalene to the male disciples as a confidant. Levi, however, defends her integrity and calls on the disciples to bear her words into the world. A fragment of this Gospel has been dated to the early third century (cf. McRAE, G.W./WILSON

R.McL., "The Gospel of Mary [BG 8502, 1]" in: J.M. Robinson (ed.) The Nag Hammadi Library in English (1984) 471), suggesting that such speculation was already prevalent at the very latest toward the end of the second century. For translations of the *Gospel of Mary* see: op cit, 471-474; HENNECKE-SCHNEEMELCHER, New Testament Apocrypha I (1963) 340-344.

- <sup>189</sup> CONZELMANN, H., 1 Corinthians (1975) 152.
- <sup>190</sup> BROWN, John II, 1010. While we would agree with FIORENZA, In Memory of Her, 333, that the term 'teacher', which would normally show a response on the part of the disciple to the master which would be seen as paradigmatic, does not constitute such an exemplary discipleship in this instance. The emphasis is on the movement towards full faith in the Risen Christ, rather than on clinging to the old picture of Jesus as the 'teacher'.
- <sup>191</sup> Cf. BROWN, John II, 1012; SCHNACKENBURG, John III, 301; LINDARS, John, 607.
- <sup>192</sup> LINDARS, John, 607.
- <sup>193</sup> It is significant that the Synoptic accounts report that the *Angels* asked about the women 'seeking'. John deliberately avoids this and gives the question to the Risen Jesus Sophia.
- <sup>194</sup> Chapter 3, section 3.2.4.2.2.
- <sup>195</sup> CULPEPPER, R.A., The Johannine School (1975) 298.
- <sup>196</sup> For example, Psalm (LXX) 24:6; 27:8; 83:16; 105:3-4.
- <sup>197</sup> LINK, H.-G., "ζητέω / seek" NIDNTT III, 531.
- <sup>198</sup> FIORENZA, In Memory of Her, 333.
- <sup>199</sup> ELLISON, H.L., "ῥαββί / Rabbi" NIDNTT III, 115-116; RENGSTORF, K.H., "διδάσκω, κτλ." TDNT II, 152-159.
- <sup>200</sup> Chapter 3, section 3.2.4.3.
- <sup>201</sup> BROWN, John I, 653, sums this up by saying: "The Paraclete's mission is the completion of Jesus' mission. Jesus bore God's name (xviii 11,12) because he was the revelation of God to men: the Spirit is sent in Jesus' name because he unfolds the meaning of Jesus for man. If Jesus could say in 24, 'The word that you hear is not my own', so too the teaching that the Paraclete will communicate is not his own."
- <sup>202</sup> Chapter 3, section 3.2.4.1.3.
- <sup>203</sup> BROWN, Community, 191.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> BROWN, John I, 77.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, 79.

<sup>207</sup> BROWN, Community, 186.

<sup>208</sup> Cf. the commentaries. BARRETT, John, 589-592, deals with it in an appendix, listing considerable textual material against its authenticity. BROWN, John I, 332-338, deals with it *in situ*, as do SCHNACKENBURG, John II, 162-171; and LINDARS, John, 305-312. Bultmann does not even bother to comment on it!

<sup>209</sup> At least one early scribe saw its affinity to Luke in terms of language and thought, including it after Lk 21:38. See BARRETT, John 589.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

- <sup>1</sup> DUNN, Christology, 250.
- <sup>2</sup> BROWN, Community, 186.
- <sup>3</sup> DILLON, "Wisdom Tradition", 272.
- <sup>4</sup> BROWN, John 2, 1077.
- <sup>5</sup> LINDARS, John, 632.
- <sup>6</sup> Cf. BROWN, John 2, 1110-1112; SCHNACKENBURG, John 3, 360-367; LINDARS, John, 632-636. BULTMANN, John, 712ff denies that there is any evidence in the text itself to support the idea of rehabilitation.
- <sup>7</sup> ENGELSMANN, Feminine Dimension, 119.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid, 117.
- <sup>9</sup> Cf. BROWN, John 1, ciii-civ. WENGST, K., Bedrängte Gemeinde und verherrlichter Christus (1983) argues cogently for the *origins* of the Johannine community in the Transjordan region of Palestine, but still sees it as having migrated, probably to Ephesus.
- <sup>10</sup> BROWN, John 1, civ.
- <sup>11</sup> On the addressees of the Letter to the Ephesians see, BARTH, M., Ephesians 1-3 (1974) 10-12.
- <sup>12</sup> For arguments concerning the Ephesian destination of the Pastorals see under Ephesus in KELLY, J.N.D., A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (1963).
- <sup>13</sup> For various citations from the Patristic writers and a more positive assessment of the Montanist women see, FIORENZA, In Memory 298-309.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid, 302.

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