

# The Gospel of the *Memra*: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John

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*For Elizabeth Busky, with gratitude*

Most Christian and Jewish scholars have been heavily invested in asserting the radical difference and total separation of Christianity from Judaism at a very early period. Thus we find the following view expressed by one of the leading historians of dogma in our time, Basil Studer:

From the socio-political point of view Christianity fairly soon broke away from Judaism. Already by about 130 the final break had been effected. This certainly contributed to an even greater openness towards religious and cultural influences from the Greco-Roman environment. Not without reason, then, it is exactly at that time that the rise of antijudaistic and hellenophile gnostic trends is alleged. Christian theology began gradually

<sup>1</sup>I wish to thank the following colleagues and friends who have commented on earlier versions of this paper and contributed much to whatever success its final form bears: Daniel Abrams, Carlin Barton, François Bovon, Virginia Burrus, Harvey Cox, Richard Hays, Karen King, Catherine Keller, Helmut Koester, Moshe Idel, Stephen D. Moore, Maren Niehoff, Birger Pearson, Dina Stein, Krister Stendahl, Rob Wall, and Azzan Yadin, as well as the graduate students in my seminar on the Fourth Gospel at Harvard Divinity School in the spring of 2000. A shorter version was delivered as a public lecture at HDS, 24 April 2000. In addition to the above-mentioned colleagues, others asked good and useful questions at this lecture, too. Virginia Burrus was also, as frequently in the last several years, a vital conversation partner in the generation of these ideas. I alone take responsibility in the end for both ideas and form. Gratitude as well to Asi, Tsahi, Hila, and Na'ama for making a stay in Jerusalem while I was completing this essay incomparably more pleasant.

to draw away from Judaic tendencies. . . . In the course of separation from the Synagogue and of rapprochement with the pagan world, theology itself became more open towards the thinking of antiquity with its scientific methods. This is particularly evident in the exegesis of Holy Scripture in which the chasm separating it from rabbinic methods broadened and deepened, whereas the ancient art of interpretation as it was exercised especially in Alexandria gained the upper hand.<sup>2</sup>

Studer's picture is a fairly typical one. Even as sophisticated a commentator as James D. G. Dunn, who realizes that "the parting of the ways, if we can already so speak, was at this point also as much a parting of the ways *within* the new movement as *between* Christianity and Judaism, or better, as within Judaism,"<sup>3</sup> still feels moved to insist that "after the second revolt [132–135] the separation of the main bodies of Christianity and Judaism was clear-cut and final, whatever interaction there continued to be at the margins."<sup>4</sup> Nor is this view confined to Christian scholars, of course. One of the leading Israeli historians has put it thus: "With the Bar Kokhba rising the final rift between Judaism and Christianity was complete."<sup>5</sup>

One of the clearest symbols of this separation at the theological level has been the centrality of Logos theology in Christianity from a very early date, a Logos theology that has been considered to have very little to do with "authentic" or "proper" Palestinian Judaism. The name of Rudolf Bultmann has been emblem-

<sup>2</sup>Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church* (ed. Andrew Louth; trans. Matthias Westerhoff; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1993) 14.

<sup>3</sup>James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity, 1991) 135. Since for Dunn, and I think quite compellingly so, the major departure from anything like the Jewish Koine of any first-century "Christian" is Paul's rejection of the Law (for my defense of this interpretation of Paul, see Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* [Contraversions: Critical Studies in Jewish Literature, Culture, and Society; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994]), the primary gap would be between "Christian" and "Christian," not between "Christian" and "Jew." Not surprisingly, in Paul's own works his conflicts with other Jewish Christians are much more marked than his conflicts with "Jews."

<sup>4</sup>Dunn, *Partings*, 238.

<sup>5</sup>Yitzhaq Baer, "Israel, the Christian Church, and the Roman Empire from the Time of Septimius Severus to the Edict of Toleration of A.D. 313," in *Studies in History* (ed. Alexander Fuks and Israel Halpern; Scripta Hierosolymitana 7; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961) 82. It should be emphasized that a new generation of Israeli scholars, including as a representative sample Galit Hasan-Rokem, "Narratives in Dialogue: A Folk Literary Perspective on Interreligious Contacts in the Holy Land in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity," in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land: First–Fifteenth Centuries CE* (ed. Guy Stroumsa and Arieh Kofsky; Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 1998) 109–29 and Israel Jacob Yuval, "Jews and Christians in the Middle Ages: Shared Myths, Common Language," in *Demonizing the Other: Antisemitism, Racism, and Xenophobia* (ed. Robert S. Wistrich; Studies in Antisemitism 4; Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999) 88–107, among others, are changing this picture dramatically.

atic of this position.<sup>6</sup> Bultmann famously read the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel as a hymn which came from sources outside of Judaism, from "Mandaism" or some version of a gnostic group.<sup>7</sup> This interpretation supported Bultmann's overall conviction that the Gospel ought be read as quite distant from "Judaism."<sup>8</sup> As Dunn has put it, Bultmann's work led to a perception of "Christianity [that] very quickly distanced itself from its distinctively Jewish matrix and from a characteristically Jewish Jesus."<sup>9</sup> In 1962, J. A. T. Robinson noted that there was much in the Gospel of John that seemed to indicate a close connection with first-century Palestinian realia, but that "it could still be argued that the Logos theology (for which the [Dead Sea Scrolls] provide no parallel) locates the Gospel both in place and time at a considerable remove from the Palestinian scene which it purports to describe."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray; Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1971) 21.

<sup>7</sup>For an especially clear, concise, and convenient version of Bultmann's approach, see Rudolf Bultmann, "The History of Religions Background of the Prologue to the Gospel of John," in *The Interpretation of John* (ed. John Ashton; Studies in New Testament Interpretation; 1923; repr., Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997) 27–46, esp. 43. "If my supposition is correct, then in the Gospel of John we have fresh proof of the extraordinarily early impact of eastern gnostic speculations upon early Christianity." As Bultmann remarks, in a passage cited below, these "eastern gnostic speculations" come from anywhere but "Judaism." In contrast to this, Moshe Idel, "Meṭaṭron: Notes Towards the Development of Myth in Judaism" [in Hebrew], in *Eshel Beer-Sheva: Occasional Publications in Jewish Studies* [Beer-sheva, Israel: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 1996] 41), traces direct continuity from biblical angel speculation down to the Kabbalah, "so much so that it is difficult to see the necessity for gnostic influences that stimulated the development of Jewish thought." See also much later and more definitively: "The Logos concept of the Prologue does not have its origin in the philosophical tradition of Hellenism, but in mythology" (Bultmann, *John*, 13 n. 1), by which Bultmann surely means something "Oriental" and "gnostic," as is seen explicitly in 24–31 of the Commentary, and especially 29, to wit, "It [the Prologue to John] belongs to the sphere of early oriental Gnosticism."

<sup>8</sup>Bultmann, *John*, 21. Part of the issue is that for Bultmann "Judaism" is a reified entity, such that one could make the claim that "the Wisdom myth was not as such a living force in Judaism; it was only a mythological and poetic decking-out of the doctrine of the law. Everything that the myth related of Wisdom was transferred to the Torah: the Torah is pre-existent; she was God's plan of creation and instrument of creation; Wisdom, being in some sense incarnate in the law, has found in Israel a dwelling, prepared for her by God. But the Wisdom myth does not have its origin in the OT or in Israel at all; it can only spring from pagan mythology; the Israelite Wisdom poetry took over the myth and de-mythologized it" (Bultmann, *John*, 23). The very limitations of the "history of religions" method are here approached with its apparently clear distinctions between "pagan," "Israelite," "Jewish," and "Christian." Thus, according to Bultmann, even the Book of Daniel doesn't quite make it as authentically "Jewish"; it is "syncretistic" (Bultmann, *John*, 27).

<sup>9</sup>Dunn, *Partings*, 9.

<sup>10</sup>James A. T. Robinson, "The Relationship of the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John," *NTS* 9 (1962) 128. Once again, in fairness, I wish to point out that the judicious Robinson qualifies his statement appropriately.

The lion's share of the Hellenic thinking of early Christianity—and most centrally, Logos theology—was, however, an integral part of the first-century Jewish world. The following (almost contrary) narrative seems at least equally as plausible: “Judaism(s)” and “Christianit(ies)” remained intertwined well past the first half of the second century until Rabbinic Judaism in its nativist attempt to separate itself from its own history of now “Christian” logos theology began to try to imagine itself a community free of Hellenism.<sup>11</sup> In some areas, western Asia almost certainly one of them, Gentile converts began to overwhelm—in numbers—Christian Jews at a fairly early date. They brought with them, almost inevitably, “hellenophile” and then “antijudaistic” tendencies.<sup>12</sup> But Jewish theology itself had been for centuries “open towards the thinking of antiquity,” and the binary opposition between the Jewish and the Hellenistic (as well as the binary opposition between Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism) requires major rethinking. Judaism is, from the very beginning, from its very origins, a Hellenistic form of culture.<sup>13</sup> Rabbinic Judaism, on the other hand, can be seen as a nativist reaction movement that imagines itself a community free of Hellenism.

Thus, the very “Alexandrian” art of interpretation—named by Studer as his prime exemplum of how “theology itself became more open towards the thinking of antiquity with its scientific methods,” originated in the world of Philo Ioudaios,

<sup>11</sup>I shall be defending this interpretation in the larger work for which this essay is a study, tentatively entitled, *Making a Difference: How Christianity Created the Jewish Religion*.

<sup>12</sup>The impact of the early Pauline congregations in this area would have been, *ex hypothesi*, one of the leading factors in the production of this kind of Christianity, in opposition, perhaps to the Petrine Christianity that typified Palestine and Syria. Justin, one of the earliest manifestations of this form of Christianity, may have been significantly influenced by the Pauline letters, as argued recently by David Rokéah, *Justin Martyr and the Jews* (in Hebrew, Kuntresim: Texts and Studies 84; Jerusalem: Hebrew University, Dinur Center for Research in Jewish History, 1998). Although this position is contra the consensus of Justin scholarship today, my own research on Galatians and Justin suggests to me that it is, at least, arguably the case. It is in Justin's writing that we find for the first time several topoi of a distinct anti-Judaic Christian identity, among them the notion that Israel has been replaced for its sins by a new Israel and also the notion that the “Jews” are responsible for pagan hostility to Christians (Dialogue 17.1, in *Justin Martyr: The Dialogue with Trypho* [trans. A. L. Williams; Translations of Christian Literature; London: SPCK, 1930] 34–35), a topos that would appear frequently later in west Asian texts (Judith Lieu, “Accusations of Jewish Persecution in Early Christian Sources, with Particular Reference to Justin Martyr and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*,” in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity* [ed. Graham N. Stanton and Guy G. Stroumsa; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998] 279–95). For a reconstruction similar to mine, however without marking its specifically west Asian nature, see Birger Pearson, “The Emergence of the Christian Religion,” in *The Emergence of the Christian Religion: Essays on Early Christianity* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1997) 17.

<sup>13</sup>“Hellenistic ways of life, thought and expression were integral to Jewish Palestinian culture from at least the mid-third century [B.C.] on, and these tendencies affected Pharisaism and later Rabbinic writings. Hellenistic schools were especially influential on Jewish modes

not, after all, medieval legend to the contrary, with Philo Christianus.<sup>14</sup> Christian exegesis, insofar as it continues this, follows from a "Judaistic" world. Rabbinic methods, too, can be shown to have been known to the earliest Christian writers. Along with logocentric interpretation, Logos theology originates in the world of Philo Ioudaios, and, moreover, is not an idiosyncrasy of only that writer.

## ■ The Logos of the Jews

In dualistic circles of thought, where the tendency was increasingly to represent the Deity as the Absolute in order to free Him from all association with matter, the Reason of God, tending toward, but not yet properly having become, a separate personality, that phase of God which connected God's otherwise Absolute nature with the world[, . . . the] Logos then in all circles but the Stoic . . . was a link of some kind which connected a transcendent Absolute with the world and humanity. The Logos came into general popularity because of the wide-spread desire to conceive of God as transcendent and yet immanent at the same time. The term Logos in philosophy was not usually used as the title of a

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of organization and expression. The emergence of definable sects, Pharisees, Sadducees, etc. and more importantly the attention given to them fits most comfortably into the Greco-Roman world with its recognized philosophical schools, religious societies and craft associations" (Anthony Saldarini, *Scholastic Rabbinism: A Literary Study of the Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan* [Chico, Ca.: Scholars Press, 1982] 19). My only emendation to this important statement would be to abandon language of "influence" and simply understand that "Judaism" is itself a species of Hellenism. See the formulation in Saldarini, *Scholastic*, 21, which comes closer, I think, to this perspective. Cf. most recently Lee I. Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence* (The Samuel & Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies; Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1998). This perspective entails a revision of such formulations as, "It has often seemed plausible that a Hellenistic Judaism, like Philo's but less sophisticated, was the background for Justin's and Theophilus' writing" (Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* [SJLA 25; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977] 167). See now also M. J. Edwards, "Justin's Logos and the Word of God," *JECS* 3 (1995): 261–80. Raymond E. Brown already understood this point well in his introduction to his commentary on John (*The Gospel according to John* [2 vols.; AB; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966] 1:1vi). See also Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (2d ed., 1988; repr., Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998) esp. 7–9: "So, if we use the term 'Palestinian Judaism' to mean the religion and culture of the Jews living in Palestine at that time, it designates a bilingual phenomenon which included within it significant variation."

<sup>14</sup>J. E. Bruns, "Philo Christianus: The Debris of a Legend," *HTR* 66 (1973) 141–45. It is not even absolutely and entirely clear that Philo had no *Nachleben* at all in some Jewish writing. See S. Poznanski, "Philon dans l'ancienne littérature judéo-arabe," *REJ* 50 (1905) 10–31.

unique attribute of God, but rather as the most important single name among many applicable to the effulgent Power of God which reasonably had shaped and now governs the world. (E. R. Goodenough)

What Goodenough does not emphasize enough, however, is how thoroughly first-century Judaism has absorbed (or produced!) these central "Middle Platonic" theological notions.<sup>15</sup> The idea that the Logos/Sophia (and other variants as well) was the site of God's presence in the world—indeed of God's Word or Wisdom as a mediator figure—was a very widespread one in the thought-world of first-century and even second-century Judaism.<sup>16</sup> Rather than treating Logos theology, therefore, as the specific product of "Christianity," with Philo a sort of Christian *avant la lettre*,<sup>17</sup> I wish to explore the evidence for Logos theology as a common element in much Jewish, including Christian Jewish, religious imagination. As Dunn has recently written of Wisdom christology: "*the usage is Jewish through and through*."<sup>18</sup>

A comparative study of Philo's Logos, the *Memra* of the Targum, and the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel supports this suggestion. Although the targumic material and Philo have been much discussed as contiguous with the Johannine Logos, these linkages are currently out of favor,<sup>19</sup> so it seems not beside the point to rehearse in brief the considerations in favor of these affiliations. One possible implication of this suggestion would be to counterbalance such a remark as that of

<sup>15</sup>Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr: An Investigation into the Conceptions of Early Christian Literature and Its Hellenistic and Judaistic Influences* (Amsterdam: Philo, 1968) 140–41.

<sup>16</sup>Leslie W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967). To the evidence that I shall be offering below in some detail, we might add the figure Yaho'el, in the probably second-century *Apocalypse of Abraham*, 10.3 and passim (ed. and trans. G. H. Box; *Apocalypse of Abraham* [TED; London: SPCK, 1918] nn.). See the important discussion in Darrell D. Hannah, *Michael and Christ: Michael Traditions and Angel Christology in Early Christianity* (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999) 52–54. Also: "Apparently, Justin Martyr also knew of Jews who allowed one name of God to refer to something like a *Logos*, but refused to identify the *Logos* with Jesus as he had done" (Segal, *Powers*, 13). See also W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (2d ed.; 1955; repr., London: SPCK, 1965) 147–76 and Siegfried Schulz, *Untersuchungen zur Menschensohn-Christologie im Johannesevangelium zugleich ein Beitrag zur Methodengeschichte der Auslegung des 4. Evangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957). I wish to thank Prof. François Bovon for directing my attention to this last source.

<sup>17</sup>Bruno, "Philo Christianus." See also David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* (CRINT; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) 3–33.

<sup>18</sup>Dunn, *Partings*, 195 (emphasis original).

<sup>19</sup>*Memra* is a blind alley in the study of the biblical background of John's Logos doctrine" (C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* [London: SPCK, 1978] 128), and why? Simply because of the assertion that "מֵרָא" however was not truly a hypostasis but a means of speaking about God without using

Basil Studer, who claims that “first it has to be fully acknowledged that the beginning of trinitarian reflection was made because of the Easter experience, understood in apocalyptic terms.”<sup>20</sup> It is at least possible that the beginning of trinitarian reflection was precisely in non-Christian Jewish accounts of the second and visible God, variously, the Logos (*Memra*), Wisdom, or even perhaps the Son of God.<sup>21</sup>

## ■ Philo’s Logos

The doctrine of the Logos, the linchpin of Philo’s religious thought . . .  
(David Winston)

Winston has pointed out that, although we can know very little of the philosophical context of Philo’s writing, we can determine from the writings themselves that Logos theology is “something his readers will immediately recognize without any further explanation.”<sup>22</sup> The consequences of this point are formidable. Philo was clearly writing for an audience of Jews devoted to the Bible. If for these, the Logos theology was a virtual commonplace (which is not to say that there were not enormous variations in detail, of course), the implication is that this way of thinking about God was a vital inheritance of (at least) Alexandrian Jewish thought. It becomes apparent, therefore, that for one branch of pre-Christian Judaism, at least, there was nothing strange about a doctrine of a *deuteros theos*, and nothing in that doctrine that precluded monotheism. Moreover, Darrell Hannah has emphasized that “neither in Platonism, Stoicism nor Aristotelian thought do we find the kind of significance that the concept has for Philo, nor the range of meanings that he gives to the term λόγος,” and, therefore, that “he appears to be dependent upon a tradition in Alexandrian Judaism which was attributing a certain independence to

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his name, and thus a means of avoiding the numerous anthropomorphisms of the Old Testament.” It seems never to have occurred to any of those who hold this view how self-contradictory it is, as I will argue later. See also, e.g., Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: Burns & Oates; New York: Herder & Herder, 1968) 484–87.

<sup>20</sup>Studer, *Trinity*, 39.

<sup>21</sup>Other designations were used as well. See Jarl Fossum, “Jewish-Christian Christology and Jewish Mysticism,” VC 37 (1983) 260–87; Jarl Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Conceptions of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism* (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985) 333. For the Logos as the “first-begotten son of the Uncreated Father” in Philo, see David Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1985) 16. Cf. Dunn, *Partings*, 202–3. Cf. also: “If Philo remains within the spectrum of recognizable and acceptable first-century Judaism, would the same not be true for Hebrews also? It would be hard to answer anything other than Yes” (Dunn, *Partings*, 211), with which “Yes” I heartily concur.

<sup>22</sup>Winston, *Logos*, 11. So also Segal, *Powers*, 163: “There were others in Philo’s day who spoke of a ‘second god’ but who were not as careful as Philo in defining the limits of that term.”

God's word."<sup>23</sup> He sees the sources of that tradition as in part growing out of the Israelite Prophets themselves, at least in their Septuagint hypostasis. As he has formulated it,

"The Greek OT could be read as affirming that the λόγος θεοῦ was an agent of both creation and revelation, roles which Philo attributes to the Logos. . . . It would appear, then, that Philo drew on a hellenistic Jewish tradition which asserted that by means of His Word, which was the same as His Wisdom, God created the world and revealed Himself to the prophets."<sup>24</sup>

Philo reveals some of the crucial OT intertexts for his Logos doctrine:<sup>25</sup>

For this reason, whereas the voice of mortals is judged by hearing, the sacred oracles intimate that the words of God (τοὺς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγους) are seen as light is seen, for we are told that *all of the people saw the Voice* (Ex. 20:18), not that they heard it; for what was happening was not an impact of air made by the organs of mouth and tongue, but the radiating splendour of virtue indistinguishable from a fountain of reason. . . . But the voice of God which is not that of verbs and names yet seen by the eye of the soul, he (Moses) rightly introduces as "visible." (Philo, *Migr.* 47–48)

One of the fascinating and vitally important implications of this text is the close connection that it draws between the Logos, the Word, and light. This is an association that will immediately arouse associations with the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel, but in reality has much broader early Jewish contexts, as we shall see.

Further, it can hardly be doubted that for Philo the Logos is both a part of God and also a separate being, the Word that God created in the beginning in order to create everything else: the Word that both is God, therefore, and is with God. We find in Philo a passage that could just as easily have fit into Justin's *Apologies*:

To His Word, His chief messenger, highest in age and honour, the Father of all has given the special prerogative, to stand on the border and separate the creature from the Creator. This same Word both pleads with the immortal as suppliant for afflicted mortality and acts as ambassador of the ruler to the subject. He glories in this prerogative and proudly describes it in these words "and I stood between the Lord and you" (Deut. v. 5), that is neither uncreated by God, nor created as you, but midway between the two extremes, a surety to both sides. (*Quis rerum divinarum heres sit* 205–206)<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup>Hannah, *Michael*, 80.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 80–81.

<sup>25</sup>As pointed out by Maren R. Niehoff, "What is in a Name? Philo's Mystical Philosophy of Language," *JSQ* 2 (1995) 223.

<sup>26</sup>See also discussion in Hannah, *Michael*, 82–83.



Philo oscillates on the point of the ambiguity between separate existence of the Logos, God's Son,<sup>27</sup> and its total incorporation within the godhead. If Philo is not on the road to Damascus here, he is surely on a way that leads to Nicaea and the controversies over the second person of the Trinity.

It becomes, in the light of the centrality of such mediation by the Logos for Philo's theology, less and less plausible to speak of Philo as having been influenced by Middle Platonism. Instead, insofar as the Logos theology, the necessity for a mediator, is intrinsic to Middle Platonism, that form of "Hellenistic" philosophy may simply be the Judaism of Philo and his fellows. A "Hellenism" is, after all, by definition the creative synthesis of Greek and "Eastern" culture and thought, and "Philo's Logos, jointly formed by the study of Greek philosophy and of the Torah, was at once the written text, an eternal notion in the mind of the Creator and the organ of his work in time and space. Under this last aspect, it receives such epithets as Son, King, Priest and Only-Begotten; in short it becomes a person."<sup>28</sup> As eloquently described by Charles Harold Dodd as well, Philo's Logos is neither just the Wisdom, the חכמה of the Bible, nor is it quite the Stoic nor Platonic λόγος, nor yet just the divine Word, the דבר of the Hebrew, either, but some unique and new synthesis of all of these.<sup>29</sup> That synthesis is arguably the central theological notion of Middle Platonism itself. If the Logos as divine mediator, therefore, is the defining characteristic of Middle Platonism, then, not only may Philo's Judaism be Middle Platonism, Middle Platonism itself may be a form of Judaism and Christianity.<sup>30</sup>

Maren Niehoff emphasizes that for this aspect of his philosophy, Philo apparently did not have previous Greek sources to draw upon. For his notion of man as an Idea, Philo could draw upon his Alexandrian predecessor, Arius Didymus, but for the concept of language itself as an Idea, indeed perhaps as the Idea of Ideas, Philo had no known Platonist models.<sup>31</sup> This is, of course, of signal importance for the present investigation, as it suggests that we look in quite other directions for the Philonic intertexts for this conceptual world:

<sup>27</sup>E.g., in *De agricultura* 51.

<sup>28</sup>Edwards, "Justin's Logos," 263.

<sup>29</sup>Charles Harold Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960) 269–79.

<sup>30</sup>This idea was originally suggested to me in conversations with Virginia Burrus, but I take full responsibility for the formulation. As she points out, the parade example of a "pagan" Middle-Platonist turns out to be Numenius, a philosopher who, while nominally indeed not Jewish nor Christian, quotes quite a bit of Scripture for his purpose. See, inter alia, David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) 190–91; John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977) 378–79. I have perhaps misunderstood or exaggerated this point, which will need, in any case, further elaboration.

<sup>31</sup>Niehoff, "What's in a Name?" 226.

Philo idealizes language more than man. For him, the ideal language does not at all belong to the realm of createdness. It rather seems to have preexisted with God Himself, thus entirely pertaining to the realm of the eternal, unchanging, most real and most true. In comparison to the ideal man, Divine language also plays a clearly more active and generative role. It is likely that both the enormous importance which Philo attributes to language and its active role as part of the Deity are ideas which are inspired by the natural assumption of God's speech-acts throughout the Biblical writings. The idea seems then to have been conceptualized in Plato's terms of ideal Forms.<sup>32</sup>

We find this active religious understanding of the Logos in another very evocative Philonic text:

The Divine Word descends from the fountain of wisdom like a river to lave and water the olympian and celestial shoots and plants of virtue-loving souls which are as a garden. And this Holy Word *is separated into four heads*, which means that it is split up into the four virtues . . . It is this Word which one of Moses' company compared to a river, when he said in the Psalms: *the river of God is full of water* (Ps 65:10); where surely it were absurd to use that word literally with reference to rivers of the earth. Instead, as it seems, he represents the Divine Word as full of the stream of wisdom, with no part empty or devoid of itself . . . inundated through and through and lifted up on high by the continuity and unbroken sequence from that everflowing fountain (*Somn.* 2.242–45)<sup>33</sup>

Philo's Logos seems, therefore, a close congener of the Logos theology that we find among almost all ante-Nicene Christian writers, and which would appear, therefore, to have a "Jewish" Beginning.

## ■ The *Memra*

Were we to find such notions among non-Christian Jews in Philo alone, we could regard him, as he often is regarded, as a sport, a mutant, or even a voice crying in the wilderness. However, there were other Jews, and, moreover, not only Greek-speaking ones, who manifested a version of Logos theology. Notions of the second god as personified word or wisdom of God were present among Semitic-speaking Jews as well. This point is important because it further disturbs the dichotomies that have been promulgated between Hellenistic and Rabbinic (by which is usually meant "authentic," "really real") Judaism.<sup>34</sup> The leading candidate for the Semitic Logos

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 226.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 230.

<sup>34</sup>For Goodenough, writing in 1923, there are "Judaism proper" and "Hellenistic Judaism," and he claims that it is the latter which provides Justin's theology with its theoretical base

is, of course, "The *Memra*" of God, as it appears in the para-rabbinic Aramaic translations<sup>35</sup> of the Bible in textual contexts that are frequently identical to ones where

(Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr*, 33). Although in the intervening decades such notions have loosened up considerably, they are by no means gone from the world.

<sup>35</sup>That is, in the ancient Palestinian and Babylonian synagogues. They are para-rabbinic in that as synagogue products they frequently represent religious ideas and practices parallel in time to (and from the same geographical space as) but not by any means identical to those of the "official" rabbinic Judaism represented in the rabbinic literature. Some of the Targums, notably Targum Onkelos and the targum known as Pseudo-Jonathan, have been modified somewhat to make them better fit rabbinic ideologies and interpretations. The principle that whatever disagrees with the Mishna must be pre-Mishnaic can no longer be maintained, given what we think now about Jewish religious diversity within the rabbinic period and the difficulties of the Rabbis in gaining hegemony over the Synagogue and its liturgy; see, inter alia, Richard S. Sarason, "On the Use of Method in the Modern Study of Jewish Liturgy," in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice* (ed. W.S. Green; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978) 146; and Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns* (Studia Judaica; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977) 7. In truth, Heinemann's form-criticism seems to me rather confusing in that he blurs heavily the distinction between the distinct topoi of Study House and Synagogue together with their associated *Gattungen*. Thus, for him, Targum, a Synagogue *Gattung* par excellence, belongs to the Study House (Heinemann, *Prayer*, 265)! I find his reasoning and argument, therefore, very difficult to follow. Much clearer and more convincing are Lee I. Levine, "The Sages and the Synagogue in Late Antiquity: The Evidence of the Galilee," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lee I. Levine; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992) 201–24; and Cynthia Baker, "Neighbor at the Door or Enemy at the Gate? Notes Toward a Rabbinic Topography of Self and Other" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, New Orleans, 1996). For a related argument for non-rabbinic religious traditions alongside those of the Rabbis (and not to be distinguished from it in terms of class) see Segal, *Powers*, 67 on Metatron and the late-ancient text known as "The Visions of Ezekiel." In this text, a secondary divine figure is cheerfully accepted on the grounds of Daniel 7:9 and called the "youth" (נָעָר), known by other Jews (e.g., the fourth evangelist) as the "son of man"! Although Scholem famously interpreted "youth" here as "servant," there is little warrant for this interpretation, as argued by David J. Halperin, "A Sexual Image in Hekhalot Rabbati and Its Implications," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6, 1–2 (1987) 125. I am convinced that he is called the "youth," i.e., the "Son of Man," in contrast to the "Ancient of Days." There is increasing evidence from all sides that the religion of the late ancient Palestinian countryside (and even well into the Byzantine period) was by no means identical with that projected by the Rabbis. On this point, see also Elchanan Reiner, "From Joshua to Jesus: The Transformation of a Biblical Story to a Local Myth: A Chapter in the Religious Life of the Galilean Jew," in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land: First–Fifteenth CE* (ed. Guy Stroumsa and Arieh Kofsky; Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 1998) 224–25, where it is argued, inter alia, that

it will be necessary to distinguish between the normative religious world, as formulated in talmudic literature, and the religious world represented by those lists [of Jewish holy places] and the associated literature. We may possibly have to acknowledge the existence of a Galilean community whose religious milieu differs from that presently known.

Surprisingly (or not so by now), the life of this "religious world" represented a set of identity formations (for narrative traditions) in which "Judaism" and "Christianity" were not nearly so clearly distinct as they are in the normative texts. See finally Hasan-Rokem, "Narratives in Dialogue."

the Logos hermeneutic has its home among Jews who speak Greek.<sup>36</sup>

"The *Memra* has a place above the angels as that agent of the Deity who sustains the course of nature and personifies the Law."<sup>37</sup> This position has been well established among historians of Christianity since the late nineteenth century. Alfred Edersheim saw the *Memra* as referring to God's self-revelation. As Robert Hayward says of Edersheim: "He also made a distinction between God and the *Memra*. Noting that Rabbinic theology has not preserved for us the doctrine of distinct persons in the Godhead, he remarks: 'And yet, if words have any meaning, the *Memra* is a hypostasis.'"<sup>38</sup> With this comment, Edersheim is clearly implying the existence of non-rabbinic forms of Judaism that were extant and vital within the rabbinic period alongside the rabbinic religion itself. Although the official rabbinic theology suppressed all talk of the *Memra* or Logos by naming it the heresy of "Two Powers in Heaven," both before the Rabbis and contemporaneously with them there was a multitude of Jews, in both Palestine and the Diaspora, who held onto this version of monotheistic theology.<sup>39</sup> If we accept Edersheim's view, the *Memra* is related to the Logos of Logos theology in its various Christian manifestations.

There have been obstacles to seeing the connections between the *Memra* and the Logos, however. Among Jewish scholars, as Hayward has put it, "since the time of Maimonides, it had been the custom to understand *Memra*, along with certain other Targumic terms like *Shekhinta*' [*sic*] (Presence) and *Yeqara*' [*sic*] (Glory), as a means of avoiding anthropomorphisms in speaking of God, and thus defending a notion of his incorporeality. Nahmanides, however, disagreed with Maimonides on this issue, although he held that the words had a secret and mystical meaning which would be revealed only to those versed in the *Kabbalah*. Nonetheless, the idea that *Memra* was simply a means of speaking about God in a reverent manner befitting His omnipotence and otherness was not unknown from the time of the Middle Ages onwards."<sup>40</sup> The consensus of scholarship since the 1920s has been like Maimonides's view. Thus, "Die Folgerung, die sich aus vorstehenden Darlegungen in Bezug aus

<sup>36</sup>The Hebrew behind the Aramaic *Memra* is apparently *ʾimra*, its virtual etymological equivalent, as found, in synonymous parallelism with *dabar* and *Torah* in Ps 119. In that psalm, the LXX translates *ʾimra* as λόγος and sometimes νόμος.

<sup>37</sup>Edwards, "Justin's Logos," 263.

<sup>38</sup>Robert Hayward, *Divine Name and Presence: The Memra* (Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies; Totowa, N.J.: Allanheld, Osmun, 1981) 3.

<sup>39</sup>I shall be defending this argument in a companion piece to this one, tentatively entitled: "The Heresy of Rabbi Akiva: Two Powers in the House of Study."

<sup>40</sup>Hayward, *Memra*, 1. See Vinzenz Hamp, *Der Begriff "Wort" in den aramäischen Bibelübersetzungen: ein exegetischer Beitrag zur Hypostasen-Frage und zur Geschichte der Logos-Spekulationen* (München: Neuer Filser-verlag, 1938). For a good and judicious discussion of the three Aramaic terms in question, see Arnold Maria Goldberg, *Untersuchungen über die Vorstellung von der Shekhinah in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur: Talmud und Midrasch* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1969) 1–12.

den Johannischen Logos ergibt, kann nicht zweifelhaft sein: ist der Ausdruck 'Memra Adonais' ein inhaltsloser, rein formelhafter Ersatz für das Tetragram gewesen. . . .'<sup>41</sup> Here is Raymond Brown representing the standard view: "Targum Onkelos speaks of the *Memra* of Yahweh. This is not a personification, but the use of *Memra* serves as a buffer for divine transcendence."<sup>42</sup>

It seems not to have occurred to any who hold this view that it is fundamentally incoherent and self-contradictory. Surely, this position collapses logically upon itself, for if the *Memra* is just a name that simply enables avoiding asserting that God himself has created, appeared, supported, saved, and thus preserves his absolute transcendence, then who, after all, *did* the actual creating, appearing, supporting, saving? Either God himself, in which case, one has hardly "protected" him from contact with the material world, or there is some other divine entity, in which case, the *Memra* is not just a name. Indeed, as pointed out by Burton Mack, the very purpose for which Sophia/Logos developed within Judaism was precisely to enable "a theology of the transcendence of God."<sup>43</sup> The currently accepted and dominant view ascribes to the use of the *Memra* only the counterfeit coinage of a linguistic simulation of a theology of the transcendence of God, without the theology itself. Rather than assuming that the usage is meaningless, it seems superior on general hermeneutic grounds to assume that it means something. It follows then that the strongest reading of the *Memra* is that it is not a mere name, but an actual divine entity, or mediator.<sup>44</sup>

An additional obstacle in the way of seeing connections between Logos and *Memra* has been in the way that the problem has been posed, namely, as put by

<sup>41</sup>Hermann Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (München: C. H. Beck, 1924) 333. So thoroughly had I been socialized into the traditional "Jewish" view here that I did not perceive any connection between the Logos and the *Memra* until Virginia Burrus sent me to the crucial Edwards, "Justin's Logos."

<sup>42</sup>Brown, *John*, 1:524.

<sup>43</sup>Burton L. Mack, *Logos und Sophia: Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie im Hellenistischen Judentum* (SUNT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973) 6. Similarly, James D. G. Dunn argues that the purpose of Sophia is to impart "God's active concern in creation, revelation and redemption, while at the same time protecting his holy transcendence and wholly otherness" (*Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980] 176).

<sup>44</sup>The argument that the Targums have sometimes "God" and sometimes the "*Memra*" in the same contexts is hardly decisive, since the ambiguity between God and the Logos is to be found wherever Logos theology is to be found, *pace* Martin McNamara, "Logos of the Fourth Gospel and *Memra* of the Palestinian Targum," *ExpTim* 79 (1968) 115. In later Jewish usage, one says "The Name" instead of actually citing any divine name. Although this usage has been compared to the use of the *Memra* in the Targums, they are not at all comparable. The later practice is a simple linguistic substitution to avoid profaning the Holy Name by pronouncing it, which the phrase *Memra H'* obviously does not accomplish. (I am using "H'" to represent the Hebrew *nomen sacrum*.)

Martin McNamara, as an issue regarding whether or not the “targumic expression” is “a true preparation for the rich Johannine doctrine of the Logos.” In that case, “the doctrine as well as the term used by John would have been prepared in the synagogue theology.” As an alternative to the view that John’s doctrine “had been prepared in the synagogue,” a view that had been rejected by all scholars according to McNamara, “many scholars have come to see the preparation for the doctrine of John in the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament, and for the term he uses in the creative word (in Hebrew: *dabar*) of God.”

McNamara himself draws a distinction between the doctrine and the words used to express it: “His teaching on the nature of the Logos John got from the revelation of the New Testament. The source from which he drew the words that express this new doctrine is then the point at issue.”<sup>45</sup> Those of us who are more skeptical about revelation may be more skeptical as well about the notion of an idea without a word that then finds its word elsewhere, indeed from the revelation of a canon that was not to come into existence for centuries. Clearly, the apologetic desire to find absolute uniqueness in this important moment in Christian doctrine and the consequent compliance with a different sort of Jewish apologetic of its own has misdirected the inquiry.<sup>46</sup>

In contrast, after his discovery of the first complete manuscript of the Palestinian Targum,<sup>47</sup> and slightly before McNamara, Alejandro Díez Macho had argued for the close connection of the *Memra* so widely occurring in this text with the Logos of the Fourth Gospel.<sup>48</sup> In all of the Palestinian Aramaic translations of the Bible, the term *Memra*—as a translation of various terms which in the Hebrew either simply mean God or are names of God—is legion and theologically highly significant, because these usages parallel nearly exactly the functions of the Logos, the *deuteros theos* in Logos theology.

We find the *Memra* working as the Logos works in the following ways:

*Creating:* Gen 1:3: “And the *Memra* of H’ said Let there be light and there was Light by his *Memra*.” In all of the following verses, it is the *Memra* that performs all of the creative actions.<sup>49</sup>

*Speaking to humans:* Gen 3:8 ff: “And they heard the voice of the *Memra* of H’ . . . And the *Memra* of H’ called out to the Man.”<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup>All quotes in this and the previous paragraph are from McNamara, “Logos,” 115.

<sup>46</sup>On this point in general, see Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

<sup>47</sup>Alejandro Díez Macho, *Neophyti 1, Targum Palestinense ms. de la Biblioteca Vaticana* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1968).

<sup>48</sup>Alejandro Díez Macho, “El Logos y el Espíritu Santo,” *Atlántida* 1 (1963) 381–96.

<sup>49</sup>Michael L. Klein, ed. and trans., *The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch according to Their Extant Sources* (2 vols.; AnBib; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980) 1:43.

<sup>50</sup>Klein, *Fragment-Targums*, 1:45–46.

*Revealing himself:* Gen 18:1: "And was revealed to him the *Memra* of H'."

*Punishing the wicked:* Gen 19:24 "And the *Memra* of H' rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah."<sup>51</sup>

*Saving:* Exod 17:21: "And the *Memra* of H' was leading them during the day in a pillar of cloud."<sup>52</sup>

*Redeeming:* Deut 32:39: "When the *Memra* of H' shall be revealed to redeem his people."

These examples lead inductively to the conclusion that the *Memra* performs many, if not all, of the functions of the Logos of Christian Logos theology (as well as of Wisdom),<sup>53</sup> and an *a priori* case can be made, therefore, for some kind of connection between these two, after all, etymologically cognate entities in non-rabbinic Judaism.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 1:53.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 1:74. Cf. Philo, *Her.* 205, in which the Logos is identified as this very angel.

<sup>53</sup>Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 152. This vitiates somewhat Hurtado's point that the different functions, "creation, redemption, revelation," are assigned to different quasi-divine figures in "Judaism," while all are assigned to one in "Christianity," thus marking a significant difference (Hurtado, *One God*, 21). Of course, one could argue that the *Memra* is a post-Christian development, not an impossible suggestion, and one that would make the point of continued Jewish/Christian closeness all the more eloquently. While in general I find Hurtado's argument bracing and important, his exclusive reliance on only one criterion, worship, as determining the divine nature of a given intermediary seems to me overly narrow and rigid. There may be no gainsaying his demonstration, I think, that worship of the *incarnate* Logos, is a novum, a "mutation" as he styles it, introduced by Jesus-people, but the *belief* in an intermediary, a *deuteros theos*, was common to them and other Jews. To Hurtado's one-dimensional notion of what constitutes a divine being, contrast Daniel Abrams: "When is an attribute a literary means of describing divine activity, and when is it personified as a hypostatic element, receiving an identity of its own, while nevertheless partaking in the divine ontology? The latter appears to be the case when the physical manifestation of God is not excluded from the divine being" ("The Boundaries of Divine Ontology: The Inclusion and Exclusion of Metatron in the Godhead," *HTR* 87 [1994] 292). On this criterion, as I have indicated, many non-Christian Jews did indeed believe in second divinities or second divine beings.

Moreover, there is powerful evidence that in quite early (but post-Christian) mystical prayer even among rabbinic circles, it was possible to pray to both "The Lord of All" and the "Creator of Bere'shit," without this having, seemingly, any "gnostic" meanings. Idel uses the term "binitarian" for this form of Jewish prayer in its early medieval manifestations and explicitly rejects the terminology of "gnosis" that had appeared in earlier scholarly writings (Moshe Idel, "Prayer in Provencal Kabbalah" [in Hebrew] *Tarbiz* 62 [1993] 269). This form of Jewish prayer may be as early as the late second century, and at the latest is from the fourth-fifth centuries. (For discussion of dating as well as references to earlier literature, see Michael D. Swartz, "Alay Le-Shabbah: a Liturgical Prayer in *Ma'aseh Merkabah*," *JQR* 87 [1986-87] 186 n. 21). Scholem dated the prayer very early (Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* [2d ed.; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965] 27). It is thus at least contemporary with the later targumic texts. It becomes harder and harder to see binitarian worship as the distinguishing feature between "Judaism" and "Christianity." As Idel emphasizes, this binitarian prayer was found in abso-

In the Targumim we can see, or at any rate, construct a picture of how the *Memra* has also come into being in the exegesis of Gen 1:3. Exod 3:12–14 (the theophany of the burning bush) and its targumic expositions are key texts.<sup>54</sup> In the first of these verses, in answer to Moses's apprehension that he will not be sufficient to go to Pharaoh to bring out the Israelites, God answers: "I [אֲנִי] will be with you." According to the Palestinian Targum, preserved in MS Neofiti 1, the Aramaic here reads: "I, My *Memra*, will be with you."<sup>55</sup> The other targumim maintain this interpretation but add the element of the *Memra* as supporter, thus, "And he said: Because my *Memra* will be for your support."<sup>56</sup> The Hebrew here reads that Moses, having asked God his name so that he may say in whose name it is that he comes, receives the famous reply: "And God said to Moses: I am that I am,<sup>57</sup> and he said: Thus shall you say unto them, I am has sent me to you" (Exod 3:14).

lutely central early medieval rabbinic writers, of whom it is almost impossible to imagine that they "invented" a binitarian worship form that they had not received as a tradition. Their binitarian interpretation of the late ancient prayer may be taken, therefore, as highly plausible if not definitive. For another remnant of late ancient Jewish prayer directed to a secondary divine being of one sort or another, see Daniel Abrams, "From Divine Shape to Angelic Being: The Career of Akatriel in Jewish Literature," *JR* (1996) 43–63; and Daniel Abrams, "The Dimensions of the Creator—Contradiction or Paradox?: Corruptions and Accretions to the Manuscript Witnesses," *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 5 (2000) 35–53. Once more, it could be said with hardly any exaggeration that the various attempts in medieval Jewish exegesis to explain these texts could be mapped onto the varieties of late ancient christologies, from docetism to homoianism. On the other hand, the incarnation of the Logos in Jesus' flesh was much more of a "mutation" than was worship of the Logos or Demiurge. What is fascinating is that this very prayer to a binitarian God includes an explicit anti-Jesus-worship moment: "They pray to vanity and emptiness, and bow down to a God who cannot save [=לֹא יוֹשִׁיעַ]." The last three words are, in my opinion, an ironic pun on the name of Jesus, *Soter*. Israel M. Ta-Shma ("The Origin and Place of 'Aleinu le-Shabbear in the Daily Prayerbook: *Seder Ha-Ma'Amadot* and Its Relation to the Conclusion of the Daily Service" [in Hebrew], in *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume* [ed. Barry Walfish; vol. 1; Haifa: University of Haifa Press, 1993] 90) cites a medieval Ashkenazic expanded version of the prayer that explicitly indicates that "they" worship a God who is only "flesh and blood." The insinuation is that the *Logos Asarkos* is kosher for Jewish worship but not the *Logos Ensarkos*!

The question of "Metatron and Jesus" is also treated by Abrams, "Metatron," 316–21.

<sup>54</sup>I am in agreement with the argument of Hayward, *Memra*, 16–20, that this is a key targumic textual nexus for understanding the *Memra*, although I disagree with various points in his interpretation. Hayward, needless to say, is not concerned there with the Johannine parallel.

<sup>55</sup>Díez Macho, *Neophyti 1*, ad loc.

<sup>56</sup>The association of *Memra* with supporting, as well as redeeming and revealing, is almost commonplace in the Targums, as we have seen above.

<sup>57</sup>For reasons of his own, Hayward translates here "I AM THERE," which does not seem warranted or necessary to me.



On this verse the Palestinian Targum<sup>58</sup> translates: "And the *Memra* of H' said to Moses: He who said [אמר] to the world from the beginning, 'Be there,' and it was there, and who is to say [אמר] to it 'Be there,' and it will be there; and he said, Thus shall you say to the Israelites, He has sent me to you."<sup>59</sup> In other words, the declaration "I AM" has been glossed in the Targums by a reference to Genesis 1's "Let there be" and thus to the Word by which God brought the universe into being. In the verse following this one, as we have just seen above, this name for God—"He who said to the world 'Be there'"—has become transformed into a divine being in its own right, the very word that was said, separate from but homoeousios with God: "I, My *Memra*, will be with you: I, My *Memra*, will be a support for you." From here we see how this *Memra*, Logos, is that which is revealed to Moses in the declaration I AM and which provides support for him, redeems the Israelites, and so forth. In the Targum, as in the Logos theology, this word has actually been hypostasized.<sup>60</sup> In other words, this targumic midrash provides us with an actual point of origin for the term *Memra* as derived from an interpretation of Gen 1:3. One could almost say that "I am" is a name for the *Memra* from this targumic text.

The conclusive evidence for the connection of the targumic *Memra* and the Logos of John has been adduced by Martin McNamara himself in the guise of the Palestinian Targumic poetic homily on the "Four Nights." Most immediately relevant here is the "first night," the night of creation:

Four nights are written in the Book of Memories: The first night: when the Lord was revealed above the world to create it. The world was unformed and void and darkness was spread over the surface of the deep; AND THROUGH HIS *MEMRA* THERE WAS LIGHT AND ILLUMINATION, and he called it the first night.<sup>61</sup>

This text appears in various witnesses to the Palestinian Targum, so it cannot be taken as a later "Christianizing" interpolation into the text. McNamara's conclusion that this text represents a cognate to the first verses of the Johannine Prologue, with their association of Logos, the Word, and light, is therefore compelling, although, as we shall see below, the Prologue shows other "midrashic" connections as well: "It is legitimate, then, to presume that the author of the Fourth Gospel heard read in the synagogue that, at the very beginning of time, at the creation of the universe ('the first night'), there was an all-pervading dark-

<sup>58</sup>Both in the MS known as the Fragment Targum and in the Geniza Fragments.

<sup>59</sup>Klein, *Fragment-Targums*, 1:164.

<sup>60</sup>It is fascinating that in the binitarian theology of later medieval Kabbalism, the first "I am" is taken to refer to the Demiurge and the second to Wisdom! (Idel, "Prayer in Provencal Kabbalah," 274–75).

<sup>61</sup>Klein, *Fragment-Targums*, 2:47.

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