

2. Philo's Logos doctrine

The Logos doctrine of Philo – if indeed it can be said that he had a *single* Logos doctrine – is part of his doctrine of God. It was a logical requirement of that doctrine, especially in regard to its emphasis on the transcendence of God. If there had not been Logos doctrines already in existence for his use, Philo would almost certainly have created the concept with its associated vocabulary. The term Logos is used by him very frequently and, partly because the ideas it was used to express are difficult and complex ones, and partly because Philo's own thought is also profound and complex, it is difficult to give a clear and coherent statement of Philo's thought in this area. A chapter on his Logos doctrine could be as long as the one on his doctrine of God. Requirements of space, however, mean that a severe abbreviation of what Philo has to say must take place, with the inevitable distortion and misrepresentation of his ideas that this involves. There are, perhaps, inconsistencies and even contradictions within Philo's thought on the subject of the Logos. It is always, however, difficult for a modern mind to grasp wholly what it is that an ancient writer – especially one who is avidly devoted to both scriptural Judaism and Greek philosophy – had in mind, and one suspects more than once that what looks like an inconsistency or a contradiction does so because of the intellectual and religious viewpoint of the (usually non-Jewish) reader of his works.

The meaning and use of the term Logos. Part of the complexity of the subject of Philo's Logos doctrine is due to the extremely wide range of meanings which the word *logos* may have in Greek. Of these many meanings the one that it definitely should not have – despite the Vulgate's *verbum* and some English translations of the Prologue to John's Gospel – is the meaning 'word'. It is better for the student of Philo, and of the New Testament, to retain the word Logos itself, and always to remember, when *Verbum* or Word (even with capital V or W) is used in translations of John 1, that

something much more than the Latin or English words indicate was in the original author's mind.

The primary meaning of Logos, as it was used in Philo's world and by Philo, is more than, to quote one definition, 'the spiritual Mind of the transcendent God'. Logos means, among other things, the rational thought of mind expressed in utterance or speech. It is something present within the total reality of God himself, within the natural order of the universe, within man himself, but it is primarily with the Logos of God, the Logos with a capital L, that we shall be concerned.

Philo was able to use the Logos concept – and did not have to invent it in order to retain both his belief in God's transcendence and his conviction that God was in touch with his world – because it was present in the thought, for example, of the Stoics. Stoicism, described as a system attractive to Philo because of its ethical teaching, made considerable use of the Logos concept. It did so in its account of the rational law – the word Logos was used to designate this – which holds together and governs the life of natural phenomena. For Philo the Stoic concept needed, of course, to be detached from the pantheism of Stoicism and united with the Jewish conception of divine transcendence. Philo was probably, as has been suggested, looking round for an appropriate term for the divine Mind. The more obvious term, *nous*, was already in use, within Stoicism and elsewhere, for the human mind, so, carrying with it some of its Stoic associations of meaning, but also given new contents, the term Logos came to be used by Philo for the divine Mind. Philo was probably encouraged to use the term and to use it in the way he did by the preparation for its employment in what the Old Testament said about 'the Word of God'. He had only to unite in his thinking the account of creation in Gen. 1 – creation by the 'word' of God – and passages such as Ps. 33: 6, 'The Lord's word made the heavens', or Ps. 147: 18 or Ps. 148: 8 – passages which link the ongoing life of the created order with the 'word' of God. He would no doubt have noticed that the LXX translation of the three psalms mentioned employs the word *logos*, which is also used in Wisd. 9: 1, a verse which affirms that everything was made by God's 'word'. Furthermore, Philo could easily apply to his own philosophical and religious purposes the statements, in Exod. 34 and Deut. 10, that the Word of God was revealed in the Law. He knew also that 'the word of the law' was what came to the prophets (see Isa. 2: 1; Jer. 1: 2 – a verse in which

there is an interesting transition from *rhema* to *logos*; Ezek. 3: 16). Philo was no doubt particularly interested in the statement in Isa. 2: 1 that the 'word' was *seen* by the prophet.

In *Leg. All.* 1.65 Philo states, in his allegorical exposition of Gen. 2: 10–14, that 'River' denotes generic virtue, goodness. This issues forth, he explains, out of Eden, as the Wisdom of God, and this is the Reason (*logos*) of God. Here is a clear statement, such as is found elsewhere in Philo's writings, identifying Wisdom and the Logos, a process no doubt justified in Philo's mind by the fact that Scripture assigns to Wisdom attributes and functions also assigned to the Logos. This happens in the statement about creation in Ps. 104: 24 (cf. Prov. 3: 19; Jer. 10: 12), the statement about the 'wisdom' which comes out of the mouth of God (cf. what is said about Wisdom in Prov. 8: 1ff.). In *Wisd. Sol.* 9–12 Wisdom is equated with the Logos (cf. *Ecclus.* 24: 23ff.). So, there was already within Judaism language about Wisdom which was so close to what was said elsewhere about the Logos as to justify the virtual abandonment of the feminine term, Wisdom (*sophia*), and the adoption instead of the masculine noun, *logos*, much more useful because of its masculinity to both Jewish and Christian writers in the first century AD.

The Logos as mediator. Perhaps the thought that was uppermost in Philo's mind when he used the term Logos was that of mediation. God was never for him a transcendent Being whose thoughts were totally and utterly beyond man's reach. Even if God is transcendent, he is not, for Philo, silent. He speaks and communicates, and for Philo the term Logos denotes the Thought of God expressed in a form that is, at least indirectly, accessible to men and knowable by them. It has been suggested that, by the time Philo wrote, the problem of reconciling the transcendence and the immanence of God had become acute within Judaism. As we have seen earlier (pp. 42–3), Philo had much to say about the transcendence of God. He could even say, having just affirmed the omnipresence of God (though with the usual qualifying statement that 'To be everywhere and nowhere is his property and his alone'), that 'this divine nature which presents itself to us, as visible and comprehensible and everywhere, is in reality invisible, incomprehensible and nowhere' (*Conf. Ling.* 136–8). In *Op. Mund.* 69ff. Philo is discussing the possibilities open to man in view of the fact that, in a sense, his mind is 'a god to him'. He describes how the

human mind lifts its gaze beyond the material world to reach out after 'the intelligible world', and sees therein the surpassingly lovely Ideas. It is then 'seized by a sober intoxication, like those filled with Corybantic frenzy, and is inspired, possessed by a longing far other than theirs and a nobler desire'. It seems to be on its way to 'the Great King himself', but 'amid its longing to see him, pure and untempered rays of concentrated light stream forth like a torrent, so that by its gleams the eye of the understanding is dazzled'. So the sight of 'the Great King himself' is denied to man.

The problem of the sheer transcendence of God created a situation within which, without finding a solution to the problem, Philo could have written nothing about God, since he could have known nothing about him. Whether the solution which Philo adopted did anything more than, as Bultmann suggests, substitute one version of transcendence, in terms of the opposition between matter and spirit, for others is a matter for discussion. But Philo certainly believed he had found a solution, and the student of his writings should read not only the *De Opificio Mundi* passage just referred to, but also, for example, *Quaest. in Ex.* II.51, where Philo, expounding Exod. 25: 7, states: 'For if, O mind, thou dost not prepare thyself of thyself, excising desires, pleasures, griefs, fears, follies, injustices and related evils, and dost [not] change and adapt thyself to the vision of holiness, thou wilt end thy life in blindness, unable to see the intelligible sun. If, however, thou art worthily initiated and canst be consecrated to God and in a certain sense become an animate shrine of the Father, [then] instead of having closed eyes, thou wilt see the First [Cause] and in wakefulness thou wilt cease from the deep sleep in which thou hast been held. Then will appear to thee that manifest One, who causes incorporeal rays to shine for thee, and grants visions of the unambiguous and indescribable things of nature and the abundant sources of other good things. For the beginning and end of happiness is to be able to see God.' But ascent to that ultimate *visio Dei* is possible for men only because God has expressed his inward thought in his Logos, which is, among other things, the sun of the transcendent world of Ideas. For it is the case, as Philo says of the Logos in the *Decal.* 105, that 'nothing so much assures its predominance as that through it is best given the revelation of the Father and Maker of all, for in it, as in a mirror (cf. 1 Cor. 13: 12), the mind has a vision of God'.

The Logos as light. The Logos for Philo is the uttered or expressed Thought of God. Not surprisingly, therefore, just as God is light

and the archetypal source of every other light, so is the Logos. So, 'Wisdom is God's archetypal luminary and the sun is a copy and image of it' (*Migr. Abr.* 40), but also it is 'the supreme Divine Word' who is said to be 'the fountain of Wisdom' (*Fug.* 97). It will not be a surprise to readers of the Prologue to John's Gospel, where it is affirmed that 'the Word was God', to find that Philo, without intending to infringe his Jewish monotheism, and without in fact doing so (though some Jewish writers have accused Philo of introducing a conception utterly alien to it and one which damaged its absolute character), calls the Logos 'the second God', in whose image man has been made (*Quaest. in Gn.* 11.62). He also, incidentally, calls the 'creative (power)' 'God', while the 'royal (power)' is called 'Lord'; or, rather, Philo notes that that is how these two powers are described in Scripture. The description of the Logos as 'the second God' Philo deduces from the statement 'in the image of god he made man' in Gen. 1: 26. In other words, Philo derives his usage here from Scripture. Lest one be tempted to see in Philo's language more than part of the conceptual background to the process of Christian theological development that began with the New Testament and instead see actual anticipations of Athanasian language, it is important also to note that in *Leg. All.* 11.86 Philo states that 'the primal existence is God, and next to him is the Word of God'. The Logos is also here said to be 'the wisdom of God' which he 'marked off highest and chiefest from his powers'. In *Som.* 1.229–30, as we saw in the previous chapter, only when the word *theos* denotes God himself is the article used. The title, *theos*, without the article, is, however, given to 'his chief Word' (see p. 56). In other words, though the Logos is neither God nor a god, it is the primary, secondary layer (as it were) of the effulgence or emanation of the divine light, the Thought of God – and therefore appropriately called either 'the second God' or allowed the title *theos* – expressed, for example, in the rational order of the universe intelligible to the human mind. It is doubtful if we should do justice to Philo's view of the Logos if we described it as an intermediary. To regard the Logos as an intermediary in the proper and fullest sense would perhaps involve a departure from the Jewish view of God as a living God, himself active in the world and history – a step not taken by Philo. It cannot be emphasised enough that the Logos for Philo is God's Logos, the incorporeal Word or Thought of God, not a distinct and separate being having its own divine ontological status, subordinate to God.

Fug. 101 the 'Divine Word' is said to be 'high above' the divine powers, and has not been 'visibly portrayed, being like to no one of the objects of sense'. The Logos is 'the Image of God, chiefest of all Beings intellectually perceived, placed nearest, with no intervening distance, to the Alone truly Existent One'. So close is the relationship between God and his Logos that Philo here calls the latter 'the charioteer of the Powers' while God himself is said to be seated in the chariot 'giving directions to the charioteer for the right wielding of the reins of the Universe'. In his account of the creation of man Philo, following Genesis, states that 'man was made a likeness and imitation of the Word', and that the 'perfect beauty' of man (before the Fall) was due to the fact that 'the Word of God surpasses beauty itself, beauty that is, as it exists in Nature'. Incidentally this means that for Philo the Logos 'is not only adorned with beauty, but is himself in very truth beauty's fairest adornment' (*Op. Mund.* 139). The relationship between the Logos and the powers – after an emphatic statement that 'God is indeed one' – is made clear in *Cher.* 27–8. There Philo says that between the two powers, God's goodness and his sovereignty, there is 'a third which unites them, Reason, for it is through Reason [*logō(i)*] that God is both ruler and good'.

The eternity of the Logos. Connected with what Philo says about the superiority of the Logos is what he says about its eternity. According to *Plant.* 8 and other passages, the Logos is *ho aidios logos* (see *Conf. Ling.* 146; pp. 125–6). The Logos is not, like the Christian Son/Logos, unbegotten. In *Leg. All.* III. 175 Philo states that 'the word of God is above all the world, and is eldest and most all-embracing of created things'. The New Testament student's mind turns at once to John 1: 3, where the evangelist makes a statement, with reference to the Logos, that 'no single thing was created without him'. Philo's statement in the *Leg. All.* III passage seems to involve the idea of the definite inferiority of the Logos to God and to place it, or him, in the category of 'created things', a category which includes many other things besides the Logos. It also seems to represent a quite different viewpoint from that of the author of the Fourth Gospel, who seems, in his Prologue, to be insisting that nothing that has been made came into existence apart from the Logos. It is possible to see how Philo's thought and language influenced early Christian thinkers; impossible, if proper attention is paid to them, to confuse the two.

If it is asked how the Logos can be both eternal and yet not

unbegotten, the answer is quite simply that, though not unbegotten, the Logos will now never cease to be. The Logos, which is between the unbegotten Father on the one hand, and the universe and man on the other, is neither made nor begotten. It is logically dependent on God and cannot be conceived of as self-existent, and it is this that makes Philo use language at times which comes close to affirming the begottenness of the Logos or that the Logos is among the body of created things. But, as the *eikōn* (image) passages show, God's Logos is an expression of his Thought, than which no better one could be available to man.

The term 'only-begotten' (*monogenēs*), used in the Christian creed, is not used by Philo of the Logos, but in so far as what Philo does have to say about the Logos and God is an aid to the understanding of that term (in, for example, John 1: 18), the conclusion might have to be to interpret the word as denoting uniqueness without excluding the idea of dependence on God.

The precise relationship of the Logos to God is not easy to define. The use of the expression the 'first' God (*Leg. All.* III.207), implies the existence of 'the second God' (*Quaest. in Gn.* II.62) and the propriety of applying the term *theos* to the Logos. There is a sense in which the Logos is *theos*, more than *theios* (divine), without being 'God', for the Logos is God's Logos, not God. The Logos does not exhaust the being of God. However, as Philo puts it in *Conf. Ling.* 95-7, those who 'serve the Existent', led by Moses ('the nature beloved of God'), 'shall behold the place which in fact is the Word, where stands God, the never changing, never swerving' and also 'the world of our senses'. Seeing 'the most holy Word' and 'after the Word its most perfect work of all that our senses know, even this world' is what philosophy, as he understands it, is all about. It is interesting to note that Philo defines philosophy here as 'the earnest desire to see these things exactly as they are'. Philosophy, then, involves the *visio Verbi*, the vision of the Logos which is the place occupied by God. By that combination of the intellectualism and mysticism which made up Philo's outlook, it is possible to arrive at the awareness that there is a God, that there is a place in which he stands.

Inevitably, since the Logos is the expression of the Thought of God, is in fact God's Expressed Thought, there is for Philo a very close link between the Logos and the world of Ideas or Forms which he adopted – and adapted – from Plato (see below, p. 111). It is in fact Philo, not Plato himself, who appears to have been the first

to use the phrase *kosmos noētos* (intelligible world) for the Platonic, or rather Mosaic, world of Ideas. The expression *kosmos noētos*, not found at all in Plato, occurs in Philo's *Gig.* 61, where he makes it quite clear that the *kosmos noētos* is the community in totality of the imperishable and incorporeal Ideas. Regarded as a totality, that community or commonwealth is the Logos (see below, p. 135).

In *Som.* 1.186, speaking again of the world which 'only intellect can perceive', Philo states that it was 'framed from the eternal forms in him who was appointed in accordance with Divine bounties'. The 'in him' most probably refers to the Logos, in which case Philo here seems to imply that the world of Ideas is within the Logos rather than being identical and coterminous with it. That the Logos embraces, rather than is to be equated with, the world of Ideas is also suggested by the words of *Conf. Ling.* 172, where Philo states: 'Through these Potencies the incorporeal and intelligible world was framed.' Philo goes on to explain that the *kosmos noētos* is 'a system of invisible ideal forms'.

But because the Ideas are Ideas, the infinite variety of ideal archetypes of the actual world, existing within the divine Logos or Mind, the Logos or Mind of God, Philo often refers to their creation by God (see *Op. Mund.* 16ff.; pp. 131–6); though, as has been noted, Philo avoids the use of the term *nous* for the divine Mind, and uses instead the word *Logos*, almost certainly because he wanted *Logos* reserved for the Mind of God and *nous* to denote, as in Aristotle, the human rational faculty, or mind (see above, p. 104).

It needs to be noted, of course, that the Logos, as the Mind or Reason in which the Ideas exist, acquires a certain independence of God's essence. And it is this, the world of Ideas in its totality, that was the model for the material universe which God has created. Philo's language frequently personifies the Logos in relation to the act of creation, so that the Logos appears as a kind of personal Agent performing the actual work of creating (see *Op. Mund.* 24; pp. 130 and 135). The instrumentality of the Logos in creation is clearly stated in *Spec. Leg.* 1.81: 'And the image of God is the Word through whom the whole universe was framed.' But it would appear wrong to interpret Philo's language about the Logos' role in creation as involving the idea of creation as an operation shared by a partner or co-worker with God. The Logos, it needs to be stressed over and over again – especially for Christian readers of Philo's works – is the Logos of God, God's Logos. It is *eikōn* in

relation to God, *idea* (ideal form) in relation to the material world, but Philo's words in *Som.* 11.45 should be recalled. There Philo states of the material universe that 'when it had no definite character God moulded it into definiteness, and, when he had perfected it, stamped the entire universe with his image and an ideal form, even his own Word'. The subject of the verb *etypōse* (formed), and of the other verbs used of creative process, is God. The Logos here is referred to as if it were an instrument in God's hands rather than an Agent through whom he performed the act of creation.

The Logos as the power of God in the world. At times Philo's Logos is a kind of cosmic power present in the world. It is that which binds all things together and causes them to cohere. This aspect of Philo's Logos doctrine has close affinities with Stoicism and the thought of Heraclitus in particular (see p. 104). As for Paul, it is the Son who is 'the image of the invisible God' in whom 'all things consist' (or cohere: Col. 1: 15-17), so Philo, using similar language, can speak of the Logos as the unbreakable bond (*desmos*) which holds the universe together in a coherent, unified whole. The Logos is also described as 'the ruler and steersman of all' (*Cher.* 36). Philo appears to mean by this and other passages that there is a rational plan which governs the life of the universe, and to be affirming that the Logos is 'simply the instrument through which the divine purpose is carried out'. God, he says, 'directs the affairs of men through the operation of that rational law which is bound up in the very constitution of the world' (Drummond 1888: 11.200). In *Sacr AC* 51 Philo refers to 'the right reason which is our pilot and guide', a reference to the rule of 'right reason' in human life; though it is certainly the case for Philo that the 'right reason' (*orthos logos*) in man is a reflection of the divine Logos at work in the universe. Every participation within human experience in good or ill is due to the 'armed angel, the reason of God [*theou logon*]' (*Cher.* 35). The 'house of God' (Gen. 28: 17) is said to be the Logos, since it is not the visible world but the one that is 'withdrawn from sight, and apprehended only by soul as soul', i.e., that is purely spiritual or rational. He also adds that the Logos both is 'antecedent to all that has come into existence' and is 'the Word, which the Helmsman of the Universe grasps as a rudder to guide all things on their course'. To complete the important set of statements Philo makes in this passage about the Logos, he also says

that God employed the Logos 'as his instrument, that the fabric of his handiwork might be without reproach' 'when he was fashioning the world' (*Migr. Abr.* 5–6). Philo uses the idea of the creation of the world by God using his Logos as his instrument (*organon*) to express his belief that the universe – except for the physical body and the irrational element in man – is a reflection of the ideal pattern in God's mind. That such an interpretation of Philo's use of the word 'instrument' is justified is based on the evidence of the description of the 'form' as 'instrument' and upon the parable of creation in, for example, *Op. Mund.* 16–20 (see pp. 131–3).

The statements of *Migr. Abr.* 6 and *Op. Mund.* 16–20 are in strict parallelism. The Logos, as Philo understood it, was God's 'instrument' (*organon*) in the sense that it was God's 'pattern' (*paradeigma*), just as one may say that perhaps the most important instrument possessed by a sculptor is not the chisel in his hand, but the idea of what he is about to carve that exists in his mind. There is no need, in the case of what Philo says about the cosmological agency or instrumentality of the Logos, to see evidence of belief in a being apart from God, though one may perhaps properly refer to an aspect of, or an element within, the totality of the Godhead. Having said that, however, it must be remembered that there are places, as we have seen, in which it appears that Philo speaks of the Logos as a created, or begotten, intermediary divine Being.

In *Rer. Div. Her.* 206 (see pp. 109–10) Philo describes the Logos as 'being neither uncreated as God, nor yet created as human beings'. This seems to be contradicted by the statements in *Leg. All.* III. 175 and *Migr. Abr.* 6. In the former Philo states that the Logos is above all the world and is 'eldest and most all-embracing of created things'. In the latter it is said that the Logos is 'antecedent to all that has come into existence'. In *Conf. Ling.* 41 the Logos is said to be 'imperishable' compared with God, who is 'eternal', and, later in the same work (*ibid.* 147), the Logos is described as 'the eldest-born image of God'. In *Decal.* 134 the adjective *aidios* (eternal) is used of the Logos.

The Logos and man. An important aspect of what Philo says about the Logos concerns man's relationship with it. In *Rer. Div. Her.* 119 the Logos is called, among other things, the *spermatikos*, the divine Logos, which 'implants its seed' within men. All men, therefore, participate to some extent in the life of the Logos. 'Man was made a

likeness and imitation of the Word, when the Divine Breath was breathed into his face' (*Op. Mund.* 139; cf. *ibid.* 146: 'Every man, in respect of his mind, is allied to the divine Reason, having come into being as a copy or fragment or ray of that blessed nature'). All men are, in one sense at least, God's sons, as the Logos can be called God's Son. This is connected with Philo's understanding, based on the Genesis narrative, of man as created in the image of God, for the Logos is, as we have seen, God's *eikōn*. However, men become sons in the fullest sense only by fellowship with the Logos, which means living the life of reason (and abandoning the life of the flesh, the body, since the body is in effect a tomb for the human soul: see *Spec. Leg.* iv.188). It is the Logos that brings man to repentance and salvation by entering the soul and making man aware of his sins and bidding them be cleared out in order that the Logos might be able to perform the necessary work of healing (*Deus Imm.* 134–5; cf. *Rer. Div. Her.* 63–4). According to *Leg. All.* iii.173, the Logos is the heavenly bread (Philo is commenting on Exod. 16: 15) which God supplies to feed men (it is noticeable in this passage how Philo passes from the LXX's *rhēma* to the term *logos* – a point, together with many others, not to be overlooked in the exegesis of, for example, Heb. 11: 3). The mysterious bread of heaven referred to in Exodus is 'the Divine Word, from which all kinds of instruction and wisdom flow in perpetual stream'. He calls the Logos 'the heavenly nourishment' which is the 'ethereal wisdom' poured upon minds that delight in contemplation. The effects of feeding upon the Logos are ethical, as well as mystical and intellectual, for, as Philo goes on, 'This Divine ordinance fills the soul that has vision alike with light and sweetness, flashing forth the radiancy of truth and with the honied grace of persuasion imparting sweetness to those who hunger and thirst after nobility of character' (*Fug.* 137–9). This passage reinforces what is said elsewhere in Philo's works to emphasise the practical and active aspect of the life of the Jew who shared in Philo's mystical and intellectual form of Judaism. In *Congr.* 70 Philo stresses the importance of deeds and actions, this being only one of the many passages in which the ethical character of Philonic Judaism is exhibited.

And, of course, as we have already seen, men who desire to know God by seeing him are not permitted such a vision, but instead are allowed to see the *Imago Dei*, 'the most holy Word' (*Conf. Ling.* 97). In another passage (*Migr. Abr.* 173–5), Philo also states that as long as the man who 'follows God . . . falls short of

perfection' he possesses as his Leader 'the Divine Word'. When such a man 'has arrived at full knowledge', he will run as fast as his Leader, and they will both become 'attendants on the All-leading God'. Men, who are akin to the divine Logos by virtue of their rationality, as the passages from the *De Opificio Mundi* quoted above show, will at least behold the Logos and even gaze on the Existent. More seems to be involved here, in the ultimate beatific vision, than in passages such as *Op. Mund.* 31, where Philo allows no more than that the 'invisible light perceptible only by mind has come into being, as an image of the Divine Word who brought it within our ken'.

The Logos and Moses. A special connection exists for Philo between the Logos and Moses, whose life he wrote (see above, pp. 56–9). It has been said that this is so, and indeed that Moses is a type of the Logos, because, among other things, Moses reports the words of the Lord. Alongside the eulogistic statements made about Moses in Philo's *De Vita Mosis* is the statement in *Gig.* 47 that 'the divine spirit of wisdom' abode a long time with 'Moses the wise'. Like the Logos, Moses is also described as a 'high priest' (*Rer. Div. Her.* 182; cf. *Ebr.* 126). Moses, as a priest, was given a 'blessing which nothing in the world can surpass' (*Vit. Mos.* II.67). So lofty is the estimate of Moses found in Philo's works that one is led to ask if Philo thought of him as actually divine, as an incarnation of the Logos, or as being a Logophany. Philo himself raises the question of Moses' divinity: 'Was not the joy of his partnership with the Father and Maker of all magnified also by the honour of being deemed worthy to bear the same title? For he was named god [*theos*] and king of the whole nation, and entered, we are told, into the darkness where God [*ho theos*] was' (*Vit. Mos.* I.158). Here God himself is designated *ho theos*, while Moses was named (*ōnomasthē*: i.e. bore the name) *theos*. This distinction, in the case of Moses and God, between the application of *theos* with and without the article, is similar to that which Philo says applies, as we have seen already (p. 107), in the case of God and his Logos. In *Som.* II.189 the name God is said to be 'a prerogative assigned to the chief prophet, Moses'. Philo also says that as *theos* Moses was 'not a man' (*oude anthrōpos*), but 'one contiguous with both extremes' (cf. *Rer. Div. Her.* 84).

Philo often speaks of Moses as divinely inspired, as in *Quaest. in Ex.* II.29, where his words include the statement that 'he who is

resolved into the nature of unity, is said to come near God in a kind of family relation, for having given up and left behind all mortal kinds, he is changed into the divine, so that such men become kin to God and truly divine'.

Not surprisingly, there is a close association in Philo's thinking between Moses and the divine Logos. In *Mut. Nom.* 110ff., Philo interprets the 'Shepherd' of Ps. 23: 1 as 'the divine word' which guides men away from things material and earthly. Since it is Moses who rescues mankind from the bondage of matter, the clear implication is that, in a real sense, Moses is (or is an expression or manifestation of) the Logos. Philo does in fact call Moses the Logos, the 'Law-giving Word' (*Migr. Abr.* 23). He can even say what the New Testament writers say of the Son (e.g., John 1: 10) that God committed to Moses the entire cosmos as a possession fit for God's heir (*Vit. Mos.* 1.155). One distinguished Philonist has decided that in the case of *Mut. Nom.* 110–11, Moses is being described as 'the agent, if not the exact equivalent of the Saving Logos'. According to *Congr.* 170 Moses is 'the prophet-word' (*ho prophētēs logos*). It has also been concluded that the prayer in *Som.* 1.164ff. is a prayer, addressed to Moses as 'Sacred Guide', similar to those addressed by Christian mystics to Christ.

Strictly speaking, for Philo Moses was a man inspired by or inhabited by the Spirit of God or the Logos, but in some passages – for example, *Sacr. AC* 8–10 – Moses is one of those whom God advanced higher than others and 'stationed . . . beside himself'. So little part did his physical body play in his life, Philo tells us, that nothing is said in Scripture about his separation from it. If Moses was an incarnation, the process of occupation of a human life by the divine Logos went so far as to result in an almost total exclusion of the human flesh of Moses. However, though the 'bodily region' was placed in a position of subjection within Moses' life, it was by 'that Word by which also the whole universe was formed'. The result of such interaction between body and Logos was that in his case, according to Scripture, 'no man knows his grave' (Deut. 34: 6) (*Sacr. AC* 10). Philo adds the question 'who has powers such that he could perceive the passing of a perfect soul to him that "IS"?' The soul of such a person at such a moment is, says Philo, 'filled with the spirit of God' (the Greek in fact being *epitheiazousan* – called upon as god).

One particular respect in which Moses and the Logos are alike in their unlikeness to God himself is that, contrasted with God, who is

nameless, Moses, like the Logos, is many-named. The Logos is said to be the possessor of many names (*poluōnomon*: *Conf. Ling.* 146; see p. 124; so also in *Mut. Nom.* 125). This possession of many names is a characteristic of the Logos who is, for Philo, *theos*. Moses too is described as a 'truly God-inspired soul' and as being, because of his wisdom, *theos* (*ibid.* 128). Philo was at times forced to face precisely the same difficulties as confronted the early Christian theologians. He was a devout Jewish monotheist, and yet he was forced into contradictions of that absolute monotheism, especially in what he said about Moses. Even the lover of the divine becomes, according to *Omn. Prob. Lib.* 43–4, 'a god', though only 'a god to men' and not to the whole of the natural order. Moses, Philo argues, was 'not deemed worthy of divine rank in his own right', yet because 'he had God for a friend' he did possess 'absolute felicity'. It has been suggested that Philo did at times think of Moses as God's substitute in his relationships with men. Therefore, a passage in the *De Virtutibus* implies that, as a 'divine man', he was sinless. What he says is that absolutely not to sin is a property of God alone, or perhaps of a divine man (*ibid.* 177; see p. 45). When Philo goes on to say that Moses, earlier described as 'most holy Moses, who was a lover of virtue and goodness', recalled his fellow-Jews to monotheism (*monarchia*) instead of polytheism (*poluarchia*), it is clear that any beliefs he held about the divinity of Moses were held together with an unswerving belief in the unique and absolute sovereignty of God.

The question that has been raised of the possibility of an incarnation of the Logos within the human life-history of Moses raises also the question of whether or not the Logos of Philo was personal. Philo certainly speaks of the Logos in personal terms, as, for example, the Son of God (*Conf. Ling.* 146; see pp. 125–6). The same implication seems to lie behind such titles as a 'high-priest' in *Som.* 1.215, but it is doubtful if personification proceeds to the point of personalisation. The Logos of Philo is never, as it was later in Christian theology, a 'person' within the one Godhead. There may well have been, to Philo's mind, some kind of incarnation of the divine Logos within the life-history of the human Moses – thus making Moses a divine-human being – but there is nothing in that Philonic conception that is precisely the same as the Christian concept of the Incarnation within a particular human life (that of Jesus of Nazareth), of the Person within a Triune Deity designated the Son or Logos. Philo did perhaps think in terms of the

deification of Moses, but not of an incarnation within Moses' life of the divine Logos. Because of the diametrically opposed qualities of flesh and spirit, the deification process involved the gradual and finally total eradication of flesh from the life of Moses. That is nearer to the Docetic Christologies of early – and modern – Christianity, to that seen by some in John's Gospel, than to the doctrine of the Incarnation subscribed to, in theory at least, by orthodox Christianity. Philo states that 'nothing mortal can be made in the likeness of the most high One and Father of the universe but [only] in that of the second God, who is his Logos' (*Quaest. in Gn.* II.62). Christianity, however, made the claim that a particular mortal man, Jesus the Jew, was made in the likeness of the High One and Father. It also claims that the Logos made man was the likeness of God within the life of a man, not merely of a 'second God' but of a second Person within the one God. Unless in *Praem. Poen.* 165, one of the rare passages of Philonic eschatology, the 'vision divine and superhuman' is, as it could be, a reference to the Logos in a Messianic role, there is no connection in Philo's thought between the Logos and the Messiah of Judaism. For John the Logos made flesh is the Son, as in Philo, and the agent of creation, but he is also the Son of God, the Messiah. Philo makes no mention of the Jewish Messiah and, therefore, no suggestion that the Logos became incarnate and was the Messiah. When Paul came to write 1 Corinthians he interpreted the 'spiritual rock' which followed the Israelites at the time of Exodus as Christ: 'and the rock was Christ' (1 Cor. 10: 4). When Philo described the incident of the Burning Bush he said that in the midst of the flame was 'a form of the fairest beauty' which was 'an image supremely divine in appearance, refulgent with a light brighter than the light of fire' (*Vit. Mos.* I.66). It might be supposed, he says, that such an image was an image of him that IS; but he prefers to say that it was an angel or herald, using visible events, the burning of a weak bramble bush, to offer hope to the persecuted. Describing the Exodus, he alludes to the cloud which went behind the Israelites to guide them, stating that within it was 'the vision of the Godhead flashing rays of fire' (*Vit. Mos.* II.254). The Burning Bush passage seems to require no reference to the Messiah, or even perhaps to the Logos, though there is reference to an angelic image.

Philo's ideas on the subject of the Logos are extremely interesting and important, as part of the history of Logos thinking in general and of the development of Jewish Logos thinking in

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Philo's ideas on the subject of the Logos are extremely interesting and important, as part of the history of Logos thinking in general and of the development of Jewish Logos thinking in

particular. They illustrate what can happen when a devout Jew with philosophical interests and expertise seeks to give expression to his essentially Jewish faith by using Greek philosophical concepts and the Logos concept in particular. Philo's works are an enormously important part of the background to the New Testament and need therefore to be studied carefully by all New Testament students and students of the later development of the Christian Logos doctrine. His Logos doctrine shows how it is possible for a monotheist to embrace the belief in a Logos, a divine Logos, without modifying his doctrine of God into one involving a Godhead of more than one Person. It also shows how a Jew, in the New Testament era, could speak of an association between the Logos and a particular man in a way that at times sounds like incarnational language and at other times maintains absolutely the separate identity of the Logos and the particular man in question. But it is perhaps wise, when reading Philo's works as part of the background, for example, to John's Gospel, not to be misled into attributing to Philo Judaeus, Philo the Jew, ideas which became part of the development of Logos thinking only in the minds of some of the writers who contributed to the Christian New Testament. Even Philo's Logos doctrine, however interesting to the student of Christian literature, is part of the history of Jewish thinking.