THE MEANING OF LOGOS IN JOHN 1.1-18: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

BY

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ABSTRACT

The title of this dissertation is the Meaning of *logos* in John 1.1-18: A linguistic Analysis. This study was motivated by the various meanings attached to the word *logos* and how certain meanings affect the way Christology in general is understood. The challenge of meaning is also seen in the rendering of the word in receptor languages. In addition, the same meaning chosen determines how the book of John is understood. As a result, it became imperative that we study the meaning of *logos* in John's prologue. In order to achieve this endeavour, we employed linguistic analysis as a method. Linguistic analysis looks at, among other things, semantics, morphology, phonology, syntax and lexicology. We found out that the word *logos* had a wide range of meaning prior to the writing of the prologue of the Gospel of John. These include *logos* as word, a rational principle and mediator. To these, John added the nuance of a divine person, in his effort to express his belief in the identity, incarnation and work of Jesus (1.17). The findings of this research have implications in the way the word *logos* is translated into receptor languages. We concluded that, the rendering of *logos* as "Word" in English or "Shoko" in Shona does not adequately capture the nuances of *logos* in the prologue of the Gospel of John. The results of this study also noted other implications regarding the divinity and mission of Jesus.

APPROVAL

This dissertation has been submitted for examination with my authority as a University Supervisor

Signed: ………………………………… Date: ……………………………………………

Rev. Thomas M. Munengwa

DECLARATION

I, hereby Declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted for any degree in any other University

Signed: …………………………………… Date: ………………………………….

Mathew Muchingami

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to students at Mutare School of Preaching, both past and present, who have passed or are passing through my hands. May this dissertation be a motivation to you to continue broadening your academic and spiritual horizon.

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LIST OF ABREVIATIONS

ASV   American Standard Version

ESV   English Standard Version

KJV   King James Version

LXX   Septuagint

NASB   New American Standard Bible

NEB   New English Bible

NIV   New International Version

NKJV   New King James Version

NRSV   New Revised Standard Version

NWT   New World Translation

RSV   Revised Standard Version

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Words are important both in the shaping of a language and communication of ideas and concepts. In the case where documents are written down, especially those of antiquity, a thorough study of the language used must be done to understand and comprehend the contents. To understand such literature, a linguistic study becomes vital. Christian documents written in the first Century are also not an exception. Efforts and interest have been increasing among Biblical scholars in their attempt to understand the meaning of such documents. In the turn of the last century, the study of linguistics was declared an open field in Biblical studies because less attention has been paid to the language within Biblical texts.[1] Whilst more effort has been put on the epistles, "The language of the gospels and its interpretation as language are taken for granted, in spite of the profusion of literature on the subject, even within the theological realm."[2]

Words are an integral part in any language and in the communication of ideas. The New Testament contains certain words having significance in theology and the field of Biblical studies. Writers of the New Testament documents used words which were

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[1] See Richard, J. Erickson, "Linguistics and Biblical Language: A Wide Open Field," in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 26/3 (September 1983) 257.
[2] Ibid., 261.

common during their day and adapted them in their attempt to communicate important Christian teachings to their audiences.

"Words have a history and some of them are obscure to today's readers."[3] Since this is a fact, such a history becomes critical in an attempt to understand the meaning and usage of words. Because such words did not exist in isolation of their setting, a thorough study of such words becomes vital so as to understand and appreciate the meanings attached to them and those intended by the authors of the documents. This study includes translations that we make of these words into other languages.

One of these words is *logos*. Whilst it has been used elsewhere in the New Testament, its usage by John brought a whole new dimension to Theology and Christology. Just as each word and document is studied from a historical point of view, John and his "*logos*" are not an exception. The prologue of the Gospel, in which the *logos* is dominant, provides a great and highly developed theological summary of the Gospel according to John.[4] Removing the word from the prologue significantly changes the message of the whole Gospel.

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[3] See Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Ministers and Students* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001) 199.
[4] The word appears 331 times in the New Testament. However, it appears in John 1.1-18 only four times. See B. D Alexander, "Word" in G. W. Bromley (ed.) *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia,* vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1979) 1101-1106 at 1102.

It is generally accepted that, "All words have a past and this past affects their behaviour, even if their background never comes to the foreground. In fact all words have a past, a present and a future."[5] Due the movement of time, the possibility of words changing meaning is possible. This has to be noted. When a study is to be carried out, an exegete bears in mind that words are inflected with memories of the past.[6] The word *logos* does not exist in isolation in the text. Several words surround it and their study will eventually help understand the meaning intended by John. Therefore, a study of the *logos* as employed by Greek philosophers, Jewish thinkers and John himself is important and is to be carried out.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There have been various attempts to study and understand the meaning of *logos* in the Bible and particularly in John. A closer look at the prologue shows a careful use of words loaded with meaning such that a linguistic analysis becomes a prerequisite for understanding this text. Furthermore, this word is surrounded by evidences of usage and speculation prior to John and much effort needs to be made in studying its background usage and subsequent use by John. This attempt aids in finding possible influences on Johannine thought. This study, therefore, is a quest to understand the meaning of *logos* in John 1.1-18.

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[5] Peter, J. Leithart, *Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009) 93.
[6] Ibid., 93.

1.3 Aim of Study

- To establish the meaning and use of *logos* both before and in the prologue of John, and the subsequent implications on translation into receptor languages.

1.4 Objectives

To achieve the above aims, the researcher will pursue the following objectives;

- Examine what linguistic analysis is and its role in the quest for meaning.

- Examine the background of *logos* within the Hellenistic and Jewish thought.

- Employ various linguistic tools in an attempt to understand the meaning of *logos* as used in the gospel of John.[7]

- Assess contemporary implications to the study.

1.5 Research Questions

- What constitutes linguistic analysis and its values to the study of texts?

- What were the meanings attached to the word *logos* in the Hellenistic and Jewish thought?

- What was John communicating to his readers through the employment of the word *logos*?

- What are the contemporary implications to this this study.

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[7] Some of the tools in linguistic analysis include phonology, morphology, syntax (formation of sentences), semantics (relationship structures of meaning), structuralism, discourse analysis, lexicology and internal analysis.

1.6 Significance of Study

This study has great value to the church, pastors and academics. It is aimed at aiding in the understanding of the word *logos* within the pericope in question. The study contributes in a special way to the on-going debate on Christology. Whilst a lot has been written with regard to this prologue, the analysis done in this study helps students of the Bible to carry further studies on this and other texts of interest.

This study attempts to clarify the text in question within the process of trying to find the meaning of *logos*. It highlights the challenges of translating the term *logos* into receptor language. In the process, suggestions are given to mitigate this challenge.

1.7 Literature Review

Literature review is, "The process of searching, systematically compiling, assessing and interrogating previous literature in order to inform or demonstrate its relationship with any current research."[8] This study reviews existing literature on the subject in question with the aim of showing its value to this study and the contributions so far made. This includes literature addressing issues of meaning of words such as M. Vincent (1987), G. Kittel (1967), R. Ritt (1981) and Cleon Rogers III and Cleon Rogers Jr. (1998). The study shall also review literature covering background issues. This includes Larry Deason (1984), George Murray (1982), Leon Morris (1995), K. Funk, Seok-il Yoon (2008), D. H. Johnson (1992) and B. D Alexander (1979). Literature covering aspects of

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[8] Regis Chireshe and Alfred H. Makura, "Review of Related Literature",in S. Modesto Tichapondwa (ed.) *Preparing Your Dissertation at a Distance: A Research Guide* (Harare: Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, 2013) 188.

methodology shall also be reviewed and these include John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay (1982), Michael Gorman (2001), David, Allan Black (1994) and Gordon D. Fee (1983). Whilst some of the literature specifically fits in the group assigned to it, there is a tendency to overlap especially to literature covering aspects of meaning and those dealing with background issues.

1.7.1 Literature Covering Issues of Meaning

A thorough study of a word is critical in understanding that which was being communicated by John and *logos* is one of the words. G. Kittel (1967), Harold K. Moulton (1978), Barbara and Timothy Friberg (1981), R. Ritt (1981), M. Vincent (1987), Spiros Zodhiates (1992), Cleon Rogers III and Cleon Rogers Jr (1998) and Stephen Renn (2005) are some scholars who have looked at the meaning of the word *logos*. The insights of these scholars are important in this study. All these scholars are in agreement that the word goes beyond the simple meaning of "word" in translation. G. Kittel, Harold Moulton and M. Vincent trace the root of *logos* and both are in agreement that the word comes from the word *lego* which means "I say." In fact Vincent states that "*Logos* is from the root *leg*, appearing in *lego,* the primitive meaning of which is *to lay:* then, *to pick out, gather, pick up:* hence to gather or put *words* together, and so, *to speak*. Hence *logos* is, first of all, a *collecting* or *collection* both of things in the mind, and of words by which they are expressed."[9]

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[9] Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 2 (New York: Scribners, 1887) 25.

Beyond the root word, a number of scholars have tried to highlight their understanding of the word. Spiros Zodiates viewed *logos* as, "The Utterance of human language which can be both spoken and unspoken. However, if unspoken it will be having reference to a thought in the mind."[10] Cleon Rogers III and Cleon Rogers looked at the word as it appears in the first verse and builds a case on its appearance with the presence of an article. They highlighted that, "The presence of the article before the word indicates par-excellence meaning that Jesus became the communicator par-excellence."[11] Therefore, Jesus is seen as the revealer and communicator of that which proceeds from God.

1.7.2 Literature Covering Background Issues

Much effort has been put in tracing the meaning of the word from its historical usage and understanding. Several authors and commentators have also toured the same line of thought. A few of these include Larry Deason (1984), George Murray, Leon Morris (1996), K. Funk (1995), Edwin, D. Freed (1988), Seok-il Yoon (2008), D. H. Johnson (1992) and B. D Alexander (1979). Much of their work looks at the background of *logos*. It is noted that, "Background studies have always been taken as important for interpreting Johannine material."[12] This is certainly true of all New Testament documents. However, determining the extent of influence with regard to the use of *logos* remains speculative.

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[10] Spiros, Zodiates, *The Complete Word Study New Testament: Bringing the Original to Life* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1992) 918.

[11] Cleon, L. Rogers, Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the New Testament*, 175.

[12] Leon, Morris, "The Gospel According to John" in Gordon D. Fee (ed.) *The New International Commentary on the New Testament,* rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: William, B. Erdmanns Publishing Company, 1995) 55.

Most of these scholars agree that the term was first made use of among Greek philosophers. A trace of such usage is important in an attempt to understand possible influences on John. Larry Deason and D.H Johnson traced the origin of *logos* to Heraclitus of Ephesus (c.535-475 BCE) and to Parmenides, Plato and to the Stoics. These scholars quoted a number of these philosophers and their contributions and views of the *logos*. D. H. Johnson while writing about the *Logos* specifies that, "By 500B.C, Greek philosophers began to adapt the word and use it to signify that which gives shape, form or life to the material universe."[13] Such speculation started the long history of the word. The historical insights that are given in this article are critically important to the research in question. The philosophers were, however, not always in agreement with regard to these views. Larry Deason in his work notes differences with Heraclitus's predecessors, notably Parmenides, who saw reality as unchanging while Heraclitus emphasized the ceaseless movement of nature. To him, "Fire, *logos* and God were fundamentally the same."[14] These views mentioned by Johnson and Deason were also noted by Seok-il Yoon[15] and B.D Alexander.[16] According to this view, a person cannot talk of one of these without talking about or alluding to the other.

Seok-il Yoon wrote concerning Plato (428-327 BCE). He highlighted that, "Plato thought ideas exist in their own sphere and the soul existed before its union with the

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[13] D. H. Johnson, "*logos"* in Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (eds.) *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1992) 481-484 at 482.

[14] Larry Deason, *That You May Have life: An In-depth Study of the Gospel of John* (Lady Lake: Life Communications, 1984) 38

[15] See Seok-il, Yoon, *The Meaning of the Logos in John 1.1-18* (Lynchburg: Liberty University, 2008) 12.

[16] See B. D. Alexander, "Word" in G. W. Bromiley (ed.) *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,* 1102.

body in a transcendental realm."[17] Plato, thus, "Considered *logos* as the basic fact in all life, because he believed there was a pre-existent something between the *logos* of the thinking soul and the *logos* of things."[18] Reference could have been to "reason" as that which was pre-existent. Plato had his ideas which could be taken as models through which creation is fashioned.

Some of these scholars such as K. Funk (1996), Leon Morris (1995) and D. Johnson (1992) are in agreement that the Stoics had a much more developed theory about the *logos* than the other philosophers. In fact they had much more to say than the other philosophers. K. Funk shows that the Stoics preferred to call *logos* the seminal *logos*. He pointed out that the Stoics, "Described *logos* as a universal, underlying principle, through which all things come to pass and in which all things share."[19] To the Stoics, "It was through this seminal *logos* that all things came to be, by which all things were ordered, and to which all things shall return."[20] The stoics saw the origin of all things as coming from this *logos*.

George Murray gave added to the views above. He posited that the answer should come from the type of audience John was writing to. He stated that, "Since the Gospel was written in Greek to Greek speaking recipients, it is also imperative to accept John in that context. The Hellenistic understanding of *logos* should not be totally discounted by

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[17] Seok-il, Yoon, *The Meaning of the Logos in John 1.1-18,* 12
[18] Ibid., 13.
[19] K. Funk, *Concerning the Logos*, 29 June 1996.
http://web.engr.oregonstate.edu/~funkk/Personal/logos.html. 25 April 2014. 1 (retrieved 24 June 2014).
[20] Ibid., 1.

those who wish to understand John's meaning."[21] His suggestions, whilst plausible, seem rather overblown. These contexts are important but they are not the only avenue of getting meaning.

On the other hand, Jewish influences were also possible. The Jewish understanding of *logos* cannot be fully explored without looking at Philo together with the Old Testament canon and Jewish Targums. Some scholars cited earlier such as G. Kittel, Rodgers and Rodgers and Deason showed a tendency of favouring this Jewish influence. Larry Deason though touring the same line of thought heavily discounted any possible influence from the Hellenistic thought whilst favouring this Jewish one.[22] George Murray who earlier had shown a tendency of favouring meaning from a Hellenistic context went to a great a length looking at Philo (c20BC-AD50) whom he regards as, "The supreme example of a Jew seeking to understand his faith in the light of Hellenistic culture and to explain it to the Gentile world."[23] He sees Philo's goal as to make Judaism understandable to those familiar with Greek Philosophy. George Murray concluded that Philo borrowed some of his assertions from the Stoics especially *logos* as a principle of reality. "He interpreted the concept in the light of God the creator and it being a medium of creation and governance of the world and revelation of God."[24] The influence that Philo had is then taken to increase Murray's earlier view of the Hellenistic influence at the expense of the Jewish one.

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[21] George, R. Beasley-Murray, "John" in David A. Habbard *et al* (eds.) *Word Biblical Commentaries*, vol. 36 (Waco: Word Book Publishers, 1982) liv.
[22] Larry Deason, *That You May Have life: An In-depth Study of the Gospel of John, 40.*
[23] Ibid., liv.
[24] Ibid., liv.

Following the same Jewish background, G. Kittel links *logos* with the Torah. He stated that, "In the Rabbinic tradition, seven things which include the Torah were preexistent and this Torah was a companion of God such that it lay on God's bosom while God sat on the throne of glory."[25] John's thoughts are then said to have been influenced by these earlier traditions among the Jews. To Kittel then, the Torah and *logos* are portrayed as the same. Besides these traditions, Jewish Targums (popular interpretations and paraphrases of the Old Testament in Aramaic) had something to say about *logos*. They contain several teachings about it. Some of these are noted by B. D Alexander. In his article on *logos,* he points out that, "The three doctrines of the Word, the Angel and Wisdom are introduced as mediating factors between God and the world. The word bridges the chasm between divine and human and it proceeds from God."[26] In his assessment the *logos* comes from God and his point is indicative of a scenario where there was a need for a mediator between God and humans. This mediator is the *logos*.

The speculations made by both Greeks and Jewish thinkers as given by scholars above seem to have been referring to something inanimate. Leon Morris, however, concludes that, "Within both Greeks and Jewish speculators, the word might be thought of as remaining within a person, when it denoted thought or reason."[27] To him, the word refers to a person. What can be build up from all these views is that the issue of *logos*

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[25] G. Kittel, "*lego*" in G. Kittel (ed.) *Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words*, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967) 69-136 at 135.
[26] Alexander, B. D. "Word" in G. W. Bromley (ed.) *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,* 1102.
[27] Leon, Morris, "The Gospel According to John" in Gordon D. Fee (ed.) *The New International Commentary on the New Testament,* rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: William, B. Erdmanns Publishing Company, 1995) 100.

was a prevailing aspect among both Greek and Jewish philosophers. Therefore, he points out that when John used the term, "He knew that it will be widely recognized among the Greeks. He could not have used it without arousing in the minds of those who used the Greek language thoughts of something supremely great in the universe."[28] This is the same reasoning that George Murray had portrayed in his work.[29] What is true with the contributions so far made is a tendency of largely finding the meaning of *logos* among these speculations.

These insights on the background to the study made by these scholars are of necessity in trying to find the meaning of *logos*. Whilst the insights of these scholars shall prove to be useful, this study shall take a different approach. With such scholars as George Murray, Leon Morris, Larry Deason, B. D. Alexander, Seok-il Yoon and others emphasizing on these background issues of *logos*, much still needs to be done, that is to look at the language that John employed. While Seok-il Yoon in particular made great contributions by looking at the Jewish and Hellenistic backgrounds, a linguistic analysis of the passage is critical.[30] Studying Biblical texts linguistically has become important in Biblical studies because, to this extend, less attention has been paid to the language

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[28] Ibid., 103.
[29] George, R. Beasley-Murray, "John" in David A. Habbard *et al* (eds.) *Word Biblical Commentaries,* liv-lv.
[30] This study and that of Yoon is different in terms of title, structure, methodology, findings and implications.

within Biblical texts.[31] The language employed in a text, therefore, need to be studied in the quest for meaning.

1.7.3 Literature Informing the Adopted Methodology

As highlighted earlier, the methodology of this study is a linguistic analysis. There are several scholars whose works have informed the methodology used in this study. These include Gordon D. Fee (1993), Michael Gorman (2001), John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay (1982). All these agree that there must be a way in finding meaning from a text. Gordon fee in his work gives a guide towards what he calls full exegesis. His work suggests several theoretical steps that can be followed in doing this. However, not all of his suggestions are helpful in linguistic analysis. Those that are important to this study include; surveying the historical context in general, confirming the limits of the passage, making a provisional translation, analyzing sentence structures, grammar and significant words, and providing a finished translation.[32] He later suggests a guide particularly aimed at exegeting the Gospels. He reasons that, "The writers have a two or three dimensional historical context which in turn affects their literary context. Therefore, they are handing down traditions about Jesus in a permanent form as preserved in the church's tradition."[33] This is automatically different from the epistles because the Gospel writers, "Selected, arranged and adapted the materials that they had

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[31] Richard, J. Erickson, "Linguistics and Biblical Language: A Wide Open Field" in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 26, no. 3 (September 1983): 257.
[32] See Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983) 35.
[33] Ibid., 35

such that the task of exegesis is to understand a passage in its present form."[34] The aim is to get what John was communicating to his audience through the language that he was using.

A major point of emphasis is the historical setting of any document. John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay (1982) expressed that historical criticism deals with questions that have to do with the text's setting in time and space, that is, "Its historical, geographical, and cultural setting or the context of the original author and audience."[35] Furthermore, they had something to say on the grammar of a text. They considered grammatical criticism as an attempt to answer questions pertaining to the language of the text, that is, the words themselves, either alone or in phrases, as well as the way in which the words are put together or the syntax of the sentence or paragraph.[36] Criticisms such as historical and grammatical criticism will help the researcher to look at the time of John and his setting. The use of words by John is a point of focus together with their syntactical meanings.

One important component is a realization that the Bible was written using human language. Norman Gorman in his work reasons that, "It was written for real people, living in a specific historical context and to address particular needs." These then require an examination of the beliefs and situations which provided the occasion for using the word *logos.* The literary context which encompasses the immediate and

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[34] Ibid., 37

[35] John, Hayes and Carl, R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook* (London: John Knox Press, 1982) 27.

[36] Ibid., 27

rhetorical context becomes critical. Gorman prefers to call it contextual analysis.[37] Gorman and Fee agree on the aspect of identifying the type of literature the text is in. Such identification helps to identify important component parts. Some scholars have identified part of John's prologue as a hymn.[38] In this study, the important part is to look at the language used; words, phrases, clauses and sentences and their relationship to the word *logos*.[39] These are looked at in their context.

1.8 Methodology

Research methodology is an important component in any research. It outlines the steps this study undertakes in order to find the meaning of *logos*. Reasons for adopting such procedures including their strengths and weaknesses are also highlighted. These steps are grouped under exegesis and hermeneutics.

1.8.1 Exegesis

Exegesis is "… the careful historical, literary and theological analysis of a text."[40] The aim here is to outline the procedure to be followed in order to find the meaning of *logos* as employed by John in the prologue. The focus is to study the language employed by John so as to ascertain the meaning of *logos*. To achieve this, the methodology that we employed is linguistic analysis of the text in question. Some of the areas which are important in linguistic analysis for this study include historical[41], literary,[42]

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[37] See Michael, J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis,* 68-71.
[38] See Stephen, L. Harris, *The New Testament: A Student Introduction* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2002) 119.
[39] See Michael, J. Gorman, Elements *of Biblical Exegesis, 95.*
[40] Ibid., 8.
[41] In this study, there is an historical investigation of the word *logos* so as to ascertain the probability of such historical usage in understanding the meaning of the text. This is possible by a careful consideration

syntactical,[43] grammatical,[44] and semantical analysis[45] of the text. Some of these are closely related to each other. Norman Gorman actually defines Linguistic analysis as, ". . . the lexical, grammatical, syntactical and semantical analysis of a text."[46] The goal is to determine key words, idioms, grammatical forms and syntactical structures having a bearing on the overall meaning of *logos*.

Linguistic analysis is one of the methodologies that can be used to study a text. Its strength lies in the fact that God communicated his will to people using human language. From the beginning, he created human beings as language users. In addition, language has been God's vehicle to communicate his will to his creation.[47] It is a fact that language has always been a complex phenomenon yet God used it. Therefore, linguistic analysis becomes important as it focuses on language. John communicated his ideas using human language and as an exegete, being many centuries away from his

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of the time and circumstances in which the author wrote. See Walter, C. Kaiser, *Towards an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981) 88.

[42] Literary analysis looks at, "… the literary conventions, that is, the literary structure, forms and figures of speech used to communicate the writer's meaning. This includes word play, word order (including chiasms), repetition and the type of specific genres." See William, J. Larkin, Jr. *Culture and Biblical Hermeneutics: Interpreting and Applying the Authoritative Word in a Relativistic Age* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988) 334.

[43] Syntax basically entails arrangement or organization. Syntactical analysis is a "Study of rules by which sentences are constructed and the relationship between such constructions." Richard , N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981) 189.

[44] Grammatical analysis is ". . . the study of a passage by a visual representation of its structure which help determine what the various grammatical features contribute to the passage's meaning." William, J. Larkin, Jr. *Culture and Biblical Hermeneutics: Interpreting and Applying the Authoritative Word in a Relativistic Age,* 224.

[45] "This is an investigation of words, their forms, arrangements and contextual relations among them." Michael Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, 197.

[46] Ibid., 199.

[47] See William, J. Larkin, Jr. *Culture and Biblical Hermeneutics: Interpreting and Applying the Authoritative Word in a Relativistic Age,* 224.

time, it became imperative that a linguistic analysis be done so as to ascertain the meaning of *logos*.

The first step to be undertaken is to delimit the text. Delimitation here entails an attempt to find where the text begins and ends and then give necessary justifications for doing such.[48] The first task is to delimit the larger context of chapter 1.1-18 where *logos* is found. In this case there is less difficulty with where the prologue starts since it is the first chapter and verse while justification for ending in verses 18 is to be made. After this, a translation of verses 1-18 will be made.

This is preceded by an investigation of the historical context in order to understand the use of *logos* among Jews and Hellenists as part of the process of getting the meaning of *logos*. We need to know the historical, social and cultural situation of the time. The goal in this study is to discover common cultural beliefs, values and philosophies on *logos*.[49] This is achieved partly by looking at the nature of the audience. In this endeavor, situations that prompted the author to write this text with *logos* at the center of it are investigated. However, whilst a historical context is an important component in exegesis, its extent of influence on a particular text and even on *logos* runs into a challenge of forcing conclusions. This challenge is mitigated by paying heed to the

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[48] See Gordon, D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983) 28.
[49] "It is essential to know both the biblical and extra-biblical history. This historical study should include the significant persons, movements, events and philosophies which preceded, followed, and were contemporaneous with the biblical record. It is also necessary to comprehend the historical lesson or data which the passage presents as well as the biblical history which relates to the passage under study." Jesse, K. Moon, *How to Study and Interpret the Bible* (Waxahachie: Jesse Moon Publishers, 1974) 29.

other contexts where the word appears so as to draw informed conclusions. These verses include 3.34; 5.24; 7.43; 12.48; 14.10 and 17.6. 8.

This study is also partly achieved through a consideration of the literary context. The aim here is to find how *logos* fits into the prologue and ultimately into the larger context of the book. According to Gorman, "Literary context also entails investigating the type of genre, structure and the rhetorical context with the concern of answering the question of why *logos* is where it is and its function in the prologue, in each sentence and ultimately in the book as a whole."[50] This is an important step in ascertaining the meaning of *logos*.

Another step involves investigating the grammatical context. The prologue was written using human language in which *logos* is part. The main concern in this section is, "To carefully scrutinize every significant word, phrase, allusion, grammar point and syntactical feature in the text."[51] Whilst Gorman's emphasis is on every word, in this study there shall be a selection of words especially with an emphasis on their function in relation to *logos*. Gordon Fee also agrees in the selection of important words and not merely every word.[52] Significant words in the passage are critical in understanding the overall goal of finding the meaning of *logos*. Semantical study (word meanings) remains important largely because Greek words can have a wide range of meanings.[53] Whilst words are important, one can easily miss the author's idea if only definitions are

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[50] Michael Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, A Guide to Students and Ministers, 69.
[51] Ibid., 91.
[52] See Gordon, D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors, 30*
[53] See Craig, L. Blomberg and Jennifer F. Markley, *A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2010) 119.

followed. This challenge shall be overcome by looking at grammatical, historical and literary contexts.[54] Most of the aspects mentioned above find their way into linguistic analysis. Though emphasizing much on the study of language, it is part of the historical critical method. The overall aim is to find out what the author was communicating through the use of *logos*.

1.8.2 Hermeneutics

Exegesis and hermeneutics are disciplines that complement each other. Both are important in achieving the overall goal of finding the meaning of *logos*. The difference between exegesis and hermeneutics need to be highlighted here. Hermeneutics is understood "As the theory while exegesis is the practice of interpretation."[55] Exegesis is also taken as part of hermeneutics and as a result, "There cannot be hermeneutics without solid exegesis."[56] Therefore, hermeneutics as a theory, informs exegesis.

In this Study we employ the historical critical methodology which is, "A diachronic approach to biblical interpretation and which focuses on the origin and development of a text, employing methods designed to uncover aspects of it."[57] This approach is not only historical in nature, but also critical. The word "criticism" is derived from the

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[54] Grammar is understood as, "The study of the correct uses of a language and supplies the rules or principles according to which a writer relates words and various parts of the sentence. This includes the study of morphology and syntax." Guy, N. Woods, *How To Read New Testament Greek* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1991) 47.

[55] Bernard C. Lategan, "Hermeneutics" in David Noel Freedman (ed.) *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 149.

[56] Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read the Bible for All its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993) 23.

[57] Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis, A Guide to Students and Ministers, 15.*

Greek verb *krino* which means "to separate, distinguish, choose, decide or judge."[58] Therefore, people who use the historical critical method act as historians and judges and try to determine the truth of the matter under consideration.[59] This is because in this age, an exegete is far removed from the time the text was written in terms of culture and language. Studying the context in which the text was written becomes important since "There is always tension between the reader and the context of the author."[60] The main thrust is an attempt to arrive at the meaning intended by the author.

In order to arrive at the intended meaning, there are methods sometimes called tools or techniques which include amongst others, textual, literary, form, and redaction criticism. These become the theories that inform the methodology chosen. This study uses more of literary and form criticism.

The text and its language are some vehicles through which meaning can be ascertained. Literary criticism becomes important. Literary criticism is defined as, "The investigation of a text which seeks to explicate the intention and achievements of the author through a detailed analysis of the component elements and structure of the text itself (here it is the what and how of a writing rather than its whence and why)."[61] It is the theory behind the literary analysis of the text that shall be carried out. In its broadest sense, literary criticism encompasses all questions which arise pertaining to the text itself, including its historical- setting, and various aspects of the language and content of

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[58] Edwin, D. Freed. *The New Testament; A Critical Introduction*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988) 61.
[59] Ibid., 61.
[60] Bernard C. Lategan, "Hermeneutics" in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary, 153.*
[61] Richard, N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism, 113.*

the text. This criticism is useful on the issues related to linguistic analysis such as language, content and syntactical issues. This step deals basically with grammar which is a major component in linguistic analysis.[62] Accompanying this step is the identification of significant words needing attention and having a bearing on the overall meaning of *logos.* An attempt to determine the possible lexical meanings and literal translations of such words is done. The goal is to establish the meaning of *logos* as intended by John.

Before texts in the Gospels could become what they are, they took certain forms. The form of the text becomes important. Whilst literary criticism dwells on the supposed world of the text, Form Criticism focuses on the smaller literary sections. It has been looked at as, "That type of criticism which examines the form, content and functions of a particular unit and asks whether these are definite enough for the unit to be classified and interpreted as belonging to a particular genre."[63] John's prologue has widely been understood rather as a hymn being sung by the Johannine community.[64] Form criticism will be the theory behind the type of genre in question. If the text was hymn or partly a hymn, then its role to the overall meaning of *logos* is investigated.

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[62] The grammar here consists of morphology (the systematic analysis of classes and structures of words) and syntax (the arrangements and interrelationships of words in larger constructions). See Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 60.

[63] John, Hayes and Carl, R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginners Handbook* (London: John Knox Press, 1982) 23.

[64] See Stephen, L. Harris, *The New Testament: A Student Introduction* (Boston: McGrawHill, 2002) 119.

1.9 Ethical Considerations

Several sources were used in this study. As a result we endeavored to acknowledge all of them. Where other libraries were involved, proper procedures were taken in order to be granted permission by authorities to use their libraries. When books from the Africa University library or any other library are borrowed, we ensured that they were returned in time so as not to inconvenience other users. In the drawing up of conclusions, we only used the results from this independent study.

1.10 Orthography

In the exegetical process it is vital to use a better critical Greek text. Because of this, we will use *The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece (27th Edition)* in the study. It is the basis for analysing John 1.1-18. Whilst the *United Bible Society (UBS) New Testament* is good, "The Nestle Aland Text contains more variants than that of the UBS. It employs symbols to indicate additions, omissions, substitutions and transpositions. Furthermore, most scholars prefer it because of its critical approach and use of symbols for variants in the text."[65] Mere scanning of the text shows that it has more information on variants than that of the *United Bible Society*. On another platform, it has provided, "Scholars with fresh insights into the attitudes and approaches of early Christians to the New Testament documents."[66] This entails that it is exhaustive with regard to its witnesses. Though complex in nature, it is an important tool in exegesis especially in the process of textual analysis and in the determination of the possible original readings.

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[65] David, Allan, Black, *New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994) 45.
[66] Frederick, W. Danker, *Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study* (Menneapolis: Fotress Press, 1996) 25.

In this study, we shall use the term *logos* as it is but in italics. We will avoid translating the term till we have been able to assess all nuances given to the term in the prologue. Furthermore, this study shall make use of translations. However, unless otherwise specified, all translations will be based on the independent translation we will make.

In terms of referencing, the Chicago style is made use of. Its preference for footnotes makes everything easier during writing. Furthermore, readers stand to get along quickly than flip from a current page to the one with references and back again.

1.11 Terminology

In this study, there following terms are necessary and are defined as follows;

Analysis- The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines it as, "The detailed study or examination of something in order to understand more about it."[67] In this study, this is a careful examination of a text so as to get to the intended meaning.

Linguistic analysis- Technically, Norman Gorman, defines linguistic analysis as, "The lexical, grammatical and syntactical examination of a text."[68] It basically entails a detailed examination of the language and its component parts that are used to communicate an idea.

Meaning – Walter C. Kaiser in an article Legitimate Hermeneutics states that, "Meaning is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author intended to bring

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[67]Sally Wehmeier (ed.) *Oxford Advanced Leaner's Dictionary*, 6th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 36.
[68]Norman Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, A Guide to Students and Ministers, 197.

out for the benefit of his readers."[69] This is the goal for any reader of a text because there was something that the author was communicating.[70] Therefore in this study, the word signifies that which the author was communicating to his audience through the use of *logos*.

Semantics – "This is the scientific study of the meaning of linguistic signs."[71] In this study it is a branch of linguistics concerned with meaning. This is achieved by an analysis of words and relations between them. In this study, the main focus was on *logos* and or relations between other words and it.

Hermeneutics – "This is a theoretical and methodological process of understanding meanings in signs and symbols whether written or spoken. It is a discipline through which people reflect on the concepts, principles and rules that are universally necessary for understanding and interpreting meaning."[72] In this study it is taken as the art and science of interpreting texts in the Bible.

1.12 Scope of the Study

This study looks at the meaning and use of the term *logos* in John chapter 1.1-18. Whilst there are several verses which could be looked at in Johannine literature and

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[69] Walter, C. Kaiser, "Legitimate Hermeneutics" in Donald, K. Mckim (ed) *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986) 113.

[70] It is proposed that, "Meaning should be seen as significance or as reference or as intention or as ideas or as use of something." Jorge, J. E. Gracia, "Meaning in Kelvin, J. Vanhoozer (ed) *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2005) 492-493at 492.

[71] Johannes, P. Louw, "Semantics" in David, Noel, Freedman (ed.) *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, 1077.

[72] D. E. Klemm, "Hermeneutics" in John H. Hayes (ed.) *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999) 497.

beyond, this study mainly focused on the meaning of the word in John chapter 1.1-18. Within this section, more focus is directed towards verses 1 and 14 where the word *logos* is appearing. The other verses describe this *logos*.

Whilst there are several methodologies that can be used in the study of the term, this study focused more on linguistic analysis of chapter 1.1-18. Whereas the word carries various meanings in the Bible and elsewhere, this study attempts to focus on the meaning of the word as is presented by John.

1.13 Limitations

One major limitation, which is true for any exegete is that there is a cultural and historical distance between the interpreter and the text. Great efforts are, however, made to try and get as close as possible to the intended meaning by John. Whilst any method has its own limitations, linguistic analysis may not be an exception. Since its main focus is on language and its component parts and its dynamics, there is a tendency of neglecting other areas. An attempt is made to infer to results made from other methods so as to increase depth. However, the assumptions here is that through linguistic analysis, it is possible to get the meaning of *logos*.

CHAPTER TWO

LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

2. Introduction

In chapter 1 we pointed out what this study is all about. We outlined its aims, objectives and procedure. We also reviewed some relevant literature to this study. We then looked at its scope, orthography and limitations. We highlighted that the meaning of *logos* was to be carried out using linguistic analysis. It is, therefore, imperative that we look at linguistic analysis in detail.

We note that, in the investigation of any text, there are key linguistic features which are common in many languages. Since every form of writing is rooted in speech, several attempts are made to deduce meaning from it. Linguistic analysis is the vehicle through which we understand the meaning being communicated by the language used. This chapter deals with the definition of terms, history and importance of language and components of linguistics. The objective is to set forth the premise for the study of *logos* which has to be achieved through linguistic analysis.

2.1 Definitions[73]

For there to be a discipline called linguistics, first there has to be a language. This is because linguistics deal with language. It follows then that, whenever an author intents to communicate something to a reader, language is used. John is not an exception. He

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[73] The terms; language, linguistics and linguistic analysis are critical for this study. These are the ones going to be defined in this section. The definition of linguistic analysis shall be given towards the end of this section after showing the information that led to it.

had a message to communicate and which he did using a language. Language then became the vehicle through which this was possible. In terms of definition, Eugene A. Nida and Johannes P. Louw see language as, "A set of internalized vocal habits shared by a speech community. Theoretical linguists look upon language as a complex neural program which speakers or writers activate when they wish to communicate."[74] It follows then that for John to communicate his message, language, with its forms and characteristics, was employed. To him, language was the means through which his message was passed to the readers.

As a discipline, Linguistics is not limited to a specific type of language or to the languages used in the Bible alone. All languages are in view here. Linguistics is defined as;

> The science that attempts to understand language from the point of view of its "inner workings" commonly referred to as "internal structure." This structure includes speech sounds and meanings, as well as a complex grammatical system that relates those sounds and meanings. It is a science because the empirical methods of the sciences are used as much as possible to bring the precision and control of scientific investigation to the study of language.[75]

The "science" aspect entails that there are rules or principles that are employed during the investigation. In the present case, we note that the meaning of John's *logos* is possible through studying the language that was employed. The field of linguistics covers a very wide area and as such, an analysis of these areas within a text should not be neglected in the quest for meaning. These areas can be broken down into several

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[74] Eugene, A. Nida and Johannes, P. Louw, *Lexical Semantics of the Greek New Testament* (Atlanta: Scholary Press, 1992) 21.
[75] David Alan Black, *Linguistics for Students of NT Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988) 8.

aspects such as; sound system (phonetics and phonology), morphology, syntax (formation of sentences), semantics (related structures of meaning) lexicology, context and even the formation of the whole text (discourse grammar and text linguistics).[76] In the investigation of the meaning of *logos*, some of these language components become useful.

2.2 Origin and Importance

Every concept in Biblical interpretation has its own history, and so is linguistics. The beginning of linguists as a field of study in its own right is variously dated from the historical or comparative study of the 19th Century to Ferdinand de Saussure's publication of *Cours de Linguistique generale* in 1916.[77] Much credit is given to Saussure for his scientific approach to linguistics. His main focus though was on linguistics in general. However, in Biblical studies, more impact was then made in 1961 by James Barr's *Semantics of Biblical language.*[78] Barr's insights opened the channel for studies to start being done in the field of linguistics in Biblical studies.

Saussure's quest was not a new phenomenon because language has always been studied in history. We can trace linguistics back to ancient Greece in the 5th Century B.C. Among the Greeks, the study of language was, however, not an independent field on its own but found its way within the larger context of philosophy and was regarded as

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[76] See Richard, N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981)112; Randal, Buth "Language and Linguistics" in Kelvin, J. Vanhoozer (ed.) *Dictionary of Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005) 431-435 at 431.

[77] See Walter, Bodine, "Linguistics and Biblical Studies" in Noel, D. Freedman (ed.) *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 327-333 at 327.

[78] See William, J. Larkin, Jnr., *Culture and Biblical Hermeneutics: Interpreting and Applying the Authoritative Word in a Relativistic Age* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988) 70.

primarily speculative. "The debate was on whether the relationship between sound and meaning was necessary or arbitrary."[79] However, interest on linguistics generally began to increase from the time of Saussure.

One essential aspect is that God communicated his message through human agents and using human language. Scripture is both a divine and human phenomenon. Therefore, Linguistic analysis becomes important. This importance lies in the fact that the investigation will be carried out by human minds and for human needs.[80] Another reason to study language flows from this previous point: "The information about God is in written form, and in order to get the most out of that, human beings need to know not only what information the language is conveying but also how language conveys that information."[81] Therefore, since God communicated his message to human beings using human language, there is every need to study that language so as to ascertain the meaning carried in it.

The task of biblical interpretation is faced with a challenge of distance. An example of this distance is the '*language gap*' between the biblical world and the present one. The writers of the Bible wrote in the languages of their day using such languages as Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek which are generally not accessible to most people today.[82] This

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[79] Walter, Bodine, "Linguistics and Biblical Studies" in Noel, D. Freedman (ed) *The Anchor Bible Dictionary,* 327-333 at 327.
[80] See Eric, Erickson, *Linguistic and Biblical Language: A Wide Open Field*, 259.
[81] Marla Perkins Bevin, "linguistics and the Bible" in *The Trinity Review*, 262 December 2006, http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=230Issues, 1 (retrieved 10 January 2015)
[82]See William W. Klein, Craig l. Blomberg and Robert l. Hubbard, Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word Publishers, 1993) 15.

distance necessitates linguistic analysis to take place, without which it may be impossible to ascertain meaning from a text. To clarify this position, there are about 2000 years between the time John wrote his prologue and our own. As a result, meaning of his text depends on an analysis of the language he used to communicate his message. The task is much more apparent due to the fact that the type of Greek language in which the New Testament is written is no longer in use. It is best referred to as a dead language.

Another importance of linguistics is to help formulate rules or principles of studying a text. Without principles it becomes difficult to be uniform in the findings that can be made. This is what is meant by 'science' in the definition. Moses Silva supports this view by identifying the task of linguists as formulating principles and provides techniques for the analysis of written and oral communication.[83] Buoyed by these principles, it then becomes possible to analyse a Biblical text.

2.3 Semantics

One of the major components of a language are words within it and these are critical in the establishment of the meaning for a particular text. Semantics focuses on these. It is that aspect of linguistics which deals with meaning in a language.[84] Any linguistic theory should possess meaning as its result. From Noam Chomsky's, "*Generative*

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[83] See Moses, Silva, *Has The Church Misread the Bible: The History of Interpretation in Light of Current Issues* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987) 13.
[84] See Peter, Cotterell and Max, Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: Intervasity Press, 1989) 38.

Grammar in 1957 to J. J Katz and J. A. Foder's *The Structure of Semantic Theory* of 1963, meaning was highlighted as the central issue."[85] Important as they are to a language, the study of words in a language should be able to contribute to this overall goal of finding the meaning of a text.

By way of definition, semantics is defined as, "The science of the meaning of words . . . One of its aims is to describe the meaning of a word as it is used in a particular context."[86] As a science it entails that there are principles followed in doing the study. The main focus of semantics is an investigation of the meaning of words, phrases, clauses and sentences in a text. Besides finding the meanings of words, one establishes precise distinctions and oppositions between associated words within the text.[87] This type of rigorous investigation demands a greater apprehension of the languages being investigated and the presence of the necessary tools to use. The overall goal though the use of words and their function in the component parts of a sentence was to communicate meaning to an audience.

Linguistic analysis recognises that most words have a range of meanings. One word may mean many things just as it can function differently from one sentence to another. Craig Blomberg brings another aspect that other words can also overlap into the meanings of other words, making up what is known as a semantic domain of a word.[88]

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[85]Ibid., 38.

[86] John, F. A. Sawyer "Semantics" in R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden (eds.) *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation,* 616-618 at 616.

[87]Ibid., 619.

[88] See Craig, L. Blomberg, *A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010) 121.

This can also be referred to as the semantic range of a word. It is impossible for a Language to have a separate word for everything. The Greek that John used is not an exception. For example, the word *logos* has a wide semantic field with some attached meanings overlapping into those of other words such as *rhema* (3.34; 14.10; 17.6, 8).

The field of semantics can be divided into two that is, diachronic semantics and synchronic semantics. These are two general approaches to the study of words in a text. The synchronic (meaning with [in] time) approach,

> Views language as it exists at some particular point in time. This approach is emphasized by *Descriptive Linguists* who essentially emphasize on a synchronic view of language, examining language without reference to the changes that are a natural part of the development of any language.[89]

It looks at the final form of a text and as it stands in the Bible. The importance of synchronic analysis stem from a simple but far-reaching observation, namely, that the meaning of a discourse for John or for his hearers can depend *only* on what John and his hearers know and remember about their language and culture.[90] Meaning then will not depend on the etymology of a word but what the writer and his audience had understood at the time.

The diachronic approach views language from a historical perspective. Any language has to develop from one stage to another. This development can be traceable. Practitioners of this approach are called historical linguists. These emphasize on the,

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[89] David Alan Black, *Linguists for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications,* 5.
[90] See Vern Poythress, "Analysing a Biblical Text: Some Important Linguistic Distinctions*" in Scottish Journal of Theology* 32/2 (1979) 113-131 http://www.frame-poythress.org/analysing-a-biblical-text-some-important-linguistic-distinctions (retrieved 05 January 2015).

"Study of the origin and development of the sound patterns of language, of the forms of individual words, of the grammatical relationships between words, and other data related to language."[91] This information suggests that it employs ways that are intended to uncover the origin and development of words. The underlying view here is that words and language in general can change through time and this has to be accounted for in the quest for meaning.

Whilst comparison can be made between the two, the synchronic approach seems to resonate well with written documents. Synchronic analysis focuses at a specific point of time when a discourse was made while diachronic analysis has no much limitation of time. Therefore, language structure is properly regarded as a synchronic fixed point in the interpretation of a speech. The diachronic change in language becomes secondary to interpretation of that speech or discourse. An overlap between these two approaches is possible.

2.4 Structuralism

One component part in linguistics is structuralism. Its practitioners, however, have had difficulty in giving a unified definition. In large measure, it cannot be looked at as a science but rather as a combination of principles. Richard Jacobson defines it as,

> The application of principles derived from certain movements within linguistics to other areas of discourse. These other areas may be transphrastic- that is, units

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[91] David Alan Black, *Linguists for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications*, 5.

of speech greater than the sentence, such as narrative-or they may be the social discourse of ritual, kinship rules or law.[92]

Structuralism is not the same as the structure of a text. It is rather the structure of a language to which individual texts as particular linguistic expressions must conform in order to be intelligible. Structural linguists deal primarily with the sentence and smaller units while Biblical and literary critics are interested with larger units. "The task of the structuralist is to determine the rules by which language functions and to deduce principles for analysing the structure of the text."[93] Language is then recognised as a structured system such that the value of each component part is seen based on its relationship to the whole system. A study of this relationship within the language structure becomes an important component in the quest for meaning.

One of the major components in linguistic examination is to observe the language of a particular text as a whole together with its numerous parts. It follows that every component within a text contributes in a way to the attainment of meaning. The units of meaning that will be analysed range from the smallest to the largest. These include; "Words, sentence segments (phrases), sentences, text segments (such as paragraphs, stanzas, and smaller clusters of sentences) and then the text itself as a whole."[94] In John's prologue, an attempt to make meaning demands that an exegete bear in mind the presence of these units.

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[92] Richard, Jacobson "The Structuralists and the Bible*" in Donald, K. McKim (ed.) *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: WB. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986) 280-296 at 280.
[93] Richard, N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 182.
[94] Michael, Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, 95.

Major stress can at times be wrongly put on words. However, words alone do not contribute much to the meaning of a text. "Meaning is very much a matter that depends on the relations among words (or their combinations), and their grammatical structure."[95] One of the essential reasons is that any writer having something to say works out a theme using paragraphs, sentences, words. The smaller units when brought together build up to the largest component. This fact entails that in the quest for meaning, it is easy to start with the smallest components.

2.5 Lexical Semantics and Context

As can be noted, words-whether nouns, verbs or other contribute to meaning in a minimal way. These do not make meaning on their own, but in a context. A context must never be neglected in the quest for meaning because it helps to determine the meaning of a word. This is also true of phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs. Otherwise without a context, that word may necessarily be said to be just a possibility of meanings waiting to find a context. J. P. Louw highlighted that;

> The situation and the syntactic environment which a word finds itself contributes to the choice between the several possibilities of meaning. This implies that a word will not have a wide semantic field outside its context. If a context is identical, then a word can be consistently translated by the same word.[96]

Linguists recognise that there are a variety of contexts that can be noted. These include, "The writer's social location, personal word bank and style (that is, what the person normally mean by using a particular terminology) and the literary and rhetorical setting

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[95] J. P. Louw, *Semantics of the New Testament*, 68.
[96] Ibid., 40.

in which the word appears."[97] It then becomes critical to ascertain the environment in which the word is placed so as to ascertain its meaning. Since the quest of this present study is to find the meaning of *logos,* the context is going to be key.

As has been established already, the meanings of words are determined largely by the way they are used in a context. These larger literary contexts, and not words, are the real linguistic carriers of theological meaning. David Alan Black argues, for example, that we learn more about ecclesiology from the study of Ephesians than from a word study of "church." "This weakness is then exemplified in word study books such as Kittel's Theological Dictionary of Bible words, Vincent's Word Studies among other word study books."[98] A Theological concept cannot be discussed in an article about a single word. However, dictionaries that organise words for a theological concept can militate against this weakness. It is critical that the syntax where a word finds itself be examined in the process since words in a text cannot stand alone. They combine with others to form phrases or sentence segments. This arrangement of words is what is referred to as syntax.[99] In the case of *logos,* while the lexic*al* sense can be explored, it is imperative that its meaning be explored also from the various contexts it finds itself.

It is also important here to note the difference between a 'word' and a 'concept.' We note that the Bible itself has both words and concepts but these can be differentiated from one another. Allan Black made the difference when he stated that, "Words have

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[97] Michael, Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, 97.
[98] David Alan Black, *Linguists for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications* 123.
[99] See Michael, Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, 101.

been used by Biblical writers to express religious meanings, and concepts involve the use of far more elaborate structures than individual words."[100] Several words and ways can, therefore, be used to express a concept.

2.6 Discourse Analysis

One of the important fields in linguistics is discourse analysis. Discourse analysis implies, "Any sequence of strings and or any coherent stretch of language in a structured manner."[101] Its main feature goes beyond semantic analysis and sentences. "It encompasses the entire sections of material viewed as communicable wholes."[102] The assumption in discourse analysis is that there is a relationship between the components which constitute any discourse, a relationship which involves both grammatical structure and meaning. There can be no discourse analysis without a structure and that structure, as Peter Cotterell and Max Turner noted, ". . . Is related to a particular historical and sociological context within which the communication was effected."[103] A text, therefore, must harmoniously relate to its context.

As has been highlighted earlier, discourses in written texts are studied with their sequences and with their words. These sequences should be connected to each other in a progressive format and extends from the smallest component in the discourse to the

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[100] David Alan Black, *Linguists for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications,* 123
[101] Peter, Cotterell and Max, Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* , 231.
[102] Walter, R. Bodine, "Linguistics and Biblical Studies" in Noel D. Freedman (ed.) *The Anchor Bible Dictionary,* 327-332 at 330.
[103] Peter, Cotterell and Max, Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*, 232. .

larger parts. The entire discourse should be tied together by the different components which range from the individual words, to sentences and ultimately the entire structure.

There are some similar characteristics within discourses which can be noted. Every discourse has a beginning point, a middle point and an endpoint.[104] Within these three sections of a discourse, Peter Cotterell and Max Turner suggested a common formula. These stages are the *title*, *pre-peak episode, peak episode, post peak episode and the closure*.[105] One important stage is the *peak* stage which becomes the centre of everything in the discourse. Everything else flows to and from the *peak*. The closure, being the last part, is the conclusion of the discourse. The format of a discourse varies among authors while a certain format may be unique to a certain author. For example, John has his own unique way of presenting arguments and stories about Jesus. This is the same with other writers such as Paul or Peter. John's prologue, though being part of a larger discourse, can be thought of in a similar way.

2.7 Internal Analysis

One essential focus of linguistics is to ascertain the level of influence of other languages on a particular language used to write a text. This has been referred to as the internal analysis of a text. "The focus will be on whether the language used is simply Hellenistic Greek of the time or a unique sort of Greek influenced and shaped by the

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[104] Ibid., 247
[105] Ibid., 248.

influence of Semitic, especially through the Septuagint."[106] This supposed influence may have implications on the overall meaning of a text in question. In the quest for the meaning of *logos,* such influences cannot be discounted out rightly.

Conclusion

It has been noted that language was the vehicle through which God communicated to human beings. An investigation of that language becomes critical. This brings about the discipline of linguistics. Because of the dynamics and complexity of language, an analysis of the same is a prerequisite in the quest to understand the meaning of a written document (though the field of linguistics is not necessarily limited to only written documents). This chapter has enabled us to establish the component parts of studying language which includes sound system (phonetics and phonology), morphology, syntax (formation of sentences), semantics (relationship structures of meaning) lexicology and even the formation of the whole text (discourse grammar and text linguistics). It has also been established that a text should be studied from its context.

Linguistic analysis aims in general, through the employment of principles, to understand meaning from the study of the language used. In terms of the Bible, it has been noted that information about God is in written form, and in order to get the meaning out of it, we need to know not only what information the language is conveying but also how language used conveys that information. A text is then studied using various components of language study as noted above. The quest of the present

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[106] Walter, R. Bodine , "Linguistics and Biblical Studies" in Noel D. Freedman (ed.) *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 327-332 at 331.

study is a quest for meaning, that is, of *logos* in John 1.1-18. Linguistic analysis makes this possible. To achieve the aim of this study, relevant components in linguistic analysis are employed in verses 1-18. In the next chapter we now explore the usage of the term *logos*, prior to the writing of John's Gospel.

CHAPTER 3

PRE-JOHANNINE UNDERSTANDING OF *LOGOS*

3. Introduction

We have so far been able to introduce this study in chapter 1. In chapter 2 we dwelt on linguistic analysis. We were able to note what it is and what constitutes it. We saw its importance in this study. We highlighted that the quest to understand the meaning of *logos* in John 1.1-18 was going to be achieved through linguistic analysis. The concern of this current chapter is to trace the usage of the word prior to the writing of the prologue. This is achieved by firstly tracing the etymology of the term *logos* and then the meaning attached to *logos* among the Greek philosophers and Jewish thought and tradition so as to see possible reflections in Johannine thought. *Logos* meant many things to many people. It was common among the Greeks. Presently, however, its meaning and conception can only be seen among the works of Greek philosophers which are extant and not the ordinary people. Its usage can also be seen in the Septuagint (LXX), a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures and other Jewish documents. The last part of this chapter shall deal with Philo, who in a way, is a representative of both the Greek and Jewish thinking.

3.1 The Etymology of *Logos*

The term *logos* has a wide semantic field. It means so many things. We can trace the word from its root.

Its Greek root is *leg*, appearing in *lego* the primitive meaning of which is *to lay:* then, *to pick out, gather, pick up:* hence to gather or put *words* together. Hence *logos* is, first of all, a *collecting* or *collection* both of things in the mind, and of words by which they are expressed.[107]

It can mean "word," "speech," "matter," "thing," "command," "message," "account," "reckoning," "settlement," "respect" and "reason."[108] Its 330 occurrences in the New Testament are evenly distributed with 40 of its appearances are found in John. In some of its senses it was used "for God's word whilst on others it was used for ordinary human words, together with some other non-theological meanings."[109]The word also carries a philosophical meaning where it is taken, not as a linguistic term, but a rational concept that can be displayed, clarified, recognised, understood carrying within it a creative power.[110] In the Old Testament, it finds its equivalent in "*dabar*" ("word"). We note therefore that so many meanings have been attached to the word *logos*. Distinctions in meaning however varied between Greek and Jewish thinking.

3.2 Hellenistic Conceptions of *Logos*

Prior to the writing of the Gospel by John, the word *logos* was a point of speculation among Greek philosophers. It carried with it several meanings within Hellenistic thought. In fact, most philosophical schools of ancient Greece had something to say about *logos*. Several Philosophers and Philosophical schools such as Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Zeno, Stoics, Sophists, and Platonists had several philosophical

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[107]Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 2 (New York: Scribners, 1887) 25.
[108] William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957) 478-480 at 478.
[109] H. Ritt *"Logos"* in Horst, Balz and Gerhard Schneider (eds.) *Exegetical Dictionary on the New Testament,* vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991) 356-359 at 356.
[110] See G. Kittel "λέγω" in G. Kittel (ed.) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 71-136 at 80.

views and conclusions concerning *logos*. This section shall explore these views independently and in chronological order.

3.2.1 Heraclitus' Conception of *Logos*

One of the first Greek philosophers to speculate concerning *logos* was Heraclitus (500 B. C.E), a pre-Socratic philosopher and native of Ephesus. Nothing much is known about his life as only about 100 sentences of his work are extant.[111] Some of his thoughts centred on the origin of the universe. This led to speculations concerning *logos* and not just as a mere word but as something more. He reasoned that, **"***Logos*** constitutes the being of both the cosmos and man. It is the connecting principle which forms the bridge and possibility of understanding."[112] The "being" mentioned here concerns the origin of the cosmos and man. The connection is between man and the world and between man and God. He adds that people are bound by this *logos* though they are not in a position to see it.[113] Heraclitus also used the term in a sense of an underlying cosmic principle of order which is related to the general meaning of measure, reckoning and proportion.

He said that the primary element from which all things take their rise must not be water or air as previous thinkers had proffered, "But something more subtle, mysterious and

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[111] See E. I. Hussey, "Heraclitus of Ephesus" in Ted, Honderich (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 351-352 at 351.
[112] G. Kittel, "λέγω" in G. Kittel (ed.) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. IV, (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmanns Publishing Co., 1967) 71-136 at 81
[113] Ibid., 81.

potent, that is, fire."[114] To him, fire, *logos* and God were fundamentally the same. His conception of God was, however, pantheistic rather than monotheistic in nature as in line with Greek deities.[115] The three were put at par with each other. Another point of emphasis he made is on what he called harmony, sometimes called justice. He viewed the world as a collection of things unified and regulated by the *logos* which is common to them and which makes the world an orderly structure.[116] Therefore, the cosmos owed its order, justice and harmony to this *logos.*

Therefore, to Heraclitus, *logos* went beyond being a mere word or content of speech. It was the primary element from which all things came to be and were ordered. This *logos* was a ruling principle equated with God, though it remained elusive to people.

3.2.2 Sophists' Conception of *Logos*

Sophists lived around 500 B. C. and rose to become influential itinerant teachers of their day subsequently getting disciples in the process.[117] They travelled widely through the Greek world, giving popular lectures and specialised instruction in a wide range of topics though they were not a school nor did they possess a common doctrine. In

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[114] Larry, Deason, *That you may have Life: An Indepth Study of the Gospel of John* (Lady Lake: Life Communications, 1998) 37.

[115] See Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1 (Garden City: Image Books, 1985) 43

[116] See A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Classical Life and Letters* (London: Duckworth and Co., 1974) 145.

[117] See R. B. Edwards, "Word" in Geofrey, W. Bromley (ed.) *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia of the Bible*, vol. 4, (Grand Rapids: Willam B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988) 1103.

addition, their intellectual activities included speculations concerning nature and mathematics.[118]

Though they appreciated Heraclitus views concerning *logos,* Sophists had their own understanding concerning the same. "They used *logos* in a broad sense to include both the rational, which makes cultural and political life possible and the art of public speaking or presenting arguments."[119] Besides dwelling on arguments themselves, they also looked on what arguments were all about, so that, "Right reason tended to be used both for a correct argument or theory and of the rational structure or principle which the argument or theory was all about."[120] Due to the nature of their movements, it is obvious that their followers were taught the art of rhetoric, debating skills and oratorical techniques to defend their own opinions.

The Sophists also speculated that, "*logos* became predominantly the rational power set in man, the power of speech and thought. G. Kittel highlights that, "This power of the *logos*, is described in quasipersonal terms as a great ruler, capable of effecting the most divine deeds in the smallest body."[121] Reference here was to what they referred to as political life which played a decisive part as the means of persuasion and direction. It suffices to say that sophists were the first to develop a theory of *logos* though it was more aligned to political thoughts. They reasoned that only through *logos* is political

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[118] See Sybil, Wolfram, "Sophists" in Ted, Honderich (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 839-841 at 839.
[119]Ibid., 1103.
[120] C. B. Kerferd, *"Logos"* in Paul Edwards (ed.) *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy,* vol. 5 and 6 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1967) 82-84 at 83.
[121]G.Kittel, "λέγω" in G. Kittel (ed.) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 71-136 at* 82.

life possible. It makes people stand above the level of beasts due to their ability to reason.

In brief, Sophists' conception of *logos* then was that it was a rational power behind all that is seen. It sets in motion all other things. Part of their speculations had to do with giving an answer to the origin of nature and the role of reason in arguments.

3.2.3 Socrates (470-399BC) and Plato (c.424-347 BC)

Socrates and Plato were some of greatest ever philosophical teachers to speculate concerning *logos*. Socrates (470-399BC) and Plato (c.424-347 BC) were all Athenian philosophers.[122] The two are some of the most significant scholars to ever arise in the history of philosophy. "Plato, however, came under the influence of Socrates who stole his heart into philosophy. When Socrates was condemned to death in 399BC, Plato gave up the thought of a political career, and founded a philosophical school."[123] It is at this school that some thoughts concerning *logos* were developed though Socrates had had much influence on him.

The two philosophers did not make much direct contribution to the doctrine of *logos* but Plato's theory of ". . . ideas (belief in the existence of an eternal world, absolute, changeless and perfect which contrasts with the visible changing world of the senses)

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[122]See C.C.W. Taylor, "Socrates" in Ted, Honderich (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 836-837 at 836.

[123] David, Bostock, "Plato"in Ted, Honderich (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 683—686 at 683.

was to influence later philosophical doctrines on *logos*."[124] However, the Socratic dialogues expressed firstly that common speech was in view and secondly that concepts were presupposed as the common basis of *logos*.[125] To the two, *logos* was the basic fact in all life and it was the decisive point in the politics of Socrates and Plato who also held that there was a kind of pre-existent harmony between the logos of the thinking soul and the *logos* of things.[126] This followed their conclusion about a world that is seen and another that is not seen. The world that is not seen was held to be absolute and changeless.

Plato's use was more philosophical compared to that of Heraclitus concept of an ordering principle of the material world. He preferred to refer to *logos* as "Demiurge" or "Divine Reason or Mind". This Divine Reason proceeds direct from God and is regarded as the "Mind of God."[127] Plato saw God as the intelligent power who made the world, yet held that matter is in some sense eternal and inflexible. Plato's views organized the universe on rational principles.

The contribution of these two philosophers concerning *logos* could be taken as minor but their conclusions about a changeless and eternal world in contrast to that which can be seen with the eyes heavily influenced later philosophers. It developed a thought that there is something behind that which is seen, something that is pre-existent and which

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[124] R. B. Edwards, "Word" in Geofrey, W. Bromley (ed.) *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia of the Bible*, 1103

[125] See G. Kittel, "λέγω" in G. Kittel (ed.) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 82.

[126]Ibid., 82.

[127]Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1 (Garden City: Image Books, 1985) 192-193.

they also called *logos*. Plato, however, emphasized that *logos* was the Divine Reason or Mind whose source was God.

3.2.4 Aristotle

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E) was born to a father who was a doctor at Stagira in Chalcidice in Northern Greece. At the age 17, he went to Athens to study under Plato and remained at that academy for about 20 years.[128] "His philosophical interest covered a wide area such as logic, ethics, epistemology, physics, biology, rhetoric, meteorology, dialectic, politics, aesthetics and mathematics."[129] As a student of Plato, Aristotle showed some similar thoughts which were seen in his teacher.

Aristotle, like Socrates and Plato, made a very small contribution on the doctrine of *logos*. He often used the term to mean "proportion" or "ratio." Like Plato, he further used it to refer to rational speech and rationality in general. What distinguished human beings from lower animals was "Reason *(logos)*."[130] To him, the mental faculty of reasoning which is possessed by human beings and the ability to express them in speech accounts for the difference between animals and people. Therefore, he concentrated on *logos* as reason.

3.2.5 Stoics

One influential philosophical school to ever arise were the Stoics. These were philosophers whose philosophical tradition was, "Founded by Zeno (335-263 B.C.E.) of

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[128] See David, Charles "Aristotle" in Ted, Honderich (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 53-56 at 53
[129] Ibid., 53.
[130] See Thomas, H. Tobin, "*Logos*" in Noel. D. Freedman (ed.) *The Anchor Bible Dictionary,* 348.

Citium, developed by Cleanthes and Chrysippus (280-207 B. C. E) and named from the 'Stoapoikile' or 'Painted Porch' in Athens where they taught."[131] They had much to say concerning ethics. "They placed ethics in the context of an understanding of the world as a whole, with "reason" being paramount both in human behaviour and in the divinely ordered cosmos. They saw a relationship between divinity and the world."[132]

A notable thing was that most former philosophical views concerning *logos,* except those of Plato, were more secular and without any religious connotation. Only in Stoicism does *logos* emerge as a universal, cosmic and religious principle. For the Stoics, "*Logos*, God and nature were essentially one whilst the same *logos* was the rational element that controlled the universe."[133] Specifically, Zeno identified *logos* with fire while Chrysippus blended the fire with air which the two referred to as spirit or breath.[134] Zeno identified Socrates' *logos*, or rational principle, with that of Heraclitus. In their nature as teachers, they were propelled by the philosophical views of those who came earlier such as Heraclitus' views concerning order and the origin of the universe. In fact, they took from Heraclitus: "The concept of a *logos* which directs all things and which is shared by all men. In addition, Fire, the symbol or vehicle of *logos* was also

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[131] W. Sharple, "Stoicism" in Ted Honderich (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 852-853 at 852.
[132]Ibid., 852.
[133] Thomas, H. Tobin, "*Logos*" in David, Noel Freedman (ed.) *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 349; G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 82.
[134]Ibid., 349.

adopted from him."[135] While *logos* was held to be present in every part in nature, it is only in human beings where its presence was part of their very nature.

These philosophers were coming from Aristotle's point of view that only human beings were rational. The human rationality intimately connected with and reflected the rationality (which was material unlike Plato's own which was beyond this realm) of the universe. For the Stoics then, "The *logos* in human beings was part of the governing principle of the soul and for most of them, it was located in the heart."[136] This *logos* or reason was then held to be the guide of the soul and morality. In addition, they held that there was an active and passive principle in the world. "The passive principle was matter; the active principle, the *logos*, which is in practice identical to God and is responsible for acting upon matter."[137] This distinction informed could have helped shape their conclusions.

The major contribution which was made by the Stoics is that they brought a religious connotation to the whole dimension of *logos* though maintaining it as a rational principle. As a rational principle, it sets apart animals and people. They saw the cosmos as divinely ordered through the activity of *logos.*

3.3 Jewish Conception of *Logos*

Jewish scriptures and tradition have something to say about *logos*. However, *logos* being a Greek term cannot be found within the Hebrew Bible and Jewish tradition,

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[135] A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Classical Life and Letters, 246.*

[136] Thomas, H. Tobin, *"Logos"* in David, Noel Freedman (ed.) *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 349.

[137] Craig, S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003) 342.

except in the Septuagint (LXX). What can be noted from all extant documents are some words which were deemed equivalent to *logos.* In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the LXX, we note that *logos* is used to translate Hebrew equivalents. Rabbinical traditions in the Targums and other Jewish literature show a similar trend. This section attempts to trace such words and make conclusions pertaining to their meaning. These words include *"dabar," "memra," "wisdom" and "Torah."* It is noted that some of the attributes given to *logos* by John are similar to those that were attached to these words. The sources of these words shall constitute the subheadings in this section.

3.3.1 *Logos* in the Septuagint

One of the most important words translated *logos* in the LXX is the Hebrew term *dabar.* It appears about 1430 times and generally means "matter" or "thing but also applies to the spoken word, or written communication."[138] The last usage dominates others within the Jewish religious thought. The word has two main elements¯ the dianoetic and the dynamic elements.[139] G. Kittel highlights that the dianoetic element means that *dabar* always belongs to the field of knowledge, because it includes a thought.[140] However, when the two main elements are combined together, "It will then indicate strong power, which can be manifested in the most diverse energies."[141] These supposed energies

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[138] R. B. Edwards, "Word" in Geoffrey, W. Bromley *(ed.) International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia of the Bible,* 1101.
[139] These two, whilst being of major importance are beyond the scope of this discussion. For further discussion on this see G. Kittel *"lego"* in G. Kittel (ed.) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 91.
[140] Ibid., 91.
[141] Ibid., 91.

could have then guided God's messengers to declare and write that which was communicated to people as the Word of God.

In the LXX, the term is used in several ways. It is ordinarily used more often for ordinary human communication, whether written, spoken or acted (Est. 9.8; Is. 29.11, 18). It is also for words of poems, songs and sayings of wise men (Pr. 1.6; 22.17; Deut. 31.30).[142] *Dabar* is also used as prophetic revelation in several passages in the Old Testament. Edwards highlights that: "This is one of the key concepts in the Old Testament which refers to God's direct revelation to mankind either orally or visually (1 Sam. 3.2-14)."[143] It follows that God spoke to his people in a number of ways. "A frequent expression (used over 120 times) is the so called word-event formula – "The word of God/the Lord came to . . ." especially to the prophets (Hos. 1.1; Joel 1.1; 1 Kings 12.22)."[144] In other instances it is combined with a vision whilst in Isaiah it is symbolized by the touching of the mouth (Jer. 1.9; Is. 6.7). In Ezekiel, the prophet is actually asked to eat it (2.8-3.3). The same is true of the non-writing prophets and in the other Minor Prophets such as Amos, where prophets acted as messengers in delivering the word to people.

Dabar can further be seen as God's creative word. The Greek translation of Psalms 33.6 expresses the idea vividly by stating that it was through the *logos* that all things were

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[142] See R. B. Edwards, "Word" in Geoffrey, W. Bromley (ed.) *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia of the Bible,* 1102.
[143] Ibid., 1102.
[144] Ibid., 1102.

made. God is then further portrayed as using nature to speak to humanity (Ps 147. 16-18).[145] In Psalm19.1-4, it is actually nature which speaks of the glory of God with its words going to the ends of the earth. Furthermore, certain utterances of blessings and curses have always been thought by ancients as having power of their own such that once spoken they cannot be revoked (Gen. 27.32-38).[146] When words were said in such a way, people took them seriously.

In conclusion, we note that the word *dabar,* translated *logos* in the LXX*,* is on several occasions ordinarily used as a linguistic term. The word that the prophets spoke was understood to be coming directly from God himself. As a result, that which came from God is that which is translated *logos.*

3.3.2 The Attributes of *Logos* in Aramaic Targums

In Aramaic, there is a word which has been given some attributes similar to those given to *logos* by John. These are seen in the employment of the word *"memra"* as found in the Jewish Targums. A Targum is an early Jewish translation of the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic.[147] Some parallels between the use of the word *memra* and *logos* can be seen in these Targums. While the word *logos* in not specifically mentioned in these Targums, we may speculate that the attributes mentioned prepared people for the Johannine *logos.* This is because some similar attributes are noted. This section shall highlight some of

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[145]Ibid., 1102.
[146]Ibid., 1102.
[147]See Phillip, S. Alexander, "Targum, Targumim" in Noel, D. Freedman (ed.) *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 6, 321-331 at 320.

these. On many occasions where *Dabar* is translated *logos* by the LXX, the Targums will have *memra*. This section has been separated from that of *dabar* because of some of the differences that can be noted in terms of the attributes and subject matter.

The Targumim, in many occasions, employ the expression "*Memra*" to refer to a somewhat personified concept which has its existence above the angels. The reflection here is that of an intermediary being. Whilst Jews held angelic beings highly, "The *Memra* had a place above the angels as that agent of the Deity who sustains the course of nature and personifies the Law."[148] Daniel Boyarin states that, "In the Palestinian Targums (which were Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew Old Testament), the Aramaic word *Memra* (or "the Word") is frequently used as a substitute for the name of God."[149] Notions of the second god as personified word or wisdom of God were present among Semitic-speaking Jews as well. We note that,

> In the Targum, the *Memra* figures constantly as the manifestation of the divine power, or as God's messenger in place of God Himself, wherever the predicate is not in conformity with the dignity or the spirituality of the Deity.[150]

Certain divine attributes are therefore assumed in such usages.

This *Memra* is also seen as an agent for many things. It is noted that the *Memra* is the Agent of salvation as seen in the Targum's paraphrase of Deuteronomy 1:30, where it is

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[148] M. J. Edwards, "Justin's *Logos* and the Word of God" in *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 3:3, (1995) 7.
[149] Daniel Boyarin, "The Gospel of the Memra: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John" in *Harvard Theological Review*, 252
[150] Kaufmann Kohler, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=399&letter=M (retrieved 30 November 2014)

the *Memra* who fights on Israel's behalf. In Exodus 33:22, it is the *Memra* who shelters Moses from the fatal brilliance of God's glory. And in Isaiah 45:25, it is through the *Memra* that the descendants of Israel will be justified.[151] Secondly, the *Memra* is seen as the Agent of Revelation in the Targum's paraphrase of Exodus 19:17, Moses meets with the *Memra*. In Deuteronomy 4:33, 36, it is the *Memra* who speaks out of the fire to the people. And in Isaiah 6:8, it is the *Memra* who reveals himself to Isaiah and commissions him to prophesy to Israel. In a way, therefore, the *Memra* refers to God's self-revelation.[152] Though it is personified, it can be seen that the word is given some linguistic connotations.

Thirdly, the *Memra* is portrayed as an agent of creation. This attribute has been given to *logos* in John's prologue. In Gen 1.3 "The *memra* said let there be light. . ." In fact, "All creative actions in the first two chapters are portrayed as being done by the *Memra*."[153] Lastly, the *Memra* is the Agent of the Covenant – In the Targum's paraphrase of Exodus 25:22, it is the *Memra* which meets with the High Priest over the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant.[154] In Genesis 15:1, "It is the *Memra* who becomes Abraham's shield, in fulfilment of God's covenant with him whilst in Leviticus 26:9, it is the *Memra* who enacts the Sinai Covenant."[155]

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[151] F. C. Burkitt, "Memra, Shekinar, Metatron" in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, (n.d.) 258. http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jts/024_158.pdf (retrieved 5 December 2014)
[152] See Daniel Boyarin, "The Gospel of the Memra: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John" in *Harvard Theological Review*, 254.
[153]Ibid., 249.
[154]Ibid., 249.
[155]Ibid., 249.

It is significant that the characteristics attached to the *memra* are also given to *logos* by John. The *memra* is thought to have proceeded from God and is His messenger in nature and history of the Jewish people. It was an agent in creation and is personified in several of its usages. The elevation that is given especially in comparison to angels may have allusions to divinity but not to the extent that the prologue shows.

3.3.3 *Logos* in Jewish Wisdom Speculation

Some conceptual parallels on the use of *logos* are found in Jewish Wisdom literature (Proverbs, Sirach, Baruch and Wisdom of Solomon). The various attributes and activities ascribed to wisdom in Jewish wisdom literature are almost similar to those ascribed to *logos* in the prologue of John. A notable use of *logos* is seen in the employment of the word "wisdom" as a synonym for *logos*. Boyarin highlighted that, "The idea that the *Logos/Sophia* 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."[156] The word "wisdom" went beyond being a linguistic term. One of the usages of the word is found in the description of Wisdom as given in some of the later books of the Old Testament. What can be noted from the description of this wisdom is that, "It was regarded as more than a human endowment or even an attribute of God, and may be said to attain almost to a higher level of knowledge regarding deity." [157] It is the eternal thought in which the Divine Architect ever beholds His future creation (Job 28:23-27). If in Job, wisdom is revealed only as underlying the laws of the

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[156]Ibid., 248.
[157] R. B. Edwards, "Word" in Geoffrey, W. Bromley (ed.) *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, vol. 4, 1104.

universe and not as wholly personal, in the Book of Proverbs it is coeternal with Yahweh and assists Him in creation (Prov. 8:22-31).[158]

Something more than a personified idea may be inferred from the contents of the non-canonical literature. "Sirach represents Wisdom as existing from all eternity with God. In Baruch and Wisdom of Solomon, the Sophia is distinctly personal. It is, "the very image of the goodness of God."[159] In the pseudo-Solomonic book, the influence of Greek thought is traceable. The writer speaks of God's Word as His agent in creation and judgment.[160] Donald Winslow states that, "In the apocryphal *Wisdom of Solomon,* the *logos* is depicted as joined together with *sophia,* as God's agents in the creation of the universe 'O God of my fathers and Lord of mercy, who has made all things by his *logos* and by thy Sophia has formed man…(Wis 9:1-2)."[161]

Wisdom, though having parallels with *logos* went beyond being a linguistic term or mere word. It has an ordinary use can also be seen. The ordinary use of the term points to something else different beyond it. Within this literature, wisdom is, therefore, presented as more than just an attribute of man or God; it almost attains a personal identity of its own. It is possible that during the time John wrote his prologue, this personification and high attribute of wisdom had reached a higher level in Jewish thought.

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[158] Ibid., 1104.
[159] C. B. Kerferd, "*Logos*" in *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, 84
[160] See Donald F. Winslow, *"Logos"* in Ferguson, Everett (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of Early Christianity* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1998) 688.
[161] Ibid., 688.

3.3.4 The Torah

In Rabbinic tradition, we see the elevation of the Torah. This word refers to the first five books of the Old Testament scriptures. Some notable attributes given to the Torah are also given to *logos*. These attributes are important for this study.

One of the attributes has to do with preexistence. "In Rabbinic tradition, as to a person, the Torah is given salvific functions besides being given pre-existent attributes of a person."[162] The aspect of pre-existence is attributed to *logos* in John's prologue. In addition, the prologue attributes divinity to the *logos* which at the same time is attributed to the Torah. In fact, the Midrash on Psalms 90.3 speaks of the Torah being a companion of God whilst at the same time sharing the same divine nature.[163] Besides pre-existence and the aspect of divine nature, the Torah had a role to play in creation. The Midrash on Genesis 1.1 states that, "Through the first-born, God created the heaven and the earth, and the first-born is none other than the Torah."[164] In John's prologue, everything was created by the *logos* (1.3).

The Torah is also shown as being the life and the light such that without the light there will be darkness."[165] The aspect of life and light are also highlighted in the prologue of John as emanating from the *logos*. One interesting component is that, in Psalms 119.17, 35, 43 and 148, the word of God (translated *logos* in LXX) and the law (Torah) are used

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[162]Ibid., 485.
[163]Ibid., 42.
[164]Ibid., 42.
[165]Ibid., 43.

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synonymously.[166] In this case the "word of God" mentioned is the one translated *logos* in the LXX.

The Torah was, therefore, regarded as that which gives guidance and direction and carried with it deeper meaning among the Jews. Some of the important attributes of the Torah which are similarly ascribed to the *logos* include pre-existence, Creator, mediator and giving of life and light. These facts serve to highlight that it is probable that when John's prologue was written, Jews had already been prepared for something of similar nature by these traditions.

3.3.5 Philo's Conception of *Logos*

Philo (c. 20BC- AD 50), an Alexandrian Jew, is held as the supreme example of a Jew seeking to understand his faith in the light of Hellenistic culture and to explain it to the Gentile world.[167]In fact, there is a strong possibility that the Aramaic use of the term *Memra* provided the Hebraic foundation for Philo to build a bridge to Greek philosophy, through a mutually recognizable Greek philosophical concept of *logos*.[168] Following the reasoning of Plato[169] and Socrates, Philo envisaged that *logos* is the

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[166] See Rudolph, Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. 1, Kevin Smyth (trans.) (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1968) 485.

[167] See George, R. Beasley-Murray "John" in David A. Habbard *et al* (eds.) *Word Biblical Commentaries*, vol. 36, (Waco, Word Book Publishers, 1982) xxi.

[168]See Kaufmann Kohler*, Jewish Encyclopedia*, http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=399&letter=M

[169] "Philo had a deep reverence for Plato and referred to him as "the most holy Plato." Philo's philosophy represented contemporary Platonism which was a combination of Platonism and Pythagorean ideas. Clement of Alexandria called Philo "Philo the Pythagorean." But he put forward the teachings of the Jewish prophet, Moses, as "the summit of philosophy" and considered Moses the teacher of Pythagoras (b. ca. 570 BCE). For Philo, Greek philosophy was a natural development of the revelatory teachings of Moses." Marian, Hiller, "The *Logos* and Its Function in the Writings of Philo of Alexandria: Greek Interpretation of the Hebrew Myth and Foundations of Christianity" in *A Journal from The Radical*

Reason inherent in the universe, whether that Reason is divine or human. Thus, it can mediate between God and man.[170] The *logos* doctrine of Philo was intended to bridge the gap between the purely spiritual God and the material world and also explain the presence and action of God in the soul.[171]

As described by Charles Harold Dodd as well, "Philo's *logos* is neither just the Wisdom of the Bible, nor is it quite the Stoic nor Platonic *logos*, nor yet just the divine Word, the *dabar* of the Hebrew, either, but some unique and new synthesis of all of these."[172] Following the Jewish mythical tradition, "Philo represents the *Logos* as the utterance of God found in the Jewish scripture of the Old Testament since God's words do not differ from his actions."[173]

According to Philo, God is the absolute Being. He calls God "that which is:" "the One and the All."[174] God alone exists for himself, without multiplicity and without mixture. No name can properly be ascribed to Him: He simply is. Hence, in His nature, Vincent adds that;

Reformation. A Testimony to Biblical Unitarianism, 7: 3 (1998)
http://ww.socinian.org/files/PhiloAlexandria.pdf (retrieved 29 November 2014)
[170] See D. H. Johnson, "*Logos*" in Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and Howard Marshall (eds.) *The Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels,* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1992) 481- 484 at 483
[171] Rudolph, Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. 1, Kevin Smyth (trans.) (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1968) 485.
[172] Charles, Harold, Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960) 269.
[173] Marian, Hiller, "The *Logos* and Its Function in the Writings of Philo of Alexandria: Greek Interpretation of the Hebrew Myth and Foundations of Christianity" in *A Journal from The Radical Reformation. A Testimony to Biblical Unitarianism,* 7: 3 (1998)
http://ww.socinian.org/files/PhiloAlexandria.pdf (retrieved 29 November 2014)
[174] Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 2 (New York: Scribners, n.d.) 30.

He is unknowable. The absolute God is surrounded by his *powers* (*dunameis*) as a king by his servants. These powers are, in Platonic language, *ideas*; in Jewish, *angels;* but all are essentially one, and united, as they exist in *logos* of God, as they emanate from him, from which all things are disseminated in the world. Hence the Logos appears as the *immanent reason* of God, containing within itself the world-ideal, which, while not outwardly existing, is like the immanent reason in man. This is styled *logos* (*endiathetos*), that is., *the logos conceived and residing in the mind*. This was the aspect emphasized by the Alexandrians, and which tended to speak of a twofold personality in the divine essence.[175]

Philo also linked divine wisdom as it appears in the later Jewish Old Testament writings with his conception of *logos* thereby establishing a link between the term used in the Jewish scriptures and that of the Hellenistic philosophy. Philo goes to highlight the role of *logos* in creation. The Divine action of creation is transferred to the *logos,* but also shares in the work of salvation for men.[176] To him, *logos* was the instrument through which this was possible. In addition, whilst commenting on the creation story in Genesis 1.27; people were created in the image of *logos*.[177] Besides being the instrument of creation, the *logos* is thought to be a unifier of that which is in the universe. He compared *logos* to a chain and glue which connects and fastens everything together. The result is that all things are then filled with the essence of *logos*. In the process of unifying all things in the universe, the *logos* gives shape and form to the universe without which the world become formless.[178]

Besides *logos* being active in creation, another function is seen in governing that which was created. To Philo, *logos* "Governs the world and souls of the just in particular, in

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[175]Ibid., 30.
[176] See Rudolph, Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, 486.
[177]Ibid., 487.
[178]Ibid., 287.

which he dwells and moves as in a city thereby becoming a mediator or teacher of union with God."[179] Writing on the *Cherubim*, Philo expanded on the aspect of governing by stating that, the governing part is only possible through divine reason with every man connected with divine reason."[180] Such a connection with "divine reason" determines what one is and does.

Besides governing, Philo personifies the *logos* as a Son. He reasoned that,

> For God, like a shepherd and king, governs (as if they were a flock of sheep) the earth, ruling them according to law and justice; appointing as their immediate superintendent, his own right reason [*logos*], his first-born son, who is to receive the charge of this sacred company, as the lieutenant of the great king.[181]

Reasoning along the lines of Plato, Philo speculated that the *logos* was created before the organisation of the material world as God's 'true Word and Firstborn Son. In the process he equated *logos* to the Platonic Demiurge responsible for the organisation of matter."[182] The idea of a Son further gives an implication of the origin of *logos* as having eternal generation. Philo could have been giving eternal characteristics of *logos*.

In conclusion to this discussion on Philo, it can be noted, therefore, that Philo was trying to make his Jewish understanding of things relevant to the Greek philosophical thoughts which characterized the Alexandrian city in which he stayed. He united Greek and Jewish thought. He held *logos* to be a rational principle, a mediator and God's

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[179]Ibid., 287.
[180]Ibid., 21.
[181]Ibid., 178.
[182] Mario, Baghos, "Hellenistic Globalisation and the Metanarrative of the *logos*" in Elizabeth Kefallinos (ed.) *A Journal for Greek Letters* (Dec. 2012): 23-37

instrument of creation. It seems he was torn between a personal Being (following Jewish influence) and an impersonal Being (following the Greek). This Being had certain divine attributes and regarded as a first born Son. His thoughts, however, prepared his readers for the acceptance of divine *logos* in John.

Conclusion

The conception of *logos* among the Greeks was philosophical. Speculation in meaning and usage among Greek thinkers steadily developed highlighting the functions of *logos* in the origins and continuance of the universe. To the Greek philosophers, *logos* meant several things. The underlying fact throughout their speculations was that *logos* is used rather in a philosophical sense to denote reason. All philosophers held that *logos* meant "reason" and it stood as a rational principle in and behind the world. An attempt was, however, made by the Stoics to bring a religious flavour to the equation.

We also traced the usage of the word in Jewish thought. *Logos* was seen as a linguistic term though it went beyond being just an ordinary word. Among the various Jewish usages, the term means "word," "speech," "matter," thing," "command," "message," "account," "reckoning," "settlement," "respect," and "reason,"[183] More than this, the use of *dabar, memra* and wisdom in Jewish thought have certain similar attributes given to *logos* in John's prologue. *Logos* was seen as an agent of creation, mediation and revelation. The conclusions of Philo were to some extent not totally new. They also upheld the Jewish thinking though given a philosophical flavour. "It would appear,

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[183] R. B. Edwards, "Word" in Geoffrey, W. Bromley (ed.) *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, vol. 4, 1101-1104 at 1101.

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."[184] In Jewish speculations, including by Philo, *logos* was given personal and divine attributes. The underlying fact throughout this discussion is that by the time John wrote the prologue, the idea of *logos* with its multiplicity of meanings was dominant both as a linguistic term and as a philosophical concept. With all these possibilities, it is now critical to look at John 1.1-18 and see the meaning that John attached to the term.

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[184] Daniel Boyarin, "The Gospel of the Memra: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John" *Harvard Theological Review*," 94: 3 (2001) 248.
http://nes.berkeley.edu/Web_Boyarin/BoyarinArticles/108%20Gospel%20of%20the%20Memra%20%28 2001%29.pdf (retrieved 10 December 2014).

CHAPTER 4

LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF JOHN 1.1-18

4. Introduction

In chapter two we discussed the meaning and components of linguistic analysis. We explored the importance of linguistic analysis in the study of language employed in written texts and its importance in ascertaining the meaning of such texts. We stated that linguistic analysis shall be used in this study. In chapter three we looked at the origin of *logos* and traced its usage of the term *logos* among Greek philosophers and within Jewish thought. Our task was to find out the meaning and use of *logos* in these two traditions. We noted that many meanings and uses were associated with this term.

This chapter now pays special attention to the meaning and use of *logos* in John 1.1-18. It encompasses a delimitation of the text and a translation[185] of verses 1-18. This section shall be followed by an analysis of the form and structure of the prologue. The verses will then be looked at in detail with more emphasis placed on verses 1 and 14 which contain the word *logos*. We note that John used the word elsewhere in the Gospel (8.31; 5.38; 10.35; 12.38, 48; 14.24; 15.7, 20; 17.6, 14, 17, 20; 18.9). These verses shall also be briefly analysed and conclusion made.

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[185] Unless otherwise specified, this is translation we shall use in this chapter.

4.1 Delimitation (1.1-18)

Delimitation here entails an attempt to find where the text begins and ends and then give necessary justifications.[186] Chapter 1.1-18 constitutes the prologue of the book and stands as a unit. The prologue begins in verse 1 and ends in verse 18 because in verse 19 there is a change of subject and theme. In verse 19 the subject changes to John the Baptizer.[187] The theme in verses 1-18 is the identity and nature of the *logos* whilst from verses 19-34 contains the testimony of John the Baptizer. Furthermore, the form of the prologue is different from that of verses 19-34. The greater part of the prologue is a hymn[188], whilst the form of verses 19-34 is prose. We, therefore, conclude that 1:1-18 is a unit which can be studied on its own to ascertain the meaning of *logos.*

4.2 Translation of 1.1-18

1 In beginning was the Word,[189] and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him was not anything made that was made. 4 In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men.[190] 5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overpowered it.

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[186] See Gordon, D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983) 28.

[187] We note that the *logos* remains the overall subject of the unit. This is despite the fact that the light is dominant 4-9. However, together with life, these are inherent in *logos*. John is also the subject in verse 15. However, when we consider the whole unit, the *logos* remains the subject.

[188] A detailed discussion on the form of the prologue is made in 4.3.2

[189] In this translation, we have provisionally translated *logos* as "Word." After considering the various nuances given to the term in this study, we will then make a decision on the term.

[190] The word translated "men" is generic. It therefore includes both women and men. Therefore, we can alternatively translate it as "human beings." The same word also appears in verses 6 and 9.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, in order that he might give testimony concerning the Light, so that all might believe through him. 8 That one was not the light, but came to bear witness concerning the Light.

9 The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world.10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. 11 He came to his own, and his own received him not.12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; 13. Who were born, not of blood,[191] nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 John gave testimony concerning Him and cried aloud, saying, "This is He of whom I said,[192] He who is coming after me has been put before me, for He was before me." 16 For He it is from whose fullness we have all received, even grace upon grace.17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God: the only Son,[193] who is in the Father's bosom, He has made Him known.

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[191] The word is translated "blood" is in plural, but for the sake of English grammar, the singular option has been chosen here.

[192] The text here has several variant readings which could have come as copyists tried to deal with the awkwardness of the Οὗτος ἦν ὃν εἶπον reading. We chose to maintain this reading because it has the widest manuscript support and text types, that is in P⁶⁶ P⁷⁵ ℵ A B D K L M U Δ Θ Λ Π Ψ *f*¹ *f*¹³. This reading is also supported by some oldest manuscripts, such as P⁶⁶, P⁷⁵, Codex Sinaiticus (ℵ), Alexandrinus (A) and Vaticanus (B).

[193] Other manuscripts have μονογενὴς υἱὸς A C³ E F G H K M S while others have μονογενὴ θεὸς P⁶⁶ ℵ B, C L syrp, a reading supported by the Nestle Aland Text. The μονογενὴς υἱὸς seems to go along with Johannine thought. There is internal evidence in chapter 3.15 to support this (3.15). Also,

4.3 Analysis of the Structure and Form of the Prologue

We have so far seen that is 1.1-18 is a unit on its own. Now in this section, we consider the structure and form of the prologue. We are going to observe the structure of verses 1-18 first. From this structure, we shall be able to see the form of the prologue.

4.3.1 Structure of the Prologue

In the previous section, after delimiting the text, we translated the text into English. Now in this section, we look at the structure of the prologue. The purpose of this section is to help visualize the flow of thought in verses 1-18. Besides seeing the flow of thought we also note some aspects which characterize this flow of thought.

The prologue can be structured in a variety of ways. One way is by showing the relationship of *logos* to what John discusses. In this study we divide the prologue according to such relationships. The structure is as follows;

A. 1.1 Relationship of *logos* to Deity
B. 1.2-3 Relationship of *logos* to creation
C. 1.4-5 Relationship of *logos* to life
D. 1.6-9 Relationship of *logos* to John
E. 1.10 Relationship of *logos* to the world
F. 1.11-13 Relationship of *logos* to humanity
G. 1.14 Relationship of *logos* to flesh
H. 1.15 Relationship of *logos* to John
I. 1.16-17 Relationship of the *logos* to the law
J. 1.18 Relationship of *logos* to God

Another way of seeing the flow of thought in this prologue is to observe verses 1-18 in a chiastic structure. This flow of though is shown as follows;

Bruce Metzger supported this point saying it is highly doubtful that John could have written μονογενὴ ς θεὸ ς. See Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the New Testament* (Stuttgart: UBS, 1971) 198.

A.1.1-2 . . . καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν
  B.1.1:3 πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο . . .
    C. 1:4-5 ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν . . .
      D. 1:6-8. . .ὄνομα αὐτῷ Ἰωάννης· οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν.
        E. 1:9-10 . . . τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν . . . ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν
κόσμον.
          F. 1:11 εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν, καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι . . .
          G. 1:12a. ὅσοι δὲ ἔλαβον αὐτόν,
           H.1:12b ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ
γενέσθαι,
          G¹ 1:12c τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ,
        F¹ 1:13 οἳ οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων . . . ἀλλ' ἐκ θεοῦ
ἐγεννήθησαν.
        E¹ 1:14 Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν
      D¹ 1:15 Ἰωάννης μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ
    C¹ 1:16 ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος . . . καὶ χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος
  B¹ 1:17 ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο.
A¹ 1:18 ὁ μονογενὴς υἱὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός[194]

From the above structure, we observe that verses 1-12a ascends to verse 12b while
verses 18-12c descends back to verse 12b. This verse (12b) stresses that the purpose of
the *logos* becoming flesh and bringing life and light into the world was that those who
receive him and believe in his name, might become children of God. This is known as
the "peak" in discourse analysis.[195] In this analysis, verse 1 links with verse 18 and are
points to the nature and origin of *logos* and so is verse 2 and 17. Life is received in
verse 4-5 while grace is received in verse 16. Verses 6-8 is about John the Baptist and
his testimony as also pointed by verse 15. Verses 9-10 and 14 appear similar as they all
point out something about the coming of the *logos* into the world.

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[194] This arrangement can be seen in a different formats from the one presented here as presented by Colin,
G. Kruse in Leon, Morris (ed.), *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: John*, (Grand Rapids:
William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company, 2003) 59-60.
[195] This is the centre of everything in the discourse. Everything slowly builds to this level. See Peter,
Cotterell and Max, Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*, 248.

Verses 11 and 13 are about the coming of the *logos* to his own people. Verse 11 speaks of physical Israel while verse 13 is about those that are really his own, that is the believers. Verses 12a and 12c are also intrinsically connected through the verbs being used in describing the reception of *logos* by those to be the children of God. Those that accepted (12a) and believed (12c) the *logos* were given the right to become children of God (12b). This arrangement can resonate well with John's stated purpose in chapter 20.30-31,

> *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name (RSV).*

Within the prologue, we also note that John starts clauses with particles *hina* and *hoti* (7-8, 17). Barnabas Lindars highlighted that, "Epexegetical clauses with *hina* and *hoti* are very common, and the two particles are almost interchangeable.[196] Another conjunction that is very common in the prologue is the conjuction *kai* ("and") connecting sentences together. Its usage shows a relationship of what is being joined together. The word is found almost in every verse in the prologue.

There are chains like repetitions within this prologue. The repetition of words in the first twelve verses is a special feature here, thus making up the inner texture of the text. Some of these words include; word (1.1), life, light and darkness (1.4-5), testify and testimony (10-12), world (10-12), his own (10-12) and receive (10-12). These chainlike repetitions abruptly come to an end in verse 12.

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[196] Ibid., 45.

This structure that we have seen shall be helpful in the attempt to get the meaning of *logos* in the prologue as we follow the movement of thought. Secondly, the chiastic structure that has been noted helps us to remain focused on the goal of writing the prologue. Lastly, the repetition of words which is a special feature in the prologue is critical in getting the meaning of *logos.*

4.3.2 Form of the Prologue

In the section above, we have seen the structure of verses 1-18. In this current section, we now deal with the form of the prologue. In this study, form refers to the type of literature to which the text belongs. Knowledge of the type of literature that makes up the prologue plays a major role because it affects the way we read and make sense of its contents. It determines how the material is presented. It is, therefore, essential that we examine the type of literature to which the prologue belongs.

The prologue and the entire book of John fall into a group of literature called "Gospels." John's prologue is, however, presented in a mixed form. The first form that can be observed is that of a hymn. Hymns are usually observable due to their subject matter. The subject is expressed in a poetic format. The purpose is mainly that of praising God or Jesus for his divine attributes and work.[197] We observe parallel lines from verses 1-11. The first line in every verse is parallel to the second. These parallelisms are joined by the *kai* conjunction. These parallelisms resemble the structure of the Psalms in the

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[197] The New Testament has a number of hymns geared at praising the divine nature and activities of God Jesus Christ (Phil. 2.6-11; Col. 1.13-20; 1 Tim 3.16; Heb. 1.1-8). Most of these have to do with confessions of faith which praise the redeeming power of God. See R. P. Martin, "Hymns in the New Testament" in W. Bromley (ed.) *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia,* vol. 2., (Grand Rapids: WB Eerdmans Publishing Company) 288.

Old Testament. For example, verse 3 uses antithetical parallelism where the second line

opposes the first. These parallelisms can be taken as alternate lines. There could have

been someone leading a song by singing the first line while the church gave its response

in the second line. This assertion, however, remains speculative. This view is supported

by Morris who viewed that the prologue is antiphonal.[198] As a song, it is divided into

stanzas. These stanzas can be shown as follows;

> Stanza 1: Praises the Divinity and Eternal Nature of the *logos* (1-2)
> Stanza 2: Praises the Work of *logos* in Creation and Sustenance of life (3-5)
> Stanza 3: Praises the dignity of the *logos* by describing his forerunner sent from God (6-8).[199]
> Stanza 4: Praises the *logos* for the redemptive work in bringing spiritual life (9-13)
> Stanza 5: Praises the *logos* for Becoming flesh (14-15)
> Stanza 6: Praises the Superiority of the *logos* 1.16-18[200]

We also note that the hymn is characterized by rhythm and repetition of phrases. We

speculate that it could have been a song that the early Christians sang to show their new

faith on the nature and person of Jesus Christ. If the hymn was sung by the early church,

then John adapted it to suit his theological purpose in writing the Gospel. Therefore, in

this study, we presuppose that this was a hymn.

The other alternative is to take the same sections described as a hymn to be a poem.

Poetry involves more of an art in its presentation. Gene Taylor describes it as the use of

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[198] Leon, Morris, *The New International Commentary of the New Testament: The Gospel According to John*, Gordon D. Fee (ed.) (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 64.

[199] In the structure, we noted that verses 6-8 are comments that the author could have inserted. However, if verses 6-8 are were part of the hymn, then they would constitute their own stanza.

[200] See Leland Ryken, *Words of Delight* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book house, 1987) 300-310

artistic and imaginative ideas expressed in a language or rhythm.[201] The prologue shows

a lot of skill on the part of the author in the use of words which are full of meaning. For

example, the word *logos* which we are examining is full of meaning. The words are

usually repeated. The repetitions help to enforce a point. One point which makes the

idea of a poem strong is the presence of clauses of equal length which have the same

coordination, that is, the use of *kai.* Just like in hymns, there is also parallelism in

poetry.[202] Another similarity has to do with rhythm. The sound of words usually

rhymes. It is for this reason that some scholars see nothing different between a hymn

and a poem. This is because hymns are also presented as poems. The major difference,

as highlighted before, is that the purpose of hymns is usually to praise.[203]

However, we note that whether the prologue is a hymn or poem, it is interspersed with

brief remarks in verses 6-9 and 15. These verses appear differently from the rest of the

prologue. We see these verses containing an explanation from the author himself

regarding John the Baptist. Probably the author saw a need here of showing a difference

between the Baptist and what he was discussing before. We also note a different form in

verses 12-18. Their structure does no show the parallelisms that characterize verses 1-

11. There are more of comparisons and contrasts. Alternate lines are few. We observe

that verses 1-5, 10-11 are characterized by two clauses in each verse while those in

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[201] See Gene, Taylor, *Hermeneutics: How to Study the Bible* (Lubbock: Gene Taylor, 1995) 47.
[202] Rhythmic characteristics are seen in words and syllables. Rhythm can also be noted in the number of thoughts, words and stresses in each line of parallelism tend to be almost the same. See Adele, Berlin, "Introduction to Hebrew Poetry" in *The Interpreter's Bible*, 300-315 at 308.
[203] Scholars such as Raymond Brown chose the middle ground and decided to call it a "poem-hymnal." See Raymond, Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament (New York: Doubleday,* 1997) 333.

verses 12-18 are more. In fact, verse 15 is a narration which could be joined to the section on John in verses 6-9.

However, in this study, whether this is a hymn or a poem, our attempt to find the meaning of *logos* is not affected. What we note is that the prologue has lines of approximately the same length and each constitute a clause. In the quest to find the meaning of *logos,* these short clauses are critical. They assist in explaining the other clause.

4.5 Detailed Analysis

We have so far looked at the structure and form of the prologue. Using our findings it is now imperative that we make a detailed analysis of the prologue. The purpose of this section is to ascertain the meaning of *logos* from the text itself. We shall proceed with the study using linguistic analysis. After analysing the prologue, some verses within John's Gospel with the term *logos* shall also be briefly investigated. This section shall be subdivided according to the relationship of *logos* to various aspects in the text.[204]

4.5.1 Identity and Relationship of logos to Deity (1.1)

Verse 1: In this verse we see the relationship of *logos* to Deity together with its identity. The verse contains three short phrases whose vocabulary and contents overlap. Each phrase builds into another in a parallel fashion. Gail O'day calls it "stair step

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[204] These relationships were discussed in 4.3.1.

parallelism."[205] The opening of this verse with the adverbial expression "Ἐν ἀρχῇ" ("in beginning") echoes the word order of Genesis 1.1. Some of the vocabulary in this prologue such as "light", "darkness," "life," and "created" are characteristic of the creation narrative in Genesis 1.

In the present case, "Ἐν ἀρχῇ," ("in the beginning") refers to the period before the creation account of Genesis. By itself, it seems insignificant, but it is the presence of "was" (ἦν) after it that brings out the importance of this phrase. The word "was" (ἦν) is in the third person imperfect tense form of the personal pronoun εἰμί ("I am"). It is used throughout the prologue exclusively of the *logos*. It is contrasted with the word ἐγένετο ("become"), a term that indicates creation in time. Everything mentioned along with it has a point of origin such as in verses 3, 6, 10, 14 and 17. The difference is between the verb "to be" with the verb "to become." The use of ἦν here expresses continuous timeless existence of *logos*. The existence of *logos* went beyond "the beginning."[206] The prepositional phrase Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν is, therefore, indicative of a scenario where the *logos* did not come into being at any moment. Literally, we can loosely render this part as, *"When the beginning began, the logos was already there."* What was "in beginning" here is the *logos* which is rendered "Word" by most major English translations such as the KJV, NKJV, RSV, NRSV, ESV, NEB, NIV, ASV, and

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[205] Gail, O'Day, "John" in Leander E. Keck (ed.) *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 9 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995) 518.

[206] Leon Morris noted that, "Ἐν ἀρχῇ" is pointing to something at the root of the universe and not at the beginning of history." *The New International Commentary of the New Testament: The Gospel According to John, 65.*

the NASB. The Shona translation renders it as "*shoko*" or *"inzwi."*[207] Therefore, what this section adds to this study is the eternal nature of *logos*.

The preposition πρὸς ("with") used with an accusative and which we gave a "with God" rendering can be rendered also as "accompanied by" or "toward." The preposition serves to show that there is an intimate relationship of *logos* to θεὸν ("God").[208] Therefore, the *logos* is intimately connected to God.

The last phrase καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος ("and the word was God") has been a point of debate in theological circles. This debate has been exacerbated by the absence of an article on the predicate nominative θεὸς ("God"). Normally ὁ λόγος ("the Word") as the subject would have been placed first in English syntax but its position in Greek is grammatically correct. The absence of the article on θεὸς should not be surprising in Greek grammar. Deason supports this position by noting that the ananthrous nature of the word is to be explained by the syntactical arrangement or the Greek word order in sentences.[209] The context here, therefore, prefers the rendering, ". . . and the Word was God." The fact that the first θεὸς ("God") (1b) in the sentence is articular supports this view because they are referring to the same person, "God." Going with this rendering, it means that the *logos* is part of the Deity but not the same person as the first θεὸς

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[207] Bible Society of Zimbabwe (ed.) *Bhaibheri: Magwaro Matsvene Amwari* (Harare: Bible Society of Zimbabwe, 2006) 92.

[208] "The preposition reflects association in the sense of free mingling with others of a community on the same equality; thus, the pre-incarnate *logos* was on a level with and in communication with θεός. When it is used with an accusative, it denotes movement towards but that movement breaks off on the frontier of the object sought." Reicke, "πρὸς" in G. Kittel (ed.) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* vol. IV (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968) 720-725 at721.

[209] Ibid., 53.

("God") mentioned in the sentence. We conclude that that this verse shows that the *logos* has its whole being in the Deity, but does not exhaust the being of the Deity. Another contribution that we add to our nuance is that the *logos* is divine.

Another option that has been suggested is to render that last phrase as, "and the word was a god." The major proponent of this reading is The New World Translation (NWT).[210] It constructed a case on the ananthrous nature of θεὸς ("God") preferring to render it as, "a god." However, its translation committee was highly inconsistent because an ananthrous θεὸς occurs elsewhere where they render it as God and not god (Mt. 27.46; Mk 12.26, 27, Jn. 8.54, Rom. 8.33).[211] There could have been a motive behind the translation. This rendering could have been inspired by theological inclinations rather than on linguistic leverage.[212] Therefore, the context and grammar of the sentence makes such conclusions highly improbable.

Based on the above information, we conclude that the first verse provides the subject of the whole gospel. This verse sets the tone for the whole Gospel of John. In this verse, we have identified firstly that the "*logos* is eternal" (not a creation) and secondly, that the "*logos*" is intimately connected to God. Thirdly, we noted that *logos* is God.

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[210] Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (Pennsylvania: Watchtower Publications, 1961) 113.

[211] There are 282 occurrences of the ananthrous θεὸς ("God") in the New Testament. Of all these occurrences, the committee was consistent only 16 times in rendering as either gods, god or godly (that is only 6 percent of total occurrences. See R. H. Countess, *The Jehovah's Witnesses' New Testament: A Critical Analysis of the New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* (Philipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Press, 1982) 54.

[212] The uses of the Greek article, the functions of Greek prepositions, and the fine distinctions between Greek tenses were less known by translators of the NWT. See F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments,* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1963) 60.

4.5.2 Relationship of *logos* to creation 1.2-3

Verse 2: The verse, in a way, is a repetition of the components of verse one. It continues on the thought of *logos* being pre-existent. The three phrases of verse 1 are expressed as one thought in this verse.[213] The emphasis, through repetition, serves to show firstly the origin of *logos*, secondly that the *logos* was with God for all times and lastly that *logos* did not come into being at the "beginning." Verse 2 makes two contributions to our quest to find the meaning of *logos*. It tells us that the *logos* was pre-existent and eternal.

Verse 3: In the previous verse we have noted that the *logos* was with God. In verse 3, John explains the work of the *logos*[214] in creation. The verse is introduced by πάντα ("all"), which is used here as a substantive and because it is in the neuter, we rendered it "all things." The phrase δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο ("were made through him") is referring to the "all things." Creation was, therefore, only possible through the *logos*.

The second phrase, "καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἕν ὃ γέγονεν" ("and without him nothing was made that was made") in 3b serves to emphasize what was said in the first clause in 3a. The verse has a complete change of verb from ἦν ("was", the imperfect of εἰμί ("I am"), to ἐγένετο ("become"), the aorist of γίνομαι. In Greek, the verse literally says, "*All things came into being through him, and apart from him not even one thing came into being which has come into being*." The use of ἐγένετο here signifies that the creative activity is viewed as one event in contrast with

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[213] Ibid., 520.
[214] We say *logos* here due to the fact that αὐτοῦ ("him") in this verse follows οὗτος ("he") in verse 2 which has a direct reference to *logos* in verse 1. The two pronouns are both referring to *logos*.

the continuous existence of verses 1 and 2 as expressed by ἦν.[215] Therefore, this verse here shows the role of *logos* in creation.

In this verse, we note that all things came into being through the activity of the *logos*. The *logos* was the creator. Therefore, we add that the *logos* was creator to the shades of meaning regarding the *logos*.

4.5.3 Relationship of *logos* to life 1.4-5, 9

Verse 4: While verse 3 shows the role of *logos* in creation, verse 4 shows another role, which is of giving life and supporting its continuance. The stanza (verses 3-5) consists of a series of clauses in which the last word in a clause becomes the first key word in the next clause. The repeated words are ζωὴ, φῶς and σκοτί ᾳ. This is a key feature in rhetoric.[216] The presentation of material this way, helps the mind to easily recall the subject matter.

The overall subject of the prologue is the *logos* but we note that 4-9 speaks more of the light. Together with life, the context shows that these are inherent within logos. "ζωὴ ("life") and φῶς ("light") are portrayed as coming to men ("τῶν ἀνθρώπων") in both physical creation and new creation.[217] Here the article is on both words making them interchangeable in terms of position. The latter aspect of new creation seems to be in view here as it is consistent with Johannine theology. Many references about life in

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[215]The prominent distinction in John's presentation here is that the λόγος: "he was" but "all things including the world were made" (or became) See Larry, Deason, *That you May have Life: An In-depth Study of the Gospel of John* 57.

[216] The pattern in this hymn is known as gradation in rhetoric. See Leland Ryken, *Words of Delight* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book house, 1987) 300.

[217] See George, R. Beasley Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary: John*, 11.

John speak about life beyond the physical (20.31; 3.15-16, 36; 4.14; 5.21, 24, 26, 29-30; 10.11, 15, 17, 28; 17.2-3). Jesus in 14.6 declared that he was the life while in chapter 8.12 and 9.5 he declared that he was the light. "ζωὴ (life) in this context certainly goes beyond the physical life.[218] The same can be said of the light mentioned here, it is not physical light. These spiritual aspects are consistent with the overall theme as presented by John, that is, to give life (20.31). The *logos* is, therefore, the source of life and light for humanity.

Verse 5: Verse 5 continues the thought of verse 4 concerning the light. The light's sphere of operation is shown by the prepositional phrase ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ("in the darkness"). With φαίνει ("shines") in the present indicative, reference is to the activity of φῶς ("light") against the darkness. The tense shows that the activity of giving light is continuous. The word itself embraces history and also the present time. John probably is taking his readers back to the Genesis account where the emergence of light changed the dominance of darkness. Murray pointed out the same, saying, "The light of *logos* shone in the primal darkness at creation, and continued amidst the darkness of fallen mankind but shone more brilliantly in the glory of the incarnate *logos*."[219] Without the *logos*, then, darkness would have remained dominant.

The next phrase καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν ("and darkness has not overcome it") shows the strength and extent of this light. The word κατέλαβεν

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[218] This life should properly be seen as the spiritual life which is the principal of divine life. See Larry, Deason, *That you May have Life: An In-depth Study of the Gospel of John* 56.
[219] George, R. Beasley Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary: John*, 11.

("overcome"), an aorist of καταλαμβάνω, has a double meaning which conveys both the idea of "to seize or to grasp with the mind or to overcome."[220] The darkness has never caught up to the light or enveloped it or swallowed it up, so has never been able to comprehend it, or overcome it, or extinguish it. The use of κατέλαβεν indicates that darkness has never comprehended or overcome or extinguish the light. If darkness refers to sin or rebellion and despite its intensity, the work of the *logos* was and will not be extinguished. What can be in view here are forces and attitudes antagonistic to the mission of *logos*. This could be due to the type of light mentioned by John which is not ordinary. Therefore, κατέλαβεν indicates the inherent power of *logos* over anything perceived as darkness.

4.5.4 Relationship of *logos* to John 1.6-8

Verse 6: John now shifts his attention to the ministry of John the Baptist in his witnessing concerning the *logos*.[221] If these verses are indeed part of a hymn, then they serve to exalt the dignity of the logos by describing his forerunner sent from God. As we have noted before in verses 1 and 2, through the use of the verb ἦν ("was"), reference is made to eternity. But we also saw in verse 3 that the root γίνομαι ("come into being") is used three times to refer to creation. Reference here is to the coming of John. It can be seen that the *logos* "was," while John, in this instance, came into being. Here John is not identified as the Baptist or the forerunner as in the synoptic Gospels,

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[220] Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980) 217.
[221] We say the Baptist was witnessing concerning *logos* because *logos* is the overall subject, the point of focus in the whole prologue. This is what we have also established from verses 1-5.

but simply as John whose function is shown in verse 8, that is, to testify concerning the *logos*. The phrase ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ ("sent from God"), indicates the action of being sent or commissioned by God. The contribution of this verse to our study is seen when combined with verses 7 and 8.

Verse 7: This verse describes the role of John. He was appointed to the office of a "witness" ("μαρτυρία") so that he might "witness" concerning *logos* as the "Light." The Baptist's ultimate purpose is shown by ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι' αὐτοῦ ("all might believe through him"). The use of the first ἵνα ("in order that") in the clause indicates a specific purpose. The second ἵνα could be referring to the supreme end of John's witnessing. The use of ἵνα in the final clause together with the first aorist active subjunctive πιστεύσωσιν ("may believe") indicates that believing was to be the end result of John's testimony.

Verse 8: The evangelist continues to broaden the demarcation between John and the *logos*. The expressional phrase οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος ("that one was not") shows that John was not the light the author is referring to. It could have been possible that John's followers held their master highly but the author now takes the task of differentiating the *logos* from John.[222] The last clause is a purpose clause introduced by ἵνα ("in order that"). It points out that the sole mission of John here was that of giving testimony to the light. It serves to emphasize his mission that had been stated earlier in verse 7. Since

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[222] O'day noted the same thing when he wrote that, "The two clauses in the verse serve to remove any grounds for elevating the person of John by subordinating him to the "true light." See Gail, O'Day, "John" in *The New Interpreter's Bible, 521.*

John was held highly among his followers, it was, therefore, necessary to show them that John was not the light.

Whilst the thought of verses 6-7 is completed in the next verse, verse 7 shows that this *logos* could be testified to. This was the sole mission of John.

Verse 9: This verse concludes the discussion on light. It also serves as a transition to the hymnal material to follow. The phrase Ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν ("he was the true light") serves to strengthen the refutation of John as the light, a discussion carried forward from verse 8. John could have been speaking something that the audience knew regarding the light. The concept of light was not new among Jews.[223] Comprehension of what John was saying was not to be a challenge.

The use of ἦν at the beginning of the sentence is for emphasis sake. We have noted so far that its use in the prologue gives a direct reference to the *logos*. The use of ἀληθινόν ("true") serves to show that the *logos* is the true light. Therefore, John was not fit to be the light but reference is to the *logos*.

This verse carries forward from verses 4-5 the notion that the light enlightens all people, but also explicitly states that the light was "coming into the world." The object of this

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[223] John could have been doing a comparison here regarding the true light. "Perhaps the best explanation for John's use of ἀληθινόν ("true") is the well-established tradition in Judaism that regarded the Torah as symbolized by light, to which the evangelist now contrasts the final and true (that is, the real and eternal) revelation of God's light." Richard Van Egmond, *A Study of the Prologue of John*, 6

shining is πά ντα ἄ νθρωπον ("all men"). The word ἄ νθρωπον is generic and signifies that the sphere of light was intended for every person. John intended to indicate the opportunity everyone has with regard to this light.

In brief, verse 9 shows that the coming of this light was only possible with the coming of the *logos*. We have seen prior to this verse that the *logos* could be testified to. In verse 9, we note that the *logos* is the true light. Without it, darkness would reign.

4.5.5 Relationship of *logos* to the world 1.10-13

The previous section has been dealing with the light, but in these verses, there is a shift from the light to the "world." However, the link which is there is that this light was going to operate in the world. Therefore, the world is now the focus here.

Verse 10: This verse shows the presence of the *logos*[224] in the world. It also shows the response of the world to the *logos*. The word κό σμος ("world") first introduced in 1:9, is now explained further, in a resumption of the staircase hymnal structure from 1:1-5. The word is mentioned three times, in order to explain that the creation of 1:3 to which he came to, rejected him. The phrase ἐ ν τῷ κό σμῳ ἦ ν ("he was in the world") working with the imperfect tense shows continuous existence in the universe. Also in line with the theme of creation, ὁ κό σμος δι' αὐ τοῦ ἐ γέ νετο ("the world was made

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[224] We conclude that reference in this verse is to *logos* because in verse 9 we had noted that ἦ ν referred to *logos*. Therefore, the ἦ ν of verse 10 refers to the same. In fact, we have established from the first verses that whenever ἦ ν is used, reference is to the pre-existence of the *logos*.

through him"), shows that the world came into being by the activity of the *logos*. This is the same construction seen in verse 3.

Another point to note in this verse is the rejection of the *logos* by the world. The word "ἔγνω" ("know) refers to something more than intellectual knowledge. It means to perceive. People were supposed to perceive the *logos*. However, the verse showed that the world did not know, or discern or recognise the *logos*.[225] We conclude that failure to know the *logos* meant the rejection of the light highlighted earlier (1.6-8).

Verse 11: This verse extends the discussion which began in verse 10 concerning the reception of the *logos*. In this verse, we translated τὰ ἴδια and οἱ ἴδιοι as "his own." However, the two words are different in that the first is neuter while the second is masculine. The significance here is that the *logos* came to his own home, property or creation but "his people" who are part of the same creation, did not receive him.[226] The verb παρέλαβον (received") used together with οὐ ("not") means not taking to oneself. It indicates the rejection of the *logos* by his people. The first contribution of verses 10-11 to our nuance is that the *logos* dwelt among people. Secondly we see that the *logos* was rejected.

Verse 12: The two previous verses have shown the rejection of *logos* by his own, however, verse 12 shows that his coming was not met with complete rejection. This

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[225] The use of the aorist indicates that the world missed its great opportunity when the Word was in their midst. See Leon, Morris, *The New International Commentary of the New Testament: The Gospel According to John,* 85.

[226] Arndt and Gingrich translate the second clause as "his own people did not accept him." See W.F Arndt and F.W Gingrich, *A Greek -English lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979) 619.

verse expresses the salvific purpose of the ministry of the *logos* that is, for believers to become children of God. The phrase ἔλαβον αὐτόν shows that becoming children of God is made possible by receiving the logos. Those that receive him are born, not in a natural way, but of God. The result of this birth is to become children of God. The term "γενέσθαι" shows that men are not by nature children of God. They gain the right to become children of God by receiving the *logos*

The term πιστεύουσιν means to believe or commit oneself to someone but the fact that it is in the present participle shows the character of the commitment. It never ceases. It means an acceptance of *logos* and what it stands for. We note that the term is typically Johannine.[227] Those who believe in the *logos* will thus form a new community of people who will be "his own," in contrast with those who — though they were already his own creation (τὰ ἴδια as in 1.11)— did not recognize or show believe in the *logos*. Therefore, the contribution that this verse makes to our study is that the *logos* is capable of being received and believed in.

Verse 13: This verse continues the thought of verse 12 but in contrast. We note that the content of 12c and 13 are closely connected. Those who became children of God (12c) did not do so according to human will. These were born by the spiritual generation of God ("ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν"), and not by physical desire or will. The word αἱμάτων, is translated "blood" and not "bloods" in our translation. This is in line with

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[227] This term appears almost 40 times in the Gospel, most often in connection with Jesus (31 times), and usually in reference to saving faith, as it does here in 1:12. See Richard Van Egmond, *A Study of the Prologue of John*, 8.

English grammar. What is in view here perhaps is the blood of both the father and mother. This and the following phrases emphasize that no human agency is or can be responsible for such a birth. On the other hand, the word σαρκὸς ("flesh") is employed in an ordinary sense. Reinecker and Rogers supported this view when they noted that the word is not the wicked principle opposed to God, but reference is just to the natural sense of the word.[228] The verse emphasizes that those who are God's children came only from the will of God after believing in the *logos*. We continue to notice that those who become children of God would have to believe in the *logos*. The contribution of this verse to our nuance is that the *logos* can be believed. This belief makes one a child of God.

4.5.6 Relationship of *logos* to flesh (1. 14)

Verse 14: In verse 10-12, John told us that the *logos* came into the world, but in this verse he now gives the details of how that came to be. For the first time since verse 1, the term *logos* is restated. This verse shows a movement from the cosmological dimensions of the term in verse 1 to the earthy abode. The phrase ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, "the *logos* became flesh" is the controlling factor in this sentence. In contrast to verse 1, this phrase shows that the process of *logos* becoming flesh is a historic event. This movement is also apparent in John's use of the verb ἐγένετο in place of ἦν, signalling that the *logos* took on a new form. The new form is that of becoming flesh. This was a physical manifestation of the *logos*. The absence of the article with the

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[228] See Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New*, 218.

predicate substantive σὰρξ ("flesh") supports the translation adopted, so that it cannot mean "the flesh became the *logos*." "Flesh" indicates that the *logos* became something physical.

The phrase "dwelt among us" ("ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν") with the verb in the first aorist active indicative means, to pitch one's tent or tabernacle among the people. The verb ἐσκήνωσεν signifies temporary residence.[229] The verb is used elsewhere in Revelation 7:1-15; 12:12; 13:6; 21:3 to indicate God dwelling among his faithful ones. In this verse it indicates the *logos'* decisive act of dwelling among people. During that dwelling, John states that they beheld his glory ("τὴν δόξαν"). Reference was to personal experiences which the author and other followers had with the *logos*.

The word μονογενοῦς is translated as the "only born" rather than only begotten.[230] Therefore, they (John and other followers) beheld the *logos* as the only one of its kind. The kind was that of the Father. One challenge in this verse is whether to link the words παρὰ πατρός ("from the Father") with μονογενοῦς or with δόξαν ("glory"). John meant to say that "the manifested glory of the *logos* was as it were the glory of the Eternal Father. This glory is shared between the Father and His only Son. His coming brought something different; he was full of grace and truth ("πλήρης χάριτος καὶ

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[229] Bauer adds that the word can mean to take up temporary residency, tent or lodging. See Walter Bauer, "σκήνος" in *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Christian Literature*, 929.
[230] The word can also be alternatively translated as "One and only." This translation is consistent with other New Testament passages such as Luke 7.12; 8.42; 9.38 and Hebrews 11.17. In John 1.18, 3.16 and 3.18, John is not using the word in the sense of "begotten" but his uniqueness as the "Only" son of the Father.

ἀληθείας"). What is being brought to the surface in this verse is the reality of Jesus pitching his tent among men.

The contribution that this verse makes to our nuance is that the *logos* became flesh. The *logos* took on a human form and dwelt among people. Within the *logos*, there was grace and truth.

4.5.7 Relationship of *logos* to John

Verse 15: The verse goes back again to highlight John's testimony concerning the *logos*. The author takes his readers back to verses 6-8 where John is mentioned. In this case, there are two actions done by John to fulfil his mission. The first was of "testifying" (μαρτυρεῖ) which has already been highlighted. The second action is reflected by κέκραγεν ("cry out"). The verb indicates that John achieved part of his objective of testifying through public proclamation. John uses the same word whenever he is introducing important public declarations (7.28, 37; 12.44).

The participle λέγων ("saying") indicates a specific constant cry that John was making concerning the *logos*. The use of the present tense μαρτυρεῖ in the introduction of John's testimony to the *logos* further emphasizes the enduring character of the testimony. The statement which John continuously cried out portrays the theme of his inferiority which had been highlighted in verse 6-8. Οὗτος ἦν ὃν εἶπον ("This was he of whom I said") signifies this is not the first time John has said this and points back to that occasion through the use of ἦν. The clause Ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος

ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν ("He who comes after me ranks before me") indicates that John's ministry came first before that of the *logos*. However, ὅτι πρῶτό ς μου ἦν ("he was before me") indicates superiority. It means the *logos* was superior in status even though John's ministry came first. It is possible that the time component represent the pre-existence of the *logos* while rank, Deity.

In verse 15, therefore, we note that the *logos* is a person who can be proclaimed. Furthermore, the aspect of pre-existence and rank further highlights the conclusions of verse 1 regarding the divinity of *logos*.

4.5.8 Relationship of *logos* to the law 1.16-17

Verse 16: Verse 16 continues the thought of verse 15 by showing the result of Jesus' coming, that is, the bestowal of his grace. The employment of ὅτι ("for") here signifies that John's audience in general can support the verdict that they have experienced the gifts of grace that the incarnate *logos* gives. The word πληρώματος "fullness" indicates that what the people received came from the fullness in *logos*. Morris sees a further hint of the infinite extent of his resources, for "all" receive from him.[231] The thought is of resources which cannot be exhausted. The expression grace upon grace ("χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος") literally means "grace for or instead of grace.[232]" This means that

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[231] Leon Morris, *The New International Commentary of the New Testament: The Gospel According to John,* 97.

[232] Baur, Arndt and Gingrich assets that the word ἀντὶ usually indicates that one thing or aspect is to be replaced by another, that is, instead of. Alternatively it can also indicate that one thing is equivalent to another. In this regard it can be translated as "for" or "in place of." See Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 73.

when one piece of grace recedes another one takes over. Therefore, a continuous flow of grace is in view here. The incarnate *logos* is the source of this grace.

Verse 17: This verse continues the thought of verse 16. Another explanation which can be given to χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος ("grace upon grace") finds its answer here. There is a comparison between what Moses gave and what the incarnate *logos* brought. In this verse ὁ νόμος ("the law") strictly stand for the first 5 books of the Old Testament because it was Moses, in the strictest sense, through which the law came. The law is mentioned here probably because of how the Torah was elevated among Jews. It is this law that was replaced by ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια ("grace and truth").[233] The emphasis in this verse is the surpassing excellence of Jesus and not Moses because it is through him (Jesus) that grace and truth came.

We note that it is only in this verse that *logos* is identified by name, Jesus Christ. This name had not been specified before now in the prologue. We add this identification to the conclusions we have made so far regarding the *logos*.

4.5.9 Relationship of *logos* to God 1.18

Verse 18: The prologue concludes with verse 18 giving the final uniqueness of the *logos* who has already been identified as Jesus in verse 17. It stresses that it is only Jesus who is in the closest possible relationship with the father. Apart from him, there is no other. The phrase θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε ("no one has ever seen God") is emphatic

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[233] Grace and truth were elements also found within Jewish thought but John is here claiming that their source was Jesus and not Moses See Leon, Morris, *The New International Commentary of the New Testament: The Gospel According to John*, 98.

in its declaration that no one has ever seen God. In fact ἑώρακεν, a perfect tense, with πώποτε, indicates that the inability to see God has continued throughout history. Exodus 33.19-20 states that no one can see God's face and live. This means that what the *logos* did (its continuity in the presence of and seeing God) had never been done before. Comparison is between Jesus and Moses. John is here showing that the ministry of Jesus outweighs that of Moses. The phrase ὁ μονογενὴς υἱὸς ("the only son") which refers to Jesus in this context is consistent with Johannine thought (3.15).

John further gives evidence of Jesus' superiority over Moses through his position as is expressed by εἰς τὸν κόλπον ("in the bosom"). This shows a very close relationship between Jesus and his Father. In fact, it further highlights why John used the preposition πρὸς ("with") in verse 1, where the *logos* was with God signifying a close relationship. This relationship can be explained through the use of the word τὸν κόλπον ("bosom").[234] Therefore, this verse shows that no one except Jesus is closer to the Father, not even Moses.

Verse 18 is important to this study. We note that the *logos* was in an intimate relationship with the father. It indicates that it is only the *logos* that has seen God and is the only Son of the Father. We, therefore, add these attributes to the nuances we have so far noted regarding the *logos.*

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[234] The word "bosom" is a Hebrew idiom expressing an intimate relationship of child and parent or friend and friend. See Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* 219.

Conclusion

In the process of analysing verses 1-18, we have noted various nuances pertaining to *logos*. We noted that the *logos* was pre-existent and therefore eternal (1.1). It was also noted that the *logos* carried divine attributes. Verse 1 highlights that the *logos* was God. We also noted that the *logos* was the creator of all things (1.3). In verses 4-5 we noted that life and light were inherent in *logos*. This life was the light for humankind. Verses 6-9 shows that this *logos* could be testified upon. We noted in verses 10-12 that the *logos* came among people. From these three verses, we see that the *logos* could be recognized, received and believed. By believing this *logos,* a person is given the right to become a child of God (12-13). In verse 14, we observed that this *logos* became flesh. In this verse, the *logos* changed form and assumed a human body. We also saw that through the *logos,* grace and truth came (15-16). Verse 15 on its own showed that the *logos* was superior to John in terms of ministry and pre-eminence. The pronouns used in verse 15-17 points out that the *logos* was a divine person. Verse 17 adds to our nuances were the *logos* is identified as Jesus Christ. In verse 18, the *logos* is the only one who saw God and was very close to him. From all these shades of meaning, we note a deficiency in translation. The term *logos* is usually translated, "Word," but this term does not adequately capture all these sheds of meaning which we have seen. The *logos* is, therefore, something more than just a "Word." If John was discussing about a concept, then our English rendering is weak.

4.6 Remote Context

In the previous section we have been able to analyse verses 1-18 which constitute the prologue. We were able to note various nuances to the word *logos.* Our conclusion was that the traditional translation we make of *logos* is as "Word" is not adequate to capture what John was saying. This section now deals with other verses that contain the term *logos* within John's Gospel. The purpose is to investigate how John used the word elsewhere in his Gospel and determine whether such usages may shed more light to the meaning of *logos* in his prologue.

The term *logos* was not only used to refer to the findings above but it was used in other ways. We see an ordinary use of the term where it is used synonymously with *rhema* ("word") (John 3.34; 14.10; 17.6, 8). This spoken word could also be accepted or rejected. If they were to accept it then the next demand was to abide by it (8.31; 5.38; 15.7).

In John's Gospel, Jesus frequently speaks of His *logos* and "works" as containing the divine revelation and requirements made through Him. People are asked to believe in, cherish and obey them (Jn 5:24; 6:63, 68). The word is mentioned either in singular or plural (John 3:34; 8:47; 14:10; 17:8, 14). The word that Jesus spoke demanded a decision to be made by the hearers. Some accepted while others rejected it (5.24; 12.48; 4.41, 50; 7.43) as highlighted before. Since this word belongs to him, rejecting his word means rejecting him. In the prologue, John shows that some people actually rejected the incarnate *logos*, Jesus himself. One thing that can be noted is that every occurrence of

logos occurs in some syntactical sequence with Jesus or God.[235] In all these, except in the prologue, *logos* is used as an ordinary linguistic term without any reference to a person. The use of the word in the rest of the Gospel seem to imply that John is speaking of the prophetic word which goes forth from God's mouth to accomplish judgment, redemption and renewals.

What we can establish from this section is that the presentation of *logos* in verses 1-18 is unique. However, we note here that all words spoken by Jesus proceed from God. We remain with the conclusion we had made before that, the translation made concerning the *logos* in the prologue does not adequately capture all nuances ascribed to *logos* in the prologue.

4.7 Brief Reconstruction of the Occasion

We have seen so far that the *logos* is Jesus Christ and that in the text, John endeavouring to prove his divinity, person and function. This section tries to reconstruct the occasion for John's writing. Its purpose is to justify the conclusions made regarding the identity and function of the *logos*. It appears that there are some issues that John was trying to answer when he produced his Gospel. We suggest that several groups had different views regarding the person of Christ and the Christian faith. These included Gnostics, certain Jews and the followers of John the Baptist. This Gospel then becomes a defence of the faith which John knew as the one received from Christ himself. His overall purpose found in 20.31, was that all should believe in Jesus.

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[235] See D. H. Johnson, "*logos*" in Joel, B. Green and Scott McKnight (eds.) *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 481.

4.7.1 Polemics Against Gnosticism

John existed at a time when the intellectual world was one of philosophic-religious syncretism. Debates have concentrated on the Johannine Son of Man, the incarnation of Jesus (1.14), issues of creation, life, light, darkness and the "I am."[236]   Though Gnosticism reached its peak of influence in the second Century A.D, its seeds were sown during the apostle's time. Their Gnosticising tendencies had begun to threaten the very heart of the Christian faith. As a result, John sets out to give a defence.

Gnostics Christians believed in God. This God is not only unknown to humans; he is unknowable.[237] John then struggles in the prologue and in the rest of the Gospel to point out that He can be revealed and known through Jesus (1.18). Two basic questions caused a challenge and which eventually influenced Gnostic teaching. These are; how can we reconcile the creation of the world and the existence of evil with the conception of a holy God as the absolute Being creating an evil world? Their view about creation greatly shaped their tenets;

> They believed that from this One God, emerged other divine entities, emanations which are called aeons such as thought, eternality and life; moreover, some of these aeons produced their own entities, until there is an entire realm of the divine aeons, sometimes called the Fullness or, using the Greek term, the Pleroma.[238]

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[236] Edwin, D. Freed, *Critical Introduction to the New Testament*, 206.

[237] Gnostic Christians maintained that in the beginning there was only One God. This One God was totally spirit, totally perfect, incapable of description, beyond attributes and qualities. See Bart, Erhman, *Lost Christianities: The Battle for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 122.

[238] Bart, Erhman, *Lost Christianities*, 123.

This explanation gives account of how in their view this Pleroma came about and how this world was also created. It is for this reason that John wrote regarding the *logos* as the creator apart from whom nothing else was created (1.3-4).

They tried to account for the existence of the world from the emanations that had occurred. God sent out the initial emanation ("aeon"). This emanation sent out another which in turn sent another. A regression of emanations occurred bringing about other emanations (which descended from the original emanation and the original dwelling place of God). The result of this regression was that the last emanation ("aeon") created the world of evil matter. Those at the furthest levels are the ones who created the world. This means that the supreme God could be relieved of the responsibilities of creating the world.[239] This meant that the creative work of Christ had been taken away since creation was relegated to the last aeon. In order for one to understand the genealogy of emanations, the Gnostic believed that one had to acquire the greatest level of knowledge. However, in the prologue, John highlights that Jesus, who was part of the Deity, revealed God to humanity (1.18).

Their belief, that matter was evil, the body included, brought about several teachings. Redemption to the Gnostic was not redemption from sins. Redemption was through

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[239] Howard, I. Marshall, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistles of John* 17.

self-awareness or illumination to be redeemed from the material world.[240] In order to acquire this redemption, one had to be enlightened to a higher knowledge that enabled one to understand true reality. "He must become aware of the "divine spark" (*pneuma*) in himself in order to escape at death from the material world to the spiritual realm of existence. The release of the spirit trapped in the material body is salvation. It was then inconceivable that Jesus could assume a human body when flesh was evil. John, therefore, defends the act of incarnation (1.14).

One group among the Gnostics were the Docetics. The main teachers were Cerinthus and Serapion the bishop of Antioch who was the first to use the name Docetics.[241] Docetism became a tendency rather than a formulated and unified doctrine which considered the humanity and suffering of the earthly Christ as apparent rather than real. In some forms it held that Christ miraculously escaped the humiliating death on the cross by either Judas Iscariot or Simon of Cyrene changing places with him just before crucifixion.[242] Like their name, it only seemed it was Jesus but he was not. What is being denied is Jesus's real humanity and actual death. In the prologue, John defended

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[240] The Gnostics also concluded that since the body was evil matter, then it was really not important. The body's desires could be fulfilled in any way, both physically and morally (So this led to immorality among some who claimed that fornication was not a sin against the body since the body was of the material world, and thus, had no influence over the spirit). Furthermore, some Gnostics believed that the material, that is the evil body, must be deprived of physical needs such as food and sex. The body should be subjected to severe discipline. The result of this belief was the teaching of asceticism, that is, the total denial of the desires of the flesh in order to discipline the body. See Paul, McKenchnie, *The First Christian Centuries: Perspectives in the Early Church* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2001) 158.
[241] See F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (ed.) "Gnosticism" in *Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007) 493.
[242] See Merkel, Helmut, "Marcion" in Erwin Fuhlbusch *et al* (ed*.) in The Encyclopaedia of Christianity*,) (Grand Rapids: WB. Erdmans Publishing Company, 2001) 493

that Jesus dwelt among people and they beheld his glory (1.10-4, 17-18). He had not come in flesh but in "ghost like" docetic appearance. Extant documents from Nag Hammadi prove this assertion. One of such books is called the Gospel of the Acts of John, which supports this view.[243] This teaching was an attempt to explain a seeming contradiction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. However, John's prologue makes no such distinction and neither does the whole Gospel. His pre-existence, which the prologue gives, counters this standpoint which had taken root among Gnostics.

Though this is a second century phenomena, its origins in the last part of the first century could have caused John to give his view of the person and work of Christ. Due to the various views made regarding to aspects of Christ, creation, salvation and others, it became essential to give a proper view of the *logos*. This enables us to see the major emphasis placed upon Jesus in the prologue.

4.7.2 Polemic Against the Baptist Sect

The Gospel attaches special importance to John the Baptist as a primary and authentic witness to Christ (1.6-8, 15, 19-36; 3.22-30; 5.30-36; 10.40).[244] These said passages occupy a unique position in an attempt to elevate Jesus but they also proceed by way of

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[243] In this pseudo document John reports that he saw Jesus and had to flee to the Mount of Olives. When darkness covered all the earth, Jesus appeared to John in a cave and lit it. He told John, "I have suffered none of these things which they say of me." After saying this he was taken up, without anyone of the multitude seeing him. See Istvan Czachesz, *Early Christian Views on Jesus, Resurrection Toward a Cognitive Psychological Interpretation*, www.religionandcognition.com/publications/scachesz-resurrection.pdf (retrieved 10 October 2014).

[244] The Gospel does not however, call him "the Baptist." We use the description in an attempt to differentiate between John, the author and John, the Baptist.

contrast. They portray Jesus as superior in every way to the Baptist. It could have been that the disciples of the Baptist had continued to work in a manner that was detrimental to the overall mission of Christ (3.22ff; 4.1).[245] Rivalry could have been a possibility between the two groups.

Evidence for the continuation of these followers is seen in Acts 19 in Ephesus from which this Gospel could have been written. Apollos of Alexandria was also a disciple of John (Acts 18.25). Some documents like the Clementine Recognitions (third Century but based on earlier writings) assert that various sects grew up to thwart the infant church with some seeing John as the Messiah (Mt. 11.11).[246] The Johannine sect could have also been one of these. We, however, recognise the difficulty involved in proving this standpoint.

John the author took the task himself to help those who followed John that they now ought to recognise the one to whom John had borne witness. This was achieved by showing the superiority of Jesus regarding his origin and function in the world. John is shown in the prologue taking a secondary role. The author, therefore, wrote to prove the superiority of the *logos* to John.

4.7.3 Polemic Against Challenges from Jews

The Gospel was also intended, in part, to deal with Jewish denials that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God. John's epistles also deal with the same danger. The

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[245] See Barnabas, Lindars, *The New Century Bible Commentary: The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981) 58.
[246] Ibid., 58.

description best fits Jewish Christians who wanted to hold on both to their former religion and Christianity. Wally V. Cirafesi stated that this community could have been, " . . . an isolated Jewish–Christian community struggling to deal with the legal ban from the synagogue placed on them due to their dual desire to maintain devotion to Moses and faith in Jesus as the Messiah (cf. 5.46; 9.28)."[247] The members of this community may have continued to elevate the Jewish law. In the prologue, John sets the tone by showing the difference between Moses and Jesus. Jesus is mentioned as bringing grace and truth (16-17), something which Moses could not give. The elevation of Christ could have been intended to move these followers of Moses into the Christian faith.

The Gospel points to a crisis which could have precipitated its composition. At three places the expression, "put out of the synagogue" occurs (9.22; 12.42; 16.2). It has been proposed that, "This phrase refers to a practice of excommunicating perceived heretics from the synagogue."[248] It give some glimpses in the conflicts within first-Century Judaism. In this regard, the destruction of the temple (70AD), the cultic centre, meant a radical reorientation of the Jewish religious life. As a way to explain this new faith and cement their beliefs, there is a heavy use of the Old Testament. "From the beginning to the end, the Gospel is shaped by language and images of the Old Testament and extra canonical documents such as Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon, with the prologue being

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[247] Wally V. Cirafesi, "The Johannine Community Hypothesis (1968-Present): Past and Present Approaches and a New Way Forward" in *Currents in Biblical Research* 2014 12: 173, http://cbi.sagepub.com/content/12/2/173 (retrieved 25 November 2014)
[248] Gail, O'Day, "John" in *The New Interpreter's Bible, 504.*

linked to Genesis 1."[249] Within the framework of these conflicts there could have been others who did not know where to stand. John could have then realised the need to cement the beliefs of his countrymen.

Conclusion

In this study we have noted various nuances given with regard to the *logos.* Verses 1 and 14 specifically mention the term *logos* and the description given shows that it goes beyond just being a linguistic term. We noted that the *logos* was pre-existent, eternal and God (1.1). We also noted that the *logos* was the creator of all things (1.3) and that life and light were inherent in him. Verses 6-9 shows that this *logos* could be testified upon. We noted in verses 10-12 that the logos came among people. From these three verses we saw that the *logos* could be recognized, received and believed. In verse 14, we observed that this *logos* changed form and became flesh. We also saw that through the *logos,* grace and truth came (15-16). Verse 15-17 shows that the *logos* was a person who is identified in verse 17 as Jesus Christ. In verse 18, the *logos* is the only one who saw God and who was very close to him. The significant usage of the term is as a designation of the Divine pre-existent person of Christ. The investigation has shown that Jesus was of the same nature and abode with his Father. Joanna Brunt captures this conclusion well by saying that Jesus is shown as an autonomous eternal being who

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[249] Ibid, 505.

shares the authority, power and glory of Deity.[250] Taken in another way, he is of the same nature as God.

Readers of the Synoptics had long been familiar with the term "Word of God" as equivalent to the Gospel; but the essential purpose of John's *logos* is Jesus Himself and His Person. The fact that this "*logos*" became flesh in the person of Jesus brings essentially a change of meaning to the ordinary use of the word (1.14). With Jesus as part of Deity, His functions are seen in creation and ultimately in spiritually sustaining the same. He is the provider of life and light (1.3-5; 1 Jn. 1.1), elements which are inherent in him. John the Baptist came to bear witness to the existence of Jesus Christ (6-8, 15) and his work. The author goes at length to show the inferiority of John. Another person whom Jesus is compared with is Moses whom the Jews held highly. Jesus, being a Son of God and the vehicle through which grace and truth came and him being in the bosom of the Father is superior to the prophet. With regard to John, it is most probable that certain people were mistaking John for the Christ. Jesus as the *logos* is the means by which God communicated his purposes to the world. This has to be differentiated from the spoken word which dominated the Old Testament and which finds itself even in Johannine literature.

With the different possible occasions mentioned, it could have been possible that the Christian faith was under attack, especially, the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is highly possible that John's audience had the synoptic Gospels in their possession but

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[250] See Joanna, Brunt, *John: Paideia Commentaries of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1997) 38.

these could not deal with the situation on ground. Based on this fact John then wrote to present Jesus in this unique way. We, therefore, argue that John wrote to give a defence on the person and work of Jesus Christ. The prologue initiates this defence. The end result was that by believing that Jesus is the Son of God, people may have eternal life (20.31). John chose to use the term *logos* to capture and express all this.

In this study, we have been able identify the various nuances attached to the word *logos.* In the previous chapter, *logos* was generally seen as a rational principle, a mediator and an agent of creation and salvation. John adds that this *logos* was a divine incarnate person. Due to these various nuances noted, we were able to conclude that rendering the term as "Word" in English is not adequate to capture all the nuances.[251] The translation misses other essential nuances noted in the study. *Logos*, therefore, goes beyond just being "Word." In addition, our findings in this study also have certain implications for Christology. The next chapter will survey these implications and give a summary and conclusion to the whole study.

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[251] In English, the Oxford Dictionary defines the term "word" as, "Something that can be said or written or a statement, remark, news or promise." Sally, Wehmeier (ed.) "Word" in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (*Oxford: Oxford University, 2000) 1375.

CHAPTER 5

CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5. Introduction

In the previous chapter, we were able to note the different shades of the meaning of *logos*. To John, this was the best word that he could use to capture his belief in the person, nature and mission of Jesus. Based on these findings we concluded that the English rendering of *logos* as "Word" is not adequate to capture all the nuances we found. This endeavour was achieved through linguistic analysis. The purpose of this current chapter is to finalize the whole study. We will discuss some contemporary implications to the study and then give a summary and conclusion to the study.

5.1 Contemporary Implications

The results and conclusions of this study concerning the meaning of *logos* address contemporary readers in a number of ways. These include the way we translate Biblical texts into receptor languages. In this discussion, we shall take the English and Shona languages as examples. After the challenges in translation, we shall highlight implications regarding the person and work of the *logos*.

The first implication affects translators of the Bible. Translators are confronted with a challenge of finding a word in a receptor language that can best represent what is in Koine Greek. Words in the receptor language, at times, may not be adequate to explain a word or concept in Koine Greek. This is what we note regarding the meaning of *logos*

with its very wide semantic field. The English rendering of the term as "Word" leaves out some nuances. In English, the term "word" is defined as, "Something that can be said or written or a statement, remark, news or promise."[252] While the ordinary use of the term is equivalent to the ordinary use of the word *logos*, it is inadequate when capturing its meaning in the prologue.

The challenge above is also exemplified by the Shona rendering of *logos* as *"shoko."*[253] The Shona term does not also capture all the nuances that we arrived at above. In Shona, the word "*shoko*" means, "A message or discussion or a matter of conversation."[254] Another alternative Shona word is "*inzwi"* or *"izwi."* The word is rendered in English simply as voice or word.[255] Besides this definition, Herbert Chimhindu explains that, "It means a word or words said when communicating with someone."[256] We conclude that both terms are just ordinary terms which are inadequate to capture all the nuances we have noted in the study. This is because a concept which is explained by one word in one language may need more words to explain it in another language. Bible translators in Africa and elsewhere must be able to understand this challenge and take this into consideration when translating texts.

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[252] Sally, Wehmeier (ed.) "Word" in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (*Oxford: Oxford University, 2000) 1375.

[253] Bible Society of Zimbabwe, *Bhaibheri: Magwaro Matsvene Amwari* (Harare: Bible Society of Zimbabwe, 2006) 92.

[254] M. Hannan (comp.) "Shoko" in *Standard Shona Dictionary* (Harare: College Press Publishers, 1959) 606.

[255] See D. Dale, "Izwi" in *Duramazwi: A Shona-English Dictionary* (Mambo Press: Gweru, 1983) 204.

[256] Herbert, Chimhindu, *Duramazwi ReChishona* (College Press: Harare, 1996) 426.

Faced with this challenge in translation, Shona Study Bibles can be made as a follow up to the translation. These will elaborate or give more information necessary for deepening the understanding of some concepts in the Bible like *logos*. For example, using the same Shona rendering of "*shoko*" or *"izwi,"* at verses 1 and 14,[257] a study Bible may be appear as follows;

> *1 Pakutanga kwakanga kuine Shoko,*[258] *Shoko rakanga riri kuna Mwari, Shoko rakanga riri Mwari. 14 Shoko rakazova nyama, rikagara pakati pedu, tikaona kubwinya kwake, kubwinya sokwowakaberekwa mumwe chete wababa, azere nenyasha nechokwadi.*[259]

Another implication has to do with the way interpreters view the person and nature of *logos.* This determines their interpretation of who Jesus is. This affects their Christological conclusions. As we noted in the study, translating *logos* in verse 1 as a "god" is grammatically incorrect. This is the translation given in the NWT. However, the interpretation we made in this study is relevant in the face of this challenge. The words being affected in the interpretation are qualitative nouns (1c). They signify neither definiteness ("the God"), nor indefiniteness ("a god"), but rather attribute all the qualities or attributes of the noun to the subject of the sentence which is *logos.* If "God" is qualitative, here, then it means that all the attributes or qualities of God mentioned in the previous clause belong to Jesus.

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[257] These two verses were picked because they are the only ones in the prologue where the word *logos* appears.

[258] *Johani anoshandisa izwi iri mukuedza kutsanangura rutendo rwake rwese rwunechekuita naJesu zvaari. Rinobata dzinde, chinangwa uye basa raJesu* (John used the term to capture his faith in the person, provenance and mission of Jesus).

[259] 1 In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Another point to note has to do with the incarnation of *logos* (1.14). This has a direct implication on the provenance of Jesus Christ. It affirms that God in the person of the Son took a human body and lived among his creation. When it is said that He "dwelt" among us, the Greek word used is ἐσκήνωσεν, which is literally translated as "tabernacled" going by Old Testament allusion (Ex. 40.34-38; 37.7-11). God dwelt with people and people would come to meet him at the tabernacle. This serves to emphasize the conclusions of verse 1 regarding the divine nature of *logos.*

In brief, this study has implications on how texts are translated into other languages. The word *logos* serves as an example. We are faced with the task of trying to use our own languages efficiently to capture Biblical concepts so as to have proper understanding of them. The other implication has to do with the person and nature of Christ.

5.2 Summary and Conclusion

This section is a summary of every chapter in this study. Its purpose is to briefly summarise the details in the study from the first chapter to the fourth chapter. We bear in mind that the main focus of this study was to ascertain the meaning of *logos* in John 1.1-18. Each chapter contributed in some measure to the attainment of this purpose.

The first chapter introduced what the study was all about and what propelled it. It sets forth tools and guidelines through which the study was going to be done. Various

literatures covering various issues of background, meaning and methodology were examined.

Chapter 2 concerned itself with a discussion on linguistic analysis, a method which was to be used to ascertain the meaning of *logos* in the prologue of the fourth Gospel. We noted that linguistic analysis is critical in the study of any language. Though it is a broad discipline that looks at every language, we narrowed down to the study of the languages that were used to write the Bible, and in our case, Koine Greek. We broke it down into such aspects as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, lexicology and discourse analysis. We also noted that whilst all these are important, a text should be studied in its context. These components were going to help in our endeavour to find the meaning of *logos* in 1.1-18.

Chapter three of this study looked at the etymology of the word *logos* and concentrated on the different usages of the word among Greek philosophers, Jews and Philo prior to the writing of the prologue. From this study, we saw that John used a term that was already in circulation but with varying meanings attached to it. Its usage in Greek philosophy dates as far back as Heraclitus (500 B. C). The Sophists had seen it as a rational power behind what is seen. Plato and Socrates also emphasized that *logos* was the Divine Reason or Mind whose source was God. Aristotle saw this reason as what differentiated man from animals. However, for the neo-Platonic philosophers, the *logos* was a person - an intermediary between the remote supreme God and creation. It was later picked up by the Stoics, who used it to refer to cosmic Reason that is inherent in

all of reality. For the ancient Greek Stoic philosophers, the *logos* was the rational principle of the universe but not a person. The Stoics spoke of the *logos* as the Seminal Reason, through which all things came to be, by which all things were ordered, and to which all things returned. Though Greek speculators had several meanings for *logos,* their speculations do not correspond to the meaning that John attaches to *logos* in his prologue. We conclude that the purpose they served was to prepare the ground for Greek speakers who had come across such speculations to easily appreciate John's use of *logos.* To them it was not going to be something totally new though its meaning was in a way at variance with the one in the prologue.

In Hebrew thinking, *logos* was less rationalistic and speculative than in Greek philosophical thought. One of the most important words translated *logos* in the LXX is the Hebrew term *dabar.* The word is ordinarily used more often for ordinary human communication, whether written, spoken or acted (Est. 9.8; Is. 29.11, 18). It is also for words of poems, songs and sayings of wise men (Pr. 1.6; 22.17; Deut. 31.30) and as prophetic revelation. *Dabar* can further be seen as God's creative word (Psalms 33.6). On the other hand, the same word is translated in Aramaic as *memra.* Memra was personalized as an agent of salvation (Deut. 1.30; Ex 33.22; Is. 6.8; 45.25) and creation (Gen 1.3; 15.1; Ex 25.22). Its origin was from God.

Furthermore, certain attributes given to the Torah in Jewish wisdom literature are also given to the *logos* by the writer of the Johannine prologue. The Torah was seen as a

mediator, creator, giver of life, light and direction and pre-existent. Lastly, Philo saw in *logos* a rational principle, a mediator and God's instrument of creation. It was a first born Son, the Light and the very shadow of God. Therefore, these reflections were available prior to the writing of the Johannine prologue.

Chapter 4 investigated verses 1-18 of John's prologue. The purpose was to ascertain the meaning of *logos* as employed by John in verses 1-18. We noted that there is a general agreement that the prologue is a hymn in poetical form. As an answer to the challenges confronting his community, John endeavoured to set forth the real identity of who Jesus is, his functions and what he stood for. John used the Greek word *logos* capture and express his belief in the person and work of Jesus.

Based on the linguistic analysis that we carried out on the prologue, *logos* was eternal and divine (1-2). The prologue is clearly emphatic in declaring that besides being a person, the *logos* was truly part of Deity. The construction of the language used in the verse eliminates any other interpretation that excludes the *logos* from being a divine person. The *logos* is the creator, and life and light were inherent in him (3-5). We found also that the *logos* could be testified to (6-9) and could be received and rejected (10-13). As God, he became flesh through incarnation (1.14) and dwelt among men (1.10-12). In verse 15, through the ministry of John the Baptist, the *logos* was shown to be pre-existent. We noted that through the *logos,* grace and truth came into the world (16-17). This *logos* is then identified by the person of Jesus Christ in verse 17. After identifying

the *logos* as Jesus Christ, verse 18 reflects Jesus' closeness to His Father. This prologue and the entire book reflect that John was prompted to write this due to the challenges that were being made by certain Jews, fore-runners of Gnosticism and followers of John the Baptist regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ.

We highlighted that the proper meaning of *logos* cannot be deduced from the word itself but from an analysis of all sentence structures. These make the major semantic contribution to John's concept of *logos*. However, one term is not enough to capture these findings. We concluded that *logos* was the word that John chose from the Greek language to capture and express his belief in Jesus.

Having identified, in part, the divine *logos* as Jesus Christ, the prologue of John can therefore be seen as contributing in a certain measure to the doctrine of Christology. This doctrine assert that Jesus is divine and combined with verses elsewhere, it is seen that Jesus is omnipresent (Mt 28:20; Jn. 8.58), omniscient (Jn. 16:30; 21:17) and omnipotent (Jn. 5:19). These are the same attributes that are ascribed to God.

In this concluding chapter, we noted that the results of this study have contemporary implications. These are aimed at the way we translate texts into different languages and how we view the provenance, nature and mission of Jesus. However, in terms of translation, we maintain that our English and Shona rendering of the *logos* is not adequate to capture all nuances regarding *logos*. We recommend that a Shona Study Bible be made as a follow up to the Shona translations in circulation.

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