

A bitch, a mother, a sinner, a saint: Gnostic Sophia Reconsidered in Light of Second Temple Judaism and the New Testament

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Heavily gendered and idealized already in the Hebrew Bible book of Proverbs, the personified feminine Sophia undergoes a gradual process of masculinization and further idealization in Jewish writings of the Second Temple Period. Somewhat paradoxically, this appears to culminate in her (almost) complete effacement from the New Testament or her replacement with the masculine logos. Yet, in Christian Gnostic writings of the 2nd century CE, Sophia returns with vengeance: more feminine than she was ever before, by now she is both more powerful from the Hebrew Bible God and no longer an idealized unequivocally positive nourishing mother figure. The lecture discusses how convictions about gender and sexuality (both at the divine level and at the social level) may have been instrumental to the ways early Christians addressed the divine Sophia myth.