

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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The *Logos*

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Editor's note: Dr. Gordon Clark gave this lecture titled "The Logos" to the teachers at Chattanooga Christian School in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1984, the same year that The Biblical Doctrine of Man was published.

By your gracious invitation I am here this morning to lecture, as it was suggested to me, on the first verse of John's *Gospel*, where Christ is called the *Logos*. I published a small book on *The Johannine Logos*, and if anything in this short lecture interests you, you will find more complete exposition in that book.

Statistics may not provide the most interesting type of introduction, but it does not burden the brain nor injure the intellect to know that John's *Gospel* uses the term *Logos* forty times. What is more surprising, indeed disconcerting, is that the Greek term *logos* can be translated by forty different English words. Liddell and Scott's great lexicon has more than five columns, each ninety lines long, of its various meanings. The word *word* is hardly ever the correct translation. Liddell and Scott say explicitly that it "rarely means a single word" (page 1058, column 2).

The reason our Bibles translate *logos* as *word* is that Jerome, a monk of the early fifth century, mistranslated it as *verbum*. Jerome's *Vulgate*, as it is called, became the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church, and the texts Jerome used have become the mainstay of contemporary liberal versions. The Latin term *Verbum* became *Word* in English, though I do not know why it did not become

verb, as it actually is in a new Catholic French version, *La Bible de Jerusalem*. At any rate, *Logos* hardly ever means a single word. But it has forty or more other meanings.

I have not listed all the meanings, nor shall I read you my abbreviated list. Just survey it from your seats:

computation, reckoning, accounts, measures, sum, total, esteem, consideration, value, reputation, relation, fashion, ratio, proportion, rule, pretext, reason(ing), case (at law), theory, argument, principle, law, thesis, hypothesis, formula, definition, debate, reflection, narrative, story, speech, oration, phrase, message, tradition, dialogue, oracle, proverb, language, sentence, and the *Wisdom of God*.

The particular interest in the *Logos* as used in John's first verse derives from its philosophic background. Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher about 500 B.C., used the term to designate the Supreme Intelligence who rules the universe. Neither Plato nor Aristotle had a *Logos*-doctrine, but the Stoics, the most vigorous of all schools from 300 B.C. to A.D. 200, adopted the view of Heraclitus. Then Philo Judaeus, a contemporary of Christ, used the Stoic *Logos*-doctrine to interpret the Old Testament. Some Christians in the third century, and some others in the

nineteenth century, thought that Philo had anticipated the doctrine of the Trinity. This was far from Philo's intention, though no one can deny that he influenced the early church in that direction.

In addition to the Greek Stoics and Jewish Philo, there is another source that seems to have influenced John even more directly. At an unknown date, possibly in the early second century, an unknown author wrote a tractate *Poimander*. This became the first of a series of eighteen which were collected and published, perhaps in the fourth century, under the name *Hermes Trismegistus*. The whole was supposed to be a revelation from the Egyptian god *Tehuty* or *Thoth*. The tractates are not consistent one with another, and one or more of them seem to be a form of Christianity. Now, *Poimander*, by which Reizenstein tried to explain away Paul's doctrine of redemption, bears a striking resemblance, or better, a striking non-resemblance, to the Prologue of John's *Gospel*. *Poimander* says that the *Logos* was not in the beginning, the *Logos* was not God, not all things were made by him, and therefore the darkness could comprehend it. The contrast is so definite that one can hardly refrain from concluding that John wrote his Prologue for the express purpose of refuting *Poimander*.

This may seem to conflict with a second century date for *Poimander*. However, two considerations preserve the possibility. First, the tractates were written at different times and collected later. Second, even if *Poimander* was not written before A.D. 125, its religion was more ancient and could have had a deleterious effect on first century evangelization.

We today are not much interested in the religion of *Poimander*; but we should be interested in Christ as the *Logos*, despite the fact that even the members of conservative churches mainly react negatively.

A story of the Person of Christ could hardly begin more appropriately than with *John* 1:1. Echoing the *Septuagint*, John uses *Genesis* 1:1 "In the beginning." Not only is deity asserted in these two words, but John repeats the idea at the end of the verse: "The *Logos* was God."

Jehovah's Witnesses try to evade the force of this verse. They translate it, or rather mistranslate it, as "the *logos* was a god." They thus adopt polytheism.

More to the point they do not know the Greek rules on the use of the article, and they mistakenly assert that there is no indefinite article in Greek. But let us proceed. If John begins with the first word of the Old Testament, the second word of the Old Testament comes in John's third verse: The *Logos* created all things.

John of course is not the only apostle who tells us this. In *Ephesians* 3:9 Paul says that "God created all things through Jesus Christ." Then in *Colossians* 1:16-17 Paul says that Christ created all things, and more explicitly that Christ "organized the universe." It should be remembered that *ta panta* in Greek, though usually translated "all things," is the regular description of the universe. Christ, the *Logos*, the Intelligent Deity, organized the universe.

The doctrine of creation, asserting that the universe is not an everlasting mechanism but a teleological construction of Intelligence, needs great emphasis today because it is so widely denied in the public schools. Purposeless differential equations have replaced an omnipotent and omniscient mind. Nor does this theology affect the subject of physics only. Its implications are even more easily seen in its effects on morality, extending from Sodom on the Hudson to Gomorrah across the Golden Gate. However, before going on to these derivative subjects, we must yet a while continue with the basic theology. For theology is basic.

Associated with logic, intelligence, and mind is the concept of wisdom. Before congratulating himself in *1 Corinthians* 2:16, where Paul says that he has the mind of Christ, he had declared that "Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God" (*1 Corinthians* 1:24). *Jude* 25 acknowledges Christ by referring to "the only wise God our Savior." *Psalms* 104:24 connects wisdom with creation by asserting, "O Lord, how manifest are your works, in wisdom have you made them all." The subject is vast. A lecture like this can give only a few indications of it. For example, *Ephesians* 3:10 speaks of "the manifold wisdom of God." This wisdom is Christ, for Paul had just said, *Ephesians* 1:8, that in Christ's redeeming work God "abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."

The Gnostics had made wisdom or *Sophia* the lowest eon in God's mind, and by her sin the lower world came into being. The New Testament mentions *sophia* or wisdom fifty-one times, but it is not the *Sophia* of the Gnostics. *James* 1:5 admonishes us that "if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God...and it shall be given him." We often pray for health, and this is not improper, but how often do we pray for knowledge and wisdom?

Christ is the wisdom of God. Nevertheless Christ is also something else, something basic and more fundamental even than wisdom. The New Testament uses the word *truth* 110 times, of which 25 occur in John's *Gospel*. The scholarly Existentialists or Neo-orthodox, such as Barth and Brunner, and the totally unscholarly Pentecostals, unite in sharing emotion and ecstatic experience. But nowhere does Christ say, "I am the emotion." Many good Christians, indeed all good Christians, say that God is love; and so he is. But if this were not *true*, he would not be love. Truth is basic. Listen to what the apostle said.

John 1:14, "The Word [*Logos*] was...full of grace and truth." Three verses below, "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The third chapter of *John*, whose 16th verse is so well known, in verses 20-21 teaches that morality depends on truth. In his profound theological conversation with the Samaritan woman, who had had five husbands and was then living with a man who was not her husband, Christ insisted that one must worship God in spirit and in truth. To some Jewish believers Jesus promised "you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (8:32). Later in the same chapter, negatively, Jesus denounces the devil because there is no truth in him (8:44). The next two verses continue the emphasis. Then there is the well-known verse, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (14:6); and one may comment that if it were not true that Christ is the way, there would be no use of walking that way. The Holy Spirit, sometimes called the Spirit of Christ, is three times called the Spirit of truth (*John* 14:17, 15:26, and 16:13) verses bearing directly on the doctrine of the Trinity. Christ also says that he himself is sanctified through the truth, as we too are sanctified through the truth (17:17, 19). If any Christians wish to increase in sanctification, they must learn more truth. The verses quoted are most of John's verses that identify Christ as the Truth.

Anyone interested can search out the remainder of the 110 verses in the New Testament and meditate on their truth.

No one should be surprised that the *Logos* – the Logic, the Reason, the Wisdom, the Message, the Language, the Reflection of God – is the truth. What is surprising and depressing is the fact that the churches called evangelical have almost totally eliminated their intellectualism from their thought. If they have not become ecstatic Pentecostals, speaking charismatic gibberish, and if they have not become Existentialists, who find little or no truth in the Bible, they have nonetheless repudiated theology in favor of a comfortably blank mind. Permit me to ask you, When did you last hear a sermon on the Trinity? I remember one by Clarence Edward Macartney in 1924, and another really excellent one by a Greek Catholic priest in 1979. But even references to the Trinity, let alone complete sermons, have been few in number. References to Christ are frequent but too often meaningless. Many times evangelists have stressed "a personal relationship to Christ." This makes no sense. Even Satan has a personal relationship to Christ. He hates him; and hatred is very personal. What people need is a statement of the proper personal relationship to Christ, and that depends on who Christ is. One can sympathize with humble people of low IQ, who cannot understand. But one can only upbraid people of higher intelligence who refuse to understand.

A few paragraphs back I made mention of morality. Let us ask, why do so many women murder their own babies, or at least pay a hired assassin to kill or half-kill the child and throw his quivering body into a garbage can? Why does the cruel vixen kill her own child? Few people give the basic answer. She kills her baby because she rejects the doctrine of the Trinity. The Ten Commandments forbid the crime of murder. But why should anyone pay attention to the Ten Commandments? The answer to this *why* is found in the introduction: "I am the Lord thy God." If that statement is not true, then abortion, child abuse, torture, drug addiction, theft, and anything else are matters only of personal preference. The basic question is not what is right or wrong, though this question has a derivative status. But the basic question is, What is true?

For a good 1500 years Christian theologians have described human nature as intellectual and volitional. Jonathan Edwards, for example, wrote “God has endued the soul with two principal faculties: the one, that by which it is capable of perception and speculation, or by which it discerns and judges of things, which is called the understanding. The other, that by which the soul is some way inclined with respect to things it views or considers: or it is the faculty by which the soul beholds things...either as liking, disliking...approving or rejecting. This faculty is called...inclination, will...mind...often called heart.”

The Lutherans too, at least those who, like the Missouri Synod, have preserved this orthodoxy, pay little or no attention to the emotions. Even in this decadent century their notable theologian, Pieper, in his *Christian Dogmatics* (page 519) very briefly, but twice, states the Lutheran position that the image consists of intellect and will. There is no mention of the emotions.

This emphasis on the will has almost totally disappeared from what now passes as Christian preaching. Freudianism has replaced it with the emotions. Most pew-warmers do not realize that this emphasis is a very modern development. If one go back to the Westminster divines, to Calvin, even to Aquinas, and especially to Augustine, he will find that human nature is regularly divided into intellect and will. The point is important because faith in Christ is not an emotion but a volition. One does not feel for Christ, he decides for Christ. The Scripture says, Jesus himself said, “Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish” (*Luke 13:3*). Note very carefully that repentance is a change of mind. Its root is the word *noeō*, “to think.” The noun *nous* is the intellect. And faith, by which one is justified, is a belief, a voluntary assent to an understood proposition.

Begging your pardon, and with what modicum of modesty I can muster, may I remark that this month The Trinity Foundation has completed the publication of my book on *The Biblical Doctrine of Man*.

Now today, in contrast with the Christianity of the past, Freudian emotionalism has replaced intellectualism, and volition seems to have been totally forgotten. Finney reduced evangelism to psychological brain-washing. A contemporary

evangelistic, but non-ecclesiastical, group boasted that it could convert almost anybody in 20 minutes. They needed 35 minutes in England. This was not the attitude of Jonathan Edwards, of Whitefield, of Calvin, of Luther, nor of Augustine and Athanasius. These men emphasized the truth and urged people to believe the truth. Faith is no emotion. Faith is intellectual understanding with volitional assent.

Permit me to repeat and emphasize that the *Logos* was full of grace and truth. He said, you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. Christ was sanctified, and if we are also, we are sanctified by the truth.

O God of truth, whose living Word
upholds whate'er hath breath,
look down on thy creation, Lord,
enslaved by sin and death.

Set up thy standard, Lord, that we
who claim a heavenly birth,
may march with thee to smite the lies
that vex the groaning Earth.

Then God of truth, for whom we long,
thou who wilt hear our prayer,
do thine own battle in our hearts
and slay the falsehood there.

Book Offer

Get both books mentioned in this *Review*, *The Biblical Doctrine of Man* (regularly \$6.95) and *The Johannine Logos* (regularly \$5.95) for \$10 postpaid. Send your check or money order to:

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