

is still "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body" (Romans viii. 23).

This redemption of the body is to be realised at our Lord's Second Coming. "We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." (I Corinthians xv. 51-2). What this change will involve is, of course, something which is entirely outside our own experience, and about which we know nothing. But it seems clear that the resurrection body somehow partakes of the characteristics of the present mortal body. (I Corinthians xv. 42 f). And this is consistent with the fact that man is declared to have been made in the image of God. We saw at the outset that this included the capacity for sharing the resurrection, whatever else it might mean.

The foregoing is an attempt to set forth briefly the Bible teaching concerning ourselves. It is teaching which is at many points being sharply criticised to-day, as indeed it has often been. And it is, therefore, teaching which is all the more necessary for the Christian unflinchingly to urge upon the attention of his fellowmen.

## The Word and the Wisdom of God.

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**O**NLY by the Evangelist John is the title "Word" (in the Greek, 'Logos') applied to the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

For Matthew, Christ is "Great David's Greater Son," heir of his throne and Israel's promised Messiah. For Mark, He is the Divine Servant. For Luke, He is the Perfect Man. For John, He is the Word, the Son of God, Himself God blessed for ever.

The abrupt introduction, without preliminary or explanation, of this title in the first verse of St. John's Gospel shows that the Logos, a conception hovering uncertainly upon the confines of theology and of philosophy, was familiar—superficially, at least,—to those for whom the Apostle was writing. What, then, is the meaning of this title "The Word," applied by St. John to our Lord?

From a very early date philosophic Greeks had perceived at the heart of the visible ordered world or 'cosmos' a rational principle which they called the 'logos' or "reason." They argued, reasonably enough, that a world that displayed such order revealed also an ordering intelligence. Many of them—the Stoics, for example—rejecting, as do the fashionable scientific pantheists of to-day, the idea of a personal and transcendental intelligence, located the 'Logos' in the 'cosmos' itself.

Others, more intelligently, regarded the supreme intellectual principle—or principles, for some of them held that there were several—as independent of, and above, the material world, and as an emanation or creation of the Supreme Being.

Philo, the Jewish philosopher, born shortly before the Christian era and living his whole life in Alexandria, wrote as a Jew, zealous indeed for monotheism but deeply attracted by Greek speculative

philosophy. (It is highly likely that he knew little or nothing about Christ or Christianity.) Philo developed on monotheistic lines the doctrine of the Logos. For him the Logos was the self-revelation of the One God ; but he oscillated uneasily between a Logos that was an independent and even personal Being and a Logos that was merely an aspect of the Divine activity.

These varieties of the Logos doctrine represent the gropings of Gentile and Jewish minds (for the Jews of the dispersion were considerably infected with Greek intellectualism) after some being who should reveal or interpret God and act as an intermediary between man and the Higher Intelligence—gropings, in fact, after the doctrines of the Incarnation, the Trinity, and the Mediatorship of Christ. Some of them fail to recognise their Logos even as a conscious personal existence distinct from God, and all fail to recognise his eternal Godhead. To the rescue of these blind gropings comes St. John with the true doctrine of the Logos.

But before considering this New Testament revelation on the subject, we may well put ourselves into the place of the pious Jew who lived before Christ. Had he any knowledge of such a Being as the Logos? He knew the God of his race, who was also the Lord of the whole earth—the one true God. But did his scriptures, the holy oracles which were the precious and distinguishing heritage of his race, reveal to him any existence at all comparable to the Logos of Greek philosophy? Any being that might be regarded as the pure and uncorrupted counterpart or analogue of the ordering and creative "Reason" of heathen speculation?

That counterpart, it may with some confidence be maintained, is the "Wisdom" of the book of Proverbs.

There is much in the early chapters of the Book of Proverbs on the subject of wisdom. It is an attribute of God—an attribute highly to be coveted by man—a precious possession willingly bestowed by God upon all who seek it. "A wise and understanding heart" had been bestowed upon Solomon himself at his own request. But there is more than a hint that wisdom is something more than an excellent quality in God or man. When it is said that "Wisdom crieth without : she uttereth her voice in the streets" (Prov. i. 20), we may say that by a literary figure wisdom is here personified. But when she goes on (v. 24) to say : "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded . . . I also will laugh at your calamity : I will mock when your fear cometh . . . then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer," we begin to have serious doubts whether this "wisdom" may not be something other than a literary personification.

Again, when in chap. 3 Solomon breaks out (vv. 13-18) into a riot of ecstatic praise of wisdom—of all that she is and all that she brings, we may reflect that Solomon, vessel of inspiration as he was, was yet an Oriental writing with Oriental luxuriousness of imagery and was possibly recalling the vast prosperity that had accompanied his own acquisition of wisdom. But suddenly (v. 19) he says "The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth ; by understanding hath He established the heavens" ; and we are at once reminded that John, when introducing the true Logos to his readers (and be it remembered that the

Greek word Logos signifies both "Reason" and "Word") declares with clear allusion to the first verse of Genesis ("In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"), that "in the beginning" all things were made by this Creative Intelligence.

Wisdom is, then, much more than a mere attribute or quality. The most remarkable proof of this is to be found in the eighth chapter. There again, as in chapter one, wisdom is represented as "crying aloud" in all the places of public concourse—crying her priceless wares through a score of verses. And then suddenly, in vv. 22 to 31, occurs one of the most remarkable passages in the Old Testament—a passage in which "Wisdom" is set forth (as the Logos is set forth in the first chapter of John) as existing "from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was," when neither sea nor dry land was; and then (again, like the Logos of St. John) as taking part in the creation of the heaven and the earth "as a master craftsman" (v. 30, R.V.); as being *with God* in all this (as John says, "the Word was *with God*"); as being One between whom and God there was a mutual complacent delight (v. 30); and as finding, even in the eternity of the past, His delights—surely re-creative and redemptive—in the sons of men.

The Wisdom, then, of Proverbs is an analogue of the Logos-Reason of Greek and Judæo-Hellenistic philosophy, and, as we believe, a title of Christ as Creator. That His delights are with the sons of men suggests Wisdom as the Re-creator or Redeemer. But that the Wisdom of God is redemptive as well as creative is made most clear by a passage of the New Testament. To the Greeks at Corinth, versed in their native speculations on the Logos or Reason that informed the visible cosmos and seeking always (as the Apostle remarked) after "Wisdom," Paul preached the true Wisdom. The Wisdom that they were ignorantly groping after was Christ—He who was made unto them Wisdom from God—even righteousness and sanctification and redemption; not the Wisdom that was the creative energy of the Cosmos, but the Wisdom that was re-creative and redemptive. Sin had come in, and the message of the Creative Wisdom was useless to the sinner. What the intellectual Greek really needed, though it seemed to him "foolishness," was Redemptive Wisdom.

But if he rejected Wisdom on the Mercy Seat, there was left only Wisdom on the Judgment Seat. For Wisdom is not only Creator and Redeemer. He is Judge. This also is proved from the New Testament. Towards the conclusion of the most terrible of all His denunciations of the Pharisees our Lord made use of these remarkable words, recorded in Luke xi. 49—"Therefore also said the Wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles and some of them they shall slay and persecute." In the corresponding passage in Matthew (23, 34) Christ is reported as saying "Wherefore behold I send unto you prophets and wise men. . ." Now as there can be no discrepancy between Matthew and Luke, it is clear that our Lord assumes to Himself the title of the Wisdom of God. It is also clear from the context that He holds that title as a Judge: "that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation."

The Wisdom of God is thus *creative, redemptive, and judicial.*

Let us now pass on to the Johannine version of the Logos. "In the beginning" says John, "was the Logos." The Greek word, as we have noted, signifies both "reason" and "word." The two ideas go together; in fact, the first may be said to involve the second. Divine Reason—creative, purposive intelligence or wisdom—is plainly also a "word," that is, the means by which God expresses Himself. Just as we express ourselves not merely by articulate speech but by our acts, so God speaks in His creative acts.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." That was a self-expressing manifestation of Divine Creative Reason. The simple sublimity of this verse has often been commented upon. But John in the not less sublime exordium of his gospel lets in the light of inspiration upon its inner content. "In the beginning"—as far back, that is, as the mind can go—the Word of God was "with God":—not "in" God, but, as a distinct Person, "with" God; and the Word *was* God. John reiterates the distinctness of this personality—"the same was in the beginning *with God.*" There was to be no mistake about it. One of the chief errors of the ancients concerning the Logos must be nailed to the counter.

Again the Logos, while creative (the ancients were right in that), was creative in a far deeper and more embracing sense than the ancients had imagined. The Logos was God and was creative in the sense in which God is creative—"All things were made by Him," and (that there might be no possible shadow of a mistake) "without Him was not anything made that was made." He was

"Of the full Deity possess'd;  
Eternally Divine."

This witness is confirmed by St. Paul—"By Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth . . . all things were created by Him and for Him" (Col. i. 16); by St. Peter—"By the Word of God the heavens were of old" (II Peter iii. 5); by the writer to the Hebrews—"By Him also God made the worlds," and again, "the worlds were framed by the Word of God" (Heb. i. 2, xi. 3).

We learn, then, that in that "beginning" of which Genesis speaks the creative activity of the Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, was present. The "Word" was the means by which God expressed Himself. The suitability of the title is apparent. There is creative Reason indeed, but the Reason is God's "Word" of self-expression. Just as we express ourselves by our words, so God expresses Himself by His Son.

"Thou art the Everlasting Word,  
The Father's Only Son."

Long before there were men to speak to—long before Adam communed with God in the garden of innocence—God expressed Himself in His great creative acts. So we, if we were living like Alexander Selkirk upon a desert island, should still be expressing ourselves.

God's creative activity is vested in His Son. "My Father worketh hitherto and I work" (John v. 17). By Him God speaks. He is God's Word—God's Word in *creation.*

But He is also—and this is the main burden of St. John's message—God's Word in *re-creation*; the "new creation"; redemption. The analogy of this, it is instructive to notice, is to be found in that same first chapter of Genesis. When God originally "created the heaven and the earth," He created them good and fair—radiant with light unmixed with darkness. For "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" (I. John I. 5). But mysterious chaos overtakes the Divine order of God's fair creation, and darkness is on the face of the deep. What happens then?

Where darkness is, the Word expresses Himself as light. For God said, Let there be light. And the light scattered the darkness. Even so we are told by John in his inspired exposition of the Logos that "in Him was life, and the life was the *light* of men, and the light shineth in darkness." For

"Discord on the music fell,  
And darkness on the glory."

Man, created upright, had fallen. Sin had covered him with a darkness that could be felt. Again, the Word, expressing Himself as light, shines amid the uncomprehending darkness of man's sin and ruin.

The Word is manifested now not as creative but as redemptive energy. "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. i. 2). "In the beginning" He spoke by His Son in creation; "in these last days" He speaks by that same Son in redemption. Christ is God's Word to lost man. Man has now not to be born, but to be born again, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 13).

And how is this effected? John tells us. The Word in the beginning created the cosmos by His sovereign fiat. But this new creation? Ah, that is a different matter. Sin has created a staggering problem. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John i. 14), that He might be what the Baptist, seeing Him for the first time, proclaimed Him—"the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). Bethlehem existed for Calvary. "He Himself took part of flesh and blood that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death" (Heb. ii. 14). "Once in the end of the age hath He been manifested" in an earthly life "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. ix. 26).

When John proclaimed the Word who in the beginning was with God and was God, he was not voicing any speculations of human philosophy. He had not by searching found out the Word. No, he had himself heard and seen with his eyes and looked upon and his hands had handled, of the Word who is life (I John i. 1). He had seen the moral glory that shone in the ways and walk of "that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us" (I John i. 2). He had seen, too, upon the holy mount another glory—the unearthly glory "as of the only-begotten of the Father" (John i. 14).

In the opening verses of the first book of the Bible we have seen the Word in His glory as Creator of the heaven and the earth. In yet greater glory we have seen that Word made flesh that He might redeem and new-create the fallen race of man. Yet once more—in

the last book of the Bible—is presented to us the Word of God, not now as Creator or Redeemer, but as Judge.

We know from other scriptures that judgment is vested in the Son. Paul on Mars' Hill announced that God had appointed a day in the which He would judge the world in righteousness "by that man" whom He had ordained (Acts xvii. 31). Our Lord Himself solemnly declared that "the Father judgeth no man but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John v. 22).

So John in Revelation xix. 11-16 portrays "the Faithful and True"—in the day of His vengeance when He treads down the workers of iniquity in His righteous anger, and tramples them in His holy fury—riding forth to war and judgment, "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood"—not now His own blood, but the blood of His enemies; for "He treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God"; "and His name is called *The Word of God.*"

"God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that"—that and nothing else, that precisely and exactly—"shall he also reap" (Gal. vi. 7). The easy sentimentality that thinks of God as the good-natured master who won't be too hard on his man has no warrant in Scripture.

Men are mocking God every day; but it is God who will have the last word. After the hardness and impenitence of their hearts men are treasuring up unto themselves "wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." But the word of the Lord is that "God will render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom. ii. 5, 6).

Everywhere throughout the civilised world the demand is growing in volume and intensity for strict and exact retribution upon men whose unexampled crimes of cruelty, perfidy and mendacity have shamed the darkest records of heathenism.

"Strict and exact," forsooth! Justice aims, the saying is, at "fitting the punishment to the offence." But there are some offences—long and complicated catalogues of offences—for which there is no fit, precise or adequate punishment. No penalty that any civilised people could ever exact from the loathed Nazis would be anything but a "token" payment. (That is not to say that a tribunal of the civilised nations should not to the full extent of its powers offer its solemn satisfaction to the claims of justice).

But what man cannot do, God can do and will do. Through that Word to whom He has committed all judgment He will render to all men everywhere according to their deeds; and men will cry, and cry in vain, to the rocks to fall upon them and hide them "from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. vi. 16).

The "Word" like the "Wisdom" of God is *creative, redemptive, and judicial.*