

THE LOGOS DOCTRINE

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The doctrine and origin of the term "logos" has been one of which much has been discussed for centuries. The following thoughts are taken from various authors and are by no means the author's own. Since the origin of the term "logos" seems to have come from the Grecian philosophers, one shall begin at that point and end with the New Testament thought concerning the "logos".

The beginning point of term is not certain but the first one to write of it was a man named Heraclitus. He was a Greek philosopher who according to Morris in his New International Commentary of the New Testament, had three conceptions, "logos, Fire, and God are fundamentally the same".¹ Morris, in telling of Heraclitus thoughts on "logos" expressed it this way:

He introduced the idea of Logos to account for the order he saw in the Kosmos. It was the stabilizing, directing principle of the universe.¹

The term in classical Greek, according to International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, signifies both "reason" and "word"... "Every word implies a thought."²

Although some conceived the Logos as just a word or thought another Greek speculator, Anaxagoras, "was the first thinker who introduced the idea of the supreme intellect principle which, while independent of the world, governed it."³

In the writings of Plato, too, one finds "the idea of a regulatory principle."⁴ He made a distinction between that principle and that through which conception of the world was made.

Another Greek philosopher known as Aristotle wrote on the doctrine of the Logos though he uses words which occur in a variety of senses.

These senses can be defined as the I.S.B.E. defines them "right insight," "the faculty by which the will is trained to proper action."

The Stoic philosophers, too, used the term "Logos." Nicole, in his The Expositors Greek Testament, says about the Stoics:

Among the Stoics the word was similarly used...to express the genetative principle or creative force in nature. The term was familiar to Greek philosophy.⁵

I.S.B.E. had this to say of the Stoics:

It is to the Stoics we must look for the first systematic exposition of the doctrine of the Logos. It is the key to their interpretation of life, both in the realms of Nature and of duty. Interested more in ethical than physical problems, they were compelled to seek a general metaphysical basis for a rational moral life... The fundamental thought consequently is that the entire universe forms a single living connected whole and that all particulars are the determinate forms assumed by the primitive power which they conceived as never-resting, all-pervading fire(which)... they called Logos or God.⁶

The basic Hebrew thought of "Logos" or the Word was that it was revealed as wisdom in the Old Testament. In many of the books of the Old Testament, wisdom represents the word. I.S.B.E. says this of wisdom:

In Job, wisdom is represented as existent in God and as communicated in its highest form to man...in the Book of Prov it is coeternal with Jeh and assists him in creation (Prov 8:22-31). It may be doubtful whether this is the language of a real person or only of a poetic personification.⁷

The writings of Philo are considered by I.S.B.E. as being a combination of both Greek and Hebrew thinking:

In the Philosophy of Alexandria, of which Philo was an illustrious exponent, the two phases were combined, and Hellenistic speculation was united with Hebrew tradition for the purpose of showing that the OT taught the true philosophy and embodied all that was highest in Gr. reflection.⁸

Some of the characteristics of Philo's Logos were

- 1). He distinguished between the instrument and the cause of existence.
- 2). He believed the instrument was the intermediate between God and man.

3). The eldest or firstborn Son of God.

The writers of the New Testament are in total agreement as to the Logos. That the Logos dwells with God at this moment is brought out by Paul in Galation (4:4) and the Roman (10:6) letters. Paul mentions, too, the fact that Jesus participated in creation. In Colossians the first chapter, we find Paul stating that Christ created all things. Therefore, one must assume Paul believed in the deity of Christ as the active force in creation.

The writer of the Hebrew letter discussed the son as heir of all things, as creator of all things and as being the very essence of God. Like the writings of Paul one can see clearly that the writer believed in the deity of Jesus Christ as the creating essence in creation.

The gospel of John is the writer which explicitly uses the term Logos. The I.S.B.E. expressed it this way:

The evangelist uses "logos" six times as a designation of the Divine preexistent person of Christ (Jn 1:14; 1Jn 1:1; Rev. 19:13) but he never puts it into the mouth of Christ.⁹

Did John borrow this term from the Greeks to express his thoughts on Christ? Morris explains:

John was using a term which, with various shades of meaning, was in common use everywhere. He could reckon on all men catching his essential meaning.¹⁰

John makes three contrasts which I think would be well to bring out. First of all, John says the Logos was in the beginning of time. If the Logos was before the beginning of time, then, He is God. The proof of this is found in the prophet Isaiah's work. In Isaiah 43:10, Isaiah reveals that no God was formed before time and no God will be formed after God. Therefore, the Logos was preexistent with

God. The second contrast brought out by John was that Logos was with God. This then is a reemphasis of the preceding statement for God was in the beginning (Gen. 1:1) therefore, he was with God. John is very explicit here. The Logos not only is the essence but he is Deity along with God. The Logos then is an expression of one personality of the Godhead.

The preceding thoughts are given that the total picture of the Logos may be seen.

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Broadmen Press, 1932).

FOOTNOTES

1. Morris, p. 115
2. ISBE p. 194
3. IBID p. 1912
4. Ibid p. 1912
5. Nicoll, p. 684-685
6. ISBE p. 1912 Op. cit.
7. Ibid p. 1913
8. Ibid p. 1914
9. Ibid p. 1914
10. Morris p. 123