

In yesterday's post I began to discuss the Prologue of the Gospel of John, which contains a poem that celebrates Christ as the Word of God that became human. This Word of God was with God in the beginning of all things, and was himself God; through him the universe was created and in him is life. This word took on flesh to dwell with humans, and that human - the divine word made flesh - was Jesus.

Some readers over the years have wondered if this celebration of the Logos of God that becomes flesh owes more to Greek philosophy than to biblical Judaism. It's a good question, and hard to answer. One thing that can be said is that this Logos idea does find very close parallels with other biblical texts - in particular with texts that speak of the Wisdom (Greek: Sophia) of God. Sophia and Logos are related ideas; both have to do in some respect with "reason." Sophia is reason that is internal to a person; Logos is that reason that gets expressed verbally.

Wisdom plays an important role in some biblical passages, none more so than Proverbs chapter 8, where "wisdom" is celebrated and is portrayed almost as a hypostasis - that is, a characteristic or feature of God that takes on personal characteristics as a being separate from God. Much of the Christ poem in John 1 has parallels with the paeon to Wisdom in Proverbs 8. Consider the following verses, spoken of Wisdom:

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