

It's Relevance for Pastoral Care

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| <p>Wisdom as an Image of God:</p> <p>Essay, Experimental Litany and Shocking Conclusions</p> <p>This text @1995 Jackson Snyder</p> <p>Can Sophia possibly be a valid and efficacious image of God and object of worship? Perhaps, but only if Sophia can be defined as God / Goddess within the context of Christian scripture, using orthodox exegetical methodology and typology?</p> | |
| <p>This is a 25 minute experiment with the Hebraic Roots Group in Tallahassee, December, 2007. If you are on slow speed and would like a CD of this extraordinary litany, just ask.</p> | |
| <p>Snyder Bible Home Essays Archive All Sermons</p> <p>Go to Message Now blogging here</p> |  |
| <p>FREE THE SERMONS!</p> <p>Jackson Snyder Monthly Viewsletter</p> | <p>TOPICAL INDEX</p> <p>Devotion by St. Hildegard Devotion by Pseudo-Solomon Lecture – Wisdom as an Image of God Pagan Litany in the Seminary Goddess Language Feminine Imagery Can Sophia Represent God Overview of Wisdom in Scripture Wisdom Personified Wisdom as Logos Luke and Beyond “Wisdom Speaks” – a litany of wisdom through the ages Sophia / Wisdom Valid? Sophia / Wisdom Invalid? Wisdom and Implications for Pastoral Care</p> <p>This is advanced material meant for pastors or pseudo-scholars. Before even attempting to read this message, I suggest you first look closely at this lesson - Wisdom 101 [pdf] (12/29/07)</p> <p>I saw seven pillars supporting a round dome of iron and standing on top of this dome I saw a singularly beautiful figure. The figure is Wisdom,</p> |

The Pagan Christ: Recovering the Lost Light By Tom Harpur / Saint Martin's Press

Denying literalist claims of orthodox biblical truths, the author questions the origins of the faith and sees parallels stretching back to ancient Egyptian religion. His call to Christendom is one of inclusivism, as his research has guided him to regard the Bible as having been based on older myths, myths that perhaps were diabolic attempts to undermine Christianity before it was birthed.

This book gives the reader an insider's view into one of the ways modern scholarship attempts to refute even the basic tenets of the Christian religion.

Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew By Bart D. Ehrman / Oxford University Press

"A charting of the full theological kaleidoscope would take volumes, but it is possible, using Ehrman's book as a jumping-off point, to examine some of the most striking and widespread of the Christian roads not taken,"--*Time*. Follows the rise and fall of Ebionites, Marcionites, Gnostics, etc. 320 pages, softcover. Oxford University.

through whom all things are created and ruled by God. She was with God before any of the earth's and heaven's creatures came to be. She is God's greatest adornment and **the wide stairway to all the virtues** that are alive in him. She protects and guides everyone who seeks to follow her, and embraces with great love those who are faithful to her. She cannot be overthrown by craftiness or mere power. Her depths are hidden in the heart of the Father and invisible to human eyes. Her secrets are open and exposed to God alone. For the majesty of God that she mirrors is without beginning or end, bright and incomparable glory and so radiant that we cannot look directly upon it. She will be with us to the end of time, unceasingly admonishing us to follow where she leads. --Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)

Wisdom I loved and searched for from my youth; I resolved to have her as my bride, I fell in love with her beauty. She enhances her noble birth by sharing God's life, for the Master of All has always loved her. Indeed, she shares the secrets of God's knowledge, and she chooses what he will do. If in this life wealth is a desirable possession, what is wealthier than Wisdom whose work is everywhere? Or if it be the intellect that is at work, who, more than she, designs whatever exists? Or if it be uprightness you love, why, **virtues are the fruit of her labors**, since it is she who teaches temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude; nothing in life is more useful for human beings. Or if you are eager for wide experience, she knows the past, she forecasts the future; she knows how to turn maxims, and solve riddles; she has foreknowledge of signs and wonders, and of the unfolding of the ages and the times. I therefore determined to take her to share my life, knowing that she would be my counselor in prosperity and comfort me in cares and sorrow. --Wisdom of Solomon 8:2-9 NJB

THE LECTURE

I. Introduction

1. *Question:* In what place of worship might one perform the following litany?

Caller: Who are You, O Holy One? How have your daughters named You?

Voice: I am Nut of the sky, of Egypt, Goddess of Affection.

People: Nut, we call upon Your name and long for your affection.

Caller: Who are You, O Holy One? How have your daughters named You?

Voice: I am Anath-Astarte, and Lady Asherah of the Sea from the biblical land of Canaan.

People: Anath and Astarte, forgive us, for all we have done to You.

The litany also includes interactive worship to Ishtar, Sophia, Isis, Gaia, and a host of other female goddesses. Would one perform the litany in a new age temple, or as part of a Roman mystery religion?

Answer: This litany, "A Psalm in Search of the Goddess," was written by Miriam Therese Winter from her book *WomenWisdom*. It was

Lost Christianity

By Jacob Needleman / Tarcher

Unavailable for several years, *Lost Christianity* is a profound reexamination of the essence of Christian and faith. Philosopher and bestselling author Jacob Needleman has sought out the ancient texts and modern practitioners of essential Christianity, whose message speaks directly to contemporary seekers.

What Have They Done With Jesus: Beyond Strange Theories and Bad History- Why We Can Trust the Bible

By Ben Witherington III / HarperCollins Publishing

Recent pop culture views on Jesus are more than mind-boggling; they're often heretical. Seeking to set the record straight, Witherington reveals what we can and *cannot* know about the historical Christ--and accurately refutes the recent claims and implications of "Jesus papers," "lost Christianities," and secret first-century "Gnostic" teachings. 256 pages, softcover from HarperCollins.

performed in chapel service on May 4, 1995 at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary (United Methodist) of Evanston, Illinois. Of course, this use of goddess language in Christian ritual worship ignited a controversy in the Christian world as well as in the seminary. This incident is but an example of the stretching of Christian borders by mainly feminist theologians and lay women of the goddess cult among Methodists and other liberal denominations.

2. *Question:* What might you suppose to be the most probable cause for the rise of radical feminist interpretation of scripture and the use of "goddess language" in Christian worship? I would guess the most probable cause might be Christianity's traditional anthropocentricity and lack of feminine imagery for the deity. God is portrayed as male; Christ is male; angels are male warriors; the apostles are male. Old Testament women are chattel, or play bit parts in the story of salvation. In many sects, contemporary women have been denied ordination, the right to preach, the freedom to dress in a certain fashion, and the use of feminine imagery in worship and even private devotion. In response, some feminist worshipers have attempted to syncretise pagan goddess worship with the traditional structure of the Christian worship service. Such has elicited strong response from powerful church leaders, including denunciation and protest movements.

3. Nevertheless, Judeo-Christian tradition and its source documents do include important feminine imagery. The most evident and vital of these images is that of Wisdom / Hokma / Sophia.

4. The question is, Can Sophia possibly be a valid and efficacious image of God and object of worship? Perhaps, but only if Sophia can be defined as God / Goddess within the context of Christian scripture, using orthodox exegetical methodology and typology.

II. Wisdom in Scriptural Overview

1. If we are to make any case at all for the worship of Sophia / God, we must accept the authority of both Old and New Testaments and the Deuterocanonical (Apocryphal) writings; the latter being accepted mainly by Roman and Orthodox Christians. The Deuterocanonicals provide the theological "bridge" over the four-hundred year gap between the Testaments, although they are *not* considered to be inspired by most Protestant and Evangelical bodies.

2. Overview of Wisdom in Scripture: Hokma and Sophia, words in Hebrew and Greek respectively, meaning "wisdom," are feminine in gender. When wisdom is personified in scripture, wisdom become womanly, as a woman or a female spirit. Biblical wisdom literature as a body unfolds to reveal itself as a herald of the New Covenant. In Proverbs, Wisdom calls to those who would become her children, inviting them to surrender to her care. The immovable object is encountered (by wisdom) in Job, confining the expectancy of gain to the present only (Qoheleth / Ecclesiastes). Failing to understand the meaning of hardship in life, the seeker turns to faith in God's wisdom as revealed by Sirach. Through faith, hope is discerned beyond the confines of the present world order (Daniel), with those of "the elect," who have obeyed her, assured of victory over death (Wisdom of Solomon).

The concepts of Sophia and Logos become blurred by the late first century B.C.E., and wisdom personified as Logos, i.e. Jesus Christ,

Chasing Sophia: Reclaiming the Lost Wisdom of Jesus

By Lilian Calles Barger / John Wiley & Sons

Many women today are looking for deeper ways to know themselves and to connect with God, two forms of knowledge that are intrinsically linked.

Unfortunately, many of these women have become frustrated with traditional religion's inability to reflect their real lives, turning instead to alternate spiritualities that purport to honor a woman's experience. In this post-feminist interpretation of Christianity, Lilian Calles Barger challenges both Christian tradition and feminist trends in spirituality to provide a fresh and inspiring look at divine wisdom, opening women's awareness to the voice of God in the world.

The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is

By N.T. Wright / Inter-varsity Press

A renewed and vigorous scholarly quest for the historical Jesus is underway. Out of his own commitment to both historical scholarship and Christian ministry, Wright challenges us to roll up our sleeves and take seriously the study of the historical Jesus. *The Challenge of Jesus* poses the challenge of learning to grow in our understanding of the historical Jesus within the Palestinian world of the first century, while following Jesus more faithfully into the postmodern world of the twenty-first century.

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defeats death entirely and opens the door of salvation gnosis to all who will believe and follow.

In short, though wisdom begins as the wise counsel of teachers in the earliest biblical literature, Wisdom becomes a person by 100 or so B.C.E., and that person becomes Jesus by the end of the first century. Thus the Jewish concept of wisdom develops over the course of 700 years from clever anecdotes spoken by a wise woman to the apocalyptic judgment of the Cosmic Christ in the latest biblical literature.

III. Wisdom Personified - The quickest and least painful way to follow the evolution of wisdom through biblical literature is by the stepping-stones of the personification passages (i.e. *wisdom as a person*). These include Proverbs 8 & 9, Sirach 1, 24, & 51, Wisdom of Solomon 6 - 9, John 1:1-17, Luke 7:35 & 11:49, Colossians 1 & Hebrews 1:3,4 & 4:12-13. (One needs a Catholic or ecumenical Bible to follow along.)

1. c. 960 - 540 B.C.E. - Proverbs divorces God from corporate Israel and spirituality, providing instead practical advice for maximizing temporal life. Wisdom is personified allegorically as the speaker of important maxims, taking on many attributes of God in Proverbs. Wisdom is a wise woman. Like the prophet (Is 40:3), she "cries out in the street" (1:20), promising to "pour out her spirit" (1:23b). Her calling and spirit have the same effect as the spirit of God (8:14 compared with Job 12:13). Like Yahweh in Isaiah 55:1-3, she has a sacrificial meal: "Come eat my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed" (9:5), she beckons her lovers. Such a meal is a prototype of Jesus' parable of the marriage

feast in Matthew 22:1-14. According to Proverbs, Wisdom is the first creation of God (18:22b) (like the Logos of the pagan Heraclitus [5th century B.C.E.] and the Jew Philo [1st century C.E.]). Wisdom rejoiced at witnessing creation, though playing only a spectator's role. Now Wisdom has come to Earth to offer herself to humanity (8:31). She possesses the attributes of the messianic king of Israel (Is 11:2) and of God (Job 12:13, 16) (8:6-26). The concept of personified Wisdom as "divine agent" in creation is established and found again many times in scripture.

On Earth, Wisdom is virtuous and desirable, her appeal is cosmic, transcending law or doctrine: "whoever is simple, leave simpleness and live" (9:4a,6a), she proclaims to all worldlings. Her reward is a life of happiness and prosperity (8:34), which can be found only through devotion to her. (Yet remember, although wisdom is personified in Proverbs, it is so only for the sake of allegory.)

2. c. 190 B.C.E. (350 years later) - Sirach (also called Ecclesiasticus) is a pre-Hasmonean, inter-testamental tome of wisdom written when Israel was under the rule of the Seleucids (Syrian Greeks). It's teachings may be a forerunner of the doctrines of the Sadducees; there is no thought of the supernatural nor afterlife in Sirach. Wisdom was spoken into existence by God, and was the holy spirit hovering over the waters of creation (24:3). Although cosmic, she is specifically sent to dwell in Jerusalem (24:11) to work toward the redemption of Israel. Wisdom is found as a result of obedience to the Law of Moses.

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This is the exciting story of Judith, the heroine of Israel. Judith marks the characteristics of the **STRONG WOMAN**. This has become one of the most formative stories in Judaism, and with good reason. Also includes the LOST CHAPTERS OF DANIEL. Jackson Snyder, 70 minutes.

Pilgrimage to Jerusalem The Adolescent Yahshua

Based on a true-life story - no names have been changed. The adolescent Yahshua / 'Jesus' makes his first journey to

Thus, by equating wisdom with law (torah), Sirach seeks to bring Israel back to law and national unity.

The personification of wisdom in Sirach is much more developed than in Proverbs. Sirach writes that he "fixed on her my soul's desires, and with cleansing, I discovered her" (51:20). He testifies of his longing for her (51:13-22, and acrostic poem), and finally finds her through the law (20b). Rather than eating her bread at a sacrificial meal, in her evolution to actual personhood, she becomes the meal: "Those who eat me will hunger for more, and those who drink me will thirst for more" (24:21,22). Wisdom lives forever as the Torah.

3 . c. 50 B.C.E. (140 years later) - In the Wisdom of Solomon, a pseudepigraphy, one finds the classical concepts of logos and sophia united for the first time (18:15,16). Sophia / Wisdom becomes an actual being - a "spirit, a friend to man" (1:6). Sophia is the holy spirit, active in creation, redemption, and kingdom-style living - she is invulnerable, omnipotent, omniscient, and "penetrating through all" (7:22,23). Wisdom of Solomon embellishes Sirach's concept of "wisdom as law" to a very New Testament-sounding conclusion:

Love of her is the keeping of her laws,
and giving heed to her laws is the assurance of immortality,
and immortality brings one near to God;
so the desire for Wisdom leads to a kingdom.

Pseudo-Solomon also equates the lady Sophia / Wisdom, a spirit, with God (7:7b); she is God's breath, power, pure emanation, reflection, image and mirror.

4 . c. 70 C.E. (120 years later) - The concept of the Logos has superseded the function of Sophia, taking on all the previous characteristics of intertestamental wisdom, plus others, including maleness. In the Gospel According to John, Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the Logos (1:17) who was not only with God in creation, and was an agent through which creation came to be, but was God as well (1:1-3). The Logos came to Jerusalem, as did Sirach's Sophia, but did not stay, like 1 Enoch's Wisdom (1 Enoch 42:1,2), ascending back into Heaven. The Logos became human, and lived among humans. All who would accept the Logos would become sons and daughters of God.

5 . c. 70 C.E. - The Gospel According to Luke has Jesus referring to himself (so it seems) as "the Wisdom of God" (7:35 & 11:49). If so, this gospel writer, who never mentions the concept of Logos, may have Jesus equating himself with Sophia. Too little evidence exists to make a definitive connection here.

6 . c. 70 C.E. - Curiously, the writer of Hebrews refers to the Logos as if he were the Sophia of Sirach and Wisdom: he is living and active, he is penetrating soul and spirit, he is judging thoughts, he sees all creation, to him we must give account (4:12-13). Likewise, the writer of Colossians calls the Son of God "the image of God," "firstborn of creation" (as in Philo), agent in creation, creator, the power which holds the universe together, possessing the pleroma of God, yet present on earth in human flesh. In fact, portions of Colossians 1 may be directly paraphrased from the Pseudo-Solomon's description of Sophia.

7. In summary, personified wisdom evolves from the speaker of proverbs to being the incarnation of the Torah to the agent in creation, to a holy spirit and the image of God descending to earth and rising again,

Tabernacles in Jerusalem. Things don't turn out so good - but for the best never-the-less. Jackson Snyder, 70 minutes.

The Recognitions of Clement: The Authentic Peter

Clement was the secretary and successor of the Apostle, Peter. Excerpts from Clement's Journal are on this CD - the teachings of Peter, the letter from Peter to James, the Assault of Paul on James on the Temple steps, etc. Theodore A. Dornan, translator and narrator. 70 minutes.

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to become one with God, to enfleshment in the man Jesus of Nazareth, to a life-giving spirit.

8. This ends the lecture portion. Are there questions / comments?

9. A summary of scripture exemplifying the evolution of Hokma to Sophia to Logos may be dramatically read from my litany "Wisdom Speaks."

THE ACT OF WORSHIP - A LITANY

WISDOM SPEAKS!

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Cast of Characters

The Wise Men

King Solomon (18 lines), Son of David and King of Israel;
Moses (6), the deliverer of the children of Israel;
Agur the Sage (4), the author of Proverbs 30;
King Lemuel (4) of the Arabs, brother of Agur;
Yahshua ben Sirach (3), author of the deuterocanonical book Sirach;
The Mystic (6), Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), a heretic;
Philo of Alexandria (3), a contemporary of Jesus & St. Paul;
The Beloved Disciple (13), author of the Fourth Gospel;
The Evangelist (5), identified as the disciple Matthew;
The Logos (13), the Word made flesh, Jesus of Nazareth;
The Blessed Enoch (5), the writer of 360 books;
James the Just (6), the brother (cousin) of Jesus of Nazareth;
The Teacher of Righteousness (7), leader of the Essenes.

The Wise Women

Hokma (13), Hebrew for "Wisdom" personified;
Susanna (6), mother of John & Charles Wesley;
Sophia (8), Greek for "Wisdom" personified;
The Young Bride (7), the Shulamite of Song of Solomon;
A Wise Woman (11), from the deuterocanonical book of Wisdom;
Naomi (2), mother-in-law of Ruth;
Ruth (3), the heroine of the Hebrew book of the same name;
The Angels (women unison) (3), from realms of glory;
The Psalmist (12), from "O, Spirit of the Living God" and "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."
Hildegard, mentioned above.

NOTE: Each reader should identify their character: "I am King Solomon..." for example.

UNISON: A PRAYER FOR WISDOM: O Wisdom on High, by you the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly. Grant us, in all doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us to do, that we may be saved from all false choices, and that in your light we may see light, and in your straight path not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. (The Book of Common Prayer, U.S.A., 20th century)

KING SOLOMON: The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. Hear, my child, your father's instruction, and do not reject your mother's teaching. (Proverbs 1:7-8 NRSV)

MOSES: See, just as Yahweh my Elohim has charged me, I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!" (Deuteronomy 4:5-6 NRSV)

KING SOLOMON: Hokma cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice. At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:

HOKMA: How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? Give heed to my reproof; I will pour out my thoughts to you; I will make my words known to you. Because I have called and you refused, have stretched out my hand and no one heeded, and because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic strikes you, when panic strikes you like a storm, and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of Yahweh, would have none of my counsel, and despised all my reproof, therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and be satiated with their own devices. (Proverbs 1:20-31 NRSV)

AGUR THE SAGE: If you have been foolish, exalting yourself, or if you have been devising evil, put your hand on your mouth. For as pressing milk produces curds, and pressing the nose produces blood, so pressing anger produces strife. (Proverbs 30:32-33 NRSV)

KING SOLOMON: For Yahweh gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk blamelessly, guarding the paths of justice and preserving the way of his faithful ones. (Proverbs 2:6-8 NRSV)

SUSANNA (A PRAYER): (Let us pray:) You, O Father, have called us to watch and pray. Therefore, whatever may be the sin against which we pray, make us careful to watch against it, and so have reason to expect that our prayers will be answered. In order to perform this duty aright, grant us grace to preserve a sober, equal temper, and sincerity to pray for your assistance. Amen. (Susanna Wesley, England, 18th century)

KING LEMUEL: A good wife who can find? She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all." (excerpts from Proverbs 31 NRSV)

THE LOGOS: I tell you, Sophia is vindicated by all her children. {Wisdom is justified by her deeds.} (Luke 7:35b NRSV)

A WISE WOMAN: For in Sophia there is a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable,

loving the good, keen, irresistible, beneficent, humane, steadfast, sure, free from anxiety, all-powerful, overseeing all, and penetrating through all spirits that are intelligent and pure and most subtle. For Sophia is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things. For she is the breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. For she is the reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness. (Wisdom 7:22b-26 RSV)

YAHSHUA ben SIRACH: Sophia will praise herself and will glory in the midst of her people. In the assembly of the Most High she will open her mouth, and in the presence of his host she shall glory. (Sirach 24:1-2 RSV)

KING SOLOMON: Yahweh by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew. My child, do not let these escape from your sight: keep sound wisdom and prudence, and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck. (Proverbs 3:19-22 NRSV)

SOPHIA: I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist. I dwelt in high places, and my throne was in a pillar of cloud. In the waves of the sea, in the whole earth, and in every people and nation I have gotten a possession. Among all these I sought a resting place; I sought in whose territory I might lodge. The Creator of all things gave me a commandment, and the one who created me assigned a place for my tent. And he said, "Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance." (Sirach 24:1-4, 6-8 RSV)

THE MYSTIC: The Virgin Sophia appears before the soul in her virgin's finery. She kisses the Soul's being affectionately, tincturing the Soul's dark fire with her Love-rays and penetrating through the Soul with her Love-kisses. Then, triumphantly, the Soul leaps in its body for great joy, and with the vitality of this Virgin Love praises the great God -- the Might of the noble Sophia. (Jacob Boehme, *The Way of Christ*, 33)

THE YOUNG BRIDE: I am black and beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. Do not gaze at me because I am dark, because the sun has gazed on me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept! Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock, where you make it lie down at noon; for why should I be like one who is veiled beside the flocks of your companions? (Song of Solomon 1:5-7 NRSV)

NAOMI: Go, return to your mother's house. May Yahweh deal kindly with you. May Yahweh grant that you find rest in the house of your husband.

RUTH: Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. (Ruth 1:8,9,16 AV)

THE PSALMIST sings: O come, Sophia, from on high, And order all things far and nigh; To us the path of knowledge show And cause us in her ways to go. (Henry Sloane Coffin, 1916)

ALL sing: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA: The Logos is the image of God, through whom the whole universe was framed. The first existence is God, and next to him is the Logos of God. For the Logos is the eldest born image of God. (Philo cited by Edwin Lee in *The Religious Thought of St. John*, London: S.P.C.K., 1950, pp. 88-89)

THE BELOVED DISCIPLE: In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. (John 1:1-5 NRSV)

THE PSALMIST: O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of Elohim appear. (9th cent., author unknown)

ALL sing: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

THE EVANGELIST: Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. (Mat 2:1-3 AV)

THE LOGOS: If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For Elohim so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, Elohim did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:12-17 NRSV)

KING SOLOMON: Happy are those who find wisdom and those who get understanding, for her income is better than silver, and her revenue better than gold. (Proverbs 3:13-14 NRSV)

THE BELOVED DISCIPLE: He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to his own home, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of Elohim. (John 1:10-13 NRSV alt.)

THE BLESSED ENOCH: Sophia could not find a place in which she could dwell; but a place was found for her in the heavens. Then Sophia went out to dwell with the children of the people, but she found no dwelling place. So Sophia returned to her place, and she settled permanently among the angels. (1 Enoch 42:1,2 Isaac)

THE ANGELS: Why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. (Acts 1:11 NRSV)

JAMES THE JUST: My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of

any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. (James 1:2-5 NRSV)

THE LOGOS: Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.

THE BELOVED DISCIPLE: Then the Logos breathed on us, and told us:

THE LOGOS: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained. (John 20:21-23 NRSV paraphrase)

THE PSALMIST: Blow, wind of EI! With wisdom blow until our minds are free from mists of error, clouds of doubt, which blind our eyes to thee. Burn, winged fire! Inspire our lips with flaming love and zeal, to preach to all thy great good news, Yah's glorious commonweal. (excerpt from Tweedy, "O Spirit of the Living God," 1935)

HILDEGARD: The majesty of Eloha that I reflect is without beginning or end: bright and incomparable glory so radiant that none may look directly upon me. But I will be with you to the end of time, unceasingly admonishing you to follow where I lead.

THE TEACHER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS: Blessed are those who hold to her precepts and do not hold to the ways of iniquity. Blessed are those who rejoice in her, and do not burst forth in ways of folly. Blessed are those who seek her with pure hands, and do not pursue her with a treacherous heart. He does not forsake her when he sees distress, nor abandon her in times of strain. He will not forget her in the day of fear, and will not despise her when his soul is afflicted. (Beatitudes, 4Q525, Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 286)

SONG (UNISON): Breathe on us, breath of Yah, fill us with life anew, that we may love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do. Breathe on us breath of EI, till we are wholly thine, till all this earthly part of us glows with thy fire divine. (Hatch, "Breathe on Me, Breath of God," 1878)

CONCLUSIONS

I. The primary question restated - Can Sophia possibly be a valid and efficacious image of God and object of worship within the scriptural tradition of the Christian Church?

1. *Affirmative* (perhaps) in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, based on their inclusion of the deuterocanonical scriptures among those considered inspired. Wisdom is a demigod, a female intermediary between God and humanity. Sophia has the attributes of God and creative power with God.

Sophia is perfect, having descended from God, dwelt with humanity, and ascended to God. She is the perfect disciple of God, the scriptural mother of the Logos, who was also with God, but who was God.

Of course, I am alluding to the Perpetual Virgin Mary, who has, in

Catholic theology, papal pronouncements, and practice, become the embodiment of Sophia, characterized by all her attributes as gleaned from scripture. Mary descended sinlessly from Heaven, was a temple virgin, led a sinless life, was the mother of God, was the perfect disciple, and ascended back to Heaven. (An influential factor in the Mary tradition may have been the Infancy Gospel of James.)

The following diagram shows the divergence of Sophia from Logos in Catholic scripture:

Proverbs→Sirach→Wisdom (Sophia is born)→ James' Mary →Mary→John's Logos→Jesus.

2. *Negative* in Reformed, Protestant, and Evangelical traditions. There is insufficient scriptural evidence for equating Sophia with God or worshiping her as a demigod. There is evidence to allow worship of Jesus as Wisdom or Jesus as Logos.

The illustration for Protestants is:

Proverbs→(God is silent) →John's Logos→Jesus.

II. Theological Implications for Pastoral Care - The following come directly from the wisdom passages quoted or referred to in this paper (lecture).

1. As in Hokma of Proverbs, the Pastor is the repository of wise sayings. He has a grasp of practical truth, and is willing to tell the truth. The Pastor has learned truth by watching, waiting, experiencing and listening. The Pastor knows he can learn more wisdom from those whom he ministers to, so he/she is open to the understandings of others, whether he/she deems them wise or not.

2. As in Sophia of Sirach, the Pastor knows law and grace. The Pastor is moral, yet situational. He/she is judgmental, yet uncondemning. He/she is cleansed, yet unafraid of contamination. The Pastor is the salt of the earth, a city set upon a hill, a light on a candle stand, a measuring rod.

3. As in Enoch and John, the Pastor has ascended to the throne of God and descended back to the congregation. He/she is therefore a witness to God's power, authority, and love, and can articulate and appropriate that wisdom in dealing with others. He/she is prayerful, remaining close to God; spiritual, luminescent, assured of eternity. Knowing God, the Pastor is mature in his ministry, seeing the big picture rather than the small.

4. As in The Wisdom of Solomon, the Pastor is a representative of the Creator God. He/she is free and magnanimous, inclusive, virtuous, and ever giving God glory. He/she is constantly reliant upon God for what to be, say, or do in situations of ministry.

5. As in John and James, the Pastor is engifted. He/she is a mirror of God's grace, discerning the needs of his friends, and applying the charisms of God to each need. He/she is not haughty with gifts, but seeks to draw out each persons unique engiftedness.

6. As in John, the Pastor is enfleshed. He/she dwells among people. He/she is of earthly good. He/she is empathic, compassionate, self-sacrificing, meek, burdened with his/her own humanity, yet experienced in God's remedies for the human condition. Like the Sophia / Logos of The Wisdom of Solomon, the Pastor is androgynous - male and female - female and male.

7. As in The Wisdom of Solomon and John, the Pastor is seeking a Kingdom - the Kingdom of love and light. This Kingdom is now, and it is later, and pastoral care must be geared to the ultimate Kingdom, and the responsibilities entailed in Kingdom-style living.

Finis.

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