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SUMMARY DOCTORAL THESIS LOGOS "THE TRUE LIGHT" IN THE GOSPEL AFTER JOHN

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1. Argument and objectives of the research

This PhD thesis is part of the spectrum of interdisciplinary analyzes that engage both theology and philosophy in the same existential approach. Today's theological speech, whether in scientific or pastoral form, is a way of dealing with contemporary society, and as such must be carefully defined and framed in topical parameters. Theology in general, and in particular the Bible, is an inexhaustible source of theoretical and practical analysis, and closed in itself has no normative applicability to man. For this reason, theology must be placed in this dynamic of dialogue with philosophy and science in order to provide integrative perspectives on life. For this reason, this doctoral thesis is an exercise of scientific analysis that will contribute to the development of the theology-philosophy dialogue. In the international academic plan, the theological intentions are precisely of this kind.

The theme of Logos can be a point of connection between the sacred text, its hermeneutics and the contemporary philosophical approach, starting with the classical Greek thinkers. Consequently, the contemporary theological and philosophical developments on the Logos doctrine resume in a theological, novelty language the patristic tradition, updating it in terms of relations with current trends of thought. In the space of Eastern theology, special voices have been affirmed that have reconfigured the theology of the Logos on the coordinates of a thought that we can define as a neo-Patriotic one. In the twentieth century, great theologians and philosophers have given us new valences to the interpretations of the Logos, and among them we can list Dumitru Stăniloae, I. G. Coman, Mircea Vulcănescu, Vladimir Lossky, Michel Henry and Andrew Louth. Addressing the problem of the Logos in contemporary times comes to fully convey its importance to the history of the spiritual concepts of humanity. Contemporary philosophical-theological thinking can find in the concept of Logos, in its vitality semantics an important resource for new ways of understanding the world and the Human Person.

In a postmodern world in which classical values are subject to deconstruction that intends to abolish any possibility of referring to Transcendence by invalidating theological, implicitly the dogmatic language in a world in which political-philosophical ideologies intend to reconfigure new functional vectors, and in which individualism and the minimization of the capacity to observe and sense rationally and religiously the meaning of existence and the universe, a junction between the New

Testament biblical theology and the Greek philosophy, the premise of Western contingent philosophical thinking, can provide a full and meaningful vision of man. *The Logos* can give us “the opportunity to understand how we need to communicate with the world around us and with ourselves”.¹ From this perspective, Benedictine theologian Ghislain Lafont will assert in his work *A Theological History of the Church* that the modern age brings with it a hyper-rationalization of the act of communication: "... beginning with the modern age, the primacy of mathematics and dialectics implied a real rationalization of this road, which involved an important loss in assessing both perceptible reality and mystery; a loss of the sensitive component of human existence, the senses blessed by the incarnation of Christ becoming rather the clue of error; and at the other end of knowledge, a loss of language capable of telling the reality of God and His Covenant."² Contemporary theology directs its meditation both towards a liturgical primacy, but also towards a patristic dimension. Cosmic Mass becomes a main subject of meditation for the thinkers of the contemporary Logos, because for them the person becomes a real liturgical space. The patristic reorientation of contemporary theology brings to the fore that the human being can only exist in an ontology of Revelation.

The objectives of the research are the following:

1. highlighting the development of the Logos concept in the historical context from the abstract of the Hellenic philosophy to His redefinition as the Divine Person in the New Testament;
2. expressing theological frameworks of the meaning of the Logos as Creator, Savior;
3. presentation of the polyvalent dimension of the meaning of the Logos as “Light” from the ontological and gnoseological point of view, a topic less approached in the Romanian theological space;
4. the articulation of the hypostases of the presence and work of the Logos in the religious consciousness of humanity;
5. the reconsideration of the Logos as the point of junction between theology and contemporary science.

¹ Bogdan Baghiu, *Scurtă istorie a Logosului*, Lumen Iași, 2011, p. 119.

² Ghislain Lafont, *O istorie teologica a Bisericii*, Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu 2003, p. 443.

2. Relevance of the topic in the context of current research

The research topic is relevant from several points of view. The Logos today is not only an element of Christology, it is the measure of all the parts of theology of the dogmatic formulation of the creed and the soteriological dogmas. The incarnation of the divine logos into the human person changes the whole architecture of consciousness and the way in which man is present in the world. The existence of the human person in the world becomes a liturgical and personal one through the Logos. The Logos, the concept of Logos, makes it possible to recreate the theological and philosophical meditation, as it was outlined in the Patristic Age. Therefore, we do not only have a return to a historical patristic perspective, in which the patristic tradition is valued as a vestige, but more than that the theology of our times aims to fully restore that liturgical patristic ethos. Thus, the question and the major question is how the life of the man of our day can become a liturgy.

The Logos, Christ, is the historical model of the liturgical sanctification of the Human Person. This sanctification is not just a ritual, it has a cosmic dimension, bringing man to co-participation, to the great mystery of Love. Contemporary theologians realize that they must return to those fundamental themes of Christology that make of it a science of Life.

The need to reform of the rationalist structures who have made their way in the speech of theology and Christological philosophy must revert to the Christian ideal of the Mystery and Mass. In the liturgy the theological speech becomes Life.

The restoration of the human contained by the fever of a social existence, without a cosmic dimension, is undoubtedly the most important challenge facing contemporary Christian theology and philosophy. This restoration is a takeover of the patristic tradition of the early Christian centuries.

The Logos in contemporary theology plays a double role: firstly, the pedagogic, contemporary theology appealing morally to that tumultuous period of the patristic beginnings, when the dogmatic struggle for shaping the doctrine of the Logos constituted an exemplification of theological gift but also an intellectual role, on how this doctrine crystallized. The patristic spirit and style are deeply reverberating in today's great theology of the world.

The study of the crystallization of the doctrine of the Logos from the early Christian ages inspired the new openings of the theologians and the avoidance of scholastic manners and themes. The present theology, by its return to the patristic manner, has a pronounced authenticity. This patristic resurrection shows nothing but the natural spirit of theology, that spirit of theology that transforms it from sterile speculation into the liturgy of the mind in communion with the soul.

Today's theology attempts to establish a new ontology based on the patristic model, which is no longer one of static archetypes, but one of the Logocentric fulfillment of the Person. Patristic theology teaches that the Christian dogmatic edifice is a harmoniously structured one, since it is made up of concepts of great vitality. Christos Yannaras will widely discuss this natural dimension of the patristic theological approach, a dimension that comes from a communion between God's will and the mind of man. And this resurrection of doctrine to natural revelation occurred as a direct effect of the Incarnation of the Logos in Person. The anthropological assumption of the Person by God the Son is the supreme proof of God's presence in dogma. The incarnation frees man from the perceptions of a sought-after geometry of dogma. In other words, theology cannot seek God after schematism and rational assumptions, but everything must be an encounter under the sign of the Logos and the Person, Yannaras saying: "In this "personal" harmony of the world that works incessantly, consists in the possibility of establishing the personal relationship of man with the world and the possibility of personal relationship with the Creator through the logos of the created ones. In other words, for the man, the bonding of the world with God is not only a possibility for a reasonable reduction of the outcome of the cause, this connection is not reached by means of a deduction through a mental leap of reducing "ideas", "faces" of the "forms" of matter to the archetypes conceived by divine wisdom before the age, to the eternal causes of the created ones, of the creatures embodied in the Being of God. But it means that the Presence of God, as a personal will and work (and not as Being), is immediate and active, operative in the world - that is an uninterrupted working call through the logos of things to the personal relationship with the God-Logos"³. Thus, we can observe a patristic constant that the contemporary theology resumes, namely that they turn into ontology. Neo-patristic reflection on existence is one of the great currents of ideas of

³ Christos Yannaras, *Persoană și Eros*, Anastasia Publishing House, București, 2000, p. 104.

contemporaneity. The Logos being in this regard one of the central pillars of philosophy and theology today.

The Ionian Logos is a synthesis of all versions of the Greek logos, uniting in its conceptual substance the naturalism of the pre-Socratic logos with Platonic humanism, to which is added the vision of Stoic moral, a morality in the sense of connection between consciousness. However, in order to best define this synthesis, it should be noted from the beginning that the synthesis of the Ionian Logos means first and foremost the Person. That is why we can see the Ionian prologue as an ontology treatment of man's restoration, but also of all existence. The signs of this new form of conceiving ontology are also the fact that John operates in his speech with non-quantifiable notions, working only with the attributes of a non-material, non-physical ontology, the elements of this ontology taking on a Reality of the Person. Christos Yannaras will draw on this ontology that eludes numerical-quantitative determinations and ontological objectivism as follows: The definitive transcendence of numerical-quantitative relations considered as an absolute and unique possibility of knowing the world, that is, the refusal of the ontic-rational determination of the truth (of the world reality a coincidence of apparent objectivity with definition but by intellect) becomes possible only on the basis of the ontological difference, the difference between Being and existence, and this means: only in the dimensions of a "manifestation" fact of Being within the personal relationship and not in the ontic-goals dimensions. In the personal relationship with the reality of the world, we get to know To be (*τὸ Εἰσατί*) not as a being, not as quantifiable ontic numerical and quantitative totality, not as a nature or essence, but as an infinite of undefined ontological differences, in other words, as the beings (*τὰ ὄντα*) are in their unique and incomparable lack of resemblance, in their "personal" uniqueness.⁴

Therefore, the Christian Logos resizes through the idea of the Person the concept of Mystic ontology. Even though the other doctrines of the logos were building mystical ontologies around them, they still grant a special intimacy through this indissoluble identity of the divine-human Logos-Person. From this perspective, many authors consider the Gospel of John a Book of Creation, of the New Testament, this statement not merely being metaphorical-speculative, but it contains the most profound meanings of the Ionian text.

⁴ Christos Yannaras, *Persoana și Eros*, Anatasia Publishing House, București, 2000, p. 97.

Starting from this fundamental characteristic of the Ionian philosophy, Michel Henry, perhaps one of the most important contemporary exegetes of the Gospel of the Logos, will remark precisely the difference of optics on the act of creation and those created within the two sacred texts of the Christian tradition, respectively The Book of Faith and the Gospel of John, the French author pointing out the different condition of humanity. In Genesis, Michel Henry says that the created man manifests a certain ontic passivity, the idea of the presence of the human being in the world being predetermined and pre-written in its sensitivity, instead the Ionian man is manifested by the idea of incarnation, by the idea of birth and through love. To the devotion of the ontology of the Creation, the Ionian ontology is no longer under the sign of the Creation, but of the Nativity: "We acknowledge the initiatory propositions of John's Prologue that allow us to understand the unity of the transcendental view of the Scriptures. This unity is unfolded when the idea of creation makes room for the one of birth. Man can be understood only by starting from the idea of birth. The birth of man in the Word (to note that the very creation of the Bible is in the Word of God that is the Word of Life: "God says (...)") repeats the birth of the Word of God as self-revelation of Him. This homogeneity between the birth of the Word and that of man explains why when the Word comes to be embodied to become man, it did not come into the world, but it came into a body "to his own" (John 1:10) - among those which always belonged to. Only when we understand all this we have left history, we no longer have to follow the chronological development of the Scriptures, whose targeting is also reversed. The concept of birth gives its exhaustive and appropriate meaning to creation, John's Prologue allows us to understand the Genesis"⁵.

3. The used methodology

The central objective of this paper is to analyze the concept of *Logos* in Greek philosophy and New Testament theology, with direct reference to biblical texts, using an appropriate research methodology. That is why I presented the methods, techniques and procedures used in this scientific approach. Using the biblical scientific approach as a reference point, I will use the specific research methods of the following kind:

a) *The exegetic-hermeneutical method* by which the Old and New Testament texts with reference to the *Logos* were interpreted in the biblical and dogmatic

⁵ Michel Henry, *Intrupare. O filozofie a trupului*, Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 2003, p. 325.

perspective. The interpretation of the various passages in these books was based on the works of the Holy Fathers, the Romanian theologians, but also on the works of modern and contemporary theologians belonging to the Western space. Particular emphasis was placed on the diachronic exegesis, by orientating my thesis towards the author(s) of the biblical texts and the context in which they appeared, but also on the synchronous one by focusing on biblical text and receivers as their receptors. Thus, it has been given attention both to the intent of the Bible authors and to the intent of the text among its recipients, with great relevance to the contextualization of the *Logos*-themed relationship in the dialogue between philosophy and theology.

b) *The historical method*, tries to outline the conceptual development of the *Logos* in Greek philosophy and the New Testament biblical theology and then look at it from a phenomenological point of view. The purpose of using this method in my work was to observe the characteristics of the relationship between the *philosophical logos* thought in the manner of the Greek philosophers (Plato, Aristotle, Stoic, etc.) and the *theological Logos* thought in the biblical manner in the Old and New Testament interconnection, but also in the patristic theology of Atanasia, Alexandrin and Maximian type. Thus, a complex historical picture of the *Logos* idea can be conceived in Greek religious philosophical thinking, which offered Orthodox theology a notional terminological vocabulary, of course with the lesser or more radical reinterpretation of the concepts in their meaning.

c) *The analytical method* by which I sought to highlight the analysis of each Greek philosopher from the record of our attention, but also the distinct theology of Saint John the Evangelist and each patristic author, in order to answer a series of fundamental questions for the present study: what did the author say, what was the context, what the author understands, what effect does his elaboration have upon the today's and past man? The advantage of this method is its ability to highlight the unique peculiarity of the thinking of each philosopher, biblical author and patristic theologian in part and his specific accents.

In view of the considerable amount of research undertaken on the *Logos*, my PhD thesis has resorted to consulting bibliographic resources. Thus, in close connection with the fundamental notions with which this work operates, are the historical sources, the literature. For this, it was necessary first to consult one and the exegetes that had the purpose of studying the idea of *logos*. From the field of philosophy, I first referred to the philosophers consecrated in thinking of rich bibliography and working tools in

order to introduce and familiarize themselves with the philosophical and theological principles of the idea of *logos*, especially with the ancient Greek mentality. Particularly important for our work were those works that we can consider to be extremely useful textbooks that have helped us to familiarize themselves with the theology of the *Logos*. Firstly, we here mention the patristic authors (Saint John Damascene, *Dogmatica*, translation by Father Fecioru PhD, Scripta Publishing House, Bucureşti 1993, Saint John Chrysostom, *Comentariu la Evanghelia după Ioan*, translation from French by Deacon Gheorghe Băbuț, Pelerinul Roman Publishing House, Oradea 1997, Saint Maximus the Confessor, *Scrieri, partea I, Ambigua*, translation, introduction and notes by Father Professor Dumitru Stăniloae, “Colecția Părinti și Scriitori Bisericești”, volume 80, Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române Publishing House, Bucureşti 1983): Aristotle, Plato, Socrates.

For a more complete approach to the topic and conceptual delimitations, I have recourse to various dictionaries and articles of high repute Western journals, *Dicționar Biblic*, Vol. I, translation from French by Constantin Moisa, Stephanus Publishing House, Bucureşti, 1995; *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Ed.), Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 2005; *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, Ralph P. Martin and Peters H. Davids (Eds.), InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 1997; *Harper Collins Bible Dictionary, Revised Edition*, Paul J. Achtemeier (Ed.), Harper San Francisco, New York, 1996; *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Ed.), Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 2005; *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, David Noel Freedman (Ed.), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Cambridge, 2000; *Harper Collins Bible Dictionary, Revised Edition*, Paul J. Achtemeier (Ed.), HarperSanFrancisco, New York, 1996, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, compiled by H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, with a revised supplement, revised and augmented throughout by H. S. Jones (LSJ), new edition, Oxford University Press, 1996, *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, Burnet, J., *Greek Philosophy*, part I: *Thales to Plato*, Macmillan and Co., London, 1928, *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*, „Cambridge Companions to Philosophy” Series, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992.

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