THE GOSPEL OF JOHN – PEDAGOGICAL LANDMARKS ON THE LOGOS

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Abstract:Examining the Gospel of John, we see that all the events and words spoken by Christ have a pedagogical meaning and contribute to a theological system of axiology, where all human endeavours are a supreme cry against death, and prove the eternal conscience of humanity. The whole world is a ceaseless school, where pedagogy goes to the eternal world. Religion is not only an expression of the need of humans to believe, but the natural quest of humanity for immortal life which is present in it.

Keywords: Logos, incarnation, axiology, pedagogy, immortality

The Gospel – as it is generically named by the Christian Church – is not a work of a single author, but a sum of works belonging to the Apostles, under the inspiration of the Spirit. What is preserved in the Church and has been theologically validated is a corpus of four Gospels, belonging to persons that were very close to Jesus: Mathew, Marc, Luke and John. The first three are very alike in information and they are called "synoptic" (synopsis – gr. seeing together), and the fourth, the Gospel of John completes and deepens in a mystagogy the first three.

We intend to contour the pedagogic dimension of the Gospel of John, or at least some important issues in the pedagogical demarche of John. We look also into the uniqueness of this writing on the history of universal culture. This, because that Gospel, extensively interpreted in the history of the Church, was assimilated to a pure theological culture, and unfortunately extracted from the mass culture, or it received different "keys" of interpretation, philosophical, esoteric, stoic etc., that, beyond their intrinsic value, are unilateral and reductive.

It is clear for any proper reader of the Scripture the fact that the Gospel of John changes fundamentally the semiotic structures of human understanding, even among the biblical writers. Without John, the New Testament and even the Bible herself would be less understandable. This is because John proposes and deepens the mystical dimension of the faith in Jesus, the abyss of the teaching of Christ, and fulfils through the word all the historical events of his life. The structure of Christian theology itself is funded on the architecture of the pneumatological and mystagogical understanding of John. This understanding is about the union between the seen and the unseen, through the Mystery, in the work of Jesus in history, in the world and in the human soul. In fact, the Gospel of John is the key for the understanding of all biblical writings, and – together with the Pauline epistles – is the apogee of the presence of Logos in human words.

John extracts the Greek philosophical terms, with a certain previous meaning, and changes them in biblical context, contorting the Greek mind and consuming it in the grace flow of the Trinity. The human reason, victorious in philosophy, even against the truth through sophism, is bound to bow under the sceptre of the Spirit, the One that all fulfils, and discovers all the labyrinths of the human mind.

The Gospel of the Eagle, as called by the patristic writers, comes to unite the rationalist cyclicality of material universe with the absolute news of the Incarnation, the rhythmic succession of cosmos with the "Sunrise above" that is Christ. John structures the temporal steps of creation on the simultaneous horizon of eternity, compresses the space into the infinity, and sees the essential unity of different persons in God and in human being. His Logos embraces in himself all the spheres of created world and gives them sense in the Uncreated, the eternal Logos, born from

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eternity from the Father. It is impossible to accede to all the subtleties and abysses of his writing in such an article. Maybe in future, a treaty of the semiotics of John Gospel could enlighten some fountains of meaning from where all the "kerygma"[1] of the Church is nourished, since two millennia.

The Eternal Logos – the Word born from the Father

One of the key points of the Scripture is the assertion of the presence of God in history. From Genesis, God is the main character of the Scripture, and his presence in the world, in the chosen people and in the heart of men is undeniably the universal meaning of human existence[2]. John comes and adds to this biblical apperception the notion of LOGOS, meaning the WORD, or the Reason, the Meaning. All the triadology of the Church comes from this fountain. From the Hebrew obsession of the uniqueness of God, as the answer of the chosen people to the aberrant polytheism of antiquity, John asserts this uniqueness, and the existence of the three Persons in the Holy Trinity[3].

The expression "en arche", in the beginning, that is taken symmetrically from Genesis ("bereshit") means not "at the beginning", but "in the beginning", in the interiority of the beginning. This means not that the Logos was from the creation of the world in time and together with time, but asserts the eternal existence of the Logos in the bosom of the Beginning, which is the Father. The divine Beginning is God the Father – names by Saint Dionysius Areopagita "pigaea theotis – pugaia qeotij" (the source of the divine). From him is eternally born the Son, the Logos, and is proceeded the Spirit.

The difference between birth and procession is essential, yet ineffable, and that shows the difference between the "two hands of the Father"[4].

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God" (John 1,1)[5]. These words show the eternal birth of the Son from the Father, his deity, the essential unity between the two, the uniqueness of the divine being, the personal difference between the Unborn one and the Born one.

"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1,2). Here we see the assertion of the quality of the Logos to be the Creator of the world. The biblical chiasm affirming in two ways a unique reality comes to emphasize the creational dimension of the Son of God. The uncreated creates all through his all powerful will. There is a fundamental distinction that broke all the Arian rationalisms in the Church, between Creator and creature. The Creator is eternal, without beginning and end, and the creatures have a point zero of their existence, they are bound to the transitoriness of the time, even though some of them are immortal through the love of God, and not through their being.

If in the Ancient Testament, the gap between the creature and the Creator was filled through the word of God addressed to the people: "The word of God to Abraham" (Genesis 15, 1), in the New Testament, the Logos becomes "flesh", body: "kai Logos sarx egeneto – kai Logoj sarc egeneto".

The Logos becomes flesh, is incarnated, and becomes true human person, not ceasing to be true God, as it is confessed by the Niceene Creed. The Word, present into the world is not a noise, an utterance, information, a sign, a vision, but a eternal Person, the unique Son of God.

[1] Kerugma, message, essence of the preaching (gr.).
[2] Pr. Ioan Sorin Usca, *Vechiul Testament în tâlcuirea Sfinţilor Părinţi. Facerea*, Christiana, Bucureşti, 2002, pp. 5-43.
[3] For an extensive biblical and theological interpretation of Logos, see Carl F.H. Henry, Dumnezeu, revelatie şi autoritate, vol. 3, Editura Cartea creştină, Oradea, pp. 92-311.
[4] Saint Ireneus of Lugdunum.
[5] King James Version.

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These theological references give a new horizon to the structure of pedagogy: the word transmitted through education is a communication with the Word, a presence of Logos into the world, a manifestation of the eternal into time.

"The Word was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1, 9). This sentence shows that all the rational struggle of humanity comes from our kinship through mind, sense and will with God, meaning that we are the image of God.

The human being was made after the "image of God" ("eikon tou theou", "imago Dei"). But the image of God was the Son, born out of Father. So, the human is the image of the Image of God, or the image of Christ.

Through all the thoughts, feelings, wills, ideals, the human being is the image of the Logos, belongs to the theological realm of the Word. All these values of human beings are met only in the human regnum. The man is thoughtful because he has the seal of the Logos in himself. Therefore all the great works of humanity are celebrations of the Logos in it.

Culture, civilisation, thought, writings, art, laws, and literature, all of these are diverse affirmations of the presence of Logos into humanity. From here it stands the lack of logic for the atheism, coming with logic arguments to deny the existence of Logos, trying to rationally explain the irrationality of the universe.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1, 14).

In this verse we find, concentrated, all the history of humanity, together with his essential apogee, the Incarnation of Logos. The word "sarc" in Greek means "flesh", meaning living body, full of blood and life, walking on earth. The John`s expression comes to strengthen the reality of a full humanity of Christ, against all the rationalisms, that assimilated the presence of the Word with ghosts, spirits, illusions. The words "we beheld his glory" are the deadly wound against all iconoclast rationalisms, trying to exile God from this world. All sacramental imperialism seeing the Church as a pyramidal earthly structure where the people replace God is disavowed by the biblical word.

The glory of God can be seen, "in grace and in truth", and the presence of Christ in history, in the Church, is ceaseless "until the end of the ages": "and lo, I am with you always until the end of the world" (Mathew 28, 20).

Christ affirms that the fulfilment of his commands gives birth to the immortality: "truly, truly I say to you, if men keep my saying, he shall never see death" (John 8, 51). Here we find the proper existential connection between human and divine through the Word. The preservation of Logos into creation and in the spiritual life of human person is the foundation of immortality, because the immortal Logos, who died as human on a cross, grants his immortality through the Mystery of the Church. The love of God is manifested not only through creation, but mostly in through the immortality granted to the human race through Christ, the eternal Logos.

The Incarnation of the Son of God is therefore the unshakable, definitive, eternal union between human and God. This is the "topoj" for the union of all human beings with their Creator. In Christ, the incarnate Logos, the carriers of the Logos receive immortality, in unity with their Maker. This is – in the Church mind – the understanding key of human life.

Every theory, based on material perception and created reason, cannot explain the universe of thoughts, the eternal oriented mind of the human person. The whole culture is a supreme NO to death, a cry of sedition against annihilation and nothingness, which proves the fact we are created for eternity.

Our conscience full of Logos is the conscience of the reality that we will never die. All the themes of universal culture are in fact expressions of this conscience of eternity. Love, mercy, peace, wellbeing, virtue, justice, all ethic values of humanity are proves of the immortality in itself, of the necessity of an eternal realm. The animals have not this apperception and they don't need

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eternal justice. The human being though centres his entire being on the immortality of the soul, the existence of a world beyond death, the just Judgement and the presence of the eternal one in the heart of humanity.

In this theological perspective, all human endeavours are our struggle to escape death: love, science, culture are centred on eternal justice. In fact, pedagogy is also targeting not a mortal life, a couple of dozens of years, but accedes on eternal life. The unceasing effort of the human being to learn from the past, from others, from his/her own experiences has not as target the remaining mortal life, but an eternal realm of life.

The Pattern of the miracle – a cradle for educational process

One of the main characteristics of the work of Jesus in the world is the word of gratitude towards the Father, before every miracle. We notice here the divine pedagogy of the words and the knowledge of the future, through thankfulness (eucharistia / gr.). For example, when he multiplies the breads, feeding five thousands people, Jesus rises his eyes to the heaven, thanks to the Father and then gives the bread to the disciples. So, the eschatological miracle happens when a certain state of gratitude and faith occurs. These are the conditions of entry for every miracle in the created world: prayer, gratitude, faith, and then fulfilment.

Conclusion

These realities are necessary in the dialogue on human being with God, but necessary for every educational process: the freedom to learn and to ask for education, the freedom to receive or not the work of the *magister*, the thankfulness, the gratitude, and the flow of information to all generations, where the disciple become teacher. All the gestures of Jesus have deep connotations in the work of teaching the world. That is why the Fathers of the Church called him "the perfect Pedagogue". The religion is the school of humanity where we learn the immortality[6].

This trinity of ways necessary to all burst of the spiritual into the material world is synthesised by Maximus the Confessor, one of the brightest minds of the Church ever. He speaks – inspired by Dionysius the Areopagyta[7] – of the three stages in the ascension toward God: practical life[8], contemplation and unity[9]. These three steps are the axiological essence of the human life[10].

The human pedagogy, as learning, way, ascension to fulfilment, need for perfection, is prove of this necessary quest for immortality. The life itself is a school of eternity, a kindergarten for the life beyond. The human quality to learn always is the fundament of a continuous pedagogy, where the faith in God is essential.

The Gospel of John comes to assert the existence of this world eternal, where the Logos, always present in this world, is the source and the goal of everything. This Logos, incarnate in history, transforms the world from within and sanctifies it as a Church of all created beings.
Religion is not only the expression of a need to perpetuate life in mortal beings, but is the core of human life, where the universes of thought collide affirming that there is no death in the world.

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[6] Cf. Ierom. Vasile Vasilache, *Predica în Evul Mediu*, Institutul de Arte Grafice „Albina Românească", Iaşi, 1938, p. 88.
[7] A exhaustive treaty of the mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita: Hieromonk Alexander Golitsin, *Et Introibo ad Altare Dei, The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita with special references to its predecesors in the Eastern Christian Tradition*, Patriarhikon Idrima, Tessaloniki, 1994.
[8] The „praxis" in the teachings of the Fathers, see P. Tomas Spidlik S.J., *Spiritualitatea Răsăritului Creştin, Manual sistematic. I*, Deisis, Sibiu, 1997.
[9] Lars Thumberg, *Microcosmos şi Mediator, Antropologia teologică a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul*, Sophia, Bucureşti, 2005, pp. 358-403.
[10] On contemplation as intermediary step of Christian life, see P. Tomas Spidlik S.J., *op. cit.*, pp. 359-382.

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