



Rediscovering the LOGOS

by the Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Eusebius Stephanou, Th.D.

I am fully aware of the fact that “Logos” is an unfamiliar term to most Christians of our day, including Orthodox. The reason is not because it is a newly coined word.

On the contrary, “Logos” has a very long history behind it. The term is older than the New Testament itself. And more specifically, it is the Greek word denoting reason, logic, or rationality. The ancient Greek philosophers long before Christ used this term to describe the eternal and universal rational principle that pervades the world, relating it to man, as well as to God.

Then apparently the English word “logical” or “logic” derives from the Greek word “Logos”. To be logical is to conform to Logos, that is, to reason. To lead a logical or rational life is to live a Logos-like existence. But how did the ancient Greeks relate this term to the physical world?

The ancient Greeks thought of Logos as a cosmic force that accounted for the harmony and orderliness in the universe. It was a divine Intelligence for them that pervaded the world and indwelt in the cosmos, filling it like water fills a receptacle. Man according to Greek philosophy was related organically to the cosmic Logos. Each man within himself had sparks or seeds of the total universal Logos that made him rational and intelligent (*seminales rationes*). The Stoics called such cognitive seed, this immanent indwelling power in each individual man, the “*spermatik logos*”.

The Logos who relates man organically to the Creator of the

world relates him, also, to the world itself. In other words, the Logos was the unifying principle that made man part of an integrated whole, united with God and the world. But, now, how could a purely philosophical category like “Logos” have any connection with the Gospel? How did “Logos” ever become linked with the person of Christ, the Son of God?

This philosophical term passed into Christian usage with the writing of the New Testament, although we can find similar use of Greek terms in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint). We must remember that the Messiah was born in a Greek-speaking and Greek-thinking world. Not only were the books of the New Testament written in the Greek, but some of the categories of Greek thought were borrowed from Greek philosophy to explicate still more further certain metaphysical truths revealed in Jesus Christ. If we turn to the Gospel of St. John, for example, we can see the term “Logos” used to explain how Christ is the incarnation of that pre-eternal cosmic principle through which the world was created and through which it is related to man and to God. The early Christians took this philosophical term and gave it a Christian meaning and a wholly Christian application.

Then, you could say that the Christians were trying to show the Greeks who the true Logos was.

They were telling them, as it were: Here is the Logos about whom you Greeks have been speculating through the ages. He became flesh. He was incarnated and walked the face of the earth as a man. He is not an abstraction, as you conceived of Him. He is an actual personality.

I think it would be helpful, if we would turn to the actual text of the Gospel in which the word “Logos” is found:

“In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. He was the true Light that enlightens every man that comes into the world. He was in the world and the world was made through Him, yet the world knew Him not. And the Logos became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. We have beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father” (John 1).

It becomes obvious now that the classical pre-Christian term “Logos” became baptized into the Gospel of Christ. It became a Christian term. In fact it was applied to the very person of Christ. Christ is the Son and Logos of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity. It is through His Logos that the world both was created and to this day remains sustained. The Logos is God’s Perfect and Absolute Reason and Wisdom through whom both He creates and continues to govern the universe. This is why the Greeks who converted to Christianity looked at the Christian Faith as a continuation and perfection of Greek philosophy. It was for them the discovery of the perfect philosophical truth.

Then, would it be correct to say that Hellenism provided a cognitive and philosophical approach to the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Can we say that Christian Hellenism gave Christianity a cosmic and scientific relevance?

For the world in which Christ was born there was nothing in experience that could be called secular. This explains why the Greeks accepted Christ as the total truth. Christ was the answer to the philosophical and scientific quest of the Greeks, as well as the answer to the need for atonement with which the Jews were primarily concerned. The convergence of Judaism and Hellenism in early Christianity brought about this beautifully balanced approach.

Consequently, the Greeks took a special philosophical approach to Christ as the full Truth, while, on the other hand, the Jewish emphasis in their response to Christ was within the framework of religion as an institution of atonement and expiation of sins.

The altar of vicarious sacrifice was the center of Jewish interest, while, on the other hand, the academy was the pivot of Greek concern. Christ is the full truth: the truth for religion, symbolized by the sacrificial altar, and for philosophy and science, symbolized by the academy. In both aspects of human experience He represents the liberating Truth. He is the cosmic truth and absolute principle in science, as well as the principle of propitiation in religious experience. After all, is not both science and religion concerned with the truth? When we are in contact with truth, we are in direct touch with ultimate reality.

What I am really saying, is that Christ is relevant as the Logos for the scientist and philosopher apart from

what the Logos means in the religious dimension. Christ is not only the vicarious Lamb that is sacrificed for the sins of the world and the High Priest of that supreme sacrifice. He is also the key that unlocks the mysteries of philosophical truth in all its aspects.

This means all branches of philosophy and the social sciences are inter-related together in the Logos: metaphysics, logic, epistemology, ethics, psychology, and sociology. This is the inference logically inherent in the revealed Truth that Christ is the "*Alpha and the Omega*". "*I am the way and the truth and the life*", Christ said. "*I am the first and the last, the beginning and the end..No one cometh to the Father, but by the Son*". Christ is the Formal and Final Cause of all things.

In addition, we find in the Scriptures the following related text: "*He is the Image of the invisible God..In Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible..All things were created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together*" (*Colossians 1:15f*).

These words of Scripture point to the Logos of God as the creative principle and cosmic power that preserves the universe and secures its orderliness and harmony. Then St. Paul immediately follows with the doctrine of the Incarnation and the purely religious character of Logos as the Truth: "*And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross*".

According to this all-embracing understanding of Christ, science and philosophy are perfectly compatible with true religion. They both converge in the person of the

Divine Logos, because Christ is the Universal Truth in its intellectual, as well as religious aspects. Well, then, why the ever-present debate in our day over the dichotomy between science and religion. Why has Christ been kept out of the area of education and science? Here we can identify the root cause of the peril that threatens the very survival of Western Civilization? Scientific and technological advances in alienation from Religion can spell out doom for this planet. A spiritually retarded man can cause him to use science to create a monster that can destroy this world.

This is the tragedy of the whole matter. A philosophically and intellectually relevant Christ did not survive long enough in the western Christian world. The whole idea of Christ as Logos or Reason was completely forgotten. Here is where the divorce between religion and science begins. It can be traced back to the cataclysmic age of the fall of the Western Roman Empire. At that time (that is, about the 6th century) Greek philosophy almost disappeared from the West under the invasions of the northern barbarians.

Of course, it is true that Christian Greek ideas had until then dominated all of Christian West, not only in Rome, but in Gaul, Spain, and as far as England. Is this, then, the time when the Latin language and the Latin mentality was revived in the West?

The total ethos and mentality changed in the Christian West because of the descent of the new Germanic and Teutonic races. The classical spirit and approach to the Gospel was replaced by an authoritarian mindset. This was the only way in which the Church of Rome could succeed in subduing the unruly races newly converted from the north. Christian theology moved

THE ORTHODOX EVANGELIST

2024 Vol. 58 No. 6

Published by the Orthodox Brotherhood of St Symeon the New Theologian, Inc. St. Symeon Office: 276 N. Holiday Road, Miramar Beach, Florida 32550 Phone: (850) 654-2771. Past issues available upon request.

Email: st-symeon-nt@cox.net

Web site: www.stsymeon.org.

from the Greek tradition to that of the Latin-speaking Christian writers. The rational and contemplative theology of the Christian East was superseded by the static and scholastic theology of the West. It is a transition that marks a break in the continuity of the Christian Faith...and the seeds of later upheavals were sown during this period of cataclysmic changes.

How was it possible for the Logos philosophy and theology of the Early Church to be ignored? Since, "Logos" is explicitly stated in the New Testament as a revealed Truth, how was it possible for the concept of the Logos to fall into oblivion in the Christian West?

Even the Bible was no longer interpreted within the framework of the Early Church's tradition. The opening chapter of St. John's Gospel was misunderstood when Latin replaced Greek. Logos is nowhere to be found in the Latin translation. "Logos" is translated *Verbum* which means "Word". This is why if you turn to the first chapter of St. John's Gospel in an English translation, you will not find *Logos*. You will find instead the term, *Word*. Instead of "In the beginning was the Logos and the Logos was with God and the Logos was God," we find: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God."

This is to say that the original Greek term "Logos" was rendered incorrectly both into Latin and subsequently into English.

The emphasis of "Logos" became something static, rather than dynamic. "Logos" became understood as the spoken or written Word. Obviously, this rendering of the original text fails to convey the meaning of the total Christ as the Reason and Rationality of God. As a result, the philosopher and thinker of the West missed the full thrust of that wonderful truth that Christ is really the underlying principle of everything rational, of everything reasonable, and of everything meaningful in the created universe and especially in the life of man.

In other words, it is as if we are saying that the Logos which was in the beginning never became established as the beginning and the matrix and articulation of thought and experience in the subsequent history of western man.

As a concept of Christian philosophy, consequently, the Logos was totally lost and forgotten. The very notion of a Christian philosophy was never taken seriously in the west, because the Christian Hellenism of Eastern Christianity was lost. Its loss has been costly to western man in his quest for a rational vindication of the Christian Faith. In an age when rationality and sanity are on the decline, it is important for man to regain the awareness of Christ as the cosmic Logos or Reason. The need is urgent in our day for Christians to rediscover Christ as the Incarnate Reason of God in an



attempt to deliver modern man from irrationality and folly that threatens to destroy him. But the fault does not lie with the secular thinkers, as much as with the Christian theologians themselves who for centuries have held to the separation of Christ and reason, faith and reason, and natural and the supernatural.

Then could we say that a total Christ for a total integrated life of religion and science should be the watchword for modern day Christians? The fullness of Christ for the fullness of life? A rational Christ for a rational life? The Logos for Logical and Logos-like men?

Yes. But we can become Logical and enjoy perfect happiness in the life governed by right Reason only by submitting to Jesus Christ in faith and

perfect obedience. There is no Truth without Christ the Logos. There is no knowledge of ultimate reality without Christ, for He is the Perfect Image of the Being. "No one cometh to the Father, but through the Son," the Bible teaches us. "He who has seen the Son has seen the Father". Christ alone can relate us to ultimate reality and to the world about us. He alone is the Key that unlocks the mysteries of both religion and philosophy.

If Christ is Perfect Reason, why do so many people fail to accept Christ as such? Why is there so much unbelief and irreligion in our day?

It is my personal conviction that no one in his right mind can reject Christ as the Reason and Logos of God. But it is a blinding irrationality, caused by sin that prevents man from accepting Christ as Savior and Master. Men are basically not in their right mind. Where Christ is missing, reason stops functioning. In the words of the Scripture, men become "futile in their thinking and their senseless minds are darkened. Claiming to be wise, they become fools". In other words, men claim to be rational and reasonable but they are in fact irrational.

The rational powers of man are darkened by sin, the disease of the soul. How many World Wars will it take to convince us of this fact? Men still labor under the illusion that they can talk themselves into a state of enduring peace and harmony. Our young people simply perpetuate this folly, only in more tragic terms, because they are deceived in thinking that this is a mark of their own superiority over the older generation.

In these troubled days of decreasing sanity among men, may God give us the supernatural capacity to understand that obedience to His only begotten Son is obedience to His Eternal Logos or Reason. The fact we are facing a reality that is essentially supernatural will require that we recognize that mental sobriety and rationality comes only by committing ourselves to Him "Who is the Truth", the Truth, not

only in its religious aspect, but in the whole spectrum of its all-embracing sovereignty, including both science, art and philosophy.

Is “Logos” Irrelevant?

It is generally recognized that man is a rational creature. Reason has always been acknowledged as the ultimate criterion of truth. If man can call the unacceptable as irrational, it is only because he still appeals to reason as the measure of what is right and true (as darkened as his reason might often be). From the very dawn of philosophical reflection with Anaxagoras and Heraclitus, the pre-Socratic thinkers, reason has been accepted as the supreme standard of thought and conduct. There are even atheists who go so far as to reject the existence of God on supposedly rational grounds.

So long as man accepts the authority of reason, then “logos” can never be irrelevant no matter what age of history he lives in. Scholastic philosophy dealt a fatal blow to Christian Hellenism by misrepresenting it to the western mind. The rejection of philosophy by the Reformers was the result of the abortive attempt of scholasticism to establish the inner continuity between faith and reason.

The emergence of the so-called “Age of Reason” confirms the dismal failure of the Roman Catholic Church to meet the demands of reason. But how can the rule of faith be redefined in the idiom of modern philosophy which in its mainstream is positivistic? How can metaphysical truths be formulated in the terms of a modern philosophy which rejects the legitimacy of metaphysics and denies the validity of metaphysical knowledge? What is the idiom of our day in which theology can be restated to make it more relevant? What else can it be but the language of physical science, semantics, and behavioral psychology?

But these sciences equate reality with the physically verifiable. They do not recognize the existence of the soul. Ultimate reality for them is physical—not metaphysical. How is it humanly possible to interpret theology in a materialistic idiom?

Metaphysical philosophy in Christian antiquity provided common ground for Hellenism and the Gospel as they encountered each other. The contest in the early church was not between reason and revelation, but between paganism and revelation.

But today metaphysics is no longer queen. Critical philosophy has dethroned metaphysics. Thus the apologetic task of the theologian has become far more difficult. Furthermore, modern philosophy which is not concerned with reality, but with the “meaningful”, is historically distrustful of religion. It is essentially reactionary, because it emerged in antagonism to the Roman Church which had kept the mind shackled under the bondage of dogmatism.

How can Christian theology address itself to a philosophy that stems from an apostasy which has repudiated Christianity a long time ago and subsequently rejects all religious and metaphysical involvement? The Gospel’s confrontation with secular philosophy cannot be compared with its earlier task of coping with Greek philosophy with which it had far more in common.

Is the Language of the Fathers Anachronistic?

The Orthodox Church alone has pre-scholastic philosophical tradition. She kept the philosophical heritage of her earlier age as a permanent part of her tradition. It is not a fanciful idea, but a fact rooted in history that Orthodoxy alone can reeducate western man and help him find his way back to the acceptance of philosophy as the synthetic interpretation of the universe. But courage and knowledge of the historical facts are required to transcend the western period of scholastic metaphysics.

Who can seriously contend that the language of the Church Fathers is outdated? There is every reason to believe that the achievements of space science will give their idiom a renewed relevance. In the light of extra-terrestrial exploration faith takes on a cosmic significance. Jesus is not only the Lamb that taketh away the sin

of the world. He is the Cosmic Christ, as well as the vicarious offering of Calvary. Christ is the Cosmic Logos and the Nous of God not only through Whom the cosmos was created, but through Whom it is sustained. The Logos pervades the cosmos. He is the Cosmological Principle through Whom the universe is to be viewed as an integrated whole.

The Orthodox Catholic Church is not only the historic church which has preserved the original deposit of Faith pure and unadulterated, but she preserves the authentic continuity of the semantic evolution in theology throughout Christian history.

A Christmas Greeting

Just a note regarding the previous edition of the newsletter. In my article “Escaping God’s Wrath”, the quote from Revelation 14:14-19 was missing lines 14:16 and 17. This was probably due to the limited space or in error. This Scripture verse goes into more detail of the workings of the angelic realm during the end times. We wish to always be consistent and accurate in our articles. I urge everyone to read the book of Revelation. To quote Fr. Eusebius: *“Reading Revelation is more than a matter of obedience. It is a rewarding act of submission to the Divine will in a literal sense of the word. There is a reward that is reserved for the one that reads it.”*

It has been a year of change and challenges. We have witnessed conflicts in different parts of the world. Some people have lost everything from war and massive storms. Jesus came into the world over 2,000 years ago during a turbulent time. He understands our suffering and pain. May we take time this Christmas season to give thanks for all of God’s blessings He has given to us.

The Board of Directors want to thank every one of the supporters of the ministry. Thank you for sending in your prayer requests also. Wishing you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year 2025! Joseph Abbate / President.