

**LOGOS CHRISTOLOGY:  
AN INTERACTION BETWEEN EARLY  
CHRISTIAN BELIEFS AND MODERN SCHOLARS'  
ATTEMPTS TO RELATE THEM  
TO THE ASIAN CONTEXT**

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I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to examine Christology as it has been developed from a theology of the Word (Logos). Since this way of viewing Christ can be observed specifically from a study of early Christian thought, the first analysis will be concerned with what the apostle John meant when he referred to Jesus Christ as the Logos. Next, three original sources will be investigated to determine what certain early church fathers meant when they interpreted and defended the doctrine that Christ is the Logos. This pursuit will be limited to the works of Justin, Irenaeus,<sup>2</sup> and Athanasius.<sup>3</sup>

Then an analysis will be made of several modern scholars' efforts to find the major points of contact between the Logos doctrine and Asian thought (or Eastern beliefs). Some of these scholars have simply tried to detect whether or not a Logos doctrine exists in the traditions of China and India; some have investigated whether there are elements of the Logos in other faiths (like Hinduism, Buddhism, or Islam). Some have even attempted to use the Logos doctrine as a bridge to other beliefs, and thus have used it as a universal common ground for adaptation. Because of this, in the last section, when comparing the Logos doctrine of early Christian thought with these modern proposals, critical evaluations will be presented as well as the position this author favors.

<sup>1</sup>There are of course the works of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, etc., but the major, strongest views are represented by Justin, Irenaeus, and Athanasius.

<sup>2</sup>Mostly seen from A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, eds., *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* (ANF vol. I; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956).

<sup>3</sup>E. R. Hardy and C. C. Richardson, *Christology of the Later Fathers* (LCC vol. III; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954).

## II. THE LOGOS CHRISTOLOGY OF JOHN

For an ordinary but eager Christian who simply wants to study through the Gospel of John, it seems to be extremely crucial for him to try to understand the first five difficult verses of chapter one. Many years ago, the "best" decision I made was to skip those verses and to continue the reading of the following verses which were more "rational." However, as difficult and obscure as those verses may be, today I think differently of them. John must have had a particular purpose when, at the outset of the Gospel, he wrote, "In the beginning was the *Logos*." He must have had an essential meaning to communicate by using that term. Also, his readers at that time must have had the capacity to understand that term. So, what did he mean by "Logos"?

To answer that question, we need to trace the etymology of the term. According to A. Debrunner, the word *logos* comes from the verb *legein* which means to count, gather, enumerate, and narrate; hence *logos* means collection, counting, reckoning, calculation, account, consideration, review, evaluation, value, reflection, ground, condition, narrative, word, and speech.<sup>4</sup> Generally, in Greek philosophy and religion, this concept was developed into two aspects, one logical and one metaphysical.<sup>5</sup> Important to note here is the concept of Heraclitus (c. 500 BC), who saw that the logical and the metaphysical are significantly undivided. For him, Logos is the transcendent and lasting order in which the flux of things and events occurs, binding the individual to the whole. It is the principle by which all things behave, the connecting link between cosmos, man, and God. Heraclitus saw that everything is constantly changing; so he proposed the idea that the universe is made of fire, because fire is the fastest moving of the four elements.<sup>6</sup> For him, the three conceptions, Logos, Fire, and God, are fundamentally the same.<sup>7</sup> However, it is the Logos, the universal law, the original fire itself, that does not change throughout the constant flux. It is the wisdom that directs the course of nature,<sup>8</sup> a stabilizing principle of the universe. This same Logos, when applied to man, is man's power of thought, reason, and speech, and is part of the universal spirit and common Logos. It denotes

<sup>4</sup>TDNT 4: 69-70.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 80-81. More stress on the metaphysical aspect is found among the Stoics.

<sup>6</sup>G. Clark, *The Johannine Logos* (Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1972, 1989) 15.

<sup>7</sup>See L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 115.

<sup>8</sup>Clark, *Logos* 15.

something like the world-soul, the soul of the universe. Therefore, in that sense it is an all-pervading principle, the rational principle of the universe, and a creative energy. All things come from this Logos, and men derive their wisdom from it.<sup>9</sup>

The stoics (c. 300 BC) used the term to signify the ordered and teleologically oriented nature of the world.<sup>10</sup> It is the cosmic law of reason, the power that extends throughout all matter, and works immanently in all things.<sup>11</sup> In other words, there is a spark of the divine Logos which controls or even is in each individual thing. These sparks, or *logoi spermatikoi*, seminal logoi, are seeds which unfold themselves, and from which grows all that we see. So man's reason is only part of the great general Logos. The duality of Logos as reason and speech is expressed in the Stoic language, inwardly as cognition (*logos endiathetos*) and outwardly as spoken word (*logos prophorikos*).<sup>12</sup>

We may conclude that the precise meaning of the Logos varies among those philosophers, but for them it usually refers to "reason." The Logos itself then becomes something like a shock absorber between God and the universe, because, as pantheists, the Greek philosophers mostly held that the divine cannot come into direct contact with matter. Thus we can see that in Stoic tradition the Logos is considered to be both divine reason and reason distributed in the world (and thus in the mind as well). It is the manifestation of the divine principle in the world.

Now before we come directly to John, we need to take a look at Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BC - 54 AD), a Jewish philosopher who was a contemporary of John, and who in his writings used the term "logos" more than 300 times.<sup>13</sup> For Philo, the divine Logos is not a god itself as it was to the Stoic; but rather the Logos is second after God, through whom all things were made. It<sup>14</sup> is a mediating figure between God and man, or God and his creation.<sup>15</sup> So, in this sense, we may say that the Philonian Logos is only the personification of a divine

<sup>9</sup>Morris, *John* 115.

<sup>10</sup>TDNT 4:84.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. 85.

<sup>12</sup>Cited from M. Aghiorgoussis, "The Word of God in Orthodox Christianity," *GOTR* 31 (1986) 84.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid. 85.

<sup>14</sup>Naturally we refer to Philo's Logos as "It," and John's as "He." A personal, incarnate, revealing, redeeming Logos who is equal in essence with God is foreign to Philo.

<sup>15</sup>TDNT 4:89; see also Morris, *John* 121.

energy, the creative power of God. The Logos is not the personal pre-existing eternal Creator.

Thus from this background we can understand that when John used the term "Logos" in the prologue of his Gospel, he was employing a term that was widely recognized in the Mediterranean world. However, this does not mean that John derived his essential thought from the Greeks.<sup>16</sup> When he used the term "Logos," he was making a clear differentiation from fundamental Greek ideas. According to L. Morris,<sup>17</sup> the Greeks thought of gods as being detached from the world, as regarding its struggles and heartaches and joys and fears, with serene divine lack of feeling. Contrary to this concept, John's Logos does not show us a God who is serenely detached, but a God who is passionately involved. This Logos speaks of God's coming where we are, taking our nature upon Himself, entering the world's struggle, and out of this agony winning salvation for mankind.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, we may say that John's prologue calls attention to a shockingly *new* message and content about the Logos. His subject is different, even though in form it remains the same and the terminology is unchanged. He did not speak of an abstract stoic or mythological Logos, but of a Logos who became man<sup>19</sup> and who is in essence God.

When we read John 1:1 (. . . *Kai theos ēn ho logos*). We cannot render the word *theos* there as "divine" (hence ". . . the Logos was divine"). If John had intended to use the adjective ("divine") here, he would certainly have employed *theios* rather than *theos*. It is also incorrect to say that because the word *theos* has no definite article, it possesses the significance of an adjective.<sup>20</sup> Here I think Barrett's view is correct that *theos*, being without the article, points to its function

<sup>16</sup>This thought is the same as that of Hellenistic Judaism. Also here we have to note that it is equally not true to say that John's Logos has no connection whatsoever with the Heraclitian or Stoic schools. I agree with Morris who says that "It would be impossible to use a term so widely known in Greek philosophy in a writing in the Greek language, probably published in a centre of Greek culture, without being mindful of the associations the term would arouse" (ibid. 117 n. 132).

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. also O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959, 1963) 260. According to Cullmann, John did intend to show that the total human life of Jesus is the centre of the revelation of the divine truth.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid. 264.

<sup>20</sup>See the opinion of R. H. Strachan, *The Fourth Gospel: Its Significance and Environment* (London: SCM, 1941) 99; cited from E. L. Miller, "The Logos was God," *EvQ* 53/2 (April-June 1981) 69.

as predicative and describes the nature of Logos. The absence of the article indicates that the Logos is God.<sup>21</sup>

The fact that the Logos is God was already being stressed by John when he mentioned "*Kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon*" ("And the Word was with God"). The preposition *pros* with the accusative carries the meaning "in the presence of" in the NT.<sup>22</sup> The significance of this is: first, that the person of the Logos and the person of God are differentiated. This is also supported by the definite articles *ho* and *ton* for *Logos* and *theos*. Secondly, the preposition *pros* should be understood as carrying the ideas of accompaniment and relationship.<sup>23</sup> In this sense, we may paraphrase it as the Logos was "in the company of" or "face-to-face with" God, and thus was pointing to the personal existence of the Logos.

Moreover, this Logos was "in (the) beginning" with God. The Greek *en arche* without the definite article indicates the timeless existence of the Logos. This is also supported by the fact that the verb "was" (*ēn*) in "*en arche en ho logos*" is in the imperfect tense,<sup>24</sup> which means that it can be translated "in (the) beginning, the Word continually was." So we may conclude that not only did the Logos exist from eternity, but He also existed in the closest connection with the Father. He is a distinct person from the Father in the Godhead, and He is not an emanation from the Father. The Logos and God are not identical, but they are one.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup>C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (2d ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955, 1978) 156. The argument goes like this: The *Logos* in John 1:1c is arthrous which signals its function as the subject of the sentence; the anarthrous *theos* then becomes the predicate. Therefore, *theos* as predicate nominative is of course not identical and interchangeable with *Logos*. In other words, we must translate the sentence "the Logos was God," and not "God was the Logos." For Miller, as an example, this is the blunder of the translator of the NEB who renders that sentence "And what God was, the Word was." He also rejects Morris' translation (*John* 76) -- "All that may be said about God may fitly be said about the Word" -- as something that John would wish to deny because of its Sabellianistic notion that the God-head was exhausted in the Logos ("Logos" 72-73). I think this is a sound exegesis because to mistranslate that sentence one will automatically misconstrue the whole passage which is the same as endangering the true message about the Trinity.

<sup>22</sup>Barrett, *St. John* 155.

<sup>23</sup>Morris, *John* 76.

<sup>24</sup>I am aware of the danger of being too "tenses-minded" by relying too much on the meaning of aorist (see John 1:14) and imperfect tenses to determine the meaning (See D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984] 69-75, on the aorist). However, I think John did not accidentally use the imperfect here; on the contrary, he must have intended to stress the fact that the Logos has eternal existence, even before the creation.

<sup>25</sup>Morris, *John* 73-74; cf. also with R. Bultmann who, even as radical as he is in demythologizing the Gospels, still holds that the Logos is God, one equal with and distinct from the Father. The Father and the Son are one (*The Gospel of John: A Commentary* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971] 33-35).

John's unique and culminating idea was of course in verse 1:14 where he said that "The Logos became *flesh*" (*kai ho logos sarx egeneto*).<sup>26</sup> This profound sentence makes the Christian Logos doctrine different from every pagan philosophy including the semi-Jewish Philonian doctrine. John did not say that "The Logos became *man*," nor that "The Logos *took a body*." He definitely wanted to be precise in making it clear that the humanity of the Logos was genuine. This eternal Logos became incarnate, and entered man's history in time and space. J. D. G. Dunn is right when he recognizes this decisive step introduced in John 1:14 as the transition from "(the Logos) impersonal personification to actual person."<sup>27</sup> The Logos comes into being as a particular person in history right where men are.

So we may conclude this section of our discussion by saying that when John wrote his prologue, he had a richer, deeper, fuller idea than that of any of his predecessors. It is incorrect to say that John recognized first a general conception of the Logos which was common everywhere, then he finally pointed to a special Christian conception which is added to the other. According to O. Cullmann,<sup>28</sup> such an approach would completely miss the point of the Johannine prologue. The truth is that when the Greek or Jewish-Hellenistic philosophers used the term "Logos," they used it without knowing the Person behind that term. They did not have any idea about the Logos who became *sarx*. The Jew could talk about the Logos as the instrument in creation; the Greek would think of a rational principle of which all natural laws are particular expressions. But, for John, the Logos was not a principle or a personification: He was a Person, a real living Being, the source of life, the eternal God.

### III. THE LOGOS CHRISTOLOGY OF JUSTIN THE MARTYR

Justin's starting point was that the Logos is the personal Reason of God in which all men partake: "For not only among the Greeks did reason (Logos) prevail to condemn these things through Socrates, but also among the Barbarians were they condemned by Reason (or the Word, the Logos) Himself,

<sup>26</sup>The context shows that *egeneto* is in the historical aorist tense, therefore it indicates an action at a point of time.

<sup>27</sup>*Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) 243. Of course we may also conclude that John's transition has something to do with the possibility that he may have been writing that verse with people called the Docetists in mind. The Docetists preserved the deity of Christ, but sacrificed Christ's humanity by saying that He only "seemed" to be a man.

<sup>28</sup>*Christology* 264.

who took shape, and became man, and was called Jesus Christ.<sup>29</sup> This means that there were Christians before Christ, that is, men who possessed seeds of the Logos and in this sense arrived at facets of the truth.<sup>30</sup> Justin could possibly have had this kind of notion because he used the concept of the *logos spermatikos* to designate the universal activity of the Logos, and thus brought Christianity into relationship with the broader spectrum of truth. This also led him to maintain that each person has a share of the Logos in himself.<sup>31</sup> That is why, for Justin, it was not difficult to explain the truth found in philosophies and various pagan religions, while at the same time distinguishing between the inadequate truths of the others and the full truth of Christianity, since only in Jesus Christ is the whole Logos present.<sup>32</sup>

Concerning the relation of the Father and the Son, Justin holds that the Logos, as the Son, is indivisible and inseparable from the Father, just as the light of the sun on earth is indivisible and inseparable from the sun in the heavens.<sup>33</sup> The Logos is also numerically distinct from the Father although He is of one essence with the Father.<sup>34</sup> He was not a creature himself, even though He was brought forth from the Father and was with the Father before all creation.<sup>35</sup> Here Justin is careful enough to note that the Logos is subordinate to the Father not in regard to essence, but in origin.<sup>36</sup> For him, to say that the Logos is united to the Father does not imply that the Father and the Logos are distinct as separate beings.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Roberts, "First Apology," ANF I:5.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid. I:46.

<sup>31</sup>Roberts, "Second Apology," ANF I:13. This means that each person can perceive the truth in proportion to the share of the Logos within himself.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid. I:8; cited from C. M. Watts, "The Humanity of Jesus in Justin Martyr's Soteriology," *EvQ* 56/1 (January 1984) 22-23. According to D. F. Wright ("Christian Faith in the Greek World: Justin Martyr's Testimony," *EvQ* 54/2 [April-June 1982] 81), Justin succeeds in incorporating all the activity of the divine seminal logos into a rudimentary *Heilsgeschichte* by way of establishing a christological criterion of truth through the method of fixing the fragmentary and provisional character of authentic understanding available through the active Logos prior to its embodiment in Christ.

<sup>33</sup>Roberts, "Dialogue with Trypho," ANF I:128.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid. I:129.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid. I:62; cf. also, "First Apology" I:21.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid. I:129.

<sup>37</sup>Cf. L. W. Barnard ("The Logos Theology of St. Justin Martyr," *The Downside Review* 89/295 [April 1971] 135) who added that, for Justin, the Logos was not only in name distinct from the Father, as the light is from the sun, but was also numerically distinct, i.e., different in person.

Concerning the humanity of Christ, Justin affirmed that Jesus was born of a virgin. Jesus was a man, but not of human seed.<sup>38</sup> In other words, Jesus had no blood relationship with humanity, although He grew up like all other men.<sup>39</sup> That is why, according to Justin, Jesus did suffer in his earthly life and was crucified,<sup>40</sup> and died a real death, because only a truly human Christ could experience those events. His purpose in coming to the world was for men's sake: to set them free from the tyranny of demonic powers, and to give them light from the truth of God.<sup>41</sup> For this, Jesus had to die on the cross, because the cross was the "greatest symbol of His power and rule."<sup>42</sup>

Now, to summarize Justin's thought, we have seen that for him, Christ was the whole Logos, distinguished from the seminal logos (*logos spermatikos*) which is present in all persons. This means that the whole truth is in Jesus, but fragmented and limited truth in man. Therefore, when this whole Logos became incarnate, becoming truly human, He was able to provide the word of revelation to set man free from demonic power. However, we must note that it is also clear that Justin's use of the term "Logos" is partly biblical and partly philosophical. It is true to say that he had the purpose of commending the Gospel to the educated and to defend it in the face of attacks by pagans and by Jews. But, several times and in several places,<sup>43</sup> he seems to have had the tendency to use his contemporary philosophical conception of the Logos more than the historic revelation from the Gospels. It seems to me that there is the danger of conceding too much for the sake of the argument. For example, we see that at times Justin seemed to be saying that Christ the Logos was merely on the same level with the sons of Zeus,<sup>44</sup> although Justin himself affirmed the God of Trinity.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>38</sup>Roberts, "Dialogue," ANF I:76.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid. I:110.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid. I:88. What he means by the last phrase is that man could be saved and have the ability to resist evil (See "First Apology" I:12).

<sup>42</sup>Roberts, "First Apology" I:55; cf. "Dialogue" I:134. However, according to Watts ("The Humanity" 32), Justin failed to "produce anything like a unified and systematic theory to explain the meaning of the cross and its salvific significance."

<sup>43</sup>See, for example, "First Apology" I:5, 12, 14, 21, 46. According to Wright ("Christian Faith" 82), Justin's philosophical context was that of the *eclectic* Middle Platonists who interpreted Plato out of predominantly religious interests and purged Stoicism of its materialistic ontology.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid. 21, 54.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid. 6, 13.

## IV. THE LOGOS CHRISTOLOGY OF IRENAEUS

Irenaeus lived in a time when Gnosticism had become very dangerous for the Christian church, because the Gnostics talked like the Christians but thought entirely differently from them.<sup>46</sup> That is why, at the outset of his great work *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus attacked Gnosticism by affirming first from the apostolic tradition that the Creator of the universe is God. He is one God Almighty who made all things through His Logos,<sup>47</sup> hence the Logos as God Himself is the instrument of creation. He is the Artificer of all and is our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>48</sup> However, Irenaeus was not quite clear in explaining the relationship between the Logos and the Father. For him, there is no second God, and the Logos is God Himself.<sup>49</sup> But this does not mean that Irenaeus rejected the pre-existence of the Logos, because for him the Logos, who became flesh, did always co-exist with the Father.<sup>50</sup>

Irenaeus explained that the incarnation was when the Son humbled Himself to be born of a virgin and descended to man so that God's salvation for man became possible.<sup>51</sup> Incarnation, then, became the basis for the meeting place of God and man; the Person of Christ is the meeting point of humanity and divinity. Without this act of God, man has no other way to be saved. The first initiative was from God.<sup>52</sup> In this way, the Logos of God gave Himself to man and summed up man in Himself, bringing man back to God.<sup>53</sup> Because it was for this end (that is, the gift of adoption to men as sons of God) that the Logos was made man; He

<sup>46</sup>Roberts, "Against Heresies," ANF I:2. According to Irenaeus, the Gnostics "led astray the minds of the inexperienced, and have taken them captive, corrupting the oracles of the Lord, and being evil expounders of what was well spoken."

<sup>47</sup>Ibid. I:22, II:30.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid. III:8, 11.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid. II:13, 30. Irenaeus himself, however, preferred to use the term "Son" rather than "Logos"; cf. G. Aulén, *Christus Victor* (New York: C. Scribner's & Sons, 1960) 21; cited from I. W. Reist, "The Christology of Irenaeus," *JETS* 13/4 (February 1970) 244.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid. II:25.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid. III:16-17, IV:12.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid. III:16.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid. III:18, 22. For Irenaeus, there was in Christ a recapitulation (or renewal) of mankind. In Christ, as the Logos of God and as the second Adam, the human race is once more united to God. This recapitulation reaches backward as well as forward, and in it mankind reverses the course on which it entered at the fall.

who was the Son of God became the son of man. In this way, men, having been taken into the Logos, and receiving the adoption, might become the sons of God, because by no other means could men attain to incorruptibility and immortality.<sup>54</sup>

It should be noted in conclusion that Irenaeus is quite different from the other apologists in the Early Christian church because he gave a more prominent place to the revelation of God (rather than philosophy). He himself did not try to explain any speculative teaching about Christ with philosophy as the vehicle. On the contrary, he just reasserted the Biblical teaching about Christ, the Logos made flesh, who was with God, and who was God.

## V. THE LOGOS CHRISTOLOGY OF ATHANASIUS

Athanasius's teaching on the incarnation started from the very beginning with the doctrine that God is good, and that His goodness is shown in the creation.<sup>55</sup> This God created the world out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) through His Logos, Jesus Christ. Why did he start with the argument from creation? Reading Athanasius's works, we know he held that the incarnation of the Logos had as its purpose<sup>56</sup> the renewal of God's creation (especially of man, who had turned away from God and had lost the special gift of eternal life).

He interpreted John 1:14 as meaning that the Logos became man, and could *not* have the meaning that He *entered into* a man. He stressed the fact that the Logos descended to *mortality* in space and time and made Himself a *body*<sup>57</sup> born of the virgin Mary. The Logos delivered this body to the point of death at the cross on behalf of all men in order that God's commandment that man had to die as a consequence of sin could be lifted. In this way the Logos restored the gift of eternal life,<sup>58</sup> and in Him man's mortal nature is joined with life.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid. III:19.

<sup>55</sup>Hardy, "On the Incarnation of the Word," LCC III:3. Athanasius did this first because he wanted to refute the false doctrines of creation as taught by the Epicureans, Platonists, and the Gnostics.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid. III:4. Men were the object and the motive of His incarnation; it was for our salvation that God loved man to the point of being born and of appearing in a human body.

<sup>57</sup>It is obvious here that Athanasius stressed the real, visible humanness of Christ, countering the false doctrine of the Gnostics.

<sup>58</sup>Hardy, "Incarnation," LCC III:8-9. The reason is because only the incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Logos of God could possibly perform this. It is through the Logos that man could be clothed in the robe of immortality.

Concerning the Logos descending to mortality, Athanasius was clear enough to note that in the incarnation the Logos's transcendent status was not altered in any way, because in taking on flesh He did not become different, but remained the same.<sup>59</sup> The Logos did not stop ruling the universe, but continued to exercise sovereignty over it.<sup>60</sup> In other words, He was active in a human body and outside it as well, so that we can say that He is active in the whole universe at the same time.<sup>61</sup>

In his second work,<sup>62</sup> Athanasius maintained that the Logos of God should not be confused with what the Stoics call *logos spermatikos*.<sup>63</sup> It should not be confused with any human word either, because a human word is composed and is perishable, while it is the task of God's Logos to preserve the perishable world from perishing. The Stoics had conceived of the Logos as the soul of the universe, and Athanasius borrowed this idea, with the difference that for him the Logos is personal.<sup>64</sup> He has a real, human, bodily existence; He *is* man.

According to Athanasius, when the Bible says that Jesus advanced in wisdom and grace, it means that there was a parallel and progressive development of His body and disclosure of His deity. On the other hand, if He is said to have professed ignorance, it was a case of feigned, not genuine ignorance. The Logos knew all things, but since He had become flesh, and flesh is naturally ignorant, it was fitting that He should make a show of ignorance.<sup>65</sup> However, this does not mean that the Logos is inferior to the Father. Athanasius was careful enough to affirm that there is no distinction between the Father and the Son in time, being, or knowledge. The Logos is *homoousios* (equal and consubstantial) with the Father. He is not the Logos of creation (*logos ktisma*),<sup>66</sup> because he was from

<sup>59</sup>J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1958) 284.

<sup>60</sup>Hardy, "Incarnation," LCC III:17.

<sup>61</sup>This idea is also expressed by Athanasius in the latter part of his work (*ibid.* 41).

<sup>62</sup>A. Robertson, ed., "Contra Gentes" in *Select Writings and Letters of Athanasius* (NPNF; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953) IV:40-43.

<sup>63</sup>For the Stoics the Logos is a finer matter immanent in the material universe. Through the activity of the seminal logos, individual things come into existence as the world develops. All the seminal logoi are contained within the supreme universal logos. This leads to the Stoic doctrine of human nature: The soul in man is a portion of, or an emanation from, the divine Fire, the Logos (Kelly, *Doctrines* 13).

<sup>64</sup>A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* (London: Mowbrays, 1965, 1975) I:311.

<sup>65</sup>Kelly, *Doctrines* 286.

<sup>66</sup>A. Harnack, *History of Dogma* (tr. fr. 3d German ed.; London: Williams & Norgate, 1897) III:141.

eternity the Son and has always been in existence with the Father.

It goes without saying that Athanasius was deeply influenced by Platonism. At the very outset of his *De Incarnatione* we can see that his doctrine of God contains a quotation of Plato's *Timaeus*,<sup>67</sup> which he adopted without comment. According to E. P. Meijering,<sup>68</sup> Athanasius had the tendency to present a Christianized version of the philosophical doctrine in the effort to give his readers a view that there is an affinity between human reason and divine Reason. This is also clearly seen in his concept of the *Logos spermatikos* where he limited this concept to refer to the Christian community only. This does not mean, however, that Athanasius's Logos Christology had been hellenized in such a way that it became a real danger for his own system of thought; because although he employed the Platonic ontology, he also made it clear that the Son as the Logos is ontologically equal to the Father, and the Son is not inferior to the Father. Here, then, he makes a clear break with the Platonic ontology.<sup>69</sup>

#### VI. SOME MODERN SCHOLARS' EFFORTS TO RELATE THE LOGOS CHRISTOLOGY TO THE ASIAN CONTEXT

Efforts to make Christianity relevant are as old as the history of Christian mission itself. It is of course not an easy task, especially if attempts are made to help the Gospel to be understood by different kinds of people in different cultures, as for example, in Asia. In this context or situation, Christians who bring the Good News can no longer carry the notion that Asians will easily accommodate themselves to Christianity. They have to find ways to relate Christianity so that its message becomes clear enough to be understood and accepted.

<sup>67</sup>Robertson, "Incarnation," *NPNF* IV:3. When Athanasius stressed the independence and transcendence of God or the independent existence of things, he was also indirectly expressing himself as a Platonist.

<sup>68</sup>*Orthodoxy and Platonism in Athanasius: Synthesis or Antithesis* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968) 117. This should be seen more as his effort to Christianize the Hellenistic philosophy rather than as his Christian doctrines being hellenized.

<sup>69</sup>However, Athanasius is considered to have failed to make any unambiguously clear mention of Christ's soul (Kelly, *Doctrines* 287). He did mention that the Logos's humanity includes a human rational soul, but, with his Platonic anthropology, he treated the teaching of the soul as having no necessary connection with the body. We see also that his regular description of Christ's human nature as "flesh" or "body" seems to point in this direction of thought. That is why he mentioned Christ's anguish only as "feigned," and not real anguish; His ignorance was no real ignorance as well. It follows that human knowledge, a limited human consciousness in Christ, had not occurred to him (Grillmeier, *Christ* 315).

Some of those efforts can be seen in our modern Christian publications. There are varying opinions about how to find the best way or message for the Asian context. Most of them, in a direct or indirect way, usually employ the Logos Christology as the best vehicle. For instance, C. S. Song introduces the importance of understanding the concept of creation and incarnation as found in the prologue of John.<sup>70</sup> He finds the Logos who was present at the creation and who later became flesh to be the preferred message, because the movement (from creation to incarnation) "expresses the movement from God's Word to man's flesh, from divine essence to the human essence."<sup>71</sup> Song calls this a "mission of enfleshment, namely, God the Creator became what He had created. The creator became the Incarnator."<sup>72</sup>

In the latter section of his work, Song developed his thought about the nature of Christian mission, which for him is primarily the unity of Word and action. If there is no action among Christians and in the church, that is a tragedy for Christianity, and this is not the characteristic of the witness of the Christian God. The God of the Bible is the God who has perfectly correlated His Word and His act.<sup>73</sup> The incarnation is the highest expression of the unity of God's Word and His act. And Jesus Christ is the Word of God made flesh, which means that "the saving love of God becomes embodied in a particular person called Jesus Christ."<sup>74</sup> That is why, from this perspective of creation and incarnation, Song can boldly emphasize that "the task of Christian mission is *not* to Christianize the world but make a contribution to the 'renewal' of civilizations deeply rooted in other religions."<sup>75</sup>

Similar to Song's is the opinion of J. S. Stromberg, who puts it more emphatically by saying that the Word made flesh, the incarnation, stands in

<sup>70</sup>*Christian Mission in Reconstruction: An Asian Analysis* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1975) esp. from p. 51; for a similar approach, see T. Gorringer, "Evangelism and Incarnation," *The Indian Journal of Theology* 30/2 (April-June 1981) 69-77.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.* 52.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.* 53.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.* 97, 99 Song repeats this theme on creation-incarnation in his article, "Jesus Christ - the Life of the World - An Asian Meditation," *The East Asia Journal of Theology* 1/1 (1983) 118-119.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.* 57 [emphasis his]; see also the same statement in his article, "Theology of Incarnation," in *Asian Voices in Christian Theology* (ed. G. H. Anderson; Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976) 157-158.

opposition to the idea that salvation is a matter of the right (spoken) words.<sup>76</sup> For Stromberg, what is important is to see the action of Jesus Christ as the Logos who entered into human history, and who allowed us to hear, see, and feel Him. If this is true, then, the question is: Can we say that all the religious quests of mankind are *related* through the divine, imminent *activity* of the Logos that witnesses to God's presence among all men?

According to A. C. Bouquet, the answer is in the affirmative, because all men have a basic continuity with the divine Logos, and all men by creation are endowed with a "seed" (*sperma*) of the Logos.<sup>77</sup> Bouquet's most striking point is that the Logos "while certainly being *apo tou theou*, does not confine His operation to the historical Jesus, but functions also, though in a lesser degree, in *all* religious leaders, whose work is thus related to that of Jesus."<sup>78</sup> In other words, the divine Logos is at work in all cultures and all religions because He is the "true light that enlightens every man" (John 1:9). This universal Logos or principle of divine reason becomes personal and is manifest supremely in Jesus Christ, but also is to be found in other men and in other religions. Thus, abstract principle, or impersonal metaphysical reality, is made prior to personal historical existence in the sense that it is the universal Logos which is incarnate in Jesus Christ (as well as in other men such as Sankara, Lao-tzu, etc.<sup>79</sup>).

We may say that in a sense Bouquet was too impressed by the elements of truth that he probably found in most, if not all, other religions. Almost the same as Bouquet is William Temple, who says that "By the Word of God -- that is to say by Jesus Christ -- Isaiah and Plato, Zoroaster, Buddha, and Confucius uttered and wrote such truths as they declared. There is only one Divine Light, and every man in his own measure is enlightened by it."<sup>80</sup> And in this context, Justin the Martyr is usually suspected of sharing the same idea.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>76</sup>"Communicating in Mission: What Word for Today?" *International Review of Mission* 77/305 (January 1988) 81 (see also p. 80, esp. no. 1, for his emphasis on the creation-incarnation connection).

<sup>77</sup>*The Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958) 152.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.* 155. Bouquet quotes Justin the Martyr.

<sup>79</sup>Bouquet himself affirms that "the statement about *Christians before Christ* [from Justin] is capable of being extended so as to embrace most of the sages of Asia, and to include, for instance, Sankara, Lao-tzu and Mo-ti and even perhaps, paradoxical as it may seem, the Jew, Karl Marx, as among those who have lived and talked 'according to Logos'" (*ibid.* 138).

<sup>80</sup>Cited from N. Anderson, *Christianity and World Religions: The Challenge of Pluralism* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1984) 170.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*; see also Bouquet, *Religions* 137, where he maintains that "Justin, in dealing with Trypho, declares that wherever, in the Hebrew Bible, Deity is said to have appeared to the patriarchs, it was the Logos that did so."

## VII. CRITICAL INTERACTIONS

The above so-called parallels between the Logos in the Bible and the Logos in Eastern beliefs are clearly incompatible with the true meaning of Logos in the prologue of John. Those approaches, especially those made by Song and Bouquet, can be categorized under the Philonic-Stoic notion of the Logos. From this starting point, of course, the study of religions has revealed parallelisms between different cultures. For example, the various systems of *Vedānta* which hold a central place in the Hindu tradition can have some analogies to the Logos doctrine.<sup>82</sup> However, John speaks of a personal God who was manifested in the flesh, whereas the Holy Power (*Brahman*) which is the Reality itself in Hinduism is impersonal.<sup>83</sup>

In Taoism, we find a unique parallel, because the Chinese word "Tao" is an equivalent of *both* the Greek word *logos* (Word), and the Greek word *hodos* (Way). This is clear when we read Lao-tzu, in his text *Tao-te Ching* (The Classic of the Way and its Power), where he begins with the famous sentence: "The Way (*Tao*) that can be spoken of, is not the constant Way (*Tao*)." There is a double play on words here, because the term *Tao* is also a verb "to speak." So, the real meaning of Lao-tzu's line is: "The Tao that can be *taoed*, is not the constant Tao."<sup>84</sup> We find the Chinese translation of the Gospel of John uses the word "Tao" to translate Logos.

In the Chinese pictograph of the word "Tao," we can identify the head (*shou*) which represents heaven, and the foot (*ch'o*), earth; hence the Tao belongs both to heaven and earth. Also, the fact that the head is the place of understanding indicates that Tao is the wisdom of God and His creative power. It is the Supreme Intellect and the source of all energy. The foot symbolizes movement and energy and these belong to the Tao.<sup>85</sup> The Logos, according to P. Clasper, was reflected in the Light and *Tao* and *Dharma* (truth) of the Asian peoples and

<sup>82</sup>N. Smart, "The Logos Doctrine and Eastern Beliefs," *ExpTim* 78/6 (March 1967) 168. It is important to note that the Hindu theologies are many and diverse; because of that, only the dissimilarity is mentioned here.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.* 169.

<sup>84</sup>H. Küng and J. Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions* (New York: Doubleday, 1989) 132; cf. also Smart, *Beliefs* 171, who says that the *Tao* means "Way". The problem is: if it means "Way" only, why not relate it to John 14:6?

<sup>85</sup>H. E. W. Slade, "Spirituality in the Modern World: III. Learning from the Eastern Religions," *ExpTim* 89/7 (April 1978) 200.

was the source of all that was true and good in their lives. However, this Logos was rejected as well as accepted.<sup>86</sup>

Again, this impersonal and creative Logos is incompatible with the One mentioned in the Johannine Gospel. From the Christian perspective, we may say that the Taoist Logos is simply the Stoic seminal Logos. That is why it could not possibly be the "bridge" to understand the Logos Christology. Moreover, it could not be the means for tracing the "original Gospel" before Christ's incarnation. Therefore, any analogies between the Tao and the Johannine Logos can be deceptive, because the latter concept is placed firmly in the context of a personal, real Being, the Christ. In this sense, even though the Tao displays the creative and underlying principle elements, any close similarity with the Johannine Logos is eroded by the lack of appropriate organic connections with the necessary context.<sup>87</sup> In the same way, and parallel to this, it is equally incorrect to say that "since God Himself has become man, has entered into our world, everything, also our language and words, has been touched by His presence. Therefore everything, every word, every person *may* become a point of contact with God who has made Himself one with us."<sup>88</sup> Indeed, this is too far from the Christian understanding of the Logos.

To conclude, we may say that these modern scholars' approaches deal with mostly the Heraclitian, Stoic and Philonic understandings of the Logos. Because of that, there is no problem for some of them to engage in dialogues with other faiths and even to establish common grounds. For example, the Logos doctrine is also present in the Qur'ān; and this is easily considered to be one of the elements for mutual dialogue.<sup>89</sup> However, the question remains: Can true Christians and orthodox Muslims both cherish the Logos doctrine as a common patrimony? I doubt it.

<sup>86</sup>P. Clasper, *Eastern Paths and the Christian Way* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1980) 131.

<sup>87</sup>Smart, *Beliefs* 171. For non-Christian scholars, the Taoist philosophy can be appropriated into the Christian system on any point of similarity; see, for instance, the opinion of J. Ching herself in *Küing's Chinese Religions* 132.

<sup>88</sup>D. Hartoko, "The Ministry of the Word, Divine and Human," *The South East Asia Journal of Theology* 12 (Spring 1971) 71. Usually what happens is that the Person of Christ, the Logos Himself, is sacrificed for the sake of dialogue in trying to find the points of contact or common ground. For instance, concerning the statement "No man comes to the Father but by Me," Piara Singh Sambhi, a Sikh, says that "If this were the Logos (*Sabad*) of God who spoke also through the Vedas, Torah and the Gurus, Sikhs would applaud its universalism, but coming from the lips of Jesus of Nazareth it cannot be accepted" ("Living in a Multi-cultural Society: V. A Sikh Looks at the Christian Church," *ExpTim* 88/10 (July 1977) 295.

<sup>89</sup>Aghiorgoussis, "The Word" 103.

Another feature is also evident. These modern scholars tend to prefer the Justinian point of view rather than the Johannine, Irenaeusian, or the Athanasian. This is because they wish to maintain the universality of the Logos, and Justin provides that possibility by his teaching about "Christians before Christ."<sup>90</sup> My question is: Why not at least prefer the Athanasian approach for the Asian context? It seems to me that Athanasius presented a better Christianized version of secular philosophy (even though his theory of the humanity of Christ has weak points), as he did not sacrifice the true meaning of the Johannine Logos, which is the revelation that finds its standard and its fulfillment in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Mayer's Model of Basic Values is "an approximate representation of personalities" that has proven helpful in a number of situations. In an effort to validate this model in a cross-cultural situation, Lee Dixon, working with a group of students at Rossmore School of Psychology under the direction of Dr. Pat Pike, conceived the idea of using it to pick the personal profiles of Indonesian teen-agers whose ages would correspond to those of American children being tested. Therefore, the research design involved high school juniors and seniors.

The purpose of this article is to tabulate the data in an attempt to utilize it in predicting a strategy for evangelism of university students in Indonesia. Since very little research has been done in the area of university evangelism, it was hoped that the Basic Values Model would generate important information in this regard. The hypothesis on which this article is based is that the Basic Values Model yields an approximate representation of basic values among high school juniors and seniors in Indonesia. This knowledge creates indicators for formulating a model of evangelism for university students.

## II. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

The survey was based on Lingenfelter & Mayer's *Questionnaire for Mining Cross-Culturally: A Personal Profile of Basic Values* (1968). The 48 questions were translated by the principal of a senior high school in Cimahi, near Bandung in West Java, Indonesia. The principal attempted to make the translations culturally appropriate and they were discussed with Jar and this author in an effort to obtain as correct a translation as possible.

<sup>90</sup>Bouquet, *Christian Faith* 138; Wright, "Christian Faith" 87; also W. M. Pickard, Jr., "Biblical Perspective for Dialogue," *Encounter* 31/1 (Winter 1970) 45.