

Arkadiusz Krasicki – Ana Albin  
JESUS THE TEACHER OF TRUTH: ETERNAL IMAGE  
OF THE MASTER

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ABSTRACT

*Many people try to historically dispute the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The aim of this paper is to find contrary claims in the Scriptures to prove that Jesus is the eternal Teacher. This implies that Jesus' mission has not come to end with his mission on Earth.*

*In the first part of the paper, we will explain the Old and New Testaments' meanings of a teacher. This will be followed with stating the differences between Jesus' teaching and the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. The aim of this is to prove the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth. In the second part of the paper, we will deal with the consideration of truth and connect the concepts of authenticity and truth. The eternal teacher of the Truth with his teaching frees those who accept him and encourages them to change their hearts and lives. His teaching transcends time and space boundaries.*

*In comparison to the teachers of this world, Jesus is an authentic teacher who lives all that he teaches as example for his disciples of his communion with his Father. The teaching of Jesus is different from the Jewish teaching, as well as from any other teaching. Jesus as teacher of teachers provides an example of learning, especially in situations of temptation. As a teacher, Jesus has a unique "educational plan" - the doctrine of God's kingdom and His teaching methods have a strong effect on students.*

*Key words: Jesus, teacher, educator, student, truth, teaching methods*

## INTRODUCTION

Over the centuries, many teachers have passed on their teachings to their students. Perhaps they themselves did not live what they taught, and their characters have long been forgotten as well as what they taught. Jesus is a special teacher who speaks and lives what he says. His teaching transcends all time. He is a teacher yesterday, but also a “teacher today” and “tomorrow”.

### 1. JESUS THE TEACHER

The Gospels present different Christological titles for Jesus, among which is “Teacher - Rabbi”. Christology points to Jesus who is the teacher of the Law, and the teacher of the truth. According to the Gospels, Jesus is also a prophet (Matt 11:9; Lk 7:26), Son of David (Matt 1:1; 9:27; 12:23), Only Begotten (John 1:14,18), Son of God (Matt 27:54; Luke 4,41; 22,70), Spouse (Mark 2:19; Luke 5:34; John 3:29), miracle worker, but also a teacher who through his preaching taught about the truth of spreading God’s kingdom on earth. By teaching and preaching, Jesus educates the audience. Therefore, He is also an educator.<sup>1</sup>

It is not surprising that in the Scriptures, the concepts of teaching and education become equivalent.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, “Teaching and education become the ultimate anthropological task. The Gospel of John writes that *Jesus knew well what was in man* (John 2:25)<sup>3</sup>, therefore every attitude of Jesus towards others is educational.<sup>4</sup> Given that Jesus came to the world to announce the kingdom of God (Mark 1:15; Luke 9:2; 13:18; 22:18; John 3:5) and to bear witness to the truth (John 18:37), that is to say that to be the good news to the poor, proclaim liberation to the slaves, restore sight to the blind, let the oppressed go free (Luke 4,18), it is necessary to touch on His history, and then to clarify the

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<sup>1</sup> In this article, we will not deal with the term “education”, although it deserves special attention. In the Old Testament, God is considered the only educator of Israel. In the New Testament, Jesus raises the New Israel. Education is the same dimension as learning.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. René Feuillet, učenik, in: Xavier Léon – Dufour et al. (ed.), *Rječnik biblijske teologije*, Zagreb, 1993., 1378.

<sup>3</sup> Niko Bilić, Isus – uzor Učitelj, 23.4.2012. <https://amdg.eu/2012/04/isus-uzor-ucitelj/> (24.5.2019.).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Cesare Bissoli, Isus odgajatelj, in: *Kateheza*, 33 (2011.) 4, 337-350.

meaning of the term teacher-rabbi in the books of the Old and New Testaments and further, through biblical texts, to show His teaching methods brought about a great change for the Jewish educational context of the time.

### 1.1. *The history of the person of Jesus of Nazareth*

Albert Schweitzer said: “There is no historical task that so clearly reveals one’s own self as writing the biography of Jesus”.<sup>5</sup> Maybe that’s why some today challenge Jesus as a historical person. Jesus as a preacher or herald and teacher is revealed in the Gospels. The Gospels are therefore the first historical trace of Jesus’ existence. Tomislav Ivančić, although he was not a biblical scholar, nevertheless deals with the history of Jesus of Nazareth in a biblical way. He does this in some of his works on contemporary theological literature that are dedicated to the history of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>6</sup> The author provides an overview of the discussion on the historicity of the person of Jesus. He presents historical documents from Jewish, Greek, and Roman historians on the figure of the Teacher from Nazareth. He does this by a chosen method, presenting concrete historical facts.<sup>7</sup>

It is not the intention here to elaborate on individual historical points of view, but it is important to point out a few facts. First of all, as already stated, according to the Catholic and Protestant representatives of exegesis and Christology, the historicity of Jesus Christ comes first of all from the Gospel. But there are also historical pagan documents that are sure proof of Jesus’ historicity (Cornelius Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny the Younger and Celsus). At that time, Christianity was subjected to harsh criticism, so it is no wonder that some authors write about the historical figure of Jesus the Teacher.<sup>8</sup> Documents from Palestine also speak in support of Jesus’ historicity. They belong to Jewish writings, and the most important among them are the Jew-

<sup>5</sup> Albert Schweitzer is a German doctor and Protestant theologian who was particularly concerned with the historical person of Christ. (cf. Albert Schweitzer, Hrvatska Enciklopedija, online edition. Lexicographic Institute Miroslav Krleža, 2021. (3/16, 2023., <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/Natuknica.aspx?ID=55043>).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Tomislav Ivančić, *Isus iz Nazareta – povijesna osoba*, Tevizija, Zagreb, <sup>2</sup>1996., 5.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Božo Lujić, *Isusova otvorena antropologija*, Zagreb, 2005., 63.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Tomislav Ivančić, *Isus iz Nazareta – povijesna osoba*, Zagreb, <sup>2</sup>1996., 5.

ish Antiquities of Flavius Josephus. They confirm the historicity of New Testament events and the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>9</sup> The other document is the collection of Jewish learning and tradition - the Talmud. It also mentions Jesus as a historical teacher in several places.

Based on the presented pagan and Jewish documents, we can conclude that Jesus was known in his era. Likewise, the mere fact that the teaching of Jesus the Teacher still radiates with newness and power today is sufficient, and the newness of his teaching is precisely that He Himself is this newness.

## 1.2. *Rabbi*

One of the most common names used by Jesus' contemporaries is the term "teacher". Both apostles and disciples, and even a wider circle of people, including Jewish leaders, i.e. his enemies, called him teacher.<sup>10</sup> In the Gospels, this term appears about 50 times. The Synoptic Gospels translate this term as *didaskalos*, while John uses *rabbi* (John 1:38) or the diminutive *rabbuni* (John 20:16). The Greek verb *διδάσκω* means to learn or teach, the causative, primary form of the verb "to learn", and the noun therefore means teacher or instructor, mentor, even master, as a voluntary choice of a mutual relationship of care and consideration. On the other hand, the noun *Rabbi* means my lord, i.e. *rabbi*, as an official honorific title of the Jewish teacher. And, according to the root of the verb *rabab*, which means to put together, i.e., to increase, to be more, or *rabiya*, which means rain, directs thoughts towards the correct interpretation of the noun *rabbi*. Knowing the etymology of the word is important because it helps to understand the context of the time in which Jesus lived.

In the Jewish people, the Rabbi-Teacher was a very high-ranking person in society – someone who was listened to, someone who represented the moral vertical in society. However, Jesus did not study the Torah or at least did not go through the last level of education, although this was a prerequisite in Israel to be called a *rabbi*.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the objections to His activity as

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Božo Lujić, *Isusova otvorena antropologija*, Zagreb, 2005., 63.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ivan Dugandžić, *Isus propovjednik i učitelj*, in: *Diacovensia*, 18 (2010.) 3., 460.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 460.

a teacher stemmed from the fact that He did not go through a prescribed teaching course nor was he authorized by any teaching body (John 7:15; Matt 13:54).<sup>12</sup>

### 1.2.1. Teacher in the Old Testament

Although the terms *student* and *teacher* are rarely mentioned in the Old Testament, it is still evident that the Jews considered teaching people morally and religiously from childhood to be an extremely important life goal. And indeed, Genesis 18:19a confirms this: “I chose him (Abraham) (Yahweh) to teach his children and his future family how to walk in the way of Yahweh, doing what is good and righteous.” Furthermore, children were given religious and moral lessons during celebrations and ceremonies (Exod. 12:26 ff.; 13:8, 14; Deut. 4:9 ff., 6:20 ff., 32:7,46), and often even after parental instruction, children would continue to be taught by professional teachers<sup>13</sup> (Prov. 5:13; Ps 119:99).<sup>14</sup>

Studying the Old Testament books, the scribe Ezra stands out as one of the first teachers of the Torah. From Ezra 7:5 it is evident that he was a priest, and then as the author Kidner noted, Ezra was the one who first characterized the Israelites as people of the book.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Ezra’s qualities as a teacher are also evident in verses 7 and 10: “For Ezra tried with all his heart to understand the Law of Yahweh, to do it and to teach Israel in laws and customs.”<sup>16</sup> An example of teaching in the Old Testament is Elijah’s relationship with Elisha. Namely, Elisha was chosen by God to succeed Elijah (1Kgs 19:16). He followed Elijah, served him, and thus learned from him. Elijah was available to his student, which greatly contributed to Elisha’s education as Elijah’s successor. Biblical scholar Beck brings the relationship of Elijah and Elisha into a direct relationship with

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, “Διδάσκω, Διδάσκαλος, Νομοδιδάσκαλος, Καλοδιδάσκαλος, Ψευδοδιδάσκαλος, Διδασκαλία, Ετεροδιδασκαλέω, Διδαχή, Διδακτός, Διδακτικός,” ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 153–157.

<sup>13</sup> Teachers were also called sages (Izr 13,20).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Martina Gracin and Ervin Budiselić. Razumijevanje učenja u kontekstu židovstva Isusova vremena – 1. part, in: *Kairos* 13, (2019.) 2, 211.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Derek Kinder, *Ezra and Nehemiah. An Introduction and Commentary*. Madison: InterVarsity Press, 1979.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Martina Gracin And Ervin Budiselić. Razumijevanje učenja u kontekstu židovstva Isusova vremena – 1. part, in: *Kairos* 13, (2019.) 2, 211.

Jesus and the disciples - he compares the gospels with the book of Kings 1 and 2 and points out:

“The circle of Elijah / Elisha, which we find in 1Kgs 17 - 2Kgs 13, has many aspects that parallel the Gospels. Both texts are directed at a man of God whose life is an example of obedience and service. Both speak of a traveling ministry, the gathering of disciples, miraculous healings, the multiplication of food and the raising of people from the dead. Both reveal conflicts with leaders whom the reader would expect to be faithful to Yahweh, but who are not. The miraculous ending also marks the end of the ministry of Elijah and Elisha, paralleling the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus”.<sup>17</sup>

It is the reciprocity of Ezra’s teaching of the Law and Elijah’s imitation of the person, that brings all aspects of the New Testament teacher-rabbi as one who teaches what he himself lives.

#### 1.2.2. Teacher in the New Testament

In the time of Jesus, the education of teacher-rabbis took place in three stages, namely *Bet Sefer*, *Bet Talmud* and *Bet Midrash*. *Bet Sefer* meant reading, writing and memorizing the Torah. The *Bet Talmud* degree referred to the oral interpretations of the Torah and the rest of the Jewish scriptures. All this was marked by rote learning. The last, but highest level of learning is *Bet Midrash*. This implied an even deeper knowledge of the Torah and the student’s journey with his rabbi, which continued until the boy himself became a rabbi or scribe at the age of 30. It is interesting to highlight the cultural context of discipleship in the Gospels through the four tasks of the disciples. The first was to remember the teacher’s words, the second was to learn the interpretations and traditions of one’s teachers, then the third was to imitate the teacher’s actions and the fourth task was to raise one’s own students.<sup>18</sup> The apostles and disciples were therefore not surprised by Jesus’ command: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you!” (Matt 28:10-20), which indicates that discipleship was to become the foundation of everything the

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, 211.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, 215.

disciples did.<sup>19</sup> However, one can now question Jesus' education and teacher's authority, on the basis of which he could give the disciples a mission.

### 1.2.3. Jesus the Rabbi and Jewish teaching

Jesus himself tells his contemporaries that they call him rabbi (cf. John 13,13). Many addressed him that way because they recognized him as a teacher of truth (Matt 4,38; Mark 9,17) and many asked him for healing (Luke 17:13). The teachers of the Law also addressed him as teacher (Matt 22:35-36), the Pharisees while addressing his disciples referred to Jesus as "your teacher" (Matt 9,11; Luke 19,39), the Sadducees (Luke 20,27-28). However, he taught not like their scribes, but as someone who has authority (Matt 7,29; Mark 1,22). His words echoed in the listeners' ears. Jesus' teaching was in force. Therefore, it is indisputable that Jesus had all the qualities of a rabbi, although there is no confirmation of his formal three-level education. However, there is a text of the Scriptures that confirms that Jesus' teaching was superior to that of the formal rabbis: "After three days they found him in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. All who listened to him were enraptured by his reasonableness and answers" (Luke 2,46-47). The aforementioned biblical passage brings out a typical dialogue between a rabbi and a student, which means that Jesus could not even have participated in it if he had not been already familiar with such a way of education.<sup>20</sup>

The fourth gospel brings out a special difference between Jesus' teaching and Jewish teaching in the meeting of Jesus and Nicodemus (John 3,1-21). In this text, the author or editor contrasts two schools of teaching. One is the teaching that comes from above, and the other is earthly. Jesus is the rabbi to whom Nicodemus came at night. Nicodemus is also rabbi. But he himself recognizes his lack of knowledge. We can ask why Nicodemus comes at night. Maybe because of fear or in fact he comes at the right time because the night is the period when the Torah is studied. Through the technique of misunderstanding, John indicates Nicodemus' misunderstanding. With this, the Author of the Fourth Gospel proves the authenticity of the teacher who comes from above (John 3,1-21).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, 223.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, 219.

### 1.3. *Jesus the Rabbi – an authentic teacher*

At this point, we should mention the fact that Jesus is not only a teacher because of the name he earned in the eyes of people (Matt 7, 27-28). He is also an authentic teacher because he went through everything himself and later taught his disciples. Primarily, as Niko Bilić notes, it is about trials. Jesus did not fall into the temptation of the senses and free will. He emerges victorious from the attack.<sup>21</sup> However, it is not only trials that establish the authenticity of Jesus as a Teacher. The whole life of Jesus was subjected to a difficult human experience. Almost on page of the Bible can the attentive reader read about some beautiful experiences from the life of Jesus. Therefore, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes about Jesus the Teacher that he was tempted in everything except sin (Hebrews 4,15). In this, you can see the realization of Ezra's teaching - first to penetrate with the heart, then to practice, and then to teach others the Law of Yahweh.

#### 1.3.1. Jesus' teaching methods

In many ways, Jesus brought innovation to the Jewish educational system. He himself, above all, was a novelty, because he did not teach like scribes, but as one who has authority (Matt 7:29; Mark 1:22). Furthermore, Jesus is not a teacher to whom disciples come and ask for permission to follow him, which was understood at that time. Jesus became a teacher by choosing his own disciples. Moreover, the difference is also evident in the selection of the type of people - he chose ordinary workers, who may have passed some of the stages of formal rabbinic education.<sup>22</sup> The Teacher from Nazareth teaches through speeches, uses methods that were not known until then. He introduced a new literary genre - the Gospel.<sup>23</sup> Through metaphors and com-

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Niko Bilić, *Isus – uzor Učitelj*, 23.4.2012. <https://amdg.eu/2012/04/isus-uzor-ucitelj/> (24.5.2019.).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Martina Gracin, Ervin Budiselić. *Razumijevanje učenja u kontekstu židovstva Isusova vremena – 1. part*, in: *Kairos* 13 (2019.) 2,

<sup>23</sup> The Gospel contains, as Schneider would say, the complete Jesus. The complete Jesus is first and foremost the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth and the meaning of His life, i.e. the secret of His heart. So, the core of the gospel is the event of Jesus' history and the inner meaning of that history, which is manifested in His death and resurrection and the call to conversion. And while the historical person of Jesus and the mystery of His heart are a great novelty



parisons<sup>24</sup> from everyday life, he conveys timeless messages about God's kingdom, and His words are confirmed by deeds, and in this respect, Jesus becomes a Teacher - a role model who is the only one allowed and able to speak about the truth (Matt 5:1-7:29; 13).

Here it is considered important to point out that according to Mark's Gospel, there is a distinction between Jesus' teaching (Eng. teaching/ Greek *didaskalos*) and preaching (Eng. preaching/ Greek *keruso*), according to which teaching prevails as a typical activity of Jesus. For Mark, the method of teaching is decisive, because, although in his Gospel he does not provide the concrete content of the teachings (2,13; 6,2; 10,1), except when Jesus gives them instructions for his passion and resurrection (8,31; 9,31), he sees and brings Jesus as the subject and as the object of his own teaching, that is, he sees a direct connection between what he teaches and His person and destiny.<sup>25</sup> However, one should not separate Jesus' sermon from his teaching - these two aspects should be seen as a whole, which should be a permanent reminder in his Church. With his sermons and teaching, Jesus actually shows that "he does not want to touch only the *heart* and *soul*, but also the *mind* and *strength* of man" (Luke 10,27).<sup>26</sup> Jesus teaches with authority. He interprets the Scriptures, without pre-prepared great speeches, a place of learning that needs to be learned. He teaches with figurative speech in a concrete moment, and parables form the core of His teaching methods.<sup>27</sup> And that is all that makes a teacher authentic and true.

### 1.3.2. Jesus the Educator

The novelty of Jesus' work in the field of education is evident, as stated by Benedict XVI, in the words of the American Rabbi Neusner, thus: "The rabbi imagines that he personally attends the preaching of Jesus, listens to his speech on the mount and

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and indicative, the call to conversion is a great Christian imperative. (Cf. Alfred SCHNEIDER, "Evanđelje - Božje ili ljudsko djelo?" in: *Obnovljeni Život* 47 (1992.) 3.-4., 260.)

<sup>24</sup> For example: salt of the earth, light of the world, pearls before swine, light under a dish, rinsed salt, ..

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Horst R. Balz, Gerhard Schneider (edd.), *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1, Grand Rapids, Mich, Eerdmans, 1990, 318-319.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Ivan Dugandžić, Isus propovjednik i učitelj, in: *Diacovensia*, 18 (2010.) 3, 462.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, 467.

compares it with what was said in the Torah. His fellow rabbis ask him about the relationship between what the “wise Jesus” says and what the Scriptures say. One rabbi asks him: “What did he leave out?” The answer is: “Nothing”. Another asks: “Then what did he add?” Answer: “Himself”.<sup>28</sup> He brings himself, his whole person into a relationship with another. He does not hesitate; he cares about the interlocutor. The conflicts and misunderstandings between people mark the time and space of his activity. He appears unobtrusively and gives peace. On the example from Luke’s Gospel, the meeting with a public sinner at a meal with Simon the Pharisee (7:36-50), the main educational methods of Jesus can be recognized. First of all, Jesus allows Simon to doubt him as a prophet, in order to confront Simon with his problem. And while on one side one can see the figure of Simon, a righteous man who only cared about the Law, on the other side one sees a public sinner who is marked by her sinful past, yet she has a heart and loves Jesus, kissing his feet. At the same time, Jesus is restrained, unobtrusive, and the situation becomes more and more tense. However, Jesus, instead of condescending to Simon in whose house he is or giving a moralizing sermon on the example of a sinner, begins with the parable of the two debtors. Through this story, Jesus helps Simon to understand that “between him and the woman there is a barrier that he himself raised, but it does not exist in God’s eyes. The problem is not on his (Jesus’) side, but that it is somewhere between them.”<sup>29</sup> Jesus wanted to let Simon know that he too is a sinner, just in a different way, but that both debts can be forgiven. He resolves the conflict by offering both Simon and the sinner the possibility “to see themselves in God’s light in a new, but correct way.”<sup>30</sup> And that makes him an authentic teacher. A teacher who becomes close to his disciples. A teacher who serves and who calls his servants friends (John 15:15). In addition, Jesus’ coming to this world is connected with witnessing for the truth, “He was therefore born to testify for the truth, we read in the report from the trial before Pilate” (John 18:37).

The authenticity of Jesus’ teaching is based on his example. He learns by living. The examples he uses come from his own life. Jesus reveals another dimension of teaching and upbringing.

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Cesare Bissoli, *Isus odgajatelj*, in: *Kateheza*, 33 (2011.) 4, 341.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Ivan Dugandžić, *Isus propovjednik i učitelj*, in: *Diacovensia*, 18 (2010.) 3, 471.

<sup>30</sup> Cf.. *Ibid*, 472.

Let's talk about love. A teacher should be guided by love for the student. This is precisely what Jesus showed when he washed his disciples' feet on the eve of his Passion (cf. John 13).

## 2. TRUTH

Many scientists, as well as the average person, struggle with the answer to the question "What is the truth?" Analysing everyday tensions, we notice a lack of true judgment in recognizing the truth. Sometimes we limit ourselves from the truth because each political system brings its own truth. However, a person still feels inside that the truth exists and that it is connected with freedom. That is why he often remains confused. Of course, the answer can be found in the Garden of Eden, in the fact of disobedience to the Truth. Ever since man's eyes were opened, man has been replacing truth with lies (Genesis 3). Jesus comes to Earth for the sake of truth (John 18:33-37).

### 2.1. *The letter and spirit of the Law*

We most often consider truth to be a thought or a word that is in accordance with reality or the reality itself that is revealed, that is clear and obvious. Accordingly, it becomes revealed in the sense of the meaning of *alethes* = unconcealed. But that is a Greek concept. The biblical concept is really different because it is based on a personal encounter with the living God.<sup>31</sup> That process is obvious. But it deviates from the truth when it becomes an instrument in the hands of the powerful. Then Pilate's question "What is the truth?" (John 18:38) is not surprising. It seems that the truth can be manipulated, but sometimes it comes to the surface because it is written into the human being (Heb.10:16). The Bible does not limit truth to an intellectual term. The revelation of the truth is more complete and dynamic. What is true is what endures and is irresistible. God and man (if he lives in the truth) can be faithful. Therefore, the concept of truth also corresponds to other topics such as God's faithfulness to the covenant and his mercy, his holiness, and the revelation of salvation.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ignace de la Potterie, istina, in: Xavier Léon – Dufour et al. (ed.), *Rječnik biblijske teologije*, 338.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Daniell Fouilloux, Anne Langlois, Alice Le Moigné, Françoise Spiess, Madelein Thibault, Renée Trébuchon, *Rječnik Biblijske kulture*, AGM, Zagreb, 1999., 70.

In the Old Testament, truth means walking in God's law. Furthermore, truth also signifies God's plan. In the New Testament, Saint Paul's truth takes on moral signs, it is the opposite of injustice and lies. In the Gospel we read that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). Interpreting the concept of New Testament truth with the Old Testament aspect of truth, one can see how they are compatible with each other and how the New Testament truth fulfils the Old Testament truth. Jesus came to announce the good news, the kingdom of God. Jesus will say for himself that he did not come to abolish the Laws or the Prophets, but to fulfil them (Matt5:17). Moreover, in this way it manifests itself as the Law itself. Unlike the scribes and Pharisees who "speak but do not do. They tie and load heavy burdens on people's shoulders, and they don't want to lift them with a finger. They do all their deeds so that people can see them. Indeed, they widen their records and lengthen their fringes. They love the fronts at feasts, the first seats in synagogues, greetings in the squares and being called Rabbi" (Matthew 23:4). Jesus by his example brings a disturbing and timeless lesson for his contemporaries. He, the teacher - the rabbi, washes his students' feet himself and only by this act confirms that he is the teacher and the Lord and orders his disciples to do the same to each other (John 13:13-15). So, Jesus speaks and does, which is visible to the end in the paschal mystery - by washing the feet, he foretold what would happen on the cross. On the cross, he freed every human soul from the yoke of sin, that is, everything he did during his earthly life, on the cross, he fulfilled with his death, and then with his resurrection. In his Gospel, the evangelist John used the same word for "laying down his garment" and Jesus' "laying down his life" (John 10:11, 15, 17, 18), so the water that flowed from His side washed away the sins of the world.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, as he himself says (John 14:6), he is the Way for his disciples to follow. This makes him an authentic teacher - not just the one who imparts knowledge, but the One who is that knowledge. Not only the one who teaches to learn, but the one who teaches, educates and changes interlocutors with the power of his words, the power of his person.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Bob Utley, Ivan 1,2,3 Ivanova. Komentar, in: Free Bible Commentary, [http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/pdf/hrv/VOL04\\_croatian.pdf](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/pdf/hrv/VOL04_croatian.pdf), 19.3.2023., 195.

## 2.2. *Jesus - an authentic teacher is a teacher of truth*

Jesus is the complete reality of the Father's gift and his saving doctrine. God the Father was Jesus' teacher. He received everything from the Father that he handed over to us (John 8:18). Jesus is the embodiment of the reality announced by the Law (John 1:17) and invites everyone to believe in him (John 3:12; 8:45-47).<sup>34</sup> Jesus is the Truth. Whoever has met Jesus has met the truth. Many of Jesus' contemporaries came to know the truth. Jesus' words are inspired, but also as a literary form they have become timeless. A reader and listener of Jesus' teachings can still become a disciple of Jesus today. He can know the Truth that will set him free.

“An authentic teacher is the one who acts in such a way that others, meeting him, learn - like a living mirror - about their own identity, which until then was obscured and superficial. Theobald writes: - Jesus creates a space of freedom around himself, communicating - by his very presence - a beneficial closeness to everyone who meets him. This living space (...) allows others to discover their true identity (...) Jesus, although he is a teacher, does not emphasize the importance of his exceptional teacher identity and himself as an absolute witness of all-encompassing truth. On the contrary, as the hymn in the Epistle to the Philippians says about him, Jesus “captured” himself: he abandoned the image of a teacher, although he truly was, and accepted the role of a listener. Jesus learns from whoever meets him, thus helping him to listen and study his identity thanks to his, that is, Jesus' word of truth. At the same time, he invites him to be motivated, in true human freedom, to acknowledge and accept the salvation offered to him as good news, and not as coercion or an excuse to avoid punishment. In all this we can see an interesting correspondence with the central place of learning, with regard to learning or teaching which is considered the primary educational factor for the growth of a person”.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Donatium Mollat. *Evangelje po Ivanu, fusnota h*): in: *Jeruzalemska Biblija s velikim komentarom*. Rebić, A., Fućak J., Duda, B. (ed.), Zagreb, 2014.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Cesare Bissoli, *Isus odgajatelj*, in: *Kateheza*, 33 (2011.) 4, 348.

### 2.3. *Way, Truth and Life*

In John's Gospel, in the fourth chapter, we come across a long speech of Jesus related to his departure to the Father. It is a farewell speech addressed to the disciples who remain in the world while Jesus goes to the Father. Jesus calls for a fearless faith. It is possible that for the modern reader, Jesus' formulation "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6) will remain completely unacceptable due to its figurative weight. Of course, this is Jesus' will to his disciples in order to remain in the faith. Jesus is the only Way to the Father. The term "path" in this case means orientation, meaning and direction, but also strength and security.<sup>36</sup> That word is connected with the next one that interests us the most: Truth.

Jesus is the Way, but Jesus is also the Truth. In this case the term truth/Truth is Jesus' self-revelation. He and the Father are one. Therefore, God is the Truth - Jesus of Nazareth as a Teacher reveals himself as a Teacher of truth because he himself is the Truth. "Whoever sees me sees the Father" (John 14:9).<sup>37</sup> The good that is (*ego eimi*) makes the teaching of Jesus timeless. And thus the timeless image of the Teacher from Nazareth is created. His words are spirit and life (Ps19 = John 6, 64). Therefore, the entire teaching of Jesus is the Truth. He came into the world to proclaim the Truth. Of course, the term truth reminds us of Jesus' all-time credibility in everything he does and is. And so Jesus in his teaching speech switches to the term life. The most valuable thing that the teacher from Nazareth gives in his all-time teaching is precisely the life that connects with the Truth and the Way.<sup>38</sup>

### 3. CONCLUSION

We refuse to deny the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth. The evidence for his existence is not only the Gospels but also non-biblical literature. Jesus' teachings are still relevant today because of the power of God's word. Jesus' teaching is based on revealed Truth. He alone is the Truth. He stands behind his

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Felix Porsch, *Ivanovo evanđelje*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2002., 125.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Giorgio Zevini, *Evanđelje po Ivanu duhovno čitanje* (sv. 2), Glas Koncila, Zagreb, 2022.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Leon Morris, *Evanđelje po Ivanu*, Logos, Daruvar, 1997., 519.

words and supports them with the example of his life. Contemporary rabbis already emphasize his knowledge, and the word about him spread throughout the surrounding area (Luke 4:36). Many asked “where did he get this wisdom” (Matt 13:55).

Jesus’ methods enclosed in parables and riddles contribute to his education of the first disciples. The Rabbi from Nazareth transcends the old structure of writers and their methods with his originality, he makes everything new. Thus, he appears with his own authority “and I say to you” (Matt 5:22).

Many recognized the authority in Jesus’ words. Compared to other teachers – rabbis, his teaching was characterized by strength. He taught as one who has authority. This is proof of his autonomy in communion with the Father.

His educational dimension is expressed by gathering disciples around him and teaching them so that they can teach themselves. He speaks to many who seek him. He invites cooperation, educates and sends his disciples to new groups. With his teaching, Jesus initiates cultural changes that reach our time.

He is the eternal Teacher of truth. We got exactly such a picture of the Teacher from Nazareth after comparing certain terms. He has his power and authority in the fact that he himself is the Truth and, in addition, the Way and the Life.

As a dedicated teacher, he wants to vividly present the subject he teaches to his listeners with familiar images from everyday life. However, this does not mean that in front of a more educated interlocutor, such as Nicodemus (John 3:3, etc.), he will not resort to more demanding forms of teaching. Jesus, like Ezra, himself becomes a knower and doer of the Law, and then teaches others by becoming available to his disciples. He shares everything with his disciples.

In the end, by going to the cross, he himself shows what it truly means to be a teacher. Teacher means to serve. Therefore, he no longer calls his disciples servants, but friends. If they are friends, then they are also students. And if they are students, then they are also servers (teachers). From the forms and methods of Jesus’ teaching, we can learn how important it is to have concrete listeners or disciples we teach, who are eager to know the truth.