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THESIS

SUMMARY

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GOD’S ETERNAL LOVE IN THE WRITINGS OF SAINT JOHN THE APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST

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SUMMARY

Man, as a being who incorporates in its anthropological structure the intelligible and sensible, lies in the establishment of its existential tension. The philosophers have sought this establishment since ancient times, are searching those who belong to other religious cultures and the Christian found it in the sacramental and liturgical horizon space of the Church, as the mysterious presence of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Therefore, it has always existed in the human consciousness the temptation *to define* what is mysterious, deep, but also axiological in the vertical structure of human existence, open to the transcendent horizon. What gets away of the ability of being possessed, manipulated under the authority of rational human thought, wants to be materialized, articulated in the fact of consciousness intentionality, at least at a conceptual level. A unified human thinking must include in a complementary philosophical-religious statement the fundamental values of human existence. What has rationally produced the exercise of thought has focused on, always, the man and the referential frame of existence in a continuity of its identity affirmation, as an entity aware of its own existence.

Love is a coordinate in which is centered the human person, as a subject, as *something* conscious and free. Philosophers have begun to realize that there is a certain way of *being*, of the being through which is sought the accession, at least rational, towards the transcendence plan, of *beyond*, and the Christian theology has highlighted this quest of human existence in new terms of the *love* experience. We cannot forget that today's philosophy, related to the ancient philosophy, lies in a new paradigm of expertise. A normal fact, moreover, since philosophy sought and seeks to provide answers to the challenges coming from the dynamics of scientific development, shifts in global society, challenges that put human problem *here and now*, which obscures his view of the transcendent. In this sense, it seems paradigmatic Jean-Luc Marion, who in his famous book *Phenomenology of Eros. Six meditations* announces a bankrupt of today's philosophy in capitalizing *love*: "Philosophy talks today very little or even nothing about love. Actually this silence is better, as long as when it is likely to talk about it, abuses or betrays it. We almost doubt that philosophers are trying anymore, if we didn't actually suspect that rather they are feared that they have nothing to say about it. Rightly, because they know better than anyone that we have no words to say it, no concepts to a thought, nor powers to a famous. In fact, philosophers have abandoned it, they removed it from the rank of concept and finally rejected it in the dark and

restless edges of their enough reason - along with the repressed, with the disregarding and the untold."

A certain recovery philosophical way of *love* was operated in Orthodox theology by Father Stăniloae, as synthesizer and successor of the patristic thought. Our analysis aims to cover, generally speaking, the itinerary of Greek philosophy *love* of Eastern theologians, and especially to the establishment of love thinking at Romanian theologians, and here Dumitru Stăniloae is normative, or the *love* career from *concept* to the *ontological dimension*.

This doctoral thesis entitled *God's eternal love in the writings of St. John the Apostle and Evangelist* intends to bring more research regarding the Romanian theological clarification of the conceptual meanings of *love* in ancient Greek philosophy and the biblical New Testament theology. As one can see that the title implies an attribute: God's *love* is "everlasting". It isn't a coincidental linguistic association, but a statement which opens the analysis to a more profound dogmatic teaching, which, incidentally, we propose to present it. God is eternal, and *love* as radiance from Its Divine Being, as a way to relate to the creature, cannot have a measurable temporal quality. *Love* is a continuous flow, timeless, a personal quality radiance of the Holy Trinity. God cannot *love* only for a certain amount of time.

Lastly, it can be seen that our research is methodological circumscribed at the approach of the *love* theme in the writings of St. Apostle and Evangelist John: *Gospel*, *First Synodial Epistle*, *Second Synodial Epistle* and *Third Synodial Epistle*. For methodological reasons, our research is limited to these New Testament writings, as an exhaustive examination of *love* in all the New Testament books overcomes a single doctoral thesis frame. Apostle John, also called "Apostle of love", provides the most comprehensive amount of meanings of *love* feast: a) God is love (*1 John 4, 8; 1 John 4, 16*); b) love one another (*John 13, 35; John 15, 13; 1 John 4, 12*); c) love as a gift from God (*John 5, 42; 1 John 3, 1; 1 John 4, 7 to 10*); d) existential mode of *being* in God's love (*John 15, 9 to 10; John 17, 26; 1 John 2, 15; 1 John 3, 17; 1 John 4, 12; 1 John 4, 16*); e) love as a confirmation of the divine commandments ownership (*John 15, 10; 1 John 2, 5; 1 John 5, 3; 2 John 1, 6*). Thus it can be seen that *love* sung by St. Apostle John is a boundless time and space love, is an all-embracing love, a sacrificial love. It is the love of the one who lived and brought forth the divine love. For St. John, love is all that is good and beautiful, power that gives birth to martyrs of faith and humanity, and the great deeds of virtue, is the essence of divinity, as was noted in the previous section.

This thesis confirms that the Christianity is the religion of love. Its deep content targets the mystery of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the mystery of man who is destined to deify himself in cooperation with the divine grace. Christianity cannot be limited to an ideology or a religious system organized in worship, doctrine and religious life, but it exceeds the inefficiency and inadequacy of other religious systems designed by humans and founded exclusively by the human, he transcends beyond what can be designed and formulated by humans because its basic premise is the divine Revelation fulfilled in absolute form, perfected by Jesus Christ, God and true Man. "In Jesus Christ all are fulfilled and all discover their meaning in Jesus Christ." The divine Logos by the kenotic act of incarnation, through passion and His resurrection, restores humanity on its way to God, path from which it failed by falling into sin. "The whole world is brought home by the Logos". Jesus Christ is the core of Christianity because He is the true God and Man that came to us in a maximum approach so we can know Him. He learned that a man has "revolutionized" his religious life principles and man's precepts referring divinity. His teaching is perfect, because He is God, and he reveals to the man confused by the sin, the sublime way of religious behavior, namely Christian, through which they can earn salvation.

The center of gravity in Christianity, and that, it clearly differentiate it from other religions, is love, under which God created the world, the divine Logos became flesh, man saves himself and creation fulfills its vocational sense. Christianity has succeeded in the world not only as a new faith, but as the great love coming from God, from Christ, towards the man and then multiplied and spread forth from man to man. "Christianity is a personal relationship, a loving communion between God and man, two personal topics. One reveals Himself to be known, and the other one meets Him, and in this relationship man discovers the meaning of life: compliance or configuring of the "image" with the Archetype for the "similarity".

Saving acts of Jesus Christ and all Christianity as a whole, are understood through the lens of love and lived in love. The true meanings of love are shown in Christianity, as a personal act, conscious and free, which states the true meaning of this godly energy, and its specified quality, in its strength, light and beauty, distinguished from other affective or sentimental events known by the human person.

The goals that we propose in this thesis are:

1. Introducing a complete framework of the word's meaning in the ancient Greek philosophy vocabulary (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle) through which is translated *love*: ἔρως, φιλία, ἀγαπάω and highlighting the semantic connections between the philosophical *love* and the New Testament *love*. To this end, we will articulate the points of convergence in which the philosophy and theology can meet and discuss the purpose of recovering the primary drive.

2. Analysis of the Hebrew conceptual vocabulary (אַהֲבָה, אַהֲבָתָה) of *love* by highlighting the meaning resignification of the word in the New Testament, resignification imposed by the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

3. Exhaustive valences research of *agape* *love* in the writings St. John the Apostle.

4. Demonstration of *love* as a way to update the person in relationship with others.

5. Congruence between *knowledge* and *love* in the New Testament theology, of the contemporary theologians (D. Stăniloae) and Romanian philosophers (Nae Ionescu).

6. Acceptance and development of biblical teaching about *love* in patristic theology (St. Augustine, St. Maximus the Confessor, St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory of Nyssa).

Most attention in this thesis will be given to the terminology variety of *love* in Greek philosophy and how did these terms made or didn't made career in Christianity.

Basically, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity own only by the Christianity, is the doctrine that allows us to fully understand the possibility of love that dwells in God and the need for them in the world. Solely in the only one deification, the Holy Trinity persons live the all-giving love of the One to the Other, true, authentic love. The Holy Scripture reminds that "the Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand" (*John* 5, 35). The Son obeys of love to the will of Father and confesses: "I don't seek My will, but the will of the Father That sent me" (*John* 5, 30). The Holy Spirit, which is assisting the Church founded by the Son, after the Father's will, which assists the Son does not seek anything for himself, but helps by loving Son's work (*John* XIV, 26). Here, love in all its fullness, is indeed an existential law and life quality of the divinity. This all-embracing love has created the seen world, so that it can constitute the object of a new giving.

People united in love state "one another as such and perfect each other. Love has resulted in a widening of the personal ego, an unchaining of all the forces of good and an enrichment of himself through the other. The more the ego gives himself, the more he enriches. Thus, the love coming from the human being's ego, makes in such manner to occur the union between this me

and God, to deify itself, giving reason, will, sense and body a divine spark. The whole ego is transfigured by divine love. Without this love it is not possible to own perfection, the development of personality. It is absolutely essential to humanity. The aspiration to God is inherent to the character, so it must be accomplished. Only love can accomplish this. He who loves God, God also lies" in him. Therefore, this kind of character has eternal life, while "*he who does not love, abides in death*" (*I John III, 14*). Love is the center of Christian life. All spring from love, towards love all are moving, by love all receive value. Love flows from the divine and human being. It exists since eternity in God and will be eternal now and ever, being the native and essential tendency of the human spirit. It is the "center" or "heart" of man and human life. Only through love it is represented the fullest union with God and through God with all creature.

Relevance and topicality of this thesis in the context of current research is that *love* is addressed in an interdisciplinary horizon: theology and philosophy. The exercise of our analysis was one not to emphasize in an apologetic manner the valences differences of the concept of *love* at Greek thinkers Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and St. John the Apostle, but an integrator one through which we aim to return to the raw senses of terms that define *love* in Greek vocabulary: *ἔρως*, *φιλία*, *ἀγαπάω*. We are interested in investigating how *agape* love has gone from concept to the divine personal reality without encountering any difficulty in the New Testament theological term. Here it should be noted that the Christian theology never intended to abolish the ancient Greeks religious reflection, but stated the defined purpose of this translated reflection, either in the practical contemplative exercise or in the conceptual speech.

Unlike other forms depicting love, *agape* has a specific characteristic, defining "love do-gooder to another, experienced and sacrificial love, the love that gives itself to another because it's altruism, freeing the human soul of selfishness that cloisters him in the darkness of life". *Agape* is not a simple attribute of God, but a definition of His spirituality (*John 4, 24*; *I John 4, 16-20*). For this reason *agape* is the favorite New Testament word. Thus, the verb *αγάπαω* is found 135 times, the noun *αγάπη* 117 times, and the adjective *αγάπετος* 63 times. The Holy Fathers have not developed a definition of love, because if defined, it limits in its splendor and does not express the joy of living love. They lived love in relationship with the Personal and loving God. St. Maximus the Confessor still it tries to characterize it this way: "Love is a good and loving mood of the soul, thanks to which it does not honor any of the things more than the

knowledge of God". *Love* is a Trinitarian energy, that flows like a beneficent rays of the sun, subscribing as a law in the heart (*Romans 2:14*), as a godly trait that leaves deep scars in it."

In the fullest sense, Christian *love* fits in its sphere the divine love, human *love* in its horizontal dimension in our fellow neighbors and peers, *love* as an interpersonal act. "Christian love is a reality, is a bipolar phenomenon, namely both members of the love relationship are both subject and object of love, and distinguishes it from eros which has an exclusively monopolar structure" says Father Professor Dumitru Stăniloae, who, moreover, has devoted an extensive attention to the *love* issue in his theology.

Christian love is expressing the divine love that comes down from the Holy Trinity in the hearts of believers, where it becomes an assumed and existential unfit love for humans, and its dynamics gushes into love for others. Love is a personal relationship between God and man, between man and God and between man and man. Love is considered a grace, a divine gift, by the one who loves. This fact appears also logically through the Christian idea of love's divine character. "The Christian love in humans is not some natural love, that has proven over time the inability of salvation of man, it is neither the same natural love, raised at an ideal coefficient, because in this case it would be an eros, but it is a gift of divinity, received by each man by the appearance of the divine love in the world in person, the work and Savior's death. Love existing in the world, in man, every believer can transcend it to expression, can potentiate or quell it. Hence the commandment given us by Jesus Christ to love, commandment that is a moral imperative for accepting love and as such a new and effective help in the salvation of human action. The commandment of love is an argument in favor of the divine origin of man's love, for to command something to someone, it indicates that for that person something is missing, that it is not hers, it is a stranger, and this thing for that person needs to become something personal, a possession." Love as a gift, is only a potential love. To become a current love, it needs the approval and effort of the believer. Only thus the Christian love really reveals its specificity: active fullness.

Christian love is dynamic, resembles activity, and it is deifying, life and living in communion with God and with our neighbor. Christian love has its reason and cause in Itself; it does not chase external goods needed by it. Through this, love is totally devoid of selfishness, it is completely impersonal, with the risk of any suffering, for the service of others. By the absence of any external reason, of egoism and unselfishness, love remains what it is:

overflowing, and as such, it is selfless. Closely related to the selfless Christian love is also its community character. Neighbor's loving is so closely linked to the notion of agape that, if lacking this, we do not encounter true love. Another feature of Christian love is that it appears also as sacrifice. Agape is a sacrifice because it is an act, namely a community act. Agape is the force that pushes the believer to the life sacrifice, to help the neighbor's salvation. In this respect, the Savior says: "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." (John 15, 13). But agape is also the spiritual experience with the neighbor. This makes the neighbor's misery to cause suffering to the one that loves. This agape appears as suffering also; suffering that leads ultimately to sacrifice. The suffering and sacrifice are major challenges of high sincerity and values of Christian love. This love demonstrates on the one hand the reality of it, and on the other hand her activism. Therefore, it does not remain isolated in its ivory tower of a vague feeling, ethereal, but enters deep into the one that loves. Through these characters, it is highlighted out the height and unmatched value of Christian love.

Agape is not only suffering. It is also full of happiness and serenity. This serenity is proved by the calmness faces of true believers, Byzantine icons of saints, full of serene and happy smiles, and peaceful lives for the Christians warm, loving hearts. Happy serenity of love is itself a natural consequence of the Christian idea after which the agape is identified with the unique and indispensable midst of salvation, and, ultimately, with salvation itself ", as pointed out by the Father Professor Orest Bucevschi.

The man loves God with the love that God pours into his soul, and that's why the man values himself as the person in love for God and for the neighbor. Our love for God is the answer to His love, man loves and needs to progress to perfection in love, because love cannot be quantified. In this respect St. Maximus the Confessor says: "Love for God and neighbor are not two virtues, but only one. Love for God and neighbor are only aspects of the same virtues: Christian love; between the two, there is an unbreakable bond, a unit that could be rightfully called dialectic, since they are interdependent; love of God cannot exist without the love of neighbor and vice versa". He who loves God, cannot fail to love every man as himself.

Believer's love cannot legally reduce at one of the three fundamental psychological functions: reason, feeling and will. It encompasses all three, but not even their amount can offer its specifics. Love is manifested by these mental functions, without reducing them. It is an existential human phenomenon with specific issues that bear the imprint of the divine, which has

its source. Pure essence of love in general is namely the outpouring, dedication. Agape is the total outpouring, "total Self-giving", phenomenon that refers not only to a vague layer sense, but the whole human being. By this outpouring, the selfishness' crust, of experience and horizon limiting, caused by the narrow living limits of its own ego, is broken, and the ego worn by love is exceeding Himself, it transcends, giving itself throughout to all existence. By this, the living horizon becomes infinite, and the ego takes part in the life of eternity, of deity. Now are met the communion between man and God, which allows the Apostle of love to exclaim: "He who abides in love, abides in God and God in him." However the communion with God means salvation. The outpouring, love's specific, found in agapes its fullness. The agape receives therefore, major religious meaning such divinity bridges, of communion with it and salvation.

The man is the object of divine love, which is full, its overflowing mode, of dedication, proves that love does not seek fulfillment, but demonstrates the full outpouring for another, and the reciprocity created between the two loving subjects. By man, and the world becomes an object of love. Vice versa, the subject of human love is God and the neighbor, therefore Christian love is universal, not limited only to people of the same Christian religion. The believer must love every man, whether Christian or of another religion, either good or bad, either friend or foe.

The theological literature which targets the approach of the *love* concept, is a very rich one in various books and articles. We mention here the ones that made a career in the Romanian theology and doctoral theses: Pr. Gh. Balan: "Saint Apostle and Evangelist John, 1st Epistle", *the Metropolitan of Oltenia*, no. 9-10, 1973, "First synodal Epistle of St. John the Apostle. Commentary chapter 1, 5-10", *the Metropolitan of Oltenia*, no. 1-2, 1975, "First synodal Epistle of St. John the Apostle. Prologue", *the Metropolitan of Oltenia*, no. 7-8, 1974; D. I. Belu, *About love*, Timisoara, 1945; "The self-meaning of Christian love", in *Theological Studies*, no. 7-8, 1957, "A less heeded love for our fellowmen. Preliminary considerations", in *Theological Studies*, no. 5-6, 1958; Sorin Comsa, "Comparison between eros and agape", *the Altar of Banat*, thirteenth year, 2002, no. 7-9; Pr. Dr. Ilie Moldovan, *Theology of love*, Volume I, Publisher Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 1996; Haralambie Rovența, *Christian love*, Bucharest, 1936; Dumitru Stăniloae, "Love and truth", in *The Orthodoxy*, 1967, no. 2, *Christian love*, Publisher Porto-Franco, Galați, 1993, "God is love (I John 4, 8)", in *The Orthodoxy*, 1971, no. 3. Of course we can also note the newer appearances, but it would be redundant to flaunt a simple list of authors and titles.

Going through the entire Romanian Bible literature about *love*, we believe that our contribution to the enrichment of literature is welcomed because of the research objectives outlined above.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Methodological, these chapters are preceded by an introduction in which we are presenting the argument and research objectives. For a better systematic conduct of the *love* valences St. John's the Evangelist theology, each chapter is segmented into chapters and sections adjacent to the subchapters.

In the first chapter entitled *Meanings of love concept in Greek philosophy and Christian theology*, have been analyzed the terms of ancient Greek and Hebrew through which *love* is denoted in different semantic meanings: *ἔρως*, *φιλία*, *ἀγαπάω* אהָב, אהָבָה,. In the first chapter (1.1. *Love in the horizon of Greek philosophy*), our analysis was focused on the interpretation of love in the philosophy of Plato, Socrates and Aristotle. Thus in the second section of this chapter (1.1.2. *ἔρως- Aristotelian and Platonic meanings*), were considered the following points, which defines the meaning of *eros*: *ἔρως* in pre-philosophical cosmologies, *ἔρως* as principle of "attraction": driving force and "first mover", *ἔρως* in Plato's Symposium: rising trend and animating and sustaining force in learning the truth. In the third section of this subchapter (1.1.3. *Φιλία - conceptual clarifications of Socrates and Plato*), our analysis will focus on the significance of the term *φιλία*, used by Plato and Socrates. In this regard, this section is divided into three parts: 1.1.3.1. *φιλία as friendship: love as a factor of interrelation between humans*, 1.1.3.2. *φιλία in the Socratic and Platonic hermeneutics of Lysis*, 1.1.3.3. *Differences of nuances and meaning: Socratic and Platonic love*. The last section of this chapter (1.1.4. *ἀγαπάω - a particular way of love*) aims the meanings of the term *ἀγαπάω*.

To connect the meaning of *love* in Greek philosophy with the meaning of *agape love* from the writings of St. John the Apostle, we consider it is necessary to provide a framework of love in the horizon theology of the Old Testament, something we realized in the second chapter (1.2. *Love vocabulary in biblical theology*: *ἀγαπάω*, *ἀγάπη*, *ἀγαπητός*). This chapter is divided into two sections: 1.2.1. אהָב, אהָבָה, אהָבָה - Hebrew correspondences of love concept in the Septuagint, respectively 1.2.2. *Greek philosophical vocabulary in reinterpreting the concept of the Holy Fathers*. Of these, the first section is the most comprehensive and address the following points: translating *ἀγαπάω* through אהָב, significance of the personal relationship of אהָב,

חֵפֶץ רֵצֶה, love - norm of social relations established under the protection of the theocracy law, ἀγαπάω (love) and διαθήκη (covenant) - principles of mutual relationship between God and man, love as a basic pious relationship with God, the national and individual dimension of love in the Old Testament, love in the relationship of the Hebrew people with Yahweh, the development of the concept of love in dogma in *Deuteronomy*.

Chapter II - *The hermeneutic of love: from concept to the ontological dimension* - is dedicated to exploring the agape love in the Johannine theology, exposed in the Fourth *Gospel* and in the three epistles. After a brief introduction to the theology of St. John the Apostle (2.1. *Peculiarities of Johannine theology: Logos philosophy and the novelty of agape love*), our attention focuses on the meanings of agape love (2.2. ἀγαπάω love - valences in writings of St. John the Apostle). In the first section of this second subchapter (2.2.1. Ο θεὸς ἀγάπη ἔστιν - "God is love" (1 John 4, 16) we tried, based on the theological reflections of some renowned Orthodox professors speech, to explain the biblical verse "God is love". The hermeneutics of this text reveals that divine love is a timeless dimension, something which we outlined in the first section (2.2.1.1. *Eternity and love - prefacing the way of divine existence*), where we addressed the following points: time and eternity in the Holy Scripture, updating eternity through and in love, and that love is God's way of being in relationship with the creature (2.2.1.2. *The meaning of love as God's way of being*). In this section, we have brought to the fore the problem of the person and the relationship, covering the following points: 2.2.1.2.1. *The ontological issue in the reinterpretation of concepts. Prerequisites of love understanding as a factor and method of communication possibilities*; 2.2.1.2.2. *The person and relationship dynamics - landmarks of the possibility of expressing love*; 2.2.1.2.3. *Deity absoluteness and relationship paradox*.

In the second section of this subchapter (2.2.2. αὐτὸς ἡγάπησεν ἡμᾶς - "He has loved us" (1 John 4, 10) we showed the expression of God's love to people, reflected in fully by the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. In our argument, we considered the following points: 2.2.2.1. *Holy Trinity - the structure of supreme love*, 2.2.2.2. *Kenosis - expression of maximum love and closeness between the divine and the human*, 2.2.2.3. *Jesus Christ - absolute love face communicated to humanity*, 2.2.2.4. *Redeeming Christ way of sacrifice - human expression of love and appreciation*, 2.2.2.5. *Aspects of the redeeming love of Jesus Christ to the apostles*.

In Chapter III - *Love - integrating factor of communion and perfection. Hermeneutics highlights from the First Synodal Epistle of the Saint Apostle John* - we proposed a continuation

of love hermeneutics in Johannine theology. This chapter is divided into five subchapters. To complete the frame register of agapetove, we must consider in our research the gift quality of love (3.1. *Love - God's gift to men*), communal size of love (3.2. ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους - "to love one another" (1 John 4, 7), love as the way of agreement of the human will with the divine will by complying the commandments (3.3. αὐτηγάρεστινἡγάπητοῦθεοῦ, ἵνατὰςέντολὰςαύτοῦτηρῶμεν - "love of God means: To keep His commandments" (1 John 5, 3) and love as the transfiguring relationship in the presence horizon of God (3.4. ὁ μένωνέντηγάπηέντῷθεῷμένει, καὶόθεὸςέναύτῷμένει - "Who he remains in love remains in God and God abides in him" (1 John 4, 16). In the last subchapter (3.5. ἔρως and ἀγαπάω: morphology of the human building in the condition of the relationship with God in philosophy and theology. Benchmarking), we wanted to highlight the differences between the Greek eros and agape love in the human building exercise.

Love between people grows in communion and unity and for this reason we developed the second subchapter into several sections, in order to a better clarification: 3.2.1. *Love vector in the relationship horizon with God and others: the significance of love-response to God's love*; 3.2.2. *ἵναἀγαπᾶτεἀλλήλουςκαθὼςἡγάπησανμᾶς* ("to love one another as I have loved you" (John 15, 12). *Love of neighbor as an actual realization of love*; 3.2.3. *The fusion between love of God and love of neighbor*; 3.2.4. *Love - the foundation of communion and unity*; 3.2.5. *Responsibility and co-responsibility - caritas size love*; 3.2.6. *Community vocation of Christian love: active vector of human valuing*.

I have also granted a broad space for the fourth subchapter, because it is addressed a sensitive dogmatic issue that reveals love as a medium, as a mutual "hold short" that transposes man in God's presence and God in man. This dynamic dimension of love is theological valued in several sections and subsections: 3.4.1.1. *Καθὼςἡγάπησένμεόπατήρ, κάγὼνμᾶςἡγάπησαμείνατεέν* ("As My Father has loved Me, so have I loved you" - John 15, 9). *The relationship of love between Father and Son - matrix of the relationship between God and man*; 3.4.1.2. *"Divine adoption"* - *love structure and the way of life in Christ*; 3.4.1.3. *The conjunctively "abiding" by love of God and man - image of holiness and maximizing the ontological vocation*; 3.4.2. *Love - revealing force of the person in communion*; 3.4.3. *Love and person or the construction of a ratio between transcendent and immanent. The agape love hermeneutics in contemporary theology*; 3.4.4. *Valuing the person in the communion dynamics of love with God*.

Chapter IV - ὁ μὴ γαπῶνούκεγνωτὸνθεόν, ὅτιόθεὸςάγάπηέστιν (1 John 4, 8). *Knowledge and love: congruence in the exercise of salvation* - tries to argue that *love* and *knowledge*, of course knowledge spread between individuals, are complementary factors which influence each other. Divided into two subchapters (4.1. *Specificity of Christian knowledge reflected in the New Testament* and 4.2. *Epistemological function of love: philosophical and theological reflections*), this chapter comes to point out from the perspective of some Romanian theologians and philosophers (D. Belu, Dumitru Staniloae Nae Ionescu Mircea Vulcănescu etc.), that the act of love is the spring of knowledge, as intentionality and openness to the other.

The last chapter, the fifth one - *Acceptance and development of biblical teaching about love in patristic theology* - aims to bring to the fore the way some Holy Fathers have developed the Johannine biblical theology of *love*. The chapter is composed of four subchapters, each chapter presenting a particular patristic exegesis in *love*: 5.1. *Augustinian conception of love*; 5.2. *Love in the theological horizon of St. Maximus the Confessor*; 5.3. *Hermeneutic of love in the exegesis of St. John Chrysostom*; 5.4. *Love and perfection at St. Gregory of Nyssa*.

The central objective of this paper is to analyze the concept of *love* in the Johannine theology of the New Testament, with direct reference to the biblical texts, using an appropriate methodology for its research. Therefore, we presented the methods, techniques and procedures used in this scientific endeavor. Using as a reference point the biblical scientific approach, we used specific methods of research of this kind:

a) The *exegetic-hermeneutic method* which were interpreted biblically and dogmatic the Old and New Testament texts in reference to *agapēlove*, as points which best expresses the general frame of *love* in the Jewish religious mentality and the receiving of love, in its semantic variations, in the New Testament theology. The interpretation of various passages in the *Gospel of John* and the three synodalepistles were based on the works of the Holy Fathers, the enshrined biblical commentaries in the New Testament biblical research, of the Romanian theologian's works, but also of the modern and contemporary works of theologians belonging to Western space. I did not emphasized the diachronic exegesis, by guiding my thesis towards the biblical texts author and the context in which they appeared, but especially on the synchronic one by focusing on the biblical text and to recipients as its receptors. Thus, attention was given to the text intent of expressing some revealed truth, made briefly, but of highly complexity, with great

relevance to contextualizing importance and value of *love* in today's secularized human condition.

b) *The historical method*, tries to outline the conceptual development of the idea of *love* in Greek philosophy and New Testament biblical theology and to look at it then, from the phenomenological perspective. The purpose of using this method in my work was the observation of the relationship between *eros love*, designed in the manner of Greek philosophers (Plato, Aristotle and Socrates) and *agape love* thought in a biblical way in the interconnection of the Old and New Testament, but also in the patristic theology manner of Maximilian, Augustinian, Chrysostomian and Gregorian type. Thus, it can be outlined a complex historical picture of the idea of *love* in the Greek religious philosophical thought, which provided the Orthodox theology the notional vocabulary terminology, of course with the reinterpretation in a lesser or radical manner of the concepts into their meaning.

c) The *analytical method*, by which I aimed to emphasize the analysis of each Greek and Hebrew term through which is shown the *love* (ερως, φιλία, ἀγαπάω, אהָבָה, אֶחָדָה), but also the distinctive theology of St. Apostle and Evangelist John, in order to answer some fundamental questions for this study. The advantage of this method is its ability to highlight the unique particularity of individual thinking Greek philosopher, biblical author and patristic theologian in hand and its specific emphasis on the issue of *love*.

d) The *anthropological method*, given that the largest part of my work has dealt with the problem of *love* relevant for humans. For these reasons, I tried to avoid an arid, abstract research, but my intention was to define the value of *love* for man, as an essential dimension of his earthly existence.

e) The *comparative method* brought more accuracy in making a comparison between the meaning of *love* in Greek philosophy and Johannine theology by highlighting common and different nuances.

Given the vast amount of research conducted on *love*, our research has resorted to consulting bibliographic resources. Thus, closely related to the fundamental notions which operates this work is the historical literature. For this, it was necessary first consulting a plentiful bibliography and work tools with the purpose of introducing and familiarizing with the philosophical and theological principles of the idea of *love*, especially with the ancient Greek mentality. I used as sources the editions of the Holy Scripture *Septuagint. . Id est Vetus graece*

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