

**“OVIDIUS” UNIVERSITY OF CONSTANTA**

**DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY**

**PHD THESIS ABSTRACT**

**HUMAN BEINGS AND DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN THE  
BIBLICAL HISTORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

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## **KEYWORDS**

Man, Divine Providence, Old Testament, Proto-Gospel, Freedom, Patriarchs, Caring, Biblical people.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The subject of the doctoral thesis represents a theological aspect, with an important and interdisciplinary profile, especially in the matters concerning the biblical theology, a science that touches all disciplines that have a religious profile.

The analysed topic is important because, nowadays, the problem of Divine Providence is the centre of attention both for theologians as well as for believers. The concern of all Christians gravitates not only around man but also around the Divine Providence that leads the man to God, the path that leads to the kingdom of Heaven.

This project updated this matter in order to give a clear answer to those who consider it lacks from the life of the believers, which is an erroneous conception on the existence of Divine Protection over man and all creation, which is overflow of divine love on all beings and especially on the flower of creation, which is man.

The goal of the thesis is to prove with biblical testimonies the reality of Divine Providence that helps creation and especially man to reach God's intended destination.

In the pages of the Holy Scriptures, the grounds regarding man and Divine Providence, are clear because without this, man is lost when he is indifferent to his Creator, who especially created him in order to emphasize his position towards the creation of God which emerged only by the power of the word. This is a microcosm in which are joined the revealed world, that is the macro-cosmos, which he must serve, because the man's opposition in doing so cancels even the God's care for him.

The project is drafted, in simple words that can be understood by any believer, so its message can penetrate the correct understanding of man's role within creation, always helped by the Divine Providence.

Every believer bears the image and likeness of God that he preserves under the protection of Divine Providence. The development of this interdisciplinary matter, in which a major role is played by the Holy Scripture of the Old Testament, this being the messianic concept by which God prepares mankind to walk on the path that God reveals.

The data of this project is an important guide to maintain a good relationship with God, in other words to be a man of God, a special being both in relation with divinity and with one's peers, including the environment.

From the chapters of this project it is clear that according to the Divine Providence, the man reaches superior moral parameters not only by his own powers but also by the grace offered to him in order to perform his duties with dignity and to be a worthy servant, who can enjoy the Divine Providence.

Besides the Scriptural grounds, there have been used the testimonies of the Holy Tradition because the latter help to properly understand, especially of the protective actions that spring from the infinite love of God.

As we mentioned in the introductory part of the thesis, people have to obey God, because man is the representative of divinity in this world, a mission offered to man by divinity in order to prepare and raise it to new levels of existence. We can say that the man was created on the sixth day, at the end of creation days, the creation representing the palace in which man was seated to care for him and to be of use in his life.

What this project pursues is to overcome the scholastic influences of different past and present theologians. Indeed, for some, the Divine Providence does not exist because reality contradicts this aspect, which at first sight seems to be the truth, but in reality there is God's care towards nature and towards the flower of creation, that is man.

On the thread of history, we are confident that there is no interruption of the divine providence towards man, which would mean a tilt towards deism, a current that denies the presence, in all time, of the unbelievable divine protection over the Creation. According to this erroneous teaching, the presence of the divine providence would be removed, and the man of sin could carry out all his activities first directed against nature and then against human beings,

materialized by fratricide or countless bloodshed wars. We can say that in spite of these disturbances that denounce the divine providence, one cannot claim that Evil prevailed and that Good was defeated, because Good is sovereign, and Evil is the absence of Good. For everyone to understand, we can say that Evil cannot compare to Good in order to justify its necessity, but it can be in relation to Good, and this is not related to the ontology of creation that God made it good.

In biblical history, we have the clearest testimonies of the biblical patriarchs who led a balanced life according to the divine promise. This reality of the divine providence has been emphasized in a special chapter, and from the history of Israel it could be seen that all the dangers raised against this chosen people were, as the escape from Egypt, a special work of Divine Providence. We must not neglect the fact that the choice of people of Israel was done from a universal perspective so that the world can understand the purpose of the divine commandments, through which God wants that our interpersonal relationships to be free of revenge but to be created an atmosphere of brotherhood, and finally, what God likes most, peace among people.

## SYNTHESIS OF THE CHAPTERS OF THE PHD THESIS

The first chapter is entitled "**MAN, THE FLOWER OF CREATION DIVINE**" and consists of five subchapters. In the 5 subchapters, is analysed the well-known problem of the image and likeness of man with God. When he is obedient to God, man is strong, protected by his Creator. He becomes weak in violation of the divine commandments and no longer deserves to live in Heaven, where he is best cared. The 5th subdivision of the first chapter also refers to the consequences of disobedience towards God, which proves to be the right divine judgment toward man and which is as aspect by which the Divine Providence manifests itself.

In the first subdivision, it is shown, *inter alia*, that virtue and holiness lead man to resemble with God, a matter analysed in subchapter 2, regarding the "personal character of the divine image in human beings". Next, it is debated the aspect of "the resemblance of man to God", which reveals the qualities of the divine image in man. As elements of the resemblance can be counted a series of qualities and capacities that were planted by God in man, such as reason, will, feeling, immortality of the soul, kindness, justice, cleanliness, beauty, etc. In the works of the Holy Fathers, the most common, which also are considered as the most important one, are the following: reason, free will and feeling.

Each human beings, man and woman, is created according to God's "image" and "likeness" (Genesis 1: 26). By God's gift, life is contemplated as the supreme value of man on earth, because it is the support of all. The man means creation, and more precisely the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1: 26-26), because he is a living person, intended to live in the community of other living persons, with whom he enjoys living at personal level but also within Community.

The prerogatives of the primordial state of man are based on the image and likeness of God within his being. And the difference between "image" and "likeness" explains the distance from the relative improvement of the first Adam to the perfection of the second Adam. The image of God is the "glorification" and "honour" with which man was crowned by his Creator (Psalm 8: 5), therefore homicide is an atrocious crime.

The next subchapter in chronological order is entitled "Violation of divine commandment by man".

Issuing the command shows the quality of God as ruler. The use of the world by man, by obeying the commandments of God, shows the exercise of his capacity as master and ruler as it was entrusted to him by God. God had to warn the man by command, and show him the risk of disobeying. Disobeying the commandment, the man denies the divine rule. It's exactly what science and technology do by using the world and excluding God from it. As in the past, this act leads to spiritual and physical death, the fall of man from the eternal purpose of his life, the loss of balance. Sin also had heavy consequences on nature: Earth was cursed by God because of man (Genesis 3: 17). As Saint Cyril of Alexandria says, all creation got sick because of sin due to Adam's disobedience.

To the sinfulness state inherited from Adam, people have added many and severe personal sins, deepening on the gap between them and God.

The love of the Father does not deny the disobedient son. He advises man to work the land; He banished man with the firmness of the Father who must determine the son to start working on his own; and as a good Father, He prevents the son to make a new mistake – by reaching an eternal and definitive state of ruin. This is done by the indirect method of the Divine Providence, using the fidelity and qualities of embodied but spiritual beings, also His creation, the cherubim.

The disobedience of the first human beings of the divine commandment triggered "their banishment from Heaven", a matter analysed in the 5th subchapter. By leaving the Heaven people begin their own secular life regarded as a mission revealed to them by the Divine Providence but chosen by them by absolute free will. They begin a new type of life in which they will try to build good things for them and the entire creation. In this state, they will not be left out of divine protection.

The second chapter of the thesis is entitled "The Divine Providence in the light of the Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition". The first subchapter has the title: "Revelation as manifestation of Divine Providence". At the beginning of this first subchapter there is debate on Revelation, which is a disclosure made by God to man by virtue of Christian love and responsibility. Both Natural Primordial Revelation and Supernatural Revelation are forms of Divine Providence. From Divine Providence result the two Revelations, both natural and supernatural, the latter being the proof of the intensification of the work of Divine Providence,

which is essentially the love of God, and through the Supernatural Revelation its nature is taken one step forward.

The second subchapter, "Divine Providence or preservation of the Creation according to the Old Testament and the teachings of the Holy Fathers", continues to deepen the teaching of keeping creation alive exclusively due to God's intervention or divine rules.

In this sequence it is shown that Divine Providence is Christocentric and that it need the Creation. Especially, man needs to be subjected of the Divine Providence, which strengthens and guides him on the God's way.

The third subchapter, which concludes the second part of the Thesis, refers to "Unborn energies and the Eternal Law as testimony of Divine Providence in the scriptural and patristic spirit. Divine energies have their source from God to ground the inner structure of Creation. They are unborn, not yet created, as Western theologians claim to this day. They appear with the creation of the world, which needs support from God.

Eternal law is the eternal plan of God by which all creatures are live in order to fulfil their purpose; it is the supreme moral law and the common source of all temporal forms of the moral law, as the foundation of the whole moral order. So we can say that it is the central sun around which the whole Creation gravitates.

The Eternal Law of God is closely followed by the Divine Providence in order to perform the God's care for the realization of Eternal Law in the actual unfolding of Creation. God - The Father - is also called the Almighty, because all creatures are kept into existence according to His plan, according to His will and power. He takes care of everything according to His great wisdom.

Between Creation and Providence there is a close bond, as it is also revealed in the Holy Scripture: "He was in the world, and the world was born through Him" (John 1: 10). They are in close connection and so must be regarded by faithful ones, for the Christian teaching about the creation of the world from emptiness leaves no room for the autonomy of Creation as in the dualist cosmology that claims the independence of the material substrate of the world, it but attributes everything to God. The necessity of God's care especially for man and for the world in general is motivated by the inability of man and the world to fulfil their purpose without the help of God. The cosmos cannot function autonomously by virtue of laws that transform it into a huge

and secure mechanism, therefore it needs permanent care of God, because if left alone, according to the principle of entropy, it will turn to destruction.

The same is mentioned in the Holy Scripture, stating that without their spirit all creatures will die and return to the dust (Ps. 103, 30). The being is marked by the inevitable end, sighing and waiting to be saved from the slavery of corruption, and "to be free to be a part of the glorification of the sons of God" (Romans 8: 19-23).

Finally, we can say that Divine Providence is grounded in Holy Scripture and in the writings of the Holy Fathers, which defends the right teaching of the work of God in the world, which, without the presence of the divine grace, does not have the force of remaining in existence. Thus, the saying *Nihil sine Deo*, comes true and it gives energy to God's creatures to exist according to divine rule.

An important factor for man is the moral law which has to follow correctly in order to fulfil his purpose on Earth. The violation of the moral law leads the man to die or cause the sins committed against the Divine Will.

In the third chapter, it is analysed "Proto-Gospel, expression of Divine Providence".

The preparation of the world for the coming of the Saviour starts even from Heaven, after the falling of man, when God promises Adam and Eve a Saviour. This promise is recorded in Genesis 3: 15, where God says to the serpent (Satan): "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he (that is, the offspring, someone born of a woman) will crush your head, and you will strike his heel".

A decisive moment in the preparation of the world is the choice of a people among which the Son of God to be born. To this people will be given to God the Old Law, which is "a guide to Christ" (Galatians 3:24). Through the prophets, the conscience of this people is constantly kept awake about its very special role in the history of Salvation.

The manifestation of Divine Providence can be seen in the work of salvation prepared by God through prophets, messengers of coming of the Messiah who would save mankind from the dominion of the Devil. The Heavenly Father knows what man needs to be released from passions. The Incarnation is said to be the beginning of the priesthood of Christ, who as the Son of Man-Bar Enach can intervene to the Father, so that through His sacrifice to bring the renewal of man for his other life.

The Heavenly Father, who cares all beings, knows our needs. That is why the Saviour

clearly shows the purpose according to which to hierarchize everything: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matthew 6: 25-34).

So you do not have to "live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear," says the Apostle (Peter I, 1: 17). In this respect, the providence makes a special reference to the social environment. Leaders must "cease to be threatened (the slaves), since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him " (Ephesians 6: 9). God will always bring justice for his chosen ones "who cry out to him day and night, as He endures with much longsuffering" (Luke 18: 7). There is neither slave nor free, "but you are all one in Christ Jesus " (Galatians 3:28).

The Lord Jesus Christ accomplished his Salvation work through three capacities or dignities - prophet, high priest and emperor - and still continues to do so after His Ascension to heaven as he does his work of salvation through the Holy Spirit in the Church. His entire work is contained by these three missions, which represent the highest dignities that men can accomplish on Earth.

The Messianic idea is analysed in detail in the third subdivision. These promises represent the main theme of the Divine Providence in the Old Testament. Through their intercession divine promises are made about the rehabilitation of man who will become God's son after receiving the Grace.

God makes this promise. Him and the Promise are mutually defined: God reveals His great plan in the Promise, and this Promise by its nature reveals something from the being of the One who promises. Because only a powerful God, full of love and kindness promises life, eternal happiness, peace and joy for all who believe in His word, a word full of power and truth, to whom God remains faithful forever: "Heaven and Earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. "(Matthew 24:35).

The name of Yahweh is in all respects a name of the Promise. Through it, God understands not only to reveal himself, but to give himself by his own decision; He turns to the people, pointing out that he is bound with them in a personal relationship. In the commandment: "I am the Lord your God .... You shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20, 2-3), God reveals His name and His supreme will, that he is the supreme master of man, from which it comes His love for man "I have loved you with an everlasting love;

therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you" (Jeremiah 31: 3, Isaiah 43: 4). Nothing can make God to promise anything, and if He makes this promise this is a consequence of the divine love and of His magnificence which He wants to share with His creation; then it is easy to understand that God will be faithful to the Promise he made, having all the power to fulfil what he has promised.

The Kingdom of Messiah will be a kingdom of righteousness, salvation, blessing and peace, qualities missing from the earthly kingdoms, as they quarrel and start wars against eachother.

The evaluation of Messianic texts begins with the Proto-Gospel, and continues after the flood of Noah when it resumes through Sim or Shim, which means "name" or "word" and in modern Hebrew is used for the divinely articulated name Haššem. The only saviour of man is God.

The Messianic texts found in the third sequence of the third chapter can be found both in the great and small prophecies. The short story of the prophet Abdias or Obadiah speaks of the meaning of his name, that of the servant of God or the one who serves God. His name is composed of the verb "abad" followed by the participle qal, then followed by the abbreviation of the divine name "ia" from Yahve(h).

In the context of the writing of the prophet Jonah, it is said that it represents the symbol of the death and resurrection of the Messiah, which corresponds to the doctrine of Messianism.

The Messianic idea crosses like a red thread the history of the Old Testament, including the Psalms. A reference work on Psalms is the work entitled "The Book of Psalms and its Importance in the Pastoral-Missionary Life of the Church," elaborated by IPS Professor Theodosius Ph.D., Archbishop of Tomis, Constanta, 2008.

The Book of Psalms gives us many prophecies about the coming of the Messiah, the prophecies that became true in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Messianic Psalms are of course the most important of all Psalms. Their Messianic character is attested by Christ the Saviour Himself and by non-testamentary biblical authors. These psalms are divided into two categories: the Messianic direct and indirect psalms. Psalms 2, 15, 21, 34, 40, 44, 46, 49, 54, 67, 68, 71, 109, 117 and 131 are part of the first category, and Psalms 8, 18, 39, 77 and 132 are part of the second category.

In the book of Archimandrite Emilianos Simonopetritus, "Interpretations of the Psalms", published by the Saint Nectarios Publishing House, Arad, 2011, pages 7-8, it is emphasized that "The Psalter has the same connection with the Old Testament as the heart with the whole body. It is at the centre of time and reflects in the soul the divine law and the personal experience of every man with palpable examples taken from nature and from human activity. The God of the Psalmist is not an abstract idea, nor an impersonal power. He is a living personality, has eyes and ears; He is the judge sitting on the throne, the emperor, departing from Heaven to see the works and decisions of men; He is a perfect warrior, and He travels in the wilderness with His people, He is angry and raging, but He is also moved by the passions of the faithful and He repents and redeem them.... There is no other book like the Psalms, in which the divine characteristics and works are gathered together and they preserve their perfect and balanced character, so that God cannot be touched, cannot be comprehended by the human mind, He cannot be understood but at the same time He is the Saviour, the restless guardian of human life and salvation.... Above all the Psalmist sees the restless care of God over the unhappy and fallen man when He departs from the height of His holy Palace, and looks down from Heaven to Earth "to hear the sigh of the obedient tied down by chains, to free the Sons of those who were killed", understands and foresees the coming of the Messiah, his birth with flesh, his appearance in the world and his life together with people resembling him".

In the Psalms we find the law that guides us on the right path, the history that teaches the truth, the prophecy that shows us the future, in Psalms we find the great rule of life, the perfect morality that moves the heart and melts the soul. They are the pledge of the happiness of the souls of the believers. That is why the inclusion of the Psalms in the Messianic prophecy is correct, because in this holy book we find a definite proof of God's caring for man, the flower of the creation that must sanctify the place, and not to destroy it or to make it dirty.

In the group of matters about God's caring for man, it is depicted the biography of the biblical character Job, who has a meaningful name, "despised" by Devil, who failed to defeat him, as God granted Job much patience in his suffering, and in the end of his struggle against Satan he rewarded this triumphant man.

Indeed, Job can be counted as a messenger of the coming of the Son of God; through his sufferings he showed what Christ will endure. The blessed and right Job (Ezekiel 14: 14-20, James 5:11) symbolizes the coming of the Saviour and the birth of the Christian Church; his cursing wife symbolizes the life of the people, those who lead an immoral life, and Job's friends prefigure the heretics who have no other occupation than the seduction of souls.

The fact that Job is a prefiguration of Christ the Saviour is highlighted by the way he endures his suffering. Who is prefigured the blessed Job through his suffering if not Christ during the time of His suffering, about whom the prophet Isaiah said: "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted." (Isaiah 53: 4). Suffering is fundamental as a condition for being. This is a theological, philosophical, artistic and scientific evidence at the same time, existential and fundamental experienced. It entails an existential paradox, a question and a maximum difficulty of the being.

Job is the messenger of the suffering overcome by the light of Christ. The Christian faithful must consider suffering as a tool of his salvation. Saint Gregory of Nazians sees Job as the face of suffering that man endures with patience, and the Church calls him "the victory over many temptations and the admirable man of suffering with patience" celebrating him each year on May 6<sup>th</sup>.

It is true that Job entered the conscience of the faithful one as a man of patience, but the emphasis does not fall on the man, but on God, who helped him. At one point, Job wanted to ask God, why is this happening to him, as he was righteous man and not a sinner.

In the unfolding of these very difficult events, Job did not deny God, as the fight against the devil was fought by God, who cares especially for those who are in great need. Job is victorious and happy, because his devotion and faith in God helped him through these very difficult to bear circumstances.

The Book of Job is very modern, because of the book's message about injustice of life which is a characteristic of our own century devastated by suffering. And in front of this reality, people have responded and respond in different ways.

Chapter Three ends with a sequence called "Wisdom of Solomon, a guide to God's Providence". The wise Solomon seeks in this didactic-poetic book to give the faithful man a spiritual guide that will lead him to God. He wants to make him follow His commandments,

which represents a special form of Divine Providence. An important role in man's dialogue with God is wisdom. Aroused by the fear of God, this wisdom guides him and helps him in fulfilling his duty before God, himself and his neighbours, by the practical application of love and justice in all his actions (20, 9).

The synthesis of all obligations of the believer towards God is resumed by "fear of God", often repeated in Book (1, 7; 9, 10; 15:33; 19:33), because it is the foundation of the relationship between the two beings, God and man, concretizing everything that the latter can do to achieve perfection. This fear of God must not be a feeling of "horror or fear as slaves and children have, but a complex feeling consisting of respect, devotion, compliance, obedience, but especially of love," bringing to the believer the life and power of to escape the chains of spiritual death (14:27). For this reason, later, the Apostles presented the "fear of God" as a fundamental feature of the inner life of Christians (Deeds of the Apostles 9:31, II Corinthians 5:11, 7:1, Ephesians 5:21). In close connection with the fear of God, there is love and full trust in Him, as it is underlined by the advice of the author: "Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.... in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3, 6)<sup>1</sup>. There is no teaching in this book that fails to urge the believer to stay away from the evil ways, from committing sins and crimes. Due to great care for the believer and to the fact that he was aware of the multiple temptations that may detract from virtue, lead the author to address from the beginning this advice: "My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. ... do not walk in the way with them, keep your foot from their path; for their feet run to evil..." (Proverbs 1, 10-16). All the wise advice that he gives to his disciples is meant only to prevent them to fall into temptation, to save them from the sins (Proverbs 2: 12, IV, 16). He warns them to watch over the places they are attending and to be mindful of the choice of friends, therefore "walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm." (13, 20).

If one observes what Solomon advices in the Book of Proverbs that he is on the right path leading to God's Providence and to His protection for better, because God wants none to perish and desires people to enjoy life, His gift, supported by divine protective laws.

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<sup>1</sup> Pr. Professor Petre Semen, Biblical Archeology in the Present, Publishing House of Moldavia and Bucovina, Iasi, 1997, p. 65.

The penultimate chapter is entitled the "Relationship between Divine Providence and human beings' freedom."

In this part of the project, freedom is analysed based on biblical grounds. It is clear from these that freedom is an attribute of the soul created by God, that "nismat chaim" given to the creation of man.

In order to understand the work of the Divine Providence in our lives, we must know that God created the man free. He gave to man this great gift: freedom. This reflects His greatness, but this is where his tragedy can start. If he does not have freedom, the integrity of God's image suffers. Freedom, which means crossing – Pesah – Pass Over or deliverance in order to be a part of the good, is given by God, which stands at its edge and does not intervene uninvited.

God wants man to be free, and the divine providence does nothing to spoil or diminish that freedom. God does not force us to go on the right path, He leaves this to our free will. Jesus Christ said, "Whoever wants .... follow me," without compelling anyone to follow him. Man can use freedom in a wrong way, even against the will of God. Thus, such person becomes the cause of his/her own suffering, evil and disorder in the world. This is how suffering, ignorance, pride, lie, injustice, hatred and wars begin. Their existence is not a sign of the lack of providence but a sign that men misuse freedom.

God allows all this from His great respect for the freedom He gave to the faithful ones. He does not hurry to punish those who do evil, as we humans do. He is long-suffering as it results from the parable of the prodigal son whose father waited for long for him to return home and when he does he forgives his son. Even in this so-called "absence" of God and the indulgence of evil, we see the Divine Providence that wants all men to be saved.

The existence of evil does not question the existence of good: good is absolute, is sovereign, evil does not even exist; evil is just a deficiency of the existence.

The teaching of the Orthodox Church concerning the Divine Providence and freedom greatly differs from the ones of the Western confessions. As it was mentioned, Orthodox anthropology has a more internalized view of freedom, ontologically related to human nature. The Grace of God as unborn energy is from the time of the Creation of man closely connected to the "image" as a normal element, and after the Fall of the Man, the Grace is completely restored

to man through Christ, salvation being in fact the "second creation of the world"<sup>2</sup>. In the state of grace, the man is completely free, freedom connected with Him "for we are also His offspring" and "in Him we live, and move" (Acts 17, 28).

Western Christianity considering the original justice either as a supernatural created gift as it is the case of Catholic doctrine, or by identifying it with the image, as in the case of Protestant doctrine, does not notice the fact that "nature participates with God"<sup>3</sup>. That's why by questioning the relationship between freedom, which is a part of the image, and providence, lead to endless disputes. Sometimes freedom was the priority, and other times freedom has been sacrificed for the providence.

As a conclusion, from all of the above-mentioned regarding the providence, based on the teachings of our Church, there can be underlined two ideas: first, that the life and activity of men and peoples is carried out according to a plan established by Divine Providence; second, that the course of the historical and personal events does not partially exclude the freedom of man<sup>4</sup>. Even though the ultimate goal of the divine plan remains, in the making of this plan, God, due to His omniscience, left room to man's free will.

Providence is not only possible but also necessary. The world without Divine Providence would turn into void. Positive sciences themselves proved the existence of the conservation principle of mass and energy, a principle that we Christians see in connection with Divine Providence.

"The truth about the Divine Providence is not only a possible and acceptable logical truth, but one of the truths necessary for reasoning: it is a requirement of the religious heart, a requirement of consciousness itself. It is hard to recognize as unreasonable the truth, without which one cannot reason or live in rational manner"<sup>5</sup>.

The last chapter of the thesis is entitled "God's care in the history of the biblical people".

In the Old Testament, we find the history of the Jewish people or the chosen people, because their ancestors, the patriarchs, pleased God, who cared for them and for their offspring.

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<sup>2</sup>       \*\*\*, *Orthodox Moral Theology*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1979, p. 267.

<sup>3</sup>       Protoiereu P. Svetlov, *Christian teaching in apologetic exposure*, translated by Sergiu Bejan și Constantin Tomescu, Chișinău, 1936, VI, p. 582.

<sup>4</sup>       Pr. Professor Dumitru Radu ph.D., „*Keeping the righteous faith a condition of achieving salvation*”, in *B.O.R*, CI, 1-2/1983, p. 52.

<sup>5</sup>       Protoiereu P. Svetlov, *op. cit.*, p. 598.

God is the special protector of the Jewish people; but from the charity and warm parental feelings are not excluded foreigners, who are not part of the biblical people, who must be treated with kindness, gentleness and love. Thus all mankind was considered as one family: the family of the same Father: "The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord, Your God" (Leviticus 19:34).

God's care for the chosen people had as purpose keeping it on the right path by observing the commandments, the compliance of which depended on the relationship between the sons of Israel and divinity. All the mosaic legislation as base of the Old Testament in all its moral, ceremonial or cultic and social aspects try to promote the moral values of mankind, to preserve human dignity and integrity through a close relationship with God.

The information in this chapter is divided into three subchapters, the patriarchs' period, the four centuries of Egyptian slavery and Entering the Land of Canaan.

The first subchapter is devoted to the period of the non-nomadic patriarchs, as some viewed them under the title: ' the nomadism of the Jews", because there was no longer the divine call of Patriarch Abraham in Ur Chaldea.

The first ancestor, Patriarch Abraham, was chosen by God to go from Ur Chaldea to the land of Canaan. The divine choice was based on the pure faith and righteousness of the patriarch who obeyed God and left his native land, and headed Haran with his wife, Sarah, his father, Terah, and his nephew.

For his enduring faith, God enlightened him and prevented him from unpleasant situations for his family. Moreover, God did not reveal to him superficial things, but true ones, in the sense that his followers will be many not only in flesh, but especially in faith.

He passed away at the age of 175 and was married to Sarah in the Cave of Machpelah, bought by him during his lifetime. The two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, buried him in this cave, situated in front of the Oak of Mamre.

The biblical data on the life of the second patriarch are general, and the most important is the episode of Jacob's blessing as first borne, and not of Esau, who started to hate his brother up to his death.

God's care for the two patriarchs is evident, and it is also repeated in Jacob's situation, as it was manifested to his father.

The last Patriarch Jacob has a richer life in biblical data, being a distinguished biblical character in the biblical history of the Old Testament.

Throughout his life, Jacob faced many unexpected situations, one of which was related to the sale of Joseph by his older brothers for 20 silver coins to a Madian caravan of merchants who headed for Egypt.

In Israel's history, God's care for him is also confirmed by the biblical data of Egyptian slavery over 400 years. God did not allow the Pharaohs to carry out their the measures of extermination of the Israelites of Egypt, and in the fifteenth to the fourteenth centuries before Christ chose Moses, destined by the Pharaoh to perish, as the latter decides to kill all male infants.

In the time of Moses, burdened by labour, the Jews had a very hard life, and their cry reached God, who sought to help them by choosing Moses on mount Horeb where was a ever burning bush. Here, God revealed to Moses that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that had seen the suffering of His people whom He decided deliver from the hands of the pharaoh, and to bring it to the land of milk and honey, namely the land of Canaan. Moses' mission was particularly difficult, but God gave him power to overcome the fear of the Israelites on their way to Canaan. He was always filled with the courage that God had given him to bring the people into the realm of freedom. God helped him and made the waters of the Red Sea to stand still until the people of Israel crossed on the bottom of the sea as on land. The care of God to his people could be seen while they crossed the wilderness, through the pillar of fire, during the night, and the cloud that protected them during the day. The thanksgiving chants of the two choirs, one of men and the other of women is the testimony of the people's gratitude for the divine help.

Point 3 of chapter 5 has as a theme the debate of "Entering the Land of Canaan" and constitutes ancient testamentary evidence to the Divine Providence over the sons of Israel.

Like Moses, his successor Joshua was a good strategist who continued the work of his predecessor to take over the Land of Canaan as promised by God to the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. Under his rule the Land of Canaan was conquered and then the territory was divided among the Israelite tribes. He teaches the people how to behave before God and renews the Promise between God and the sons of Israel. The things recorded by him in his writing represent the history of the events of about half century.

## CONCLUSIONS

After this brief presentation, some important conclusions are required to highlight the value and necessity of the Divine Providence towards man and Creation. The richness of the data presented in this work is proven to be by the rich and varied bibliography from which I extracted the essence of the respective works for underlining the biblical and patristic data in the context of the concept of Divine Providence that is important also in our time, in order for the good to prevail and the evils to be wiped out.

In my presentation I also analysed the concept of God's care, that is, the divine providence that is affected in our era by the current of secularism without taking into account atheism and other forms of denial of divinity. Here we have to add that the man without God is worthless, dangerous to society, which is often corrupted by those who claim that can live in the absence God, even though such people are rational beings who have a mind, not like beasts, so to deny their belief in God. The pride of the unbelievers is a disguised luciferism, of disregarding God and becoming His substitute. Such manifestation is typical to the tyrants, and according to the Latin saying "*homo homina lupus est*" such people become dangerous for the peace of society, or as others have refrained, they support the class struggle.

The Old Testament provides many scriptural concepts about man and Divine Providence. In this regard illustrative is the Psalm 103, dedicated to Divine Providence and, as the Psalmist says, "As a flower of the field, so he flourishes," which is a form of Divine Providence.

Solomon the Wise is the advocate of this divine pronouncement, which is a testimony of God's care, therefore it is forbidden to hate God's creation. To the aforementioned we can further add that the Old Testament is valid for all Christians, and that the Ten Commandments of the Decalogue are a spiritual and moral guide of all mankind. By obeying the teaching of the Holy Scripture - the Old Testament, we implicitly acknowledge that we have the duty to obey God because He loves us, helps us as the members of the large human being family.

In the work of the Divine Providence there are indeed things that we do not fully understand and we cannot comprehend why things happen in a certain way.

From the pages of the Holy Scriptures, the most eloquent testimony of the Divine Providence is the Messianic idea, which begins at the Fall of the first men, Adam and Eve, which God did not curse, but condemned the devil by saying, "He will bruise your head", meaning the Messiah. The Messianic idea is the bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament, through which God takes care of all mankind in order to be saved from the slavery of sin. The Messianic idea will benefit to all nations, who through the mediation of the sons of Israel were prepared to receive their Saviour. We can say that the basis of the two Testaments is this messianic idea that is accomplished in the Person of Jesus Christ at the end of time. This is great news of joy, hope, as it is highlighted by the Proto-Gospel, which is given to the successors of the primordial couple.

Among the main ideas of this project is the fact that no Creation can endure without the help of God, or in other words, without the care of the Divinity. From the rich material exposed in this project, it is clear that the violation of the Divine Providence is a great mistake that people commit against divine laws. There are some people who over-emphasize the flesh and ignore the souls, ignoring the Divine Providence, as our Saviour Jesus Christ mentions in one of His parable when he talks about people who take care of their body and not of their souls, thus ignoring the words of the Saviour: "First seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness ...".

From the point of view of its contemporaneity, this thesis is of great help for the secular society that has strayed from the teaching of Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition of the Divine Promise. By coming into contact with the information of the presented material, I hope that the reader will use it in order to redress the world in hope of a peaceful future, because peace is an attribute of the Holy Scripture. After the Holy Resurrection, even the Holy Apostles are greeted with peace, which means represent the reconciliation of man with God and also promoting the life created by Him.

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