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PhD THESIS SUMMARY

Peace in Biblical New Testament Horizon –
Bivalent Structure of Relation between Man
and God and of Relation between Peoples

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This PhD thesis aims at highlighting the peace in its New Testament biblical dimension and its applicability in the social plan in modern society. The regrettable conflicting events that are happening today in various parts of the world raises today's society a problem, namely the tension between religions, cultures or religious mentalities, when there is an ideological polemic of measuring values: how it should be thought the relationship between religions, each with the claim of having absolute truth? What is the social equation capable of leading to the avoidance of religious fanaticism in contact with other religious identities, and the affirmation of religious tolerance? How can religious freedom be exercised without regard to the other's different values, that belong to another cultural-religious area?

All these questions call for answers that Christianity has to articulate pertinently on the stage of religious pluralism. It is an indisputable fact that the European space today presents itself as an environment of interaction of political, philosophical and religious ideologies. This interaction can be recorded both at institutional and individual level, anticipating a new social reality, but also a daily challenge. If 200 years ago, Europe had a generally valid Christian profile, from the religious point of view, today it can be seen a religious horizon in which there is an amount of religious identities, each with its cultural heritage.

Practically, Europe is experiencing today the very interesting experience of implementing in its socio-religious field of foreign religious traditions, imported by the phenomenon of migration, engaged in the general plan of globalization. Globalization has brought in proximity different cultures and religious identities, beyond their geographical boundaries¹.

Phenomenologically, contact with alterity can lead to outlining at least four attitudes:

1. indifference;
2. fundamentalism, understood as fanaticism or intolerance to cultural diversity;
3. opening up to "the other" without restructuring their own identity;
4. acculturation.

¹ Globalization imposes new vectors in the dynamics of today's society, a process that provides a more transparent view of religious pluralism and, implicitly, the cultural profile of each religion. This reality drives a certain kind of evidence of diversity, but also of identity in the cultural-religious plan of the world. For a religious critique of globalization, check Natalia VLAS, *Globalizarea și religia la începutul secolului XXI*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2008.

Religion is a factor that can induce and substantiate, in intercultural dynamics, either a closure in its own values, or an acceptance of differences in the same cultural space. In these situations, there is an urgent need for a program to identify and analyse the perspective of great religions on the distinction between authentic faith, fundamentalism, intolerance and acceptance of alterity. Another important element must be drawn to the attention of both sociologists and theologians equally: identifying how religious fundamentalism materializes or transforms through contact with political doctrine.

We believe that the best way of affirming religious identity in contact with alterity is interreligious dialogue². For these reasons, in the next section we will consider the criteria by which interreligious dialogue can be carried out efficiently, promoting good social coexistence and avoiding fundamentalism, also fuelled by some political ideologies.³

Europe encourages the principle of "unity in diversity", the preservation of national identity, of local traditions and values built over the centuries and not pursuing artificial and sterile levelling, a destruction of the cultural specificity of this continent. On the other hand, cultural diversity can today become a source of tension and disunity that is detrimental to social cohesion. Therefore, a new culture of coexistence through dialogue needs to be developed.

Today's society needs to be structured through dialogue and cooperation. In the dialogue we must preserve our own identity. You cannot talk in an absent way, with an imprecise or fluctuating identity. To preserve the identity means not to live in rigidity regarding the relations with other religions, with other nations. A dialogue, first of all, puts people on an equal footing. The prolific finality of interreligious dialogue is, in fact, aimed at developing a culture of coexistence that will allow the transformation of diversity into adversity and the confusion of identity with isolation.

² Contemporary engagement in interreligious dialogue and interconfessional relationships requires sustained reflection of conceptualizing the context in which it can take place in an authentic way. However, this context is one of religious pluralism affirmed on a social platform in which postmodernity attempts to extract the religious identity from the equation. Check: Douglas Pratt, „Pluralism, Postmodernism and Interreligious Dialogue”, in *Sophia*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 2007, pp. 245-261.

³ For a guidelines table that the interreligious dialogue needs to maintain, check: Leonard Swidler, Khalid Duran, Reuven Firestone, *Trialog. Evrei, Creștini și Musulmani în dialog*, translated from English by Emilian-Iustinian Roman, Geanina-Elena Roman, Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, Paula Bud, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2013, pp. 43-48.

Interreligious dialogue allows for social integration without dissolving religious and cultural identities⁴. Nevertheless, education and permanent formation for peaceful coexistence require a spiritual maturity in which individual or collective freedom is also freedom united with social responsibility and solidarity, just as the affirmation of their own spiritual and cultural values is not performed against individuals or different communities, but together with others. Countries where different religions have been living together for centuries on the same territory have a profound and rich experience in this field because they have learned better how to avoid or overcome religious and ethnic conflicts.

Equally, interreligious dialogue can be an analysis platform to the challenges of today's society, especially in terms of moral relativism, family crises, ecological crisis, the crisis of human identity as a person, etc. An authentic interreligious dialogue is about peaceful cohabitation, not violent conflicts, mutual respect, not mutual contempt, cultivation of our own ethnic and religious identity, together with those different from us, not against them. This healthy attitude in interethnic and interreligious relationships is not a simple option, but it becomes a vital imperative or attitude of multi-religious society.

But from a theoretical point of view, this relationship between religions through dialogue must be translated into a practical, factual plan. But this can be excellently implemented by improving *peace* and expressing the *love* of one another. Peace and love are two concepts that translate into existential plan as two dynamic vectors. Peace and love are totally correspondent. One without the other does not work in genuine potential.

If we define *peace* as a state of harmony, of non-violence, of preserving and unfolding in the exercise of freedom of our own personal identity without paying attention to the value and freedom of the other, of our neighbour, this definition is incomplete and risks becoming an affirmation of selfishness, a state of social singularity, which ultimately will lead only to isolation and inability to relate. It should not be forgotten that man is a fully social being, a being open to the horizon of communion.

⁴ Paul Hedges, *Controversies in Interreligious Dialogue and the Theology of Religions*, SCM Press, London, 2010, pp. 58-108.

Christian theology recalibrates love from the reflexive dimension - from self to self - to the dimension of the relationship: from one to another. God *loves* the world, loves man, and man answers to God in love. In the horizon of this love also comes the love for the neighbour, as an integrating factor: "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, because God is love". (I *John* 4,7-8).

Love is the constituent element of the human being that defines man as a person, as a subject of relational dynamics. Only man asserts himself as a person, as a subject conscious of himself and consciously and responsible to others at large. A community defines a group of people who identify themselves with the same social values and dynamics. However, today's society is a global one in which the diversity of religious cultures in a state geographic areal becomes a way of being that society.

Love is essentially unifying in the sense of unification in the same human identity, open to the social horizon. The element of cohesion, which respects and promotes the irreducibility of every human being as a person, is love, which thus becomes a fundamental factor of interrelation, adhesion, unity. The community aspect of love must not be limited to a plan of abstract thinking, but necessarily requires concrete manifestations until an effective union. In the integrative and community dimension of love, the meaning of the word "together" is revealed: the junction of two subjects participating in an act, a way of life in an organic unit.

Since always, man wanted peace - whether he had asked for it, aspiring through all his being to the joy of having it, or receiving it, but not knowing the invaluable nature of the gift with which he was overwhelmed. Because peace has so many facets through which it can be seen and there are so many ways that man hopes to get it, that many times when man begs for what he calls peace, is quite different from what God will give. And since the entire Psalter includes not only the prefigurations of the New Testament, but itself is entirely found in the richness of its values, we chose the Psalter to analyse and exemplify the subject. It is better to say from the beginning and demonstrate through all that follows: only the universal acknowledgment of Christ as God by His return to the earth will establish a definitive and total peace. Only the Church is the source of peace among men, for it is the body of Christ and the source of the Holy Spirit. And only justice can be the foundation of a true social peace because it is that which eliminates inequity, if it cannot eliminate sin, the source of all misunderstandings.

Christianity supports the effort of "peace-makers" (Matthew 5, 9) through obedience to God, the only One who "makes peace to rise" (Psalm 71, 7). And God spoke through the mouth of the Psalmist, so that we can admire the gift of His peace: "Hear what the Lord God will say to me; for He will speak peace unto his people, and upon His saints, and upon those who turn their heart toward Him. But He is close to those who fear His salvation ... His Mercy and truth have met, righteousness and peace have kissed. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven. For the Lord shall give kindness, and our earth shall yield its fruit; justice will walk before Him and make His footsteps a path" (Psalm 85, 8-14).

Sad was the moment of altering peace as an extension of God's presence in the world through the appearance of sin, but the Messiah's unwavering expectation has already become a hope through prophets and patriarchs through the sages of Holy Scripture. Their hope turned into a reality defined in Jesus Christ, because the sin was atoned by Him and through Him. But as long as the sin did not die in every man, as long as the Lord did not appear in the latter day, absolute peace remains only a desideratum, a future blessing. The words of the prophets are constantly saying: "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who work in peace" (James 3, 18). "Peace will be the work of righteousness, the fruit of righteousness will be peace and hope forever and ever" (Isaiah 32, 17).

This is the message proclaimed by the New Testament, through the Holy Apostles Luke, John, or Paul. Jesus, the Lord, passes the praying of peace on earth, transforming it into a proclamation of salvation. As a good Jew, Jesus says, "Go in peace," but through this He heals (Luke 8, 48), forgives the mistakes (Luke 7, 50), thus showing victory over the disease and sin. Like Jesus, the disciples offer salvation through Him (Luke 10, 5-9) to the whole city, sharing peace. And yet, it seems that salvation has come to overthrow the peace of this world: "Does it seem that I have come to offer peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division" (Luke 12, 51). And it was not the war that came to take him down, but rather the peace, the peace of that Easter day following the victory of the resurrection: "He stood in the midst of them, and said, Peace be with you" (Luke 24, 36). And the apostles went to proclaim to the whole world "Pax Israelitica" (Acts 7, 26; 9, 31; 15, 33), which is religiously a transfiguration for "Pax Romana": "And after they called Paul, the Third began to accuse him, saying: "Through you we have gained much peace and the righteousness made to this generation, through your care" (Acts 24, 2). And God announced peace through the intercession of Jesus

Christ: "And He sent the children of Israel the word, preaching peace through Jesus Christ; Who is Lord over all" (Acts 10, 36).

And the Apostle Paul connects righteousness with peace, as does the psalmist. Only peace thus gains stability and substance. Jesus Christ, who represents "our peace," is in fact our peace maker: "And through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by marking peace through His blood, shed on the cross" (Colossians 1, 20). We did not know, but in us dwells: "The peace of Christ, in which ye were called, to be one body, to rule in your hearts" (Colossians 3, 15). Through Jesus Christ, every believer is at peace with God - therefore was imposed the need for His coming for bringing peace, restoring the connection between man and God, the God of love and peace: "live in peace and the God of love and peace will be with you" (2 Corinthians 13, 11). Eternal life is anticipated here, going beyond the understanding (Philippians 4, 7), shining in the relationships between men (1 Timothy 2, 22) until the day when the God of peace, who exalted Christ (Hebrews 13, 20), destroying the devil (Romans 16, 20), will restore everything according to the original order.

But even more explicit this revelation becomes through the words of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John. Because he, as the Apostle Paul, considers peace as the fruit of the sacrifice of the Saviour Christ (John 16, 33), though it has nothing in common with our sense of looking at the peace of the world.

The Old Testament saw the ultimate benefit of peace in the presence of God among His people (Leviticus 26, 12; Ezekiel 37, 26), and Saint John shows the source and reality of peace in the presence of Jesus. When sadness descends upon the disciples because they will lose their teacher, Jesus encourages them: "Peace be with you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives" (John 14, 27). From now on, this peace is no longer associated with His presence on earth, but His victory over the world, over death, and so Jesus can, together with His peace, give the Holy Spirit and the power to triumph over the sin. (John 20, 19-23).

From now on, Christians seek peace: "Blessed are the peace-makers" (Matthew 5, 9) and thus have to live their lives to become the sons of God in the only Son, Christ, and the aspiration of peace on earth we can still find it from the Old Testament through David's prophecy (Psalms 84, 8-14).

1. Frequency of the term

Throughout its history, the people of Israel have fought many wars to defend their independence and belief. Starting with the Exodus book of Egyptian slavery and

ending with the book of the last prophet of the Old Testament, there are discussions about these wars. Tasting from the bitter cup of misery, he would appreciate peace to his just value, in which he saw a gift and a blessing of God.

a) In the Old Testament, the word "shalom", which reproduces the concept of peace, is very often used. His first meaning is greeting and congratulating. The Jews greeted or parted with peace, "Peace be upon you!", "Peace to your house!", "Go in peace!" It is said that although David had shown many signs of obedience to King Saul, he still wanted to kill him. This dejected act is not approved by Jonathan, the king's son and David's friend; making known his father's plans, he tells David: "Go in peace. Now we have both sworn that the Lord may be forever between me and you, between my seed and your seed" (1 Kings 20, 42; 29, 7). Arriving with his men in the desert of Paran and lacking food, David sends a message to a certain Nabal to get what he needs. His people were advised to ask Nabal about his health and to tell him the following: "Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours!" (1 Samuel 25, 6). After Saul's death, David became emperor. As he returned from the wandering, he was greeted with peace. "Of the Gadites, some mighty men went to David to the fortress in the wilderness ... And there were some of the sons of Benjamin and Judah who went to David in the fortress. David went forth and spoke to them: "If you come to me in peace to help me, my heart will unite with you; but if you come to betray me, for the benefit of my enemies, when my hands are free from violence, may the God of our ancestors see it and judge you." Amasai, one of the chief captains, was grasped by the Spirit and said, "We are with you, David, with you, Jesse's son. Peace be to those who help you, for your God has helped you" (1 Chronicles, 12, 8-16-18). With the salute "go in peace," the five men of the tribe of Dan were released, and they went to the city of Laish (Judges 18, 6). With "peace to you", the traveling Levite was greeted through the city of Gibeah (Judges 19, 20).

b) The second meaning of the word peace is that of tranquillity, of soul contentment and of happiness. It is the meaning of the words of the Psalmist, concerning the city of Jerusalem: "Wish peace of Jerusalem, and say, those who love you may enjoy peace. Peace reign between your walls and prosperity in your houses" (Psalms 121, 7-9). This peace was to be established only in Solomon's time. Solomon, the "man of peace," who would say, "better is a piece of dry land in peace than a house full of sacrificial meat in war" (Psalms 17, 1), wrote a psalm before to follow his father to the throne in which he expressed his creed as a man of justice and peace: "God, saith

he, giveth thy judgments to the king, and gives thy righteousness to the king's son, and he shall judge thy people with righteousness, and your poor with justice. The mountains will bring peace to the people and the hills also as a result of Your righteousness. It will be like a rain that falls on a mown earth, like a quick rain that dries the plain. In his days will the righteous flourish, and there will be plenty of peace as long as the moon will be in the sky" (Psalms 71, 1-3, 6-7).

This is the meaning given by the prophet Isaiah to the word of peace when he says: "Lord, pour out peace upon us, for you have also done all our work for us" (Isaiah 26, 12). Or: "How beautiful are the feet of the messenger who proclaims peace, the good news of the earth" (Isaiah 52, 7).

2. The premises of peace

a. Justice. Peace based on violence is not durable, but illusory, a peace that can anytime break. This aspect was also taken into consideration by hagiographers. They whip the injustices of their time and present them as continuous sources of restlessness. Speaking in the name of Yahweh, the Psalmist asks, "How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the weak and the fatherless, uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed, rescue the weak and the needy, deliver them from the hand of the wicked" (Psalms 82, 2-4). Some like these, says the prophet Isaiah, "do not know the way, the peace, and in their ways there is no justice; grasping the wrong ways, they do not know peace" (59, 8).

b. Gentleness. Often, the Psalmist warns his contemporaries that anger is a source of misery, while patience and indulgence are a source of goodness. He says: "Leave the wrath, leave the swiftness, do not be angry, because the anger only brings evil ... If after a while you will see that the evil is no longer but only the place where he was, the meek ones will inherit the earth, and they shall have a great deal of peace" (Psalms 36, 8, 10-11). The same advice also gives Solomon to his successor, making peace dependent with his neighbours and, implicitly, the length of his life, of kindness and faithfulness. "My son, he says, do not forget my teachings (and keep my counsel in your heart, for they will prolong your days and years of your life and will bring you much peace.) Do not forsake your kindness and faithfulness, bind them at the throat, write it on the tablet of your heart"(Proverbs 3, 1-3).

c. Listening to the word of God. More than anything else, the Old Testament hagiographers make serenity, peace, and the promotion of life dependent on the obedience of the word of God. This, because the very word of God promotes serenity,

peace and life. "There is a lot of peace to those who love the law," says the Psalmist, "and no misfortune happens to them" (Psalms 118: 165).

God is portrayed as one who hates war, as one who "ended wars at the edge of the earth. He broke the bow, and broke the spear, and burned the chariots of war." (Psalms 45, 9). "His tent is in Salem, and his dwelling in Zion. There He broke the arrows, the shield, the sword, and the weapons of war" (Psalms 75, 2-3).

Peace is presented as a gift of God, as a reward for the fulfilment of His will. This is what Moses presents when he says, "If you follow my statutes and carefully obey my commands, and fulfil them, saith the Lord, I will send peace upon your land, and no one shall trouble you, I will drive the wicked beasts out of your land and the sword shall not pass through your land" (Leviticus, 26, 3-6). In the same sense the prophet Isaiah speaks: "To the one with a strong heart you pledge peace; you offer peace to the one that trusteth in thee" (26, 3). Peace is presented at the same time as a blessing; it brings wealth, happiness and length of days. "Thus, is the man who feareth the Lord, the one that dwells in Zion: to see the blessedness of Jerusalem his entire life; to see the children of his children; to see peace over Israel" (Psalms, 128, 4-6).

Disobedience to the word of the Lord is presented by the prophet Isaiah as the source of the troubles and many misfortunes. "Thus, saith the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I, the Lord your God, who teaches you for your benefit, who leads you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands. Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea" (48, 17-18).

The dimensions of peace

a) Speaking of peace, the sages of the Old Testament see it conditioned primarily by a proper spiritual state, by reconciling one with himself. Because scattered souls, blinded by passion, can no longer discern between good and evil, cannot wish for peace, and if peace exists, they cannot defend it, nor cherish it to its just value. "The wicked have no peace", says the prophet Isaiah (48, 22). "The wicked man writhes in pain all his days, throughout the number of years reserved for the ruthless. Terrifying sounds fill his ears. He despairs of escaping the realm of darkness. He sees the sword that threatens him, runs back and forth. Trouble and distress terrify him, overwhelming him like a king prepared for battle" (Job 15, 20-24). That's why, rightly, the Psalmist says: "Tremble and do not sin, when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent." (Psalm 4, 4). Also, Solomon expresses the same thing when he says, "deceit is

in the hearts of those who plot evil, but those who promote peace have joy." (Proverbs 12, 20).

b) Peace predicted in the Old Testament is a general peace. Both the sons of Israel and the Gentiles would enjoy it. God's peace was to be "for both the near and the far-fetched" (Isaiah 57, 19).

Indeed, there are many wars in the Old Testament, which Israel's sons were forced to bear. Speaking of wars, it does not make them an ideal and the only solution to solving litigious problems. And in these cases, the ideal pursued is also peace. War is only allowed in extreme cases, as the last solution, after exhausting all possible solutions, to solve some very important problems, such as defending independence and the danger of idolatry. This attitude derives from what is said in Deuteronomy (20, 10 et seq.): "When you approach a city to fight against it, make an offer of peace. And if he does not agree with you on peace, and will wage a war against you, then you will lay siege to it."

That peace with everyone is the biblical ideal, it results from other texts and other circumstances also. Thus, King Uzziah is glorified that during his time the people "had peace". And he built mighty cities in Judah, for the land had peace, and had no wars with any man in those years "(II Chronicles 14, 6). The prosperity of the people in Solomon's time is also presented as a result of peace. "Peace reigned all over the earth and over all the kings ... and it was peace with all neighbouring countries. So Judas and Israel lived peacefully, each under his vineyard and under his fig tree ... during the days of Solomon" (1 Kings 4, 24 et seq.). Even the building of the temple in Jerusalem is presented as a result of the pacifist spirit of which Solomon was enlivened. Suggestive in this sense are the words of David to his son: My son, I have had my heart to build the house of the Lord my God, but the word of the Lord came to me, saying: You have shed much blood and you have worn many wars; it is not for you to build the house of my name, because you have shed much blood on the earth before my face. Behold, a son is born to you; he shall be peaceful, and I will give him peace from all the enemies around him; therefore, his name shall be Solomon. And I will grant Israel peace and quiet during his reign. He will build the house of my name. And now, my son, let the Lord be with you, and build the house of the Lord your God" (1 Chronicles, 22, 7 et seq.).

But not only Israel's kings are praised for their achievements, but also other generations as well. Under the reign of Cyrus and his descendants, the people of Israel

enjoyed a 200-year peace era. Cyrus, as the liberator of the peoples, and the inaugurator of an era of peace, is greeted by the prophet Isaiah as "the anointed of God," his chosen one, through whom the providence fulfils his plans (Isaiah 45, 1). Because of his long peace work, Cyrus became a symbol of the Lord of the Cross through excellence (Isaiah 9, 5).

Messiah — The Lord of peace

a) The ideal of peace is seen by hagiographers in the Messiah's time, "the Anointed" of God, the Lord of Peace (Isaiah 9, 6). Indeed, the Messiah the one promised to the forefathers, was meant to bring man back to the state he had fallen from, to restore the order of paradise. But the restoration of this state is equivalent to restoring man's peace with God, with his fellows and with himself. Peace with God would be sealed by the sacrifice of the Messiah brought for the sins of all men (Isaiah 52, 13-53, 12). A natural consequence of this reconciliation would be to lift the curse of the former, and to reconcile the harmony between man and other creatures. This paradise harmony is prophesied with a lot of tenderness by the prophet Isaiah when he says, "Then shall the wolf and the lamb stand together; the leopard will rest beside the deer, the calf and the young lion will eat together, and a child shall lead them. The cow and the bear will graze, their young ones will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like cattle. An infant will play beside the cobra's pit, and a toddler will put his hand into a snake's den." (11, 6-8)

Prophet Ezekiel speaks of the "Covenant of Peace", which in his broad sense will look upon the other creatures. "I will make a covenant of peace with them, and will remove all the wild beasts from the land; they will live quietly in the wilderness and sleep in the midst of the forests. I will make them and the surroundings of My hill, a blessing; I will send them rain in time and it will be a blessed rain. There shall be no robbery among the Gentiles, nor the beasts of the land shall eat them, but they shall dwell in silence, and none shall trouble them" (Isaiah 34, 25-26, 28).

Peace among men will also be a natural consequence of the new relationships established by the Messiah among men, the new optics of which man is seen. And if the notion of the neighbour is broadened to the whole human race, the peace brought by the Messiah will not have a limit (Isaiah 9, 7), there will be a universal peace. The weapons that until then sowed death and pain would be destroyed (Isaiah 39, 9-10; Zechariah 9, 3-10; Hosea 1, 7; Micah 5, 9; Psalms, 46, 9; Haggai 2, 22) or they will be turned into blessed tools that serve life and happiness. Then men will "beat their swords

into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up the sword against nation, and they will never again train for war" (Isaiah 2, 4).

b) Messianic peace is closely linked to justice, it is a natural consequence of righteousness. At that time, "mercy and truth will meet, righteousness and peace will kiss" (Psalms, 85, 10). The Messiah will do justice to those who are humble, and he will help the needy (Psalms 12, 4). He will judge the world with justice and peace. And there shall be no more hearing of ruin, of destruction, and of desolation (Isaiah 60, 17-18).

The frequency of the word peace

a) In the New Testament, the word peace is the most used. It can be found 86 times, with plenty of meaning. About peace is sometimes spoken without the use of that word, being replaced by other words that render the idea of peace and soul contentment.

As in the Old Testament, it is often used as a greeting, both in meeting and parting. Thus, the evangelist John entrusts to us that the Saviour, showing Himself before His disciples on the evening of the resurrection, stood in the midst of them and said, "Peace be with you" (John 20, 19). After eight days, He again appeared before them, and Thomas was again present, and he again addressed the salutation of peace: "Peace be with you" (John 20, 26). By sending His disciples to preaching, He gives them the command to wish "peace" to the houses in which they will enter (Matthew 10, 12-13). With the words "go in peace" (Mark 5, 34) the Saviour left those who were capable to hear His word and see His wonderful works. The sick woman, who had healed and confessed her mistake, the Saviour freed her with the words "go in peace" (Mark 5, 34). After His example, the first Christians met or parted with the salute of peace. Saint Jacob gives us precise testimony in this regard when he says, "If a brother or a sister, without clothes and lacking daily food comes and ask for help, and one of you says to them: Go in peace without giving them what the body needs, what good is it?" (James 2, 15-16).

b) The term peace is used as a wish, with the actual meaning of peace, serenity and soul contentment, abundance of grace and last but not least of salvation. With these multiple meanings it is used by New Testament hagiographers at the beginning or at the end of their writings (Romans 7; II Corinthians, 1, 3; II Corinthians, 1, 2; Galatians, 1, 3, 4, 16; Ephesians 1, 2; Philippians, 1, 2; Colossians 1, 2; I Thessalonians, 1, 2; I Timothy, 1, 2; Philemon 3; I Peter 5, 14; III John 15).

Premises of peace

a) Christ the Saviour, Lord of peace

Coming to the world, "all the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the Messiah have been fulfilled in the person of Christ the Saviour" (Galatians 4, 4). Through His Incarnation, Death and Resurrection, he had, as foretold, brought salvation to the human race, bringing it back to the state from which the restoration of order and peace had fallen in the beginning.

The peace message of the Saviour (Acts 10, 36), the Lord of Peace, the king of Salem (Hebrews 7, 2), was promised by the angels on the night of His Birth, when they sang: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favour rests" (Luke 2, 10-14). It was also announced by the priest Zachariah, the father of Saint John the Baptist, when he said that his son had the mission to guide the steps of his contemporaries "towards peace" which the Saviour would place in souls (Luke 1, 79). The kingdom founded by Him at the commandment of the Father, «the God of peace» (Romans, 15, 33; 16, 20; II Corinthians, 13, 11; Philippians, 4, 9; I Thessalonians, 5, 23; Hebrews, 13, 20-21) is the kingdom of peace. "The kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Romans 14, 17). After the fulfilment of his mission, the Son of God returns to the Father, leaving mankind as gift, the peace that overwhelms the mind (Philippians 4, 7; Colossians 3, 15). "My peace I leave to you, my peace I give to you" (John 14, 17), said the Saviour to His Disciples, and through them to all who will embrace His word.

b) To the preservation of the peace brought by the Saviour Christ contributes first and foremost the new perspective of which men are seen. Through their incorporation into the mysterious Body of the Lord, in the Church, whose head is Christ (Colossians 1, 18; Ephesians, 1, 22), the differences between men disappear. "He is no longer a slave, nor a free man; no longer male or female; he is no longer a barbarian, nor a scribble, but all are one in Christ Jesus, He being all in all" (Gal., 3, 28; Col., 3, 11; Rom., 10, 12). All are called to the same hope and to the inheritance of the promises made by God to the patriarchs of the Old Testament (Gal. 4, 4-7).

"He is no longer a slave, nor a free man; no longer male or female; he is no longer a barbarian, nor a Scythian, but Christ is all, and is in all" (Galatians, 3, 28; Colossians, 3, 11; Romans, 10, 12). All are called to the same hope and to the inheritance of the promises made by God to the patriarchs of the Old Testament (Galatians 4, 4-7).

c) Preserving the peace brought by Christ is also the new commandment given by the Saviour, the commandment of love, which will never perish" (1 Corinthians, 13, 8).

On the last night the Saviour had with His disciples before His death, He gave them the last commandments, which were to summarize all of His teachings. "A new commandment I give to you: that ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 13, 34). The novelty of His command consists in the fact that its sphere would encompass everyone without exception, the close and the distant, the friends and the enemies (Matthew 5, 44). To the loving of the neighbour is given a special importance; it confirms the love of God and vice versa. "Who does not love his brother which he sees, how can he love God that he does not see? He that loveth God loveth his brother also" (John 4, 20-21; 3, 10).

The love envisaged by the Saviour is not limited to a passive soul state of simple compassion towards the fellow man, but supposes its materialization in deed. "Let us not love the word, nor the tongue, but the deed and the truth" (1 John 3, 8). To love is to not harm your neighbour" (Romans 13, 10) means to confirm the fact of our birth from God" (1 John 4, 7), which is the "God of love and peace" (II Corinthians, 13, 11).

The dimensions of peace

a) Peace with God

The consequences of the ancestral sin were multiple. The man was driven out of paradise, forced to live a painful life, became mortal, and, what was even worse, a tensioned state between man and God. Man appeared to God as an enemy, both in his thoughts and in his deeds (Colossians 1, 21). This enmity was abolished only by the obedience to death of the Son of God incarnated as man. He "wiped the record with His commandments, which stood against us and condemned us, He has taken it away, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2, 14), "He has reconciled us with God" (Romans 5, 10), "He offered us peace with God" (Romans 5, 1; Colossians 1, 20) and entrusted us with the "service of reconciliation" (II Corinthians, 5, 18).

b) Peace with oneself

Another consequence of the ancestral sin was the darkening of God's image in man, the disorder of harmony between the two components of human nature, between body and soul, the body tending to subjugate the soul and to serve the sin. "For the pursuit of the flesh is enmity against God, for it does not obey the law of God, nor can it obey" (Romans 8, 7).

The weakening of the spiritual powers, the alteration of the image of God in man, man's inability to do the good that he hardly discerns it — the apostle Paul describes so suggestively when he says, "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members." (Romans 7, 14-23).

Other is the state of man after the deliverance from the burden of sin through the sacrifice of the Saviour. The human nature is brought back to the initial state, the soul resumes its role as leader, and its powers, cleansed and refreshed by grace, see the good and push the body to its realization. In the name of this renewed man, says the Apostle Paul: "I can do all this through Him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4, 13), because "to live means Christ" (Philippians 1, 21), "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians, 2, 20). And "if anyone is in Christ, it is a new creation; the old ones have passed; behold, they are made new" (II Corinthians, 5, 17).

Such a man who can be everything is a man of virtue, of humility, of gentleness, of long-suffering, showing indulgence and love for his fellow men, who strive to keep "the union of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Romans 14, 19).

c) Peace with all people

A natural extension of harmony that has been re-established in the human nature, to which it is proper to do good and to avoid evil, is peace with the fellows and, more than a natural inclination, it is "our peace, made of the two (the heathen and the Jews) into one, and has broken the wall in 2 pieces of separation, enmity, building the them into a new man in one "body" (Ephesians 2, 14-18), who says, "Be at peace with each other" (Mark 9, 50).

It seemed that, order and harmony are characteristics of the new life for Christians, for those who make up the Sacred Body of the Saviour and follow His

teaching. Christian peace extends to all men, Christians seeing in all of these peoples their fellows, who carry the same image of God as the sign of nobility, are called to the same salvation and the inheritance of the same promises. A direct call to this effect is made by Saint Apostle Paul, when he says, "It is possible for you to be at peace with all men" (Romans 12, 18).

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