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SCRIPTURAL AND PATRISTIC BASES OF OUR KNOWLEDGE

OF GOD

IN THE RIGHTEOUS CHURCH AND

IN ROMAN CATHOLICISM

– Doctoral Thesis Summary –

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Summary of the Doctoral Thesis

SCRIPTURAL AND PATRISTIC BASES OF OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN THE RIGHTEOUS CHURCH AND IN ROMAN CATHOLICISM

After graduating high school and passing the Baccalaureate exam, I decided to take the admission exam at the Faculty of Legal Sciences, which I consider a higher education institution guided by elitist standards and which offers the student an extremely vast level of knowledge. After passing the Bachelor's exam I realized that I needed something more and that is why I decided to enroll in the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, wanting to get to know myself better and at the same time to establish deeper human relations with those around me. Here I studied subjects such as Personality Psychology, Social Psychology, Psychodiagnosis, but nonetheless, I was not convinced that I had acquired the necessary knowledge that would lead me to achieve my objectives. Under these circumstances, I decided to enroll in the Faculty of Pastoral Theology of the "Ovidius" University of Constanța, hoping that here I will learn about wholeness, about a plenary knowledge, because everything that comes from God is a science without an end, marked by infinity and by boundlessness. Nothing can be more exciting than wishing to study something that does not end, being permanently in a continuous, uninterrupted soul movement, on a path that seeks to attain perfection. From the beginning, the Faculty of Theology has captured my interest with subjects such as: Old and New Testament, History of the Romanian Orthodox Church, History of the Universal Orthodox Church, as well as linguistic scientific spheres such as Latin, Greek or Hebrew. Not less important were subjects such as the History of Philosophy or those in the musical area that complete the level of knowledge of the one who attends theological studies. It is obvious that the patristic dimension and, in the following years, the Dogmatic one provide the full knowledge necessary to the higher education institution that has at its center of its activity what the Embodied Logos left us to study.

Given all these disciplines, I gave careful consideration to which sphere of knowledge I should turn my attention for my Bachelor thesis. I decided to focus carefully on a comparison between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, though not in a strictly confessional manner, but rather reflecting on the importance of scholasticism for Roman Catholicism, as well as on the five ways of knowing God that we find in Thomas of Aquinas, all compared to the Primary Faith Teaching. I found it a very interesting topic because it gave me both a deeper knowledge of my own faith and the opportunity to study the components that contributed to a clearer definition of Roman Catholicism. In the same line of thought, I decided to continue my studies with the Master's Degree in Biblical Exegesis at the Faculty of Theology, but with a greater accent on emphasizing the features and characteristics of the Right Faith.

Before the doctoral enrollment, I reached the conclusion, together with my coordinator of this thesis - Î.P.S. Prof. univ. dr. Teodosie Petrescu, Archbishop of Tomis, that it is a good approach to continue in this direction of research and to study in more depth both the essential dogmatic principles of our Church, as well as those of the Roman Catholicism, precisely in order to formulate an effective argumentative approach, regarding the Orthodox beliefs, but also the ideas of the Roman Catholic confession. Given this motivation, I made the decision to elaborate a doctoral thesis based on the research carried out on several levels of study. First of all, I considered that it was necessary to formulate a comprehensive title that contained the whole essence of what is dealt with in such a work. That is why I chose the title in such a way so as to include references to both the scriptural basis of the research and its patristic dimension.

The Holy Bible is, of course, the Living Water Fountain from which the soul thirsty for the True Knowledge drinks. At the same time, we know that everything that the Holy Fathers have left us is a never-ending source of Knowledge, and therefore the careful reading of the *Filocalie* must be a fundamental concern for every theologian. I have circumscribed all this to the notion of knowledge, because the Savior Himself exhorts the science when he tells the Sadducees: "You have lost your way because you have not read the scriptures." (Matthew 22:29).

Therefore, we must be convinced that Christ appreciates the man who is concerned with the study of the Word of God, as well as with the other elements of the Creation that our Creator shares with us. As such, the Holy Orthodox Church has never been guided by such terms as "Walk by faith, not by sight/" ("Do not ask questions, just believe"), but has constantly urged

us to search for knowledge because in this way man becomes more responsible, more balanced, and, above all, his soul gets richer.

In the first chapter of this doctoral thesis, I dealt with the conceptual definition of what the word "knowledge" means, trying to capture as much as I could of its meanings and the meaning from the semantic perspective of knowledge. Throughout the analysis, my main point of reference has been, above all, God, as the "Source and Origin of Knowledge". It is impossible to formulate some valuable judgments on the most important aspects of the history of humanity without beginning with the origin, with the source.

Everything that mankind has discovered over time is due to God's Prowess, because the Guidance received from the Trinity has given man the ability to understand and relate much better to what God has given him, in order to have a specific ontology of human nature. Man, being the Crown of Divine Creation, was endowed with the ability to know, to enrich himself in knowledge beginning with his creation, because our great-grandparents, Adam and Eve, had God's permission to taste from all the trees of Heaven, with the exception of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which, again, was due to our Heavenly Father's love for His Creation. Father Rafail Noica said so suggestively about this moment that "God says to man: << Taste me, feed yourself with all the trees of Heaven, but not from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, just to guard yourself from evil>>". We therefore notice that God does not prohibit man to know, but sets a prohibition on him not to harm himself.

Therefore, in the first chapter of this thesis I spoke about the origin of knowledge, referring at the same time to its types and forms and also stressing the meaning of the Redeeming Knowledge, all the while considering the purpose of knowledge. There is a lot to talk about the types and forms of knowledge, so I chose to focus on different pairs like: the theoretical knowledge vs. the practical knowledge, the rational knowledge vs. the empirical knowledge, as well as on the factual vs. intuitive knowledge.

In one of the systemic definitions of personality, psychology says that the personality is a set of bio-psycho-socio-cultural traits, but we observe that such a definition of a man's psychological portrait neglects the spiritual dimension, the one which generates authentic knowledge, and this is a major shortcoming. Considering theoretical knowledge, it is certain that man can accumulate a vast set of information that comprises many notions or has many alternatives to communicate on certain aspects. However, a theoretical knowledge devoid of the

substance of the Word of God is empty of content, because it does not have in its center what Father prof. Constantin Galeriu called so suggestively "the law of reverse gravity": namely the attraction that the soul feels towards the over pouring of God out of Himself, coming down towards man and leading him upward into the Kingdom of Heaven. At the same time, a practical knowledge reduced to implementing the acquired information does not find its usefulness as long as it is not subjected to a higher motivation that comes only from Christ. From a practical point of view, you may know how to do a lot of things, but when the soul is just doing things for the sake of it, it is widowed by the True Knowledge that rescues and stops it from committing evil. One certainty that results from this first chapter of the doctoral thesis, is that the Origin of Knowledge is God and is found in God, that the meaning of Redeeming Knowledge is equated with Christ and through various forms or types of knowledge we become aware of the goal of the knowing process. Of the vital purpose of each responsible individual, namely the acquirement of immortality into Eternal Happiness.

In the second section of this doctoral thesis, under the coordination of the Î.P.S. univ. prof. dr. Teodosie Petrescu, we made the decision to refer to the fundamental teachings, to the essential principles, that is to the dogmatic portrait of our Holy Orthodox Church, precisely in order to have a faithful representation of what Orthodoxy means for each believer. We know that the Primary Teaching of Faith is the Source of True Knowledge, because the Orthodox Church is the Original Church, which has maintained its steadfastness and has continued in time without changing its beliefs, always following the path drawn by the Summit of Love, Christ. In Orthodoxy, from the Everest of Love descend over all humanity the unbridled faith, the perfect physical and spiritual health, as well as the sublime exhortation addressed to each man, to seek his eternity.

Our church did not cause any schism or split, it did not abandon its principles, but remained consistent and faithful to the Word of God. We do not make an apology for Orthodoxy for the sake of defending our Church, but only because such an approach is the deepest reflection of the Truth. No person of good faith can accuse the Orthodox Church of abuses throughout history, imprisonment or other misconduct. At the same time, we must emphasize that the history of our nation is one with Orthodoxy, from which it draws its own vitality and is, at the same time, the place that offers to the whole of humanity the spiritual wonders that are the activities of the Orthodox Church on this land. Next, this section also covers the Scriptural Grounding

concerning the Knowledge of God, because it is fundamental to understand that without biblical argumentation, any theological statement is equally empty, poor and marked by falsehood. We have chosen to speak of both the Foundations found in the Old Testament and the New Testaments concerning the Knowledge of the Trinity Assembly. When God says "I am who I am" (Exodus 3:14), He entrusts us with the essence of Knowledge and so we find out about the One without Beginning and without End, the Creator and Bestower of Grace on all that exists.

We have also analyzed other themes in the Old Testament regarding the topic of this doctoral thesis, because it is extremely important to know that the success of a theological approach depends on strong arguments coming from the Old Testament, firstly. In fact, the entire Holy Bible is an inexhaustible source of God's purpose, because there is no Bible verse that does not show us the makings of the Holy Trinity and, above all, what God offered as a gift to His Creation. When God said "Let there be light" (Genesis 1: 3), He activated His Light, and later, at the Transfiguration of Christ the Savior, man, represented here by the Holy Apostles, had a first taste of the Tabor Light, the Light of the Resurrection or the Light Beyond the Light.

As for the scriptural argumentation of the dissertation's subject it naturally continues with the rendering of some New Testament verses, starting, of course with chapter 17 of the Holy Gospel, written by the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John. There it is said: "And this is eternal life: to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3). Here, the essence of true Knowledge is expressed. Obviously, when one talks about Orthodoxy as being the Church who provides the soul with True Knowledge, the priority is given to what we find in the Holy Gospel of John. That is because every person who is a believer, must know that Christ, God's Eternal Son, who also became the son of man through the Incarnation of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, was made Human for the redemption of our sins. We then understand how the whole human nature is encapsulated in Jesus Christ, who out of love for man, accepted to be sacrificed on the Cross to save us.

The wrong Roman Catholic conception, according to which the Savior sacrificed himself to bring satisfaction to the Father, has no scriptural cover because it does not paint the image of God in an authentic way, which is, namely, love. The scriptural argumentation of the Knowledge of God is, therefore, very important, since it is the basis for the spiritual growth of the one who owns and lives It. The third sub-chapter of this section deals with the Natural Revelation and the Supernatural Revelation, because it is important to know how God has chosen to reveal Himself

to man. It is also based on what the Holy Scripture gives us. As far as the Natural Revelation is concerned, it is revealed to us throughout the creation because, as Saint Basil the Great tells us, "All creation speaks to man about God." The eye of the man of good faith can see everything that the Holy Trinity has built and reveals God in His True Attributes, which begin with endless love and culminate with love's perfection. We know that God is Omnipresent, All-knowing, Good, Gentle, Wise, Right, this to list only a few of His Attributes. If we refer to the Supernatural Revelation, we must say that it has fulfilled, overwhelmed the incomplete dimension of the Natural Revelation, being exercised directly through the Prophets, and especially through the coming of the Son of God into the world, to raise man from the death of sin and to bring him eternal life. The whole earthly activity of Christ the Savior, His works, His wonders, the love shown to people, the Mercy shown to the needy, tells us how the Lord reveals Himself in the deepest way, being with us all the time.

The last sub-chapter of this part of the work focuses on the patristic dimension, dealing with the philocalical grounds regarding the Knowledge of God. Here I have listed several words of the Holy Fathers who speak about Who and How God is, and Saints. Examples from Anthony the Great, Diadoch of the Photici, Maximus the Confessor, John Cassian, Peter of Damascus and others speak with a brilliant spiritual color about God, underlining the Work of His Uncreated Energies poured over the whole world. Saint Anthony the Great says, for example, "The way of knowledge of God is goodness." This shows how man must come to truly know Christ, because all who have become holy have imitated the Lord in everything they have done in this earthly life. At the same time, the Holy Fathers talked a great deal about the need for the spiritual cleansing of man, that he has to go through when he wants to come close to Christ, because a defiled heart, subject to sins of all kinds, cannot ascend as it should to God. The faithful one feels that he is in Heaven, while still living on earth and because God is everywhere, He finds his way to the mind and soul of people that open themselves up and welcome His Love.

Therefore, the second section of this doctoral thesis talks about the Teaching of Orthodox Faith as a Source of True Knowledge, continues with a scriptural argumentation of this knowledge, ending with the Natural and Supernatural Revelation. The last sub-chapter looks at how the Holy Fathers speak to us in *Filocalie* about the Knowledge of God.

In the third chapter of the work we have composed, we have referred to the practical means by which the Orthodox believer can draw closer to God. In this context we must know

that there are certain spiritual props, a luminous garment, a garment of the heart that connects the friendship between man and Christ. The Savior of the world assures the one who fulfills the commandments of God with all His love and promises that He will make His abode in His heart. In order to reach this point, the essential condition is the Right Faith, the Faith without rest, without denial, not subjected to error. I spoke about Faith in the first part of this chapter, because it is the basic Theological Virtue that represents the first step on the spiritual evolution of man. Without Faith you cannot maintain an effective relationship with Christ, because you cannot enter a relationship when you don't know the other's role. In order for God the Word to be the guide of your life, you must be connected to Him by faith, as St. Gregory Palamas says "The Savior Himself tells the Holy Apostles, and through them to us: << You are my friends, if you do what I command to you."(John 15:14). From here we conclude that you are truly the Lord's friend when you keep His commandments, but for this you must have Faith as the foundation of your life.

One of the major goals for which we have decided to develop such a doctoral thesis is to emphasize the principles of the Right Faith as much as possible, because in the society we live in there are many missteps and abandonments of the Truth, and people following such directions are surely on a totally wrong path. Therefore, faith is the source of knowledge, it illuminates the science of God and leads man to the depths of a happy life.

A direct consequence of Faith, but also a generator of it, in the sense of increasing it, is the Holy Prayer. We spoke of Holy Prayer as Living through God, precisely to emphasize the role that this ongoing dialogue with Christ must play in each of us. When the mind descends in the heart and speaks to its benefactor, then it becomes true what Father Arsenie Papacioc said in an extremely convincing manner, namely, the state of continuous presence that man must manifest in the relationship with Christ. Such a state begins with Prayer, continues with Prayer and ends in Prayer. It is obvious that man can address many different types of Prayers to God: Prayers of thanksgiving, those of asking something or those of worshipping. On the other hand, the form and content of the Prayers and the way in which this dialogue is carried out with Christ depends both on the specificity of the moments of Prayer and Faith, on the need and the sacrifice of each man. With certainty that Prayer is truly Life in Christ and marks a very good relationship between us and our Savior.

We continued the approach regarding the knowledge of God with a subchapter that, we believe, is interesting: the Cataphatic and Apophatic Knowledge. Regarding the Cataphatic Knowledge, I emphasized the Attributes of God, that is, the perfection of the Holy Trinity, taking into account, for example, Wisdom, Omnipresence, All-knowing, Goodness, Gentleness, Justice, Love, all specific to our God. Therefore, the Cataphatic Knowledge emphasizes the clear affirmation of the Attributes of God so that, in mentioning them, each believer understands what the Holy Trinity represents in our Faith. Regarding Apophatic Knowledge, we must mention that it refers to the denial of any imperfection of God. In view of this Knowledge, it is imperative to emphasize that God is not hatred, there is no injustice, there is no lack of mercy, there is no lack of wisdom, etc. The denial of the imperfections of the Holy Trinity results in a positive knowledge of the Divine Knowledge because, if you know what someone is not, you realize what it really is. Therefore, in the Orthodox Church, we know both what God is and what God is not in order to have the complete soul image of the infinity of life, as manifested by our Creator.

We also talked about the way we perceive Him, how we know God in the concrete circumstances of life. We have in particular taken into account what Father prof. Dumitru Stăniloae wrote, which refers largely to the way in which man encounters God in the joys, troubles, satisfactions or sorrows of his life. At the same time, as Father Stăniloae rightly points out, each and every smile of the person next to him represents the way in which God wants to create communion between people, thus becoming, in his turn, Known by those who follow His exhortations. Therefore, our emotional experiences, the feelings we nurture, which gives us the concrete circumstances of life, also give us the True Science of God, putting Christ in our hearts.

The fifth sub-chapter of this section is entirely devoted to the supreme theological virtue, that is, to Love, because it is love that strengthens both our relationship with Christ and our relationships. In the Gospel of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John we encounter the words with which all humanity is comforted and which offer the hope of salvation to each believer: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, so that anyone who believes in Him shall thrive and have eternal life "(John 3:16). We are thus shown the total sacrifice that Christ the Sinless has taken on behalf of humanity, so that the darkness of our sins and the darkness of human inability can be transformed into the Light of Virtues. Therefore my doctoral work had to speak about love, even though in a limited chapter, because love is the virtue at the peak of any person's spiritual growth.

In the last sub-chapter of this part of the thesis, we considered that we must speak briefly about the Mystical Knowledge of God, especially in the work of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite. The Holy Fathers generally describe the two ways in which the person living from a true place can become aware of the benefits of the Science of God, namely the sight of the Uncreated Light or the Mystical Ecstasy. Saint Simeon The New Theologian talks about the overwhelming light, the not-close light that surrounds the soul of the righteous Christian when he is in real need. On the other hand, Saints such as Gregory of Nyssa or Dionysius the Areopagite speak of the Superluminous Darkness, which is nothing more than a permanent movement in the Knowledge of God, which, however, by increasing the mystery, takes back the knowledge and thus further increasing the desire for knowledge. With St. Dionysius the Areopagite I have come across references to such knowledge, about the Mystical Ecstasy in which man is detached from all things of the world and truly and exclusively belongs to Christ. This kind of knowledge cannot be comprehensively rendered in the words of the limited human ability to understand. The Mystical knowledge of God that Saint Dionysius Areopagite speaks of is particularly captivating and needs much wider treatment in broader research.

As this doctoral thesis focuses on the Divine Knowledge, it could not be lacking a whole section about the practical ways in which Christ fulfills his promise when he says, "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen. "(Matthew 28:20). Therefore, we have decided to speak of the Holy Sacraments which are truly only found in the Orthodox Church, because they represent the concrete way by which the faithful Redeemer shares of the boon poured over by the goodness of God. The Holy Sacraments of our Church were instituted by Christ the Savior Himself because the Invisible Lord of the Church takes care first and foremost of the nourishment of the soul and of the strengthening of the right-thinking mind, without neglecting of course the bodily health which he generously offers to the believer. When the newborn baby is baptized, he receives the Initiation Mystery that makes him a son of the Church, a child of God and brother in Grace with Christ the Savior. The baptism washes away the original sin by adorning the one baptized with holiness, light and purity. This Holy Sacrament practically opens for the new Christian-Orthodox the Gates of the Kingdom of Heaven here on this earth. The Lord Himself says "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). We see how important this Holy Sacrament is, which practically makes us members of the

Church of Christ, and, if we fulfill the Commandments of the Lord, the rightful heirs of the Kingdom of Immortality.

Then we focused on the Holy Sacrament of Anointing whereby the baptized person receives the Seal of the Holy Spirit, implicitly His Gifts. Obviously, the christened person now acquires the Understanding, the Wisdom, the Advice, the Goodness, the Fear of God, to name only a few of the jewels which the Holy Spirit pours over the baptized man.

Another Holy Sacrifice instituted by Christ the Savior Himself is the Holy Sacrament of Confession, whereby the night of our sins turns into the sunrise of forgiveness, the dark human nature becoming clean and shining. The Lord gives the priests this power of the undoing of sins when He says, "As long as you are bound on earth, they will be bound in heaven, and whatever you untie on earth, they will be untied in heaven" (Matthew 18:18). Here we have clearly expressed the power offered to the priests to release from the burden of sin the one who confesses sincerely. As a natural consequence of a meaningful Confession, comes the Holy Eucharist, which is the actual sharing with the Body and Blood of Christ. In every Holy Mass, the Savior is crucified for humanity and he who believes Christ is in him after the Holy Eucharist is on the Path of Redemption, on the path of Salvation, fighting for eternal life. This Holy Sacrament is offering us Christ with His Body and Blood to enter into the body, so that he can truly make his abode in the heart of the man who wants to follow his exhortation.

The Holy Orthodox Church also provides the necessary framework through which every man can become a living Church himself. We have, on the one hand, the monastic way of living, and on the other, the clean celibate life, but at the same time, the Christian-Orthodox family blessed by Christ the Savior Himself at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. The Christian family is the foundation of true life in Christ because here man and woman become one body, working together with God for their salvation and of their children who beautify such a family. Monasticism is addressed first and foremost to those who feel the call for it and who by taking up their Cross, follow Christ completely. Also, even if by way of exception, another way is a clean celibate life that puts into practice the Words of Eternal Life.

We also referred to the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass, which is of particular importance for the Orthodox Christian because with it are forgiven the sins that by ignorance, omission, or simply forgetting, have not been confessed to the Sacrament of Confession. I have emphasized that God is made known through the miracles performed in the Church's services and through the

benefits he pours out at the Holy Mass. At the same time, we have also referred to the Holy Sacrament of Hirotony, this boundless adornment given to the man. Through it, Christ, as Head of the Church, sends His servants to preach the Word of the Gospel and to perform the true mission of making people aware of the goods that await them here and beyond, if they follow Messiah.

It is certain that the Sacred Sacraments of the Orthodox Church show the fullness of Grace to us. In Orthodoxy we don't find the so-called transubstantiation, the bread and wine being transformed entirely into the Body and Blood of the Lord. For the Righteous Church there are no so-called specific accidents as in the Roman-Catholic confession, a confession which, through the loss of Grace, cannot speak scripturally about the Holy Sacraments. Therefore, we must thank God that we are part of the Orthodox Church which fully maintains the Guidance according to the Words of Christ.

The next section of this doctoral dissertation deals with the Knowledge of God sprung from the Lord's Prayer that Jesus Himself transmitted to His disciples and through them, to us, to all. Before dealing extensively with the content of the Lord's Prayer, we referred to Prayer in general, because it represents both the "Food of the Soul," as St. Isaac The Syrian says, as well as a bodily health giver to the one who practices it. If man is sometimes disturbed when someone else insists on talking to him, Christ is never disturbed by the dialogue we initiate with Him through Holy Prayer. Of course, Prayer, as I mentioned earlier in this summary, is divided into several ways of accomplishing and addressing the relationship with God. What we need to point out is that a very important dimension of the conversation between us and Christ is represented by the Prayer of the Heart, a short but all-encompassing Prayer that represents the Luminous Garment with which to wrap the soul of any Christian. This Prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, the sinner," is doubtless the weapon with which each believer keeps the evil one away, providing him with the guiding light in this life and leading him to an Eternity in Happiness. The monastic practice specific to the Holy Mountain Athos has shown that it works wonders, because God really makes himself known to the man who seeks Him and who wants to reap the fruits offered as gifts.

We have referred to the necessity and importance of Prayer because it represents the spiritual oxygen that provides the spiritual breath of the soul, continually giving it new wings in the spiritual flight. As for the Lord's Prayer, we have analyzed the requests we find within it and

the way in which God makes known our relationship with Him as a result of practicing this Prayer. From the very beginning, we find with great joy that the Son of the Eternal God, the Savior of Christ, asks us to address the Heavenly Father with the formula "Our Father", thus showing us that through the sacrifice on the Cross, our sins have been redeemed and we were taken over as sons and daughters by the Heavenly Father. Also the Emperor of Light continues this Prayer by exhorting us that the name of God, which brings holiness anyhow, to let it bring holiness in our lives, that is, to our very existence through which we can deeply connect with God, as the tip of His Creation. For this we must apply the Will of God, as it happens in the Heavens, so that it may occur on earth as well, as a foretaste of the Kingdom of God, by making possible the union between Heaven and earth.

We know God from the Lord's Prayer as the Peak of Love that offers us the everyday Bread, which is the Bread unto Being. This food is primarily of the soul, that is, it belongs to the spiritual life, because, as the Holy Fathers say, it is about the Eucharistic Bread with which the faithful Christian partakes in the body Of Christ. At the same time, we ask the Lord for the earthly bread to take care of our natural needs. Last but not least, we consume the Bread of Teaching, meaning the food that springs from the Word of the Lord. The one who prays knows God as the Depth of Forgiveness and asks for the redemption of mistakes and sins, but he must also fulfill the condition of forgiveness for those who have sinned before him. If you do not forgive, you pray for the condemnation, because you do not put into practice the will of Christ. At the end of Prayer, we ask God firmly, knowing Him as our Great Protector, not to allow us to fall into temptations of all kinds and to protect us from the work of the evil one. One time, when the Savior was being forsaken by some of those around Him, He asked the Holy Apostles: "Do you want to go as well?" (John 6:67) and Simon Peter replied, "Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:68). Listening to the response of St. Peter the Apostle, we can easily conclude that the Lord's Prayer is the Essence of the Words of Eternal Life, the sublime synthesis of the Holy Gospel left to us by Christ the Savior.

The sixth part of this work is dedicated to a deeper reflection on the meanings given by the Light, in as much as it is possible for the human mind to comprehend them. We have tried to give a definition to the word "light", of course extremely brief, talking about what light is and its importance for the life of every human being. Father Constantin Galeriu spoke extremely convincingly about three types of light, referring to the light of the physical eyes, the eyes of the

body, the light of reason, but also the Light Beyond the Light. As for bodily light, it is the window that God opens wide for man so that he can admire and love the whole creation. All creation is the Wonderful Image that God sets before people to make them more and more aware of the invaluable gifts they have received. The appreciation of a sunrise, of a stormy sea, of the beautiful landscapes of this world is due to the gaze of the eyes of the body, without excluding the emotional contribution that comes from the viewer.

In an analysis carried out by specialists in the field of ophthalmology, it is said that the sight of the eyes is evaluated to display about 60-70% of the human sensory capacity. However, prestigious specialists have found that people with no physical vision are aware, especially through the development of the other senses, of the prowess and beauty that God offers to this world. Therefore, no one remains outside the touch, even with the eyes of the soul, of the Divine Creation. To complement this light there is the rational light which was given to man to compare, synthesize, abstract and materialize the things concerning his presence in this world. With the light of reason, you can analyze as a man all that has happened in the history of your own life and not only, and at the same time you are aware of all the comforts received from God.

The Light Beyond the Light is, without a doubt, the supreme aspiration of man, and is understood as the Inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven and as the Eternal Life in Happiness. This light is accessible, here on earth, to those who really want to know God, through the fruits of fasting, repentance, prayer, which brings them the reward of the Divine Light. This Tabor Light offer a pre-taste of the Light of the Resurrection, the Payment of Eternal Life and makes man a Deified palace in which Christ builds his dwelling. This must be the ideal of every Christian-Orthodox who is called to permanently renew the garment of the sanctity received at baptism.

In our thesis, we referred to how the Holy Fathers spoke about light and analyzed the words of St. Gregory of Nyssa, of St. Dionysius Areopagite, and of St. Simeon the New Theologian. If in the case of St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Dionysius the Areopagite we speak of knowledge which amplifies the unknown, but urges even greater knowledge, at St. Simeon the New Theologian we find the knowledge bathed in light, when he exclaimed in his dialogue with God, "You, the One who enlighten me the dark one!" In St. Gregory and St. Dionysius the Areopagite we talk about the Supreme Light which, by deepening the mystery, deepening the Mysteries, leads to even more knowledge. It is known that God is unknowable in His Being, but

can be known by exploring the Work of His Uncreated Energies, and the Saints who plunge into His Knowledge live an even greater mystery of ignorance, which is, at the same time, the Giver of Knowledge. Saint Dionysius speaks of how man detaches himself during the Mystical Ecstasy, when he has the deepest relationship with Christ. In the doctoral thesis I dealt with these issues much more widely, here reminding them very briefly. Therefore, God being Light and Love, with Light and Love He wants to dress the soul and the life of the one who wants to know Him, partaking in the Truth.

The last section of this doctoral thesis focuses on the analysis of the Knowledge of God as found in Roman Catholicism. In this context, we focused on the doctrinal support, meaning the principles that the scholasticism offered to the Roman-Catholic confession. Undoubtedly, scholasticism was an important movement for Roman Catholicism, because it brought certain clarifications or polemics, either from the perspective of analyzing the relationships between faith and reason or those between theology and philosophy, or theology and science in general. In the early phase of scholasticism, Carol the Great placed a special emphasis on improving the education system, which was quite poor in terms of the study program of those times, but with the passing of time, especially during the early scholastic period or that of classical scholasticism, the polemics, convictions for heresy, renunciations or withdrawals and many collisions between different currents of thought increased. We also record clashes between various philosophical-theological conceptions regarding the existence of God, like the disputes between realists and nominalists. We also mention the attempt made in the fourteenth century by philosophy to gain autonomy in its relations with theology. Anselm of Canterbury, Bonaventura, Thomas of Aquinas, William Ockham, Meister Eckhart are just some of the personalities that the scholasticism produced in the medieval period. I dealt extensively within the thesis with the periods in which they were active and what they supported. Undoubtedly, the Universities of Paris and Oxford experienced a development in terms of study programs, especially in the thirteenth century, and science and research increased significantly in the fourteenth century.

In this paper I have already dealt with the differences between the scholastic approach and the teaching of orthodox faith, precisely to show that without opposing reason in the process of knowing God, on the contrary, by assigning an important role to it, Holy Orthodoxy regards the rational portrait of the man as a continuation of a life based on faith, of the spiritual life. In the following subchapters I have addressed Thomas Aquinas' conceptions of the ways of

knowing God. He elaborated the so-called classical cosmological argument, regarding the rational demonstration of the existence of God, identifying five ways of knowing Him, the first four subject to causation, and the fifth being more a teleological representation. Inspired by the Aristotelian model, Thomas speaks first of all about "movement," according to Brian Davis, "change," which leads us to what Aristotle called "primum movens," or the unmoving, unchanging agent who moves everything. It is thus shown to us, as we find in Thomas Aquinas, that God is the One who moves and toward whom the creation are moving, determining this movement.

A second way of knowing is that of the efficient cause, Thomas asserting that a certain thing is generated by a certain cause, but that an infinite vertical regression of these efficient causes is impossible, as to the order of dependence or the ontological sphere, in this context being a prime effective cause, namely God. The argumentative approach continues along the same lines and with regard to the necessary causes, with the mention that, when talking about necessity and possibility, Thomas considers generation and destruction, that is, he brings into question the contingent causes, as well. Therefore, due to the contingency, it is impossible to have a prime contingent cause, but there is a necessary first cause that generates the other causes. The fourth argumentative dimension refers to the theory of degrees of being, here claiming that any being has a certain degree of perfection, but there is a supreme being, having the entire perfection, that is, God. The last path of knowledge that Thomas of Aquinas speaks of refers to the fact that all that exists is an attraction to a supreme higher intelligence, with God being all that is intelligible. All these paths of knowledge are more fully detailed in the work, based on the rational proof of the existence of God. The truth held by the Holy Orthodox Church fully reflects the scriptural dimension, the faith and the living of it, generating, as St. Anthony the Great says, the "true reason", the one which contemplates God.

In the last sub-chapter of this doctoral thesis we focused on the Decisions of the Second Vatican Council and the response of the Rightwing Church. It has become increasingly clear to me that the only teaching of faith that has a solid scriptural basis can be found in the Orthodox Church. Orthodoxy does not separate the Divine Nature from the Divine Persons, does not consider Pope God, the successor of the Holy Apostle Peter, does not consider the Episcopate to be the college of the Apostles who assisted Christ the Savior, does not separate the Holy Spirit from the Incarnate Logos. At the same time, the Holy Orthodox Church is made up of clergy and

believers, and the membership of the laity in the Church is not a concession made by the hierarchy, but the gift of Christ for every righteous Christian. Our Holy Church does not speak of infallibility, within it Holiness is acquired in Eternity after the intense repentance in the earthly life. Roman Catholicism considers that the Pope is without error and that this is the foundation of the unity of the confession. At the same time, the false statement according to which the Holy Spirit comes from the Son as well shows us once again that when you break away from the Mother Church, you are making serious mistakes and errors. The practice of indulgences, created pardons or the so-called existence of purgatory are other false aspects that show wrong approaches, not in accordance with the Right Faith.

In conclusion, I can say that, following the elaboration of this doctoral thesis, I remain with the deep joy of getting to understand better the great gifts of belonging to the Orthodox Church and, at the same time, I am thankful for the rich wisdom that comes from both the sweetness and the beauty of our Faith and from Its scriptural grounding, as well.

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