

**“OVIDIUS” UNIVERSITY OF CONSTANȚA
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PhD THESIS SUMMARY

WISDOM AND HOLINESS

***– DIRECTIONS FOR THE PERFECTION OF MAN AFTER THE
NEW TESTAMENT AND PHILOSOPHICAL THINKING***

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Orthodox theology states that the world is created for the man, being ontologically inferior to the human person. It is useful to man in his dialogue with God, for the spiritual enrichment of man, and greater communion among human beings; but man does not realize communion with the world, and the world does not exceed itself, it does not spiritually increase from this connection with man. The world does not have the consciousness of its existence. It is by this that man ascends, through the knowledge of the world, of its rationale, to God. For if he were to remain in the world, he would have no benefit; the man cannot remain in the world because the world cannot offer him communion, love, which he longs for by virtue of his personal character as a community.

Human knowledge has covered many of the mysteries of the universe, but many are also those that man cannot even guess. From here it can be seen that if the world is an obvious reality for man, what is beyond the world goes beyond the sphere of his knowledge. The relativity and contingency of the sensitive world prevents man from seeing the world as the last reality. In this way, material reality implies dependence on immaterial and absolute Reality, but not in a pantheistic way, for it would mean the absolutization of matter, which contradicts its obvious finitude, which leads to the understanding that the universe is eternal¹.

Knowing God is possible on the one hand because of His willingness to reveal Himself, and on the other hand, because of the human possibility of receiving this discovery. God has His existence because of Himself and through Himself, which means He is Existence². But because God is a loving Reality, He is implicitly a personal God, for an impersonal being is not capable of love. Only a personal God can draw people into communion with Him, and only the Trinity of Divine Persons can explain the depths of knowledge, the purpose and meaning of all creation. "The Revelation of the Holy Trinity is the most significant of the mysteries of faith for the Orthodox Church. God is love as the infinite love of three Persons united in perfect love. Salvation consists in the fact that God includes in His love also the creation and above all humanity, and this love communicates to us in Christ through the Holy Spirit"³.

¹ Father Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Sfânta Treime sau La început a fost iubirea*, Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church Publishing House, Bucharest, 1993, p. 21-3.

² *Ibidem*.

³ Karl Christian Felmy, *Dogmatica experienței ecleziiale. Înnoirea teologiei ortodoxe contemporane*, translated by Father Prof. Ioan Ică, Sibiu, Deisis Publishing House, 1999, p. 91.

Knowing the Person and the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ equates to the understanding of the only and genuine existential sense of creation in general and of man in particular. The theoretical approach to an autonomous anthropology will fail every time in the limitations and transience of humanity, isolated in a hermetic world, without the possibility of opening to eternity. The approach of anthropology from the perspective of Jesus Christ, as God Who became Human, opens the possibility of real understanding of the nature and meaning of man in the world.

By the act of creation, God brought man to existence but fully revealed the existential relations only by sending His Son into the world, who, becoming the Son of Man, perfected the human existence.

In all the philosophies and cultures of the world of all times, the greatness of the human being was presented in a wonderful way, but without divine Revelation, by which man understands that he is the work of a Personal and Creator God, it was impossible to state the true position of man in order of existence. The deep ideas that human thinking had about the man are also reminiscent of the primordial revelation, but are insufficient for a correct understanding of man's meaning in creation. This is why the thinking lacking the discovery of God, whether puts man in the place of God, reaching idolatry, or lowers human dignity below unreasonable creatures, destroying the glory of man and leading him into the captivity of the most dishonest passions.

Through divine revelation, man has received the true knowledge of his own measure, understanding that he is a creature created by God, being inferior to the Creator, but having received through the act of creation the dignity of being superior to all things seen. Through his correct understanding of himself in relation to God and creation, man knew that his superiority to creation is conditioned by his obedience to the Creator; and that is why man must not identify himself with the created world, but neither with his Creator and the world. Man is receiving his greatness and his dignity only from his relationship with God, as the prophet's word says: "But You, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high" (Psalm 3:3).

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the deep relationship between biblical and systematic theology in a unitary approach that will reveal the practical understanding of theology in particular. It is an analysis that highlights the superiority of Christian theology on philosophical thinking in biblical and theological perspectives, while emphasizing the distinction between Orthodox teaching and other visions of the purpose of the human being.

In the first chapter of the work, *Christian theology and philosophical thinking*, we have shown that the issue of origins is always a test for any kind of history. The history of ancient philosophy and universal church history have also encountered major difficulties in explaining and clarifying stages and events that are part of their content.

In the case of church history, it has been demonstrated in recent years that the sources that historiography possesses are not sufficient to fully understand the content and meanings of Christian life in the early centuries. The literary heritage of the early Christian centuries researched with scientific rigor is today a solid basis for discovering aspects of Christian life of the primary Church and its teachings. The most important document from which we know the first decades of the Christian Church and its teaching is the Acts.

The discovery of the Dead Sea manuscripts was an important moment in knowing the Jewish roots of the Christian religion. The discoveries from Nag Hammadi revealed the existence of Christian gnostic writings behind canonical Christian writings, but which contain important testimonies for the historical reconstruction of primary Christianity and, by comparison, the importance of the Orthodox Christian teachings towards the heterodox one. Then the Judeo-Christian writings of *Didache*, *the Ascension of Isaiah*, the traditions of the Presbyterians, help us to rediscover a parallel tradition with the writings of the New Testament and represent the direct echo of the Judeo-Christian community in the Primary Church.

However, the history of the Church begins at Pentecost or Whitsuntide. The description of the foundation of the Church by the *Acts* is beyond any doubt against the teachings of overly rationalistic or so-called de-mythologizing currents. This description fully corresponds to the Christian tradition of the primary Church. After the foundation of the Church follows the Gospel preaching to all the Gentiles, the object of the apostolic sermon is the Resurrection of Christ. The Apostle Peter addresses the Jews first of all. Jews need to change their attitude towards Christ. They must admit that they have been deceived and have to convert to Christianity. This explains why at the beginning the primary Church has a Judeo-Christian structure. The Christian community at Jerusalem is eminently Judeo-Christian headed by Peter and Jacob, the essential concern being to keep the basic structure of the Jewish religion in terms of cult and organization. Thus, in the Judeo-Christian community of the primary Church, there is a difficulty to solve because of the irreconcilable positions. While the Apostle Paul views the Christians of the heathen, the Apostle Peter is concerned with the resolution of the dispute between

Christians and Jews. He fears that many Christians coming from the Jews under the impact of nationalism will try to return to the authentic Judaism entirely. In Egypt's Alexandria before Christ, happened one of the most important phenomena in the history of the ancient world, namely the encounter between the ancient Greek culture and the Old Testament, on the one hand, and on the other hand the encounter between the ancient Greek culture and the oriental and extreme oriental religions. The encounter between them gave rise to a cultural symbiosis and, above all, generated a completely new mentality about the relationship between God (the divine principle) and the world. For the first time in the history of human culture the doctrine was launched that in the process of self-exiting or manifestation beyond itself the divine principle does not diminish qualitatively and quantitatively.

This symbiosis gave rise to a current known in the history of philosophy as the Hellenistic period. The enormous contribution of Hellenism lies in the discovery and launch of an antinomic or paradoxical logic about the relationship between God and the world. Hellenistic culture cannot be reduced, as unfortunately it seeks to accredit the idea of some specialists, to the dimension of Hellenistic Judaism, because in ancient Hellenism, ancient cultures are not joined or juxtaposed. Old cultures are not allied or juxtaposed but simply transform themselves into a completely new religious, philosophical and cultural symbiosis.

The second century after Christ is a period of blooming Christian teaching, to which a decisive contribution to the doctrinal plan brought by Christian apologists and polemics. At the same time, the religious effervescence of Christians is based on a keen desire to know God not by a theoretical or speculative approach, but by joining with Him on the path of mystical ascension.

The birth of Christian Gnosticism is a paradigm shift because *gnosis* is not just intellectual knowledge but *union*. Contemporary pagan Gnosticism parasites both the Christian gnosis and the average Platonism, which represents from the perspective of the history of philosophy an imperative transition between the authentic Platonism and the Platonian Neoplatonism and its successors. This passing is necessary to save the brilliant beauty of a philosophy that seems to agonize against the impetuous Christian doctrine. Under the new cultural paradigm, all communities have been elected, even if they have preserved their own religion. Christianity itself becomes more active and more flourishing in the third century after Christ.

Christianity is based on the divine teaching of Christ the Savior. Believers apply and live this teaching, in connection with God and their peers, on their way to achieving the salvation that Jesus Christ has objectively brought us through His saving acts, remaining as the fruits of objective salvation to grasp each of them by grace, faith and good deeds in the Church - Body of Christ. Therefore, Christianity is by no means a philosophical system, or some religious doctrine, as there were many in the history of humanity.

Christianity, with its superior teaching and morality, appears in the space of the Greco-Roman world, where famous philosophical schools appeared that gave the wise world such as Heraclitus of Ephesus, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, etc. These philosophical systems, which also had an ethics, could not impose ethical norms and could influence only a small part of people's lives. We will refer, in our research, to Greek philosophy and ethics, as most ethical systems in history have their origins in the philosophy of Greek antiquity. Because in the course of history these ethical-philosophical systems are numerous, we will use the generic name of *philosophical ethics*, a term that refers both to the theoretical aspect of ethical systems throughout history and to philosophical reflections on the general principles of morality. For the first ethical Greek philosophers it meant "the reflective study of what is good or bad in this part of the human conduct of which man is more or less personally responsible"⁴. The fundamental problem of the theory of ancient ethics was: how can man reach happiness? Before the Renaissance, people were thought to be structured by nature to reach a final target, but this global perspective was different from one philosopher to another. Modern and contemporary ethical and philosophical theories are particularly interested in the issues of practical reason and duty⁵.

Unlike these ethical-philosophical systems, Christian morality is not a mere fulfillment of liabilities that does not lead any man to this life, and only provides him with an outside reward in the future life. In Christian Morality intervenes the Christian, sacrificial, daring love, which is required to be fulfilled⁶, therefore emphasis is placed on the "inside ones". "Free action is always the transposition into action of the soul, its concrete, external expression. And its value does not spring from its external appearance,

⁴ Vernon J. Bourke, *Histoire de la Morale*, traduit de l'anglais par J. Mignon, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1970, p. 8

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 7-8

⁶ Paul Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, translated by His Eminence Prof. Irineu Popa, Bucharest, Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church Publishing House, 1996, p. 43

but from its soul, from its inner springs. Inside is the root, there is life-giving life from which the leaves, flowers and fruits emerge"⁷.

The Christian carries a life in and with Christ, a true life, in which virtues have a fundamental role in sacrificial love, and gradually grows in Christ from the course of earthly life, for the fulfillment and living of His teachings transforms his being from within.

Christian morality and philosophical ethics, despite being separated from many different teachings, also have similar contact points but come from great perspectives.

In the second chapter, *Wisdom in philosophical thinking and in the books of Holy Scripture*, I have shown that Christian teaching, according to the changes that followed the passing of Jesus Christ through Galilee, gained openness to universality through St. Paul.

The Greek word *sophia* is commonly translated by *wisdom*, and the term *philosophia*, from which *philosophy* derives, is translated as the *love of wisdom*. Herodotus uses the appropriate verb, namely *philosophein*, when describing Solon's journeys in the search of "science": "Leaving the country because of this - but also from the desire to see foreign lands - Solon went to Egypt at the court of Amasis and then to Sardis, requesting hospitality to Croesus. Arrived here, he was housed with all the king's courtiers, right at the palace. Three or four days after the arrival, at Croesus's command, the servants walked Solon through the king's treasures and urged him to remember how big and precious they were. After checking everything leisurely, Croesus asked him: "Athenian guest, the fame of your wisdom, and the news of the trips you have made have come to us; we were told that you are always eager to learn"⁸.

Thucydides places the verb in Pericles's mouth when he speaks the famous funeral speech on Athenian lifestyle: "We love the beauty, we lead a simple life, and philosophize without softening ourselves"⁹.

The *philosophy*, from the etymological point of view, also reflects the pleasure of the exercise of intelligence and curiosity, because whenever intelligence is put to work, in

⁷ *Teologia Morală Ortodoxă, pentru institutelor teologice*, vol. I, *Morala generală*, Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church Publishing House, Bucharest, 1979, p. 309

⁸ Herodot, *Istoriei, Cartea I*, translated by Adelina Piatkowski, Bucharest, Scientific Publishing House, 1966, vol. I, § XXX, p. 26.

⁹ Thucydides, *Războiul peloponezic*, translated by Prof. univ. N. I. Barbu, PhD, Bucharest, Scientific Publishing House, 1966, *Cartea a II-a*, § 40, p. 257.

practical works, in arts or in business, there is also room for philosophy, in a much wider sense than mere love in wisdom that touches *arete*¹⁰ and *techne*¹¹.

In accordance with the tradition transmitted by Sosicrates, in his book, *The Successions of the Philosophers*, which Diogenes Laertios takes on in the *Philosophers' lives and doctrines*, Pythagoras was the first to call himself "philosopher". He said there were three classes of people among those taking part in the Olympic Games. Some seek the laurels of victory and therefore take part in the competitions; others seek to obtain advantages and gains from their work and products; and others ("the best of the people") are delighted to be spectators. Philosophers resemble those in the third grade.

Greek philosophy, after Plato, passed through a moment of recession, because its end as a metaphysic was prefigured by the effort to come out of an assimilation Platonism: post-Platonism was eclectic, declined in a kind of theosophical mysticism. Plato's followers were pleased with the insertion of new ideas, without accommodating the logical needs of the system left as an ancient and rigid part opposite to the whole. Eclecticism was the effect of practical concerns about the mystery of union with the divine through various techniques of ecstasy, and a clue of indifference to speculative thinking. Another danger, more and more obvious, was gnostic, religious or philosophical dualism - because it threatened the cancellation of the very essence of metaphysics.

Plato, like Aristotle after him, sought to attenuate the force of evil. Both of them saw in absence and imperfection, inherent to the sensible existence, the incomplete participation of the human soul in Reason (Λόγος), in Intellect or Spirit (Νοῦς), and in Good (Ἀγαθός). Plato intended to save the omnipotence and goodness of the Demiurge when he affirmed the victory of order and harmony over the necessity conquered by reason and conviction¹². Aristotle did similarly when he thought that any process in nature had a purpose that aspired, by moving gradually, to the most perfect form. "The goal," says Aristotle, "when it comes to Nature as a whole, is the absolute Good"¹³. The matter and form are "obedient" to the Good, because they "obey" the purpose of the substance, so that Good is the unifying principle because it determines the suitability of matter to form. Thus, the dualism of the constitutive principles is not only attenuated but virtually canceled. In Platonism, the permanent movement towards better reduces

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, § 40, p. 258.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, § 47, p. 262.

¹² Plato, *Timaeus*, 48 a; translated in Romanian by Cătălin Partenie, in: Platon, *Opere*, vol. VII, Petru Creția's Edition, Bucharest, Scientific Publishing House, 1993.

¹³ Aristotle, *Metafizica*, I, 2, 982 b.

imperfection, and in Aristotelianism there is even hope that imperfection will be completely reduced once in a hypothetical or triumphantly end.

According to Plato and Aristotle, philosophy was oriented towards naturalism and, with Epicurus, reached materialism in its most strict sense. The Theophilus of Antioch rightly criticized the naturalism of post-Aristotelian schools of philosophy: "They say there are gods, but again I think it is nothing. Some say the gods are made up of atoms, others, on the contrary, they dissolve into atoms and claim that the gods have greater power than humans."¹⁴ Regarding God, the epicureans simply argued that since the world is full of evil, it means that God Himself is either evil or powerless, or both. Lactantius has reproduced Epicurus's famous dilemma: "God, or wants to remove evil and cannot, or perhaps can and does not want to, or wants and cannot, or wants and can. If He wants without being able, then He is helpless, and this helplessness does not fit the divine being. If He can without wanting, He is evil, and this feeling is equally alien to the divine nature. If He neither wants nor can, then He is both malevolent and helpless, and as a consequence He is not God. If He also has the will and power, the only thing that fits God, then where does the evil come from? And why does not this evil go away?"¹⁵ In the epicurean system it is useless to seek a solution to the theological problem, because epicureans suppress one of the fundamental elements of the problem, namely the notion of Providence, serving the test of the existence of evil in the world only to shake the faith in divine Providence. Theophilus of Antioch has labeled the doctrine of Epicurus as a "dogmatization of the absence of providence"¹⁶.

The Stoics have imitated divinity in matter. After them - Clement of Alexandria characterizes them rigorously - "God passes through all matter."¹⁷ Like epicureans, the stoics claimed that nature is absorbed by divinity - "God is the body"¹⁸, Clement synthesizes the Stoic doctrine. But instead of making Nature separate from the rest of the universe - and indifferent, as Epicurus, who states that "God does not care for anyone but Himself"¹⁹ - the Stoics taught that "the Spirit of God is in the whole universe"²⁰, the deity

¹⁴ Theophilus of Antioch, *Trei cărți către Autolic, III, 8* in *Apologeți de limbă greacă*, translated by Father Prof. Olimp N. Căciulă in the P.S.B. collection no. 2, Bucharest, Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church Publishing House, 1980p. 440.

¹⁵ *Apud* Paul Decharme, *La critique des traditions religieuses chez les Grecs, des origines au temps de Plutarque*, Paris, Alphonse Picard et Fils, 1904, p. 251.

¹⁶ Theophilus of Antioch, *Trei cărți către Autolic, III, 2* in *Apologeți de limbă greacă*, p. 436.

¹⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromatele, V, 89, 3* in Saint Clement of Alexandria, *Scrieri*, Part II, p. 361.

¹⁸ *Ibidem, I, 51. 1*, p. 39.

¹⁹ Theophilus of Antioch, *Trei cărți către Autolic, II, 4* in: *Apologeți de limbă greacă*, p. 390.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

being always an active soul, and the harmony of the whole universe, the proof of His unremitting action.

The rejection of epicureanism and stoicism is a constant of Greek Christian scholars - apologists and polemicists - of the first centuries, and is found in a systematic form at Origen²¹, whose work, due to the numerous references to the Stoic doctrines, can be considered one of the late but not negligible sources of knowledge of the Stoic system of philosophy. Origen came more than a century after the famous encounter in the Areopagus between the Apostle Paul and the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers (Acts 17: 18), and it is not surprising that he carried with great brilliance the heavy burden of polemics with the "pagans".

The last position until Neoplatonism is represented by the eclectic Platonists, much less faithful than the Aristotelians who preserve the peripatetic tradition, and naturally tempted to introduce foreign elements into the Master's teaching. As Nicolae Balca noticed, "at the beginning of the Christian first century, Greek philosophical systems are beginning to lose their doctrinal independence and lend ideas to each other, and thus they turn into eclectic systems."²²

Appearing on the Oriental foundations of the archaic mosaic religion, Christianity has abandoned many of the principles of ancient thinking and culture, giving up its own spiritual impasse. As a result, it became possible to synthesize the fundamental attributes of Oriental culture in the Greek-Roman culture patterns. The phenomenon in question was named by Orthodox Christian theology, through the words of the Apostle of the Gentiles in Galatians 4: 4, *the fullness of the time*. Due to its revolutionary consequences on the ancient world mentalities about human salvation, the fullness of time meant an "axial rupture"²³ in human spirituality, followed by crystallization and dogmatization throughout the patristic and post-patristic period.

Everything that Christianity contains as metaphysical and moral, its profound teachings about God and His Word, about the world, about the human soul and its destiny

²¹ Origen, *Despre principii*, II, 5 in Origen, *Scrieri alese*, Part III, *Peri arhon (Despre principii)*, Introductory study, translation, notes by Father Prof. Teodor Bodogae, *Convorbiri cu Heraclide*, Introductory study, translation, notes by Father Prof. Teodor Bodogae, *Exortatie la martiriu*, Translation by Father C. Galeriu, Introductory study, notes by Father Prof. T. Bodogae, in the P.S.B. collection no. 8, Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church Publishing House, Bucharest, 1982, p. 135.

²² Nicolae Balca, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

²³ Johan P. Arnson, Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, Björn Wittrock, *Introduction: Archaic Backgrounds and Axial Breakthroughs*, in: Johan P. Arnson, Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, Björn Wittrock (eds.), *Axial Civilizations and World History*, Leiden, Brill, 2005, p. 125–132.

come from the Hebrew tradition and the Greek philosophy. But the sublime feeling in the *Sermon on the mountain* is the essence and spirit of Christianity itself, an immortal spirit as humanity itself, who will survive and overcome all the teachings and institutions. There is no moral law superior to love and no social doctrine superior to the dogma of brotherhood²⁴. Many doctrines will aggravate and occur in the history of humanity, but the sublime morality of the words of Christ, never: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass".

The Master did not turn away from His teaching, for He said to the apostles, "For where two or three are gathered together unto My name, there am I in their midst." In the Spirit of Christ, the apostles converted to faith a lot of Jews and strangers. Although a first community of believers settled in Jerusalem, other communities were born in the Jewish diaspora beside the Greek, Syrian, Alexandrine synagogues. A small community, the cradle of the great Christian Church that will encompass the whole world, shone with the burning sermon of the apostles in all the provinces of Judea, and in the neighboring countries where the Jews lived in great numbers. At that time, a thorny problem began to divide the Church of Jerusalem, namely, if the teaching of Christ is reserved only to the Jews or must be preached to the Gentiles. The commandments of the teacher seemed contradictory in this regard, for He called Himself both the Son of Man and the Son of David. And the Saint Evangelist Matthew had noted: "Do not go to the Gentiles, do not enter the cities of the Samaritans, but first go after the lost sheep of Israel."

St. Peter handled the problem by putting his hands on a stranger and justifying himself before the Church of Jerusalem, telling his vision, as a divine voice told him: "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean". But he did not go any further: like the Church of Jerusalem, he wanted the strangers to observe the covenant of circumcision as the other provisions of the Law of Moses. St. Peter and St. Jacob were the two main representatives of the Judaism tendencies in the new Church. St. Peter did not understand but half the sublime teaching of the Sermon on the mountain. If he preached in his epistles the love of men, he also preached fear of God, and respect for the mighty earth: "Love the brotherhood, fear God, and honor the emperor" (I Peter 2: 17). He thus takes the promises of Christ: " But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells" (II Peter 3: 13).

²⁴ Father Prof. Dumitru Popescu, PhD *Ortodoxie și catolicism*, Bucharest, România Creștină, 1999, p. 71.

It happened that then the fiercest enemy of the new religion, fallen from his Pharisee rank after striving in vain to fight the domination of the Jewish spirit in the Church of Jerusalem (Gal. 2: 11), went to make known the word of Jesus in all the provinces of the Empire. St. Paul is the true apostle of the Gentiles, not only because he has preached the new teaching, but above all because he has overcome the practices of the Law of Moses. The true Jew, according to St. Paul, was the inner one; true circumcision was that of the heart that was made by the spirit and not by the letter. It does not matter to be circumcised or not; it is all the observance of the commandments of God. The God of the Jews is also the God of the Gentiles. By preaching to the Gentiles the word and communion in Christ, St. Paul abolished the primacy of the Jews: "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts" (I Corinthians 7:19).

St. Paul does even more to liberate the world from the yoke of the Old Testament, he separates it from the New Law. Before the coming of Christ, the Gentiles were without God and without law in this world. Only the Jews had one and the other, but they were powerless without faith. To make the law effective again, God had to send His own Son, incarnate as the body of sin. There is but a God who absolves the circumcision by faith, and also, by faith, absolves the uncircumcised. Thus, *faith justifies, encompasses and absorbs the law*²⁵.

Faith is not a superstition, nor the exemplary act of the custom, but it means faith in Christ crucified, in the living and incarnated truth. Only faith in Christ gives life and light. God, seeing that the world, helped by human wisdom, did not know Him from the works of His wisdom, He decided to save those who believe in Him. Jews and nations look for truth where it is not: the first ask for miracles, and the others invoke human wisdom. Christians have found this truth in the Christ crucified, which is a scandal for the Jews and a madness for the Gentiles: "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles"(I Corinthians 1: 21-23).

The distinction between law and faith is the principle and foundation of the entire doctrine of St. Paul: everywhere he opposes the faith of the law, making the lawlessness of the law and the virtue of faith spur into light. "Faith and not the law, that is the

²⁵ Moshe Idel, *Perfecțiuni care absorb. Cabala și interpretare*, translated by Horia Popescu, Iași, Polirom, 2004, p. 51–53.

principle of salvation."²⁶ The law was a principle of servitude and division; the faith alone liberates and unites the peoples: "For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in His flesh the law with its commands and regulations, to create in Himself one new humanity out of the two" (Ephesians 2: 14-16).

St. Paul is the first to define the nature and functions of the Son in relation to the Father, and puts the foundation of Christian theology²⁷. One God, the Father, from whom all things draw their being, and who created everything for Him; a single Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all "things have been made, unique mediators between God and men" (I Timothy 2: 5-6); Christ, born before all creatures, is the beloved Son, infinitely superior to the angels, the very visible face of God, the splendor of His glory, the character of His substance, the "imprinting of His being." Not only is Jesus Christ the instrument of all creation, but He is the One that sustains it by His power and Word: "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by his powerful word, after He had provided purification for sins" (Hebrews 1: 3). Thus, faith in Jesus Christ, as the visible face of the invisible God, becomes in the thinking of Saint Paul, the science of the whole truth, the universal wisdom. And faith and testimony that Jesus is the Lord can come only through the Holy Spirit. Just as the soul of man only knows what is human, only the Holy Spirit knows what is in God. God has made known to His people His wisdom through the Holy Spirit, which penetrates and searches all things, even the deep things of God. The Spirit makes the Son known, as the Son reveals the Father. Only the Spirit gives grace, and with grace freedom, knowledge, mercy, peace and all virtues, all wisdom, all happiness. Where the Spirit blows, grace comes, which makes any law and doctrine unnecessary.

St. Paul ignores the law and exalts the grace; he goes so far as to say that salvation is only for those who are visited by the grace, for the predestined children of God. Only the Spirit gives life and holiness. The flesh in which the Spirit dwells becomes holy. The community of believers in the Church enlivened by the Holy Spirit becomes the body of Christ itself. All Christians are members of this body and participate in the same life. Faith, hope and love are equally the virtues of the Holy Spirit; but the greatest is love (I Corinthians 13: 13). Universal knowledge, even the wisdom of the angels, the gift of

²⁶ L. Venard, *Les origines chrétiennes*, in: *Où en est l'histoire des religions*, 2 vol., Paris, Letouzey et Ané, Éditeurs, 1912, vol. I, p. 213.

²⁷ V. Rose, *Etudes sur la théologie de Saint Paul*, in: „Revue biblique”, 1903, p. 339.

prophecy, faith that moves the mountains, doing good, self-sacrifice, all without love, are "resounding gong or a clanging cymbal".

It can be seen that St. Paul's work is immense in the foundation of Christianity. He preaches the Word to the Gentiles; exceeds the practices of the Law of Moses; separates the new law from its origins and sets it on its own principle; it founds Christian theology on the precise, albeit incomplete, dogma of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit distinct by their nature and function. At the same time with the emancipation of the new teaching of the Mosaic tradition, he rejects all the innovations that deviate from the evangelical word. He condemns to the same extent asceticism that forbade marriage and meat eating; the mysticism of gnosis about to be born; the ultra-democratic tendencies of some Christian secularities in Judea (Colossians 3: 11-13); the inspiration and the impatient teaching of other sects that await daily *parousia* (II Timothy 2: 11-13). What St. Paul did for the Apostolic Church goes beyond any attempt to evaluate. He founded and organized everywhere in his missionary journeys Christian communities. When he died, the seed of the Christian Word roared all over Asia, Greece, Rome, and had only to grow to become the tree that would shelter the world.

In the Old Testament books wisdom is presented under its two aspects, of objective and subjective wisdom. By objective wisdom we understand wisdom as an individual and not communicable to men. Objective wisdom is especially spoken in Proverbs (8: 22-31) and Jesus Sirach (Chapters 1 and 24).

Also, in the second chapter of the work we talked about *Wisdom and holiness, attributes of God*. Orthodox theology distinguishes in God, on the one hand, the infinite and absolute being, totally incognizable and incomprehensible, and on the other hand, the uncreated divine energies that spring from the divine being, without confusion and without being totally separated from it, works after which God can be known or named.

In this way, the human mind, observing and contemplating the works of God and their effects manifested in creation, advances to the attributes of God, which is not just an idea, a concept, but a personal being. The attributes of God are thus conclusions about the actions of God in the world, which the human reason enlightened by faith and warmed by love observes in the effects of these divine actions. They are subjective and analogous representations of the objective and direct work of God in creation. God is present and working in creation through His energies, but through His being is totally transcendent to the world. In this sense, God is not identical to any of what we call His attributes: neither with infinity, nor with spirituality, nor with all-knowing, nor with eternity, nor with any

other attribute of Him. The attributes are neither the being of God nor His person, but those around the being of God. The being and the person, as a way of subsistence of the being, cannot be known in themselves, cannot be caught in concealed concepts and appointments; they rise above concepts, being visible only in external manifestations, that is, in the works.

Wisdom, or more correctly, all-wisdom is the attribute by which God knows the best means to attain the best goals. All divine wisdom is closely linked to God's omnipotence, for wisdom is involved in knowledge. God's all-wisdom is materialized in His plan of salvation in the world, in general, and in His plan with every creature in particular. For they are all guided according to all the divine wisdom towards their fulfillment in the union of grace with Himself. **Holiness** is the attribute that asserts the perfect agreement of God's will with His being, which is good. Holiness is a God's physical quality and, in this sense, profoundly apophatic, we can call it oversimplification; but the holiness of God comes in the relationship with the world, it shares the creatures, and in this sense, we can call it holiness. Only God is holy in the absolute way; human beings become holy only by participating in the holiness of God, to a greater or lesser degree. God's holiness is personal, for He is holy as a Person, not as an impersonal reality.

In the third chapter, *Holiness - a path to man's perfection after the New Testament*, we spoke of the saints as humanity renewed in Christ by the Holy Spirit.

If in antiquity it was considered that the realization of the human was possible through philosophy, in the sense that man was more valuable as he cultivated his reason, thus trying to know the mysteries of the universe to rule it²⁸ after the incarnation of the Son of God who assumes humanity raising it to its maximum value, human dignity was revealed in a real, full and definitive way only in Christ as God-Man. Under these circumstances, not man, with his infirmities and passions, is the measure of all things, but the God-Man Jesus Christ. In Christ, as the incarnated God, the authentic man is revealed in the highest and the fullest sense, that is why every human subject reaches its true value or dignity only to the extent that, through spiritual effort and sustained by divine grace, make Christ transparent in him. The true realization of the human being for each individual is to imprint the divine-human face of Christ on those who believe in Him, so that the presence of Christ in those persons transfigures their humanity fully, not in the

²⁸Father Gheorghe Popa, *Teologie și demnitate umană*, Trinitas Publishing House, Iași, 2003, p. 282-283.

sense of the annulment of this humanity, but its full and real assertion. By communing with Christ, man reaches the deification of his own humanity, which is the plenary meaning of man's existence, when, according to the words of the apostle Paul: "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2: 20). This is perfection, deification, likeness of man with God, or holiness. Those who have reached this measure are the saints, and this possibility is given to any man. The life of holiness is a renewed life in Christ by the Holy Spirit, where man is dead for the sin, but lives for God and in God: "The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God" (Romans 6: 10).

Holiness is the gift of God to man, for man does not possess holiness, nor does he acquire it autonomously, for God alone is holy²⁹; as the words of Isaiah the prophet say: "The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, He is the one you are to fear, He is the one you are to dread" (Isaiah 8: 13), and Ana, the mother of Samuel, also says, "No one is as holy as the Lord" (I King 2: 2). Holiness is the attribute of God, but people can become saints by participating in the holiness of God, so that they can receive holiness from God, which God Himself wants, for He says: "Therefore be holy, because I am holy" (Leviticus 9: 45), and Paul says: "For this is the will of God: your sanctification" (I Thessalonians 4: 3), and again he says: "For God has not called us to be impure, but to live a holy life" (I Thessalonians 4: 7)³⁰, therefore Jesus also prayed for those who believe in Him, saying, "Sanctify them by the truth" (John 17: 17).

In the fourth chapter we talked about the *Eschatological meaning of man: virtues, the path to perfection*. God is the Creator of the cosmos and man, but also their Supporter and their supreme purpose or meaning, for only in God, both the cosmos and the human can find out the fullness of their existence. Better said, man reaches his true fulfillment only in union with God, and through man, as priest of the cosmos or of the entire world, and creation achieves its end in itself as a virtuality of the Creator. The created work is called to participate in the freedom of the Creator, first of all being the rational creatures, the unseen (angels) and the seen ones (people). But neither the speechless creature is completely deprived of freedom, because of the rationality imprinted on it by the divine Creator Logos, in that it can be modeled, it is inscribed in the free circuit of the dialogue

²⁹ Ian A. McFarland (Ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011, p. 457

³⁰ Daniel G. Reid (Ed.), *Dicționarul Noului Testament*, Casa Cărții Publishing House, Oradea, 2008, p. 380

between man and God. In this way, the whole creation, led by the man, moves towards God, because the created nature is not sufficient in itself, not having fullness in itself, but in its Creator³¹. Man and the cosmos tend towards a perfect target, which they do not have in them because of their relativity and contingency they have through creation. This dynamism of creation and man illuminates the eschatological perspective or eschatological orientation of the cosmos and the human being.

God created the world in six days, and on the seventh day He rested, having first created man at the end of the sixth day. The rest of the Lord on the seventh day represents the Feast of Creation or the divine Sabbath as the fullness of all existence. Man and the cosmos have been created to participate in the feast of divine rest, but sin has led to the loss of this privilege. Through the incarnation of the Son of God, man, and through man, the whole creation is given the opportunity to share divine rest, but only as an eschatological perspective; as St. Apostle Paul says: "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest ..." (Hebrews 4: 9-11). The possibility of people's participation in the new rest, that is, the eternal Sabbath of God, is given only in Christ by which God reconciled us to Himself" because God was in Christ, reconciling the world with Himself, ignoring their mistakes and putting into us the word of reconciliation "(II Corinthians 5: 19). Under these circumstances, the meaning of man's existence is to participate in the uncreated life of God, i.e. holiness or resemblance to His divine Archetype, participation in the eschatological rest of God, which is a new rest given to man in Christ, as the Lord Himself says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11: 28).

In this new existential order, given by the incarnation of the divine Logos, man participates in the feast of divine rest, sharing the divine glory, and receiving "what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" (I Corinthians 2: 9); and God is worshiped in His creatures, especially in the rational ones. The ultimate goal of the creatures, of the rational, but especially of the people, is the manifestation of divine glory. We say that man has a special role in the eschatological manifestation of divine glory, because the Son of God has become Man, and in Christ as a full Man the glory of God has manifested in plenary, as the evangelist says, "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the

³¹ Father Conf. Ștefan Buchiu, PhD *Creație și restaurare în dogmatica ortodoxă*, in **Ortodoxia**, no. 1-2, Year LVIII, June - July, Bucharest, p. 52.

one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1: 18). In Christ, as the incarnated God, the glory of God manifested in full, and it was revealed to the disciples on Mount Tabor, as much as man was able to receive such a discovery when the Lord transfigured before them and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as the light (according to Matthew 17: 2, Mark 9: 2-3, Luke 9: 29, 32).

The worship or deification of man, which begins from this life, continuing after death and fulfilling to Parousia, is the very glorification of God, for man was created to share the Trinitarian happiness, but also to glorify God (according to Matthew 5: 16); that is why Paul says, "you are not your own" (1 Corinthians 6: 19), and the psalmist adds, "I am yours, save me" (Psalm 118: 94), and their purpose is thus presented by the apostle: "Glorify God with your bodies and your spirit, which are of God" (I Corinthians 6: 20).

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