

**OVIDIUS UNIVERSITY CONSTANTA**

**DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY**

**DOCTORAL FIELD THEOLOGY**

# **THESIS**

## **Summary**

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**MACARISMS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT  
AND THEIR RECEPTION IN THE THEOLOGY  
OF THE HOLY FATHERS**

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## SUMMARY

Since ancient times, the world has been eager to rationally understand the concept of happiness. Of all the disciplines, it was philosophy that tried different definitions, but these could not comprehend the full meaning of the concept. For this reason, the search for happiness has been done in several related sciences such as mathematics, astronomy, music or rhetoric, these being considered basic sciences of the lover of wisdom. Without the experience of these fields, no one could consider himself a philosopher, which is why "he could not try to define happiness."

Several fields of study such as medicine and rhetoric require a nature to analyze in order to understand how to reach the state of happiness. The first of these subjects the material part of man to analysis, and the second seeks answers in the analysis of the soul. Can happiness be reduced to providing the body with what is needed or is more needed? Pleasure, which was considered the fastest form of happiness, has been shown to be limited from its ephemerality, and from the fact that, no matter how much it is sought only by the senses, it will be eternally characterized by ephemerality.

Through philosophy and theology, happiness acquires a deeper meaning, especially because the dichotomy of the human being sends first to the search of the soul, since the satisfaction of the needs of the body could not define happiness. Through philosophy and theology, the accent moves from the body to the soul, these, along with other disciplines such as music and rhetoric, aimed at the impact of virtues in the process that makes man happy.

The arts that have the capacity to sensitize offered to philosophy and theology a very detailed knowledge of the soul and implicitly of the state of happiness that it always sought. The foundation of understanding the soul through science and the arts is reduced, as is natural to love.

A good connoisseur of ancient Greek philosophy, St. Dionysius the Areopagite is the author of works that cover the entire field of possible statements about God, which from his perspective, is the transcendent source of good and beauty. The latter now become names of

the deity. He often uses terms from Neoplatonic philosophy, as well as the essential elements of Platonic philosophy, so the central notions of his theology are Beauty and the Good.

The definition of the Good as an eternal idea that dominates the others, respectively the supreme being who creates all beings, brings Plato closer to Christian theology. In contrast, the Greek philosopher thought of the Good as identical with the Beautiful, thus spiritualizing the idea of beauty to the extreme. Ultimately, Plato reports both the Beautiful and the Good to God, which he says is beautiful, wise, and good. Therefore, since antiquity we have a hypothesis according to which the only way to obtain salvation is the real and existential communion of the soul, through Eros , with the Good, the Beautiful or the One, possible only through the incarnation of the beautiful and good God. Following in the footsteps of ancient philosophy, then following that of Plotinus, St. Dionysius the Areopagite places all eternal ideas in God, ideas which he considers manifestations of His will. , thus eliminating all the intermediate creative causes between the intelligible and the sensible cosmos, obtaining the supreme unity.

This perspective of St. Dionysius is developed in detail in an important treatise of his, entitled *On Divine Appointments*, which contains an essential statement for understanding his thinking, according to which the Christian teaching is the only one that holds the truth about God . In this paper is exposed the innovative idea formulated by the Areopagus regarding the notions of Good and Beautiful attributed to God. The first of these represents the quintessential name of the whole deity, perfect existence and at the same time goodness . Both the Good and the Goodness extend to all beings, there being in them a super-existent ray, fact for which Saint Dionysius realizes a resemblance of the way of communication of the Good with the symbol of the sun.

In this sense, we can say that Good is like the sun, and Goodness is the ray of the sun that detaches from it and touches beings. In other words, Goodness is the full gift of God, the first procession His from which all others multiply, a gift by which He works all good in creation, thus becoming the Cause of all. The concrete content of this good gift is the intelligible, spiritual light, which gives superhuman knowledge only to intelligible and understanding beings. Therefore, from the perspective of Saint Dionysius, through the divine gift of knowledge, God realizes the union of these beings, thus avoiding the ignorance that leads him to the separation from the Good.

In the light of these definitions of the Good in close connection with God, the work of the Holy Father is considered the deepest influence on Christian theology. Moreover, by assigning the second name, he perfectly realized the synthesis of theology with aesthetics, of truth with beauty, which is why he was called by some aestheticians "the doctrinaire, par excellence, of Christian aesthetics" and this discipline has been talked about in the superlative, being often recognized as "the most transcendent aesthetic of all".

We can speak, therefore, in the case of the thought of the Areopagite, about a field of philosophy that does not deal with the study of the sensitive beauty, but with the intelligible, absolute one, attributed to God. It is easy to see that St. Dionysius is, from this point of view, part of the philosophical tradition of ancient Greece, putting the notion of beauty in relation to the good . As I previously stated about Goodness that it represents the procession of the Good, the manifestation of God in creation, the same happens in the case of the Beautiful who in turn transmits Beauty. Divine happiness, although absolutely transcendent and imitable, has in itself, before and above all, the springing happiness, which it projects to work the beautification of all, of the whole universe, of every being. Both terms are used by the Areopagus equally to designate the universal Cause of all - God. Through His manifestations, the Beautiful awakens in beings the eros towards the Beauty, calling them to Him.

Thus, we arrived at what we were initially interested in, namely the interpretation that Saint Dionysius makes in terms of love. This fact would not have been possible without studying and correctly fixing the place occupied, in his thinking, by the notions of Good and Beautiful, which are therefore closely related to eros. According to the Holy Father, the latter is also the name given to God, love being His way of being. Eros theonym , as the Areopagite calls it, is the nature of God from which He created all that exists through a self-giving. Through love, as in the case of plot philosophy , one reaches the original unity because it is "the power of unification, binding and preserving wonderfully in the beauty and good that pre-exists due to beauty and good".

We have previously used, referring to this new name of the deity, both the term eros and the term love, which in the Christian paradigm we find in the form of agape. Although the difference between the two notions was known - the first was desire, a state of ecstasy, often considered the sensual side of love, while the second referred to gentleness, almsgiving, love for fellow human beings - aware that the term eros was unusual for theology, St. Dionysius the

Areopagite preferred its use, finding it more suitable for describing divine realities. As for understanding eros as a pleasure for the senses, it is considered to be just an idol of true Eros. Therefore, the theologians of the medieval era opted in favor of the use of the term eros referring to Christian love, unlike the current ones who consider that agape is the most appropriate option.

Returning to the love of the Holy Father, this is the divine power to unify all, a fiery love that provokes the boundless creative energy of the Good, making it come out of itself to give birth to the cosmos and all beings in it. Thus, eros does not remain only within God, but is transmitted in creation, being ecstatic and producing ecstasy. The Areopagite states that this erotic ecstasy penetrates all levels of existence, awakening in them its own eros to the Creator and the desire for self-sacrifice, sacrificial to the beloved.

St. Dionysius the Areopagite finally realizes a descending classification of eros into four categories: the angelic, the understanding, the soul and natural eros. All these aspects of the created eros constitute forms of the divine and at the same time have that power of unification.

Therefore, we are talking about an eternal circular motion both in God and in the cosmos, a movement whose internal engine is the divine eros. It is love, then, that unites all the stages of existence, those of the angels among themselves, and these with those of earthly existence.

We observe, from this perspective, a resemblance of the Holy Father's thinking to Plotinus' philosophy, in terms of the ascent to Good which takes place in stages, each step being attracted by a higher one and the latter emanating love, care and responsibility for the lower which he draws to her. The distinction from ancient thought is the Supreme Good which is no longer an Idea, but it now becomes a manifestation of God, a Person animated by erotic goodness. For this reason, some authors consider Dionysius' work to be a "Christianization of Platonic eros", necessary, which transforms him from divine messenger into divinity itself.

A commentator and successor, as well as the one who will make Dionysius the Areopagite known, is Maximus the Confessor. He pays special attention to the writings of the Holy Father, whom he considers "a man high in virtue and knowledge, who has overcome all sensibilities and united himself with understanding beauties and, through them, with God, as far as possible".

It is interesting to note how the Savior creates the proper framework for the sermon he is to give . First, he leads the listeners "into the mountain." " When Jesus saw the multitudes, he went up into the mountain: and when he had sat down, his disciples came to him . " This was a challenge for each of them to leave behind "all worldly care. We can only imagine what each of them left at the foot of the mountain: some maybe a boat and a net, with which they earned their living, others urgent matters , others all kinds of worries. But that was the price for listening to Jesus. Any rebate would have meant an overload of distributive attention to the inability to focus the needle on the essential stimulus of Jesus.

Then the Savior "laid down" His hearers. The comfort position was essential to be able to listen to the message enough to understand it. For some, comfort will mean the position on the belly, for others sitting on patches of grass. Fundamentally, however, was to sit comfortably.

Last but not least, His disciples revealed another secret : "approaching" Him, " And opening his mouth he taught them . " There is a risk that - among two or three less attentive listeners, with all the conditions previously created - an essential word or an extremely important statement will be lost. This risk could only be averted by standing "close" to the Son of God, in order to have an undisturbed hearing of noises.

All these details highlight the pedagogical side of the Savior's personality, the evil advantage for all ages.

Of the metaphors proposed by the exegetes for the overall understanding of the Beatitudes, two are more prominent: the metaphor of the ladder and that of the circle. The first substantiates the idea that every happiness represents a step of our ascent to the Kingdom of Heaven - an argument, in this sense, constituting the fact that they are complementary and gradually bring us closer to this desideratum. The second metaphor - starting from the same observation of complementarity - speaks of a logic of the possibility of testing the experience of each happiness in experiencing the next, all with the same final reward, mentioned both at the beginning and at the end, namely the Kingdom of Heaven. - the binder that joins two extremities in a circle.

" Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven . "Embodies humility and represents the foundation of the Christian character, which every citizen of the new

kingdom must cultivate. In a special nuance, the humility of which poverty speaks in spirit represents an unreserved awareness and recognition of total dependence on God, of the fact that the disciples have no dignity and no merit that does not derive from Him. Without this state of complete capitulation to the Father, man remains a slave to sin — eternally doomed to an earthly existence, the exact opposite of what gives him poverty in spirit.

" Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted . " Its ntruchipează consequence of repentance and surrender total before God. Those who are aware of their inner emptiness will immediately begin to regret every sin that has brought them to this state. At the same time, they will continue to regret the sins they will face in life and the sins in which everyone around them lives. Humility, as a way of relating to God, immediately transposes us into this state of repentance, which draws upon our lives the forgiveness of the Father and fellowship with Him — the supreme consolation we can have in this age and even in eternity.

" Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth " embodies the first trait of God's character, which is beginning to take root in us., namely gentleness. If love causes love in the one who experiences it, the same can be said of meekness. The meekness with which God received us back after repentance, as well as the prodigal son (Luke 15:22), must determine the same kind of attitude we have towards those around us (Matthew 18:33). With this, we begin to fill our face in the likeness (Genesis 1:26 ) of the One who created us and who will rule over all creation in eternity - and with Him all who will overcome the sins of themselves and those around them (Revelation 2). , 7).

" Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled . " it is the first sign that a new spiritual life has been born, because - to put it metaphorically - it requires food. Once he has set out on the path of resemblance to God, the disciple of Jesus will want to walk more and more confidently toward full holiness — even if it remains an eternal desideratum — so that the Father may find in him his pleasure as well. in His only Son (Matthew 3:17) The defining feature of this state is the urgency with which the spiritual need for holiness is required to be fulfilled - not just the whim of tasting a delicacy, but something that does not suffer delay.

" Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy . ", Embodies another feature of God's character which, as we starve and thirst for Him, is imprinted in our character as well.

Mercy is eloquent proof that we are born again for a different kind of life, in which not matter but spirit prevails. That is why the hands of the disciples can be freed from all that they have agonized over not to survive, but to want to survive in order to gather (1 Corinthians 6: 12-13; Luke 19: 8). Proving this trait of character, the disciples were to place themselves - in their turn and for eternity - under the incidence of the same almsgiving - this time, however, manifested by God Himself.

“ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God . ”Embodies the experience of each dimension of the Christian character with the purest motivation and in the fullest transparency. Hypocrisy is totally ruled out! Each word, gesture or deed has an identical correspondent at the motivational and cognitive level. Because of this, which signifies a condemnation of mankind's state of sin, the disciples had the greatest honor a man can experience — that of seeing the face of God, just as Moses did, and even more fully than that. (Exodus 34; Hebrews 1: 3).

" Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God . "Represents in turn one of the most intimate misappropriations of the divine character, expressed precisely in the desideratum that the Son of the Father came into our world - namely peace. Or, being sons of God can mean nothing more than being like His only begotten Son! The disciples were to become agents of peace between men, but especially between men and God. The work of proclaiming the gospel, which they were to carry on, pursued nothing but the reconciliation of men with God and of one another. This presupposed, however, the acquisition of a pacifying attitude as a character trait.

" Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. You will be happy when they reproach and want you because of Me . " These last verses represent, on the one hand, the consequence of the disciples embodying God's character and representing Him in the world. The devil - the one who likes to consider himself the ruler of this age ( John 14:30) - hates nothing more than the work of bringing men closer to God, so he is expected to face persecution with disciples.

On the other hand, persecution, because of righteousness or the name of Jesus, is the most eloquent test of the fact that we have embodied the divine character. Only those who end up living all the other happiness will have such a thing. The unequivocal proof , in this sense, is

that the Old Testament prophets had to pay the same price because they reflected God around them.

In conclusion, we can say that the only science that defines happiness in the most comprehensive terms is theology. It succeeds in defining happiness through its correct relation to God, Goodness and Absolute Love. The dichotomy of the human being finds its best definition only in the relationship of love with its Creator, because when the love of God is answered with the love of man, then the latter directly experiences the state of happiness, limited on earth and infinitely more great in the eternity of God's love.

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