

"OVIDIUS" UNIVERSITY OF CONSTANȚA
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
DOCTORAL FIELD THEOLOGY

PhD THESIS

- ABSTRACT -

PhD Supervisor

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PhD Student

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CONSTANȚA
2020

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**THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD -
THE SACRAMENT OF DIVINE LOVE TO
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Keywords: incarnation, love, prophets, prophecies, Old Testament, New Testament, revelation, Christology, church.

The incarnation of the Son of God is undoubtedly the mystery of God's love for people – a mystery inconceivable to human understanding.

This work, which I present as a PhD thesis under the guidance of Pr. Prof. Univ. Dr. Emilian Cornițescu at the Department of Biblical Theology of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Constanța, is an analysis dedicated to the incarnation of the Son of God confessed as a mystery of divine love for all people. Although we propose this PhD thesis to the Biblical Section, through its content the topic is interdisciplinary, considering specific elements of Patrology, Liturgy (History of worship and heortology), History of religions and last but not least Dogmatics, Biblical Hermeneutics and Iconology.

As far as we are concerned, we consider the chosen subject of special importance and topicality, in the context in which, in general, we lack the synthesis works, dedicated to the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God and the feast of the Nativity.

We would like to point out that the motivation of the proposed subject, the choice of title and subject of study was determined by the turmoil that people have towards their own faith and the answer to the question of who Jesus Christ is and why a part of humanity stayed away from the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, rejecting the gifts brought by the Son Of God's Incarnate. There are still many peoples today who have other faiths and we ask ourselves, "what will God do with them?", "why was Israel preferred as a chosen people?" or "how can we know that our Savior Jesus Christ is the one who brought us salvation and especially what we must do to enjoy the results of His Incarnation?".

From this perspective, we have dedicated our research to the desire to convince people who would still have doubts that our Savior Jesus Christ is the True God and the True Man, the Messiah proclaimed by the prophets of the Old Testament, His coming into the world through the incarnation, death and resurrection, recapitulating humanity in the unity of His Body, the Church, restoring the fallen world¹. God sent His Son, who took on human form, as an expression of love and justice for His creation, but to this sacrificial love, the people answered him viciously.

From this perspective, using the book of mankind, the Holy Scriptures and the significant works that have appeared to us over time, the PhD thesis aims to help people feel and know the mystery of the real presence of God in the Church and throughout world and this because man is a personal being open to communication and communion.

That is why we consider that our research meets the needs of contemporary man to accept and internalize his own faith, to understand and be aware of it, to be able to enjoy its results that are permanently manifested in life.

In order to streamline research, the approaches focused on the role God plays in human history. We also try to instill in the reader the idea that everything that has happened throughout the history of the preparation for the coming of the Redeemer has been made possible by God's love for man: *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son as whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).*

For the success of our approach we used established research methods, as the main method using the exegetical-hermeneutic method, with the help of which were interpreted in christological, soteriological, ecclesial and missionary perspective, the Holy Scriptures and the remarkable texts of church fathers and writers. We did not forget the heuristic method, trying to discover new facts and new things. Many times I have preferred that the texts be left to speak for themselves, thus strengthening the sense of fluency of the argued theological discourse. We considered that

¹ Fr. Prof. Dr. Stefan Sandu, *The Holy Spirit and the Church*, in the magazine GB, year XXIX, no. 7-8, July - Aug., 1970, pp. 712.

methodologically, the best formula for argumentation from an Orthodox perspective is the return to sources, ie the texts of the Holy Fathers and for this reason, international or Romanian patristic collections occupy a leading place in our research.

History itself is often considered to be a testimony to God's presence in various intensities, to the world he created, and capital historical events, as steps of God throughout creation.

The incarnation is the manifestation of God's love through which He perfects His Creation. The incarnation is the basis, meaning and purpose of Creation. Some Holy Fathers of the Church and theologians point out that the Incarnation was not determined by the fall of man, but was foreseen before Creation for his deification².

The incarnation of the Son of God was the crowning of creation and shows the great love and boundless almighty, humble and endless love of God eternally directed toward the mankind³. It was intended to direct Adam and Eve, the forefathers of the mankind and is at the same time the mystery of the union of heaven with the earth and the mystery of the deification of man by grace and of his clothing in the true Body of Christ. The purpose of incarnation of the Son of God is the salvation of mankind from sin and death, ie obtaining everlasting life.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became incarnate to sanctify human nature and give it the possibility of deification. Saint Athanasius the Great summed up this dogma: "God became man so that man could become God"⁴, a dogma that constitutes the synthesis of Holy Orthodoxy. The Son of God became the Son of man, to make men sons of God. "The Son of God became man for you, and you became God for him!"⁵; "God became man, so that man might become God"⁶.

² Fr. Boris Răduleanu, "The *Incarnation of the Word of God*", GB XXXIV (1975), no. 56, pp. 498.

³ Daniel, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, *Christmas Gifts - meanings of the feast of the Nativity*, Christmas Pastoral (1991), Second Edition, rev., Basilica Publishing House, Bucharest, 2013, p. 26.

⁴ St. Athanasius the Great, *De incarnatione Verbi*, 54, PG XXV, col. 192.

⁵ St. Varsanufie and John, *Spiritual Letters*, Answer 199, in col. *Filocalia*..., vol. XI, pp. 231-232.

⁶ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Poemata dogmatica*, X, 5-9, PG XXXVII, col. 465 and St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio Catechetica Magna*, XXV, PG XLV, col. 65D.

We could say that just as there is a mysterious longing for man for God, so there is a mysterious longing for God for man, and just as there is a birth of God in man, so there is a birth of man in God, that is, God's humanization and the deification of man. Neither the Father nor the Spirit is incarnate, but the Son is named, the Son who has in Himself and the one so loved by the Father. Therefore, from Christ and through Christ begins a new kinship, a new mankind, the family of Jesus Christ, the spiritual nation of mankind, born and reborn in the Holy Spirit.

In this endeavor, the older and newer studies belonging to Romanian theologians and theologians abroad were of great use, who leaned with great rigor on this subject. The option of analysis did not have as a priority the interfaith problem, because we proposed that the PhD thesis express first of all the orthodox Christian vision regarding the incarnation of the Son of God as a sacrament of divine love to people.

I would like to mention that this PhD thesis was elaborated with the support, guidance, advice and suggestions of Prof. Univ. Dr. Emilian Cornițescu, to whom I address a lot of gratitude and gratitude for the patience, optimism and good thoughts that, with parental care, he always offered me. I address the same thoughts to my family and to all those who, over time, in one way or another, helped me to complete this PhD thesis.

In the first chapter, entitled ***Old Testament Prophecies, of the Person of our Savior Jesus Christ***, I focused on highlighting and interpreting prophetic texts about Jesus Christ. One of the fundamental teachings of the New Testament is that our Savior Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about the coming of the Messiah. Jesus Himself stated that He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (*Matthew 5, 17*) and after His Resurrection, He demonstrated to His followers in the Law of Moses, Prophets and Psalms that God had prophesied long before it happens to Him (*Luke 24, 25-27, 44-46*)⁷.

In the second chapter we are presented to us the ***supranatural birth and childhood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ***. There is a close connection between

⁷ Father Prof. Nicolae Neaga, *Christ in the Old Testament*, Edit. Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2004, p. 99.

the supernatural birth and the divinity of the Savior. His divinity made birth beyond nature, and birth above nature is a proof of His divinity. The attempt to explain how the supernatural birth of the Savior Jesus Christ took place goes far beyond the limits and possibilities of human reason. The birth of the Lord took place beyond the laws of nature, because as the Son of God, as the trinity of eternity, coming into the world, He did not submit to human initiative, but He Himself initiated His conception and birth as a man of the Virgin Mary, for the salvation of men. Through His birth, the Savior introduced into the world a new kind of birth, in addition to the bodily one, the rebirth, the birth after God to a new pure and holy life, lived according to His will.

The third chapter is dedicated to highlighting the *meaning of the expression "Son of Man" in the Old Testament and in the Holy Gospels*. The purpose of explaining the meaning of the expression "Son of Man" in the language of the holy Gospels is to explain one of the main aspects of christology, which, being a part of christian doctrine, is thereby a necessary teaching for salvation. Instead of any pompous title, our Savior Jesus Christ uses for Himself, more and more often, the name of "Son of Man," which sums up all His humility, obedience and service. Instead of the name Christ-Messiah and the Son of God, He uses the name "Son of Man."

The incarnation of the Son of God as revelation and knowledge of God through the Incarnation of the Son of Man are analyzed in the fourth chapter entitled *The Revelation Character of incarnation of the Son of God, our Savior Jesus Christ* in which we discover that the primary purpose and meaning of the incarnation of God's Word, of the Creator and Savior Logos, is not Revelation, but the salvation of mankind, for in the incarnation, Revelation is made only for the purpose of salvation and only according to the needs of the believer, for salvation. The reason why this Revelation necessary for salvation is made by naming the Logos is included in the fact that God can speak to us better from another man, from another human person, the interpersonal communication being fully realized from man to man, from one person to another person, "face to face". (*1 Corinthians* 13, 12). The incarnation

of God's Word is the beginning and the basis of the supernatural divine Revelation, because through the act of the Logos' incarnation, not only is the supernatural divine Revelation realized, but the foundations, the premises of the other divine acts are put, through which the Revelation is fulfilled: passions, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost or Whitsun).

The importance and content of the dogma of incarnation of the Son of God is further highlighted in the fifth chapter. The incarnation of God's Word does not occur as an inevitable consequence of Adam and Eve's sin committed in Heaven. It was not sin that made this great gift possible, but God's love and freedom. In His omniscience, God knew before the creation of the world that man would fall, but by loving him, yet He builds him up, for God does not create him in the reason of perfection or subsequent purification, but in the basis of His love. It was not for a merit that would later manifest itself that man was brought to life, but for someone else to enjoy His love. So it is with the coming of the Son into the world. Neither sin, nor the progress of the world, nor the movement of the planets compelled the production of this wonderful event, but only the love and freedom of God.

The sixth chapter called *Theology of the Word in the Old Testament*, is an approach to preparing for the coming and receiving of the Messiah – Christ and messianism in the period leading up to the coming of the Savior Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, God's life was made known to us in his acts of communication and personal manifestation (theophanies), in historical events, in the covenants that God made with the Jewish people. The Old Testament has preserved numerous testimonies about the life-giving presence and communication of God through the prophets, legislators, and leaders in the history of mankind and the Jewish people.

PhD thesis continues with the presentation *of the three ministries of the Savior Jesus Christ in the Old Testament* which make up the content of the seventh chapter. The three ministries of the Savior Jesus Christ were foreshadowed and specified by the prophets in a superlative way, so in this sense it can be said of the

Son of God that he is the greatest and true ruler of the world, the perfect hierarch and the prophet of the prophets by which divine revelation has reached the greatest and most perfect revelation of divine truths. Therefore, bringing the fullest teaching in the world about God, the Savior Jesus Christ is considered the Great Prophet prophesied by Moses almost 13 centuries before His incarnation from the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The work of salvation accomplished by the New Adam is also highlighted in the eighth chapter, entitled *The Church - place of worship and teacher for the merciful and sacrificial love of our Savior Jesus Christ*. If from a spiritual point of view, the Church is defined as the mystical body of Jesus Christ, Who is the Head, and all the baptized are members, concretely, the Church was formed starting from the local Churches united by a common fund of faith and essential rituals (baptism and the Eucharist). In the light of the New Testament texts, it is known that the Savior Jesus Christ founded the Church and therefore its divine being is and will remain until the end of the ages the manifestation of the union between God and man in Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, it can be seen that the primary purpose and meaning of the Incarnation of God's Word, the Logos Creator and Savior is not Revelation, but the salvation of mankind, for in incarnation, Revelation is made solely for the purpose of salvation and only according to the needs of the believer in the sight of salvation.

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