ICOANA CREDINŢEI

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

ICOANA CREDINŢEI

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Preface

Icoana Credinţei. International Journal of Interdisciplinary Scientific Research was founded to publish high quality and original papers on religion by scholars, regardless of their field of specialization. This Journal explores the vital connections between knowledge, ethics and faith, on the interdisciplinary evaluated.

The Icoana Credinţei. International Journal of Interdisciplinary Scientific Research has the following ongoing themes: The Future of Interdisciplinary Research; Christian Political Economy; Unity of the Arts and Sciences; Religious revival in the Postmodern World; The Family and the World in the 21st Century; Problems of Philosophy, Ethics and Faith; Civil Society and Religion in the 3rd Millennium; Re-Inventing Liberal Arts Education; The Path towards Culture of Life; Science and Religion: Convergence to an Open Society; Globalization & its Shortcomings; Christianity & Democracy et alia.

In this spirit Volume 2, Issue 3, of January 2016, is divided into two parts, with the first Section dedicated to *Dogmatic Theology Studies*, and the second focusing on the *Studies of Education, Morality and Spirituality*.

Part I of the volume comprises six manuscripts highlighting different themes of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology. These articles exemplify and analyze the role of theology in the Church and society. The six papers comprised in this part represent an academic endeavor on the following themes:

- **Theologian in the service of the Church;**
- **Jesus Christ - The Redeemer of the world. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology Synthesis;**
- **The Holy Sacrament of Priesthood, the Central Sacrament of the Church;**
- **Sanctification and Christian community leadership;**
- **The Role of Faith in Epistemology;**
- **The specific features of the Evangels;**

Part II is concerned with themes such as: morality, education and spirituality. The six papers included in this part constitute a scientific research on the following topics:

- **Bioethics in the light of orthodox anthropology;**
- **The Christian family in the secularized context of our society;**
- **Some contemporary aspects of Hindu-Christian dialogue;**
- **Religious Education – Paradigm for Contemporary Education;**
- **Globalization and Technology;**
- **Restoring the moral credibility of the accounting profession: a Malaysian University example**

It is our hope that this fine collection of articles will be a valuable resource and will contribute to an uninterrupted educational process in the contemporary society, and will stimulate further research into the vibrant area of theological and social humanistic sciences.
We thank you in advance for your kind support!

January 2016   **Editor Ph.D. Marin Bugiulescu**

Theologian in the service of the Church

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Abstract: *The word about God anticipates some knowledge of God, and the knowledge of God can never be a fruit of the rational, intellectual, metaphysical research, but only of the holy-spiritual experience. Consequently, a theologian of the Church is not the rational man, however great his achievements may be, but the spiritual man, who has the experience of the Saints, namely who has tasted and is living the states of purification, illumination and deification. Disconnected from the reality of the spiritual life, a theologian becomes a false prophet. On the other hand, the Church cannot be divided into two parts, one that ministers to the believers in the place of worship, and another one that speaks from the teacher's desk, through the theologians' voice, but is one and the same Church. Actually, there is no existence more tragic than the one of a theologian, on any education level, teaching things to which he is not connected on the inside, by the heart, and which he does not accept or believe. If such a thing means failure for any science, however, for the area of Theology it is directly suicidal. In fact, the lack of the Orthodox and ecclesial way of thinking and living makes the person theologizing in the area of the Orthodoxy dangerous, because as an officially recognized teacher of Orthodox Theology, he functions as a representative of the Church tradition, while he is nothing but a false prophet. And, while, probably, the science of philology is not endangered by an unlearned philologist or the science of law by an unjust legist, the science of theology is logically denied in the person of its servant who is an unbelieving or atheist theologian and creates very great obstacles in the way of the accomplishment of the redeeming mission of the Church in the world.*

Keywords: Orthodoxy, salvation, theologian, purification, illumination, deification, Church, Faculty of Theology, theological education.

1. The theology1 of the Orthodoxy

The word about God anticipates some knowledge about God. Yet, the knowledge of God (θεογνωσία), as the Saints' experience confesses everywhere, can never be the fruit of rational, intellectual, metaphysical knowledge; it is the fruit of a holy-spiritual experiencing. This is how Saint Gregory the Theologian defines the principles of ecclesial gnoseology. According to him, theologizing is a premise of those experienced and tried in contemplation (namely in the vision of God) and, first of all, of those who have purified their soul and their body, or are purifying it, in the most adequate manner [2]. God is known according to the extent to which man has seen Him or has experienced theosis. The communion with God

makes [man] a theologian [3], since theologian is the Saint [4]. The communion with the uncreated divine glory, as participation to the mystery of the Church, leads man to all the truth [5]. For the Orthodoxy there is no other way of knowing God6. The Orthodox believer following in the Saints' footsteps and going along with all the Saints, even before having experienced theosis, theologizes in an Orthodox manner, based on the Saints' glorification, namely based on their theosis experience, and not due to his possible rationalist-metaphysical quests [7].

The one who has experienced theosis is the only one who can, as a prophet, speak about God's revelation, which revelation is above any dominion. The theology of the one who has seen God is prophetic. The fact of prophesying is identified, as it is known from the Holy Scripture, with that of theologizing [8]. Yet, in Universities, what is cultivated is Theology as a science, the highest of sciences, according to the oath of Doctor in Theology, also taken in our Faculties [from Greece]. University theology is considered actual and true science [9] and an immense social conquest of Christianity [10], namely a social recognition of the Church. However, it is known that enumerating Theology among the sciences is a heritage of the medieval Rationalism and completely foreign to the patristic conscience itself [11]. Therefore, what does Theology, taught at university level, research, where does it introduce and what education can it offer?

The Revelation of the Pentecost cannot be researched scientifically and be formulated using created notions and words. It is knowledge of a different kind, spiritual knowledge (namely holy-spiritual), which one cannot receive except behaving and being as a child... And it is not in the works of the thoughts, but it can be tasted from grace... Since no one can acquire it by learning (Avva Isaac the Syrian) [12]. With the one experiencing theosis, revelation and understanding are identical [13]. The purification of the heart opens man's way not to theological reasoning but to illumination and authentic theologizing.

As it has been mentioned, Theology as speaking about God is not a science, since the methods used by all the sciences are not in the position to approach the God of faith [14]. Yet, it is a fact that the spiritual experiences of the Saints (Prophets, Apostles, Fathers and Mothers) have been stored in different testimonies of the presence and of the advancement of the Church in history, as Christ's body (texts, monuments, artistic expressions), which constitute, in a testifying manner, elements on her life and activity, her inner development and her relation with the world, inside which she is developing and to which her mission refers. It is about the traces left in the historical time by the human part of the divine-human Body of the Church.

The theological science, in all its possible expressions, is searching, drawing conclusions, critically rehabilitating, studying and interpreting all these testimonies or drawing on them in the uninterrupted dialogue between the Church and the world [15]. This work of science, though indifferent to the process of man's theosis [theosis represents a possibility both for the educated, and for the uneducated (for instance, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Anthony the Great)], can get to be considered important not just for knowing the past of the Church, but also for her life and testimony in the present.

Consequently, the part of the historical presence of the Church, which can be researched using the means of science and can be perceived rationally, is the topic of the theological scientific research and is offered as scientific theology. It is to this frame that the education offered in the Faculties of Theology also belongs. On the one hand, it arms the stakeholders with scientific means, and, on the other hand, it guides them, by means of the sources researched and the rest of its work, in the life in Christ, as it has been revealed from

the life of the Saints, namely in the faith and way of living the existence renewed in Christ. It is easy to understand that this work is all the more efficient to the extent to which the theologian-professor embodies the universal way of living of the Church.

2. The ecclesiality of theological education

Theology, in all its manifestations, is a function of the Church. Its space is the body of the Church [16]. Even as a science, Theology is serving the Church, God's people, for which it exists as well. This is why it has been characterized as the science of sciences [17]. Despite the Western influences regarding the contemporary things, even since the Antiquity, the Faculties of Theology have belonged to the Church, although there have also been centrifugal tendencies, which confirm the ecclesiality of Theology. In Byzantium/Romania [18], theological education was entrusted to the Patriarchal Faculty [19]. Theology, as scientific tuition, never received any place among the Higher Education Foundations, as it was considered a premise of the Church body [20]. Its teachers were usually clerics and monks, as Theology was made up of the life of the Church [21].

This connection between theological education and the Church will continue during the post-Byzantine period and will materialize in the creation of the Faculty of Theology of the Ionian Academy, actually the first Greek Faculty of Theology (1823- 24), but also in the birth of her spiritual daughter, the Faculty of Theology of Halki (1844).

Yet, one cannot understand theological science and theology in an Orthodox manner without being aware that the Orthodox scientist does not cease to be a Church limb in the place of his service, working in his own – special and independent – way, yet for the building of the Church body (see 1 Cor. 14: 26). When this awareness is weakened, then the theologian- scientist, though he may stand out as a scientific authority, by wonderful achievements, in the domain of philology, philosophy, history or archeology, is not, however, a theologian of the Church [22].

Our theological education is not simply religious, but ecclesial. In our tradition, the function of the place of worship and the function of school are interrelated, as it is demonstrated, actually, by the venerable figure of Saint Photios the Great, patriarch of Constantinople, who, being by excellence an example of teacher and theologian of the Church, united in his person and made these two ecclesial types of service shine brightly.

The ecclesiality of theological education means especially the living filial relation of its bearers to the bishop and the local Church. The bishop, as a center of the life of the local Church, cannot remain indifferent to the function of theological education, yet the theological world, as a whole, cannot disconsider the bishop, since the Orthodox conscience has established: no one shall do without the bishop any of the things that belong to the Church [23].

Certainly, it is not so much the respect and the attachment to the bishop's person that constitute the ecclesiality of the theological education area, but rather the attachment to the apostolical and patristic tradition of the Church, which, by definition, the bishop has the duty to embody and serve, as he is the bearer of the apostolic succession, which does not consist only in the uninterrupted historical continuity of the ordinations, but in the tradition and taking over by the bishop of the way of existing of the Church, as life in the Holy Spirit. The centrifugal tendencies, which can be noticed since the 19th century in the theologians' area, are not always the fruit of laicization and revolt, but also of the imperfections or sometimes exaggerations of the shepherding Church.

3. Ecclesial education viewed as premise of ecclesiality

Ecclesiality cannot be perceived separately from life in Christ, expressed as faithfulness to the tradition of the Church. Intellectual knowledge does not make a theologian outstanding, nor can Theology be perceived as a research or professional concern, without premises, with topics in relation to the Church and its faith. This is something that any scientist could do. Theology, as university branch and school teaching, cannot be separated from the ecclesial experience, from the authentic theologizing of the Church. The issue has already been debated with acuity in the 14th century and was solved irrevocably for our tradition.

The theological scientific work carried out, however high and impressive, does not initiate in the Church experience, but supposes it. The more ecclesial the theological education provided in an educational institution is, the more it maintains and facilitates the access to the Church life. The integration of the theologian-scientist in the tradition of the Saints creates an ecclesial and ecclesiocentric way of living and being. What else [can this mean], naturally, but this: that salvation is redeeming both in knowledge and in dogmas, according to Saint Gregory Palamas, namely we should think the same things as the Prophets, the Apostles, the Fathers, simply as all those by means of whom the Holy Spirit confesses that He has spoken both about God and about His creations [24].

Actually, there is no other existence more tragic than that of the theologian, from any education level, teaching things to which he is not connected on the inside, through his heart, and which he does not accept or does not believe. While such a thing means failure for any science, in exchange, for the area of Theology it is directly suicidal. Actually, the absence of the Orthodox and ecclesial way of thinking and being makes the person theologizing in the Orthodox area dangerous, because as an officially-appointed teacher of Orthodox Theology, he operates as a representative of the Church tradition, while he is nothing else but a false prophet. And, while, probably, the science of philology is not endangered by an uneducated philologist or the science of law by the unjust legist, the science of theology is logically denied in the person of its servant [who is] an unfaithful or atheist theologian and creates very great obstacles in the way of the accomplishment of the redeeming mission of the Church in the world. Yet, theological education, as it has been said, has a reason to be only if, by all its activity, helps the work of the Church.

It is, certainly, a fact that the contribution of an authentic ecclesial education is possible only within the limits of the patristic spirit and can never be identified with moralist and pietist teachings, literally corrupting the pastoral work of the Church. The aim of ecclesial education is not to shape moral and useful and, actually, comfortable people, but to integrate the believer in the spiritual life of the Church, which is patristically expressed by the living of the states of purification, illumination and deification (theosis) (for instance, see The Prayer of Saint Symeon the New Theologian in the Order for Receiving the Divine Communion: those who ardently repent, You clean them with Your tender mercies and illumine them and unite them with the light).

Usually, the scientific character of academic Theology is emphasized, certainly self-importantly, with an obvious or hidden underestimation of the pastoral service of the Church. Yet, Schleiermacher has not been unjust when he placed Theology among the positive sciences, due to its practical aim [25]. The Orthodox theologians also emphasized and sufficiently clarified (Father Ioannis Romanidis) [26] the scientific and positive character of the true theological function of the Church, but as therapeutic ascetic function of

the human being. The believer's ecclesial education is assured by means of the pastoral science, namely by the integration of the whole man in the spirituality of the Church, as a communion of the Saints. A Faculty of Theology, and, similarly, school theological education [27], does not make Saints. They [these two] can, however, if they remain within their educational limits, guide towards the experience of the Saints, source of Theology, and to the method of healing- theosis (deification) of the human being by the work of the deifying and healing divine grace.

In this point, important distinctions could be made: what kind of faith and tradition are offered by theological education; how is salvation, nevertheless, lived as participation to the mystery of the Church, as life, experience, action. These distinctions are necessary and ought to be well clarified, because a just research of and a correct contribution to the fact what faith and tradition can lead to complete (full) and just (true) integration into how one ought to live [faith and tradition]. Actually, also the fact how faith ought to be lived is offered, on the one hand, empirically, but it is also taught by a specialist professor and scientist, namely by the experienced Confessor or Father, who is truly a Father only as man who has experienced theosis, in other words, as pneumatophore [28] (see I Cor. 2:15). The theologian-professor scientist (when he is Orthodox) introduces theoretically in the tradition; the theologian-professor scientist, having spiritual and pastoral experience, integrates in the practices of tradition. The pastoral science of the Church, as a therapeutic-ascetic science, is fundamentally a medical-therapeutic science and uses the method of pure science, namely observation and experiment. Seeing the uncreated divine glory is the scientific observation, while surrendering oneself to the therapeutic education of the Church is equal to the experiment, because it can lead to the experience of those who have been deified, namely to theosis (deification). The use of medical terms in a patristic manner for the pastoral service of the Church (doctor, medical healing, and spiritual hospital for the Church) represents a confirmation of this reality [29].

Therefore, very useful for the work of the Faculties of Theology and, in general, for theological education is to remember the fact that Pastoral and Dogmatic Theology are identical in the patristic tradition, since the destination of the second is the integration on the way of theosis, its premise being the therapeutical power and mission of the dogma (the Orthodox dogma assures the possibility of salvation, namely of theosis).

The Orthodox theologian, researcher or teacher of scientific Theology, has the duty to be a theologian of the Church tradition, namely he has to have inner premises, of the heart, not sentimentalistic, but existential, to be able to see his topic from the inside. In this way, he is the one speaking in the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 12: 3) by his science. His work becomes an extension of the pastoral work of the Church and offers Christ Himself, namely the embodied All-Truth, by the means and methods of his science. Scientific theological research is, by itself, unfaithful [30], but this does not mean that the theologian researcher is unloosed of being faithful to the Church life, or that he can interrupt the living connection to it. Because, in this case, it is the theologian himself who gets to be unfaithful and excuses himself from his ecclesial obligations, working, however, caught in other, heavier and, anyway, tyrannical connections.

4. The dynamism of ecclesial education in theological education

Ecclesiastical education, by the inspiration of the Orthodox Church thinking and morals, not just does not oppress the scientific character of the theological work, but even reinforces it, and is multilaterally profitable for it. This education consequently offers the premises both for objectively perceiving and for interpreting the sources of our science, and

for discovering their deep beauty [31], which remains hidden to him who does not have these premises. The studies of most of us in non-Orthodox environments confirm this position. Even Saint John Chrysostom mentions the need to think and live ecclesiastically for a correct approach of the Church tradition: for such is the nature of our mysteries. Therefore, I am in a different state, while the one indifferent to these is in yet another state. I hear that Christ has crucified Himself and immediately I admire the love for man; that one hears and considers it lack of power. Hearing about Resurrection, he says that this thing is a myth; while, as far as I am concerned, having received the evidence through the things, I bow in front of God's iconomy... On the one hand, those who do not believe, though hearing, seem not to hear; on the other hand, the believers, having the experience through the Holy Spirit, see the power of the things inside [32]. Only the traditionalist, not conservatorist, theologian can discern the power of the things inside.

The theological science and the teaching function resulting from it do not introduce in the research, and neither does a didactic use of texts in the absence of the reasons for which they were drafted and of their continual use in the Church. Actually, it is not even the acceptance of the letter of the texts that means orthodoxy or credibility in the theological science. The letter supposes and expresses a life, a way of living, and the terms used are givers of meanings based on the existing premises of the Church body. For instance, the terms life, death, light, glory, tradition, hell, spiritualized etc. find their meaning only within this existential frame. The life in Christ from inside the Church offers the adequate keys and criteria for the hermeneutic approach of the sources of tradition. For example, the teaching on the Holy Mysteries cannot be scholastically unloosed from their premises, as they are lived in the life of the Church and in its pastoral practice.

The theologian's ecclesiality further avoids confusions, such as, for instance, identifying scientific and Church knowledge and attributing a redeeming power to science (as in the case of Barlaam of Seminara and the Western metaphysics). The distinction between the wisdom from above and the outer or worldly wisdom, in other words, the knowledge of the Uncreated and the knowledge of the created, but also of one's own organs [mind (nous)/heart for the first and reason or thinking for the second] prevents, in the patristic tradition, any conflict between faith and knowledge. The Orthodox believer, according to Father John Romanidis, knows that dialectic rationalism can never become a source of authentic teaching of faith, because, otherwise, it would be as if the Church... could transform research into dogma. The authority for the Christian truth are not the written words of the Bible itself..., but rather the concrete Apostle, Prophet and Saint, who has been glorified in Christ [33] and has become united, through this experience of the glory, with all Christ's friends of all the epochs [34].

His special theological studies and his Church experience give the theologian the criteria and premises for the cultivation of a theological science supporting the tradition and not disrespectful of it [35]. This thing is actually confirmed by the use of science by the Holy Fathers, such as Saint Basil the Great, Saint Photios the Great, Saint Eustathius of Thessalonica etc. This traditionality of the theologian does not prevent scientific research, nor can it be characterized as obstacle. Actually, contemporary science, according to the way it declares itself, is neither more nor less rationalist than any other form of dogmatist religion [36]. Also according to Marc Bloch, every scientific research is from the beginning full of prejudice [37], due to preconception (Vorverständnis), unsurpassed in science as well [38].

On the other hand, the Church faith and life, when they are authentic, are not just unaffected by scientific research, but, on the contrary, they can make use of it. For instance,

the scientific evidence concerning the falsity of the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals and of the document Donatio Constantini or the observation of the correct limits of an episcopate during its history etc., not only are not harmful to the faith, but also they reinforce it even more. Actually, there can be no ecclesial faith outside the truth, which truth is also served by scientific research. In science, there is overpassing of the limits of research where there is ignorance of the two types of knowledge and one's own organs, as it actually happens as well in the theologizing that is not patristic and Orthodox. Reducing to silence the scientific research in the area of Theology is undertaken where ecclesiality is replaced by its forgeries, which forgeries call for compliance, without justifying it (see the case of Galileo Galilei).

5. Imbalances and plans to prevail over them

Unfortunately, however, here, too, is valid the distance between theory and practice, between the life of the Saints and our own tragism. It is precisely the disconnection from the spirituality of the Saints that brings the estrangement and obvious dysfunctionality of our ecclesial body on all the levels of its life.

In a world submitting truth to utility, knowledge to technique and logic to historical necessity [39] and fighting within the limits of life and death, the Church and its Theology are called to express their word on the hope in us (I Peter 3: 15), give meaning to human existence and fill its desolating gaps, offering authentic liberty within the limits of ascetic self-improvement and selfless love. In their place, to use the language of our critics, correct in many aspects, Church life represents the image of contemporary theology..., yet it is also its consequence, since mutual influence is inevitable and the contemporary Orthodox Theology... [has, unfortunately, come to] represent a slink, a wrong interpretation, a striking anomaly [40]. Yet the shepherding Church is not rarely laicized, manifesting itself as a despotic authority and a worldly power, using means and methods of behaving that deny the paternity and spirituality of the Church. This schizophrenia reaches its culminating point in the distance conspiratively designed between the theological world and the shepherding Church, a fact manifested sometimes by visible conflicts.

Without a self-critical disposition and a spirit of self-reproach, like that of the tax-collector, we will never be able to go over our tragism, which can be seen precisely from the position held in the life of our people by our theology, but also from that held by us, clerics and theologians [41]. How connected are we to the life of our people and how much do we influence this life and its evolution? Even those who come to the Faculties of Theology, with few exceptions, target only their professional settlement. Since Theology, as a Church word, has substantially stopped moving the soul of the contemporary man, theological education is taken for a professional outlet and solution. The indifference of our students to the creation of a spiritual connection with the local Shepherds [42], does not express only the obvious absence of the spiritual, namely Church life, in the case of most of them, but also the disconnection of the theological study from the life of the Church body, since it is perceived only as a chance of professional settlement offered by the State.

In this point, our inner dysfunctionality comes to surface as well, in other words, the weakening and, sometimes, disappearance, in principle, of the spiritual unity and collaboration of the theologians [43] with the shepherding Church [44]. The over-accentuation of the scientific character of Theology has created, as it has been said, centrifugal tendencies and distantiation from the life of the Church and from its persons. In these cases, apostolical traditions are annihilated, and inventions of the modern people are brought in the churches. People technologize instead of theologizing. The wisdom of the world has precedence, since the praise of the Cross is left aside [45]. Does not this thing

show the tendency towards a religious transformation of Theology or of theological education, for the sake of its modernization and social recognition? It has been correctly noticed that, being deprived of faith, the so-called «Theology» becomes religiousness [46]. Connected to this fact is the symptom of theological academism, [which has represented] a constant problem of the Greek theological academic family for decennia [47]. In this case, the differentiation of the Church tradition from Theology has to do with the separation of Theology from the life of God's people and its autonomization. However, the authentic Orthodox ecclesiology does not accept a separation of the Church into one teaching from the teacher's desk and another one, shepherding in the place of worship... It is both logically and legally incomprehensible how theological education could evolve autonomously from the Chair, simultaneously with the marginalization of the Church. And this thing is valid, of course, for the whole range of theological education. We shall signal, however, several especially resounding cases: a) Cultivation, among the theologians, of political-social tendencies, yet, by imitating and copying foreign models (political theology), which means, in other words, aspiring to sociability separated from spirituality. Yet, tragically, these theologians are rejected and, sometimes, even with roughness, not out of some love for the existential truth of the Church, but because of their contrary ideological premises. b) The lack of a living connection between the theologians and the local Church has acquired, especially in the circle of the modern ones, large dimensions. In this point, the total lack of a spiritual life is the basic reason. The reason why this is happening is, however, indissolubly connected to the incapacity, sometimes, of the local Church of approaching these theologians, naturally, in order to engage them in its service. c) However, the most determining influence on our Theology, at all its levels, comes from the new forms of theology growing within the limits of the ecumenical dialogue (and meant to serve it), such as the baptismal theology or post-patristic theology, recently appeared in Greece. The latter, actually, separates the Church tradition - harming it obviously- from the authentic patristic theology, in other words depriving it of its historical continuity and emptying it of its Orthodox content.

In the last analysis, if total rebaptizing in the life of our Holy Fathers is a necessary premise for the creation of a spirit of unity and collaboration between the shepherding Church and the theologians' world, this spiritual rebaptizing is all the more necessary in order to face together the spirit of the New Age and the things of the New World Order, which are taking the world back to the Roman Antiquity of its history. And, again, therefore, our fight is not against flesh and blood... (Ephes. 6: 12).

References:

1 Beyond its etymological meaning, the term theology (θεολογία, namely oration or discourse about God) has also received, from a historical perspective, the sense of method of drawing close to God, but also of research and scientific contribution concerning the reality of the Church and the systematic presentation of the Christian faith. The Orthodox theology receives meaning especially within the limits of gnoseology. The high form of Theology is that of the theologian in contemplation, which means the continuation of the event of the Pentecost in history. On this topic, see Κων. Γ. Σκουτέρη, Ἡ ἔννοια τῶν ὅρων «θεολογία», «θεολογεῖν», «θεολόγος» ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῶν Ἑλλήνων Πατέρων καὶ Ἐκκλησιαστικῶν Συγγραφέων μέχρι καὶ τῶν Καππαδοκῶν, Ἀθῆναι, 1972.

2 Saint Gregory the Theologian, Orations XXVII, 3, in the PG 36, 13 sq.

3 Κων. Παπαπέτρου, Εἶναι ἡ Θεολογία ἐπιστήμη; Δοκίμιον, Ἀθῆναι, s.a., p. 37.

4 Idem, Ἡ οὐσία τῆς Θεολογίας, Ἀθῆναι, s.a., p. 119.

5 John 16: 13.

6 Saint Gregory the Theologian observes: do you want to become a theologian and worthy of Divinity one day? Keep the commandments, walk following the precepts; for the practice is the ascent to contemplation (Idem, Orations XX, 12, in PG 35, 1080 B.

7 God is above the notions, even the best-thought notions, that man has available to understand and express Him. God is not identified with the notions contained even in the highest theological thought (Κων. Παπαπέτρου, Πίστη καί γνώση, Ἀθήνα, 1987, p. 8)

8 See, for instance 1 Corinthians, chap. 14.

9 Π. Ν. Τρεμπέλα, Ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία τῆς Θεολογίας, Ἀθῆναι, 1980, p. 136.

10 Ἠλ. Β. Οἰκονόμου, Αἰ Θεολογικαί Σχολαί εἰς τήν διακονίαν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, Ἀθῆναι, 1981, p. 8.

11 See Κων. Παπαπέτρου, Εἶναι ἡ Θεολογία ἐπιστήμη; Δοκίμιον..., p. 59 sq.

12 St. Isaac of Syria, Τά εὑρεθέντα ἀσκητικά, Λόγος ΙΘ΄.

13 Π. Ἰ. Ρωμανίδου, Κριτικός ἔλεγχος τῶν ἐφαρμογῶν τῆς Θεολογίας, in Πρακτικά τοῦ Β΄ Ὀρθοδόξου Θεολογικοῦ Συνεδρίου, Ἀθήνα, 1980, p. 423.

14 Κων. Παπαπέτρου, op. cit., p. 55.

15 See about this topic, for more details Γ. Δ. Μεταλληνοῦ, Ἡ Ἐκκλησιαστική Ἱστορία καί ἡ θέση της στήν Ἐκπαίδευση, in idem, Λόγος ὡς ἀντίλογος, Ἀθήνα, 1992, p. 129.

16 See Κων. Γ. Σκουτέρη, Ἡ ἔννοια τῶν ὅρων «θεολογία»..., p. 174.

17 Ἀθαν. Ἰ. Δεληκωστοπούλου, Ὀρθοδοξία. Ἡ σύγχρονη πρόκληση, Ἀθῆναι, 1986, p. 94 sq.

18 It ought to be mentioned that Romania (Ρωμανία) is actually the name of the Byzantine Empire, the latter name representing a modern historiographic term, invented in the year 1557 by the German historian Hyeronimus Wolf.

19 See Luis Bréhier, Le monde Byzantin. La Civilisation Byzantine, 3, Paris, 1950, p. 492 sq.; Δημ. Μόσχου, Ἀνεπίκαιρες σκέψεις γιά τίς σχέσεις Θεολογίας καί ὑστεροβυζαντινῆς κοσμικῆς διανόησης, in Σύναξη 43 (1992), p. 83 sq.; J. Marrou, Geschichte der Erziehung im Klassischen Altertum, München, 1957, p. 475 sq.; G. Podskalsky, Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz, München, 1977, p. 54 sq.

20 Due to the connection (of Theology) with the Church and its practical claims, Theology was considered in the past as not meeting the conditions to be characterized as a science [Π. Χρήστου, Θεολογία, in Θρησκευτικὴ καὶ Ἠθικὴ Ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια 6 (1985), col. 265.]

21 Luis Bréhier, Le monde Byzantin..., p. 492; see also Π. Φιλόθεου Φάρου, Ἐκκλησιαστική ζωή καί Θεολογία, in the Σύναξη 38 (1991), p. 31.

22 Ἀθαν. Ἰ. Δεληκωστοπούλου, op. cit., p. 94.

23 Ἰγνατίου Θεοφόρου, Ἐπιστολή πρός Σμυρν. 8,1.

24 St. Gregory Palamas, Λόγος ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχαζόντων 2, 1, 42, in Συγγράμματα, Α΄, ἔκδ. Π. Χρήστου, Θεσσαλονίκη, 1988², p. 504.

25 Π. Ν. Τρεμπέλα, Ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία τῆς Θεολογίας..., p.137 sq.

26 Π. Ἰ. Σ. Ρωμανίδου, Ρωμαῖοι ἤ Ρωμηοί Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, vol. Ι, Θεσσαλονίκη, 1984, pp. 15, see also Ἀρχιμ. Ἱεροθέου Βλάχου, Ὀρθόδοξη ψυχοθεραπεία, Ἔδεσσα, 1986.

27 Namely received in primary and secondary education.

28 In other words, bearer of the Holy Spirit.

29 Κ. Δ. Μουρατίδου, Χριστοκεντρική Ποιμαντική ἐν τοῖς Ἀσκητικοῖς τοῦ Μ. Βασιλείου, Ἀθῆναι, 1996.

30 Κων. Παπαπέτρου, Εἶναι ἡ Θεολογία ἐπιστήμη; Δοκίμιον..., p. 17.

31 See St. Gregory the Theologian, 31st Discourse, 20-21, in the PG 36, 156 C.

32 St. John Chrysostom, Homilies IX to Letter to the Corinthians 1, 2, in the PG 61, 55 sq.

33 Namely he has reached the state of theosis.

34 Π. Ἰ. Ρωμανίδου, Κριτικός ἔλεγχος τῶν ἐφαρμογῶν τῆς Θεολογίας..., pp. 425-426.

35 The most important example are the Homilies to the Hexameron of Saint Basil the Great (PG 29, 3 208). See also Βασιλείου Ν. Μακρίδη, Ἕνα πατερικό ὑπόδειγμα ἀπολογητικῆς, in Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς 70 (1987), pp. 652-660.

36 Phil. Sherrard, Ὁ ἀπανθρωπισμός τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, in Δύο κείμενα περί Ἐπιστήμης, ἔκδ. Σύναξη, Ἀθήνα, 1986, p. 49.

37 Γ. Δ. Μεταλληνοῦ, Ἡ Ἐκκλησιαστική Ἱστορία..., p. 132.

38 On the issue of objectiveness, see π. Γ. Δ. Μεταλληνοῦ, Πηγές Ἐκκλησιαστικῆς Ἱστορίας, Ἀθήνα, 1989, p. 34 sq.

39 Χρ. Γιανναρᾶ, Ἡ Ἀπολογητική στά ὅρια τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Θεολογίας, Ἀθήνα, 1975, p. 17.

40 Π. Φιλόθεου Φάρου, Ἐκκλησιαστική ζωή καί Θεολογία..., p.50.

41 This term, according to its meaning in the Greek society, refers not just to the graduates of the Faculties of Theology, but also to all the religion teachers, teaching the religion class according to the Orthodox Christian teaching of faith.

42 Namely with the Priests and the Confessors from their parishes.

43 In other words, of religion teachers, as well.

44 For concrete cases, see Άθαν. Ἰ. Δεληκωστοπούλου, Ὀρθοδοξία..., p. 277 sq.

45 St. Basil the Great, Epistle XC, 2, in the   PG 32, 473 B; see also Κων. Γ. Σκουτέρη, Ἡ ἔννοια τῶν ὅρων «θεολογία»..., p. 163 sq.

46 Κων. Παπαπέτρου, Εἶναι ἡ Θεολογία ἐπιστήμη; Δοκίμιον..., p. 15.

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Jesus Christ - The Redeemer of the world. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology Synthesis

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Abstract. The present article highlights in a synthesis of Dogmatic Theology the activity of Christ, the world's Redeemer. The person and the work of the world's Saviour, Jesus Christ, is the center of the teaching of faith, as He is the One Who accomplishes the whole work redeeming mankind and man from the slavery of sin and of death. The teaching on Jesus Christ the Embodied Son and Word of God (John 1:14; Hebrews 4:15), as it was formulated and preached by the Church in the ecumenical synods, maintains the unity of the Church, and, by the Church, of the whole world.

 Keywords: Jesus Christ, Redeemer, Orthodox, dogmatic, theology.

Introduction

The entire redeeming activity of our Saviour is defined by the term redemption – deliverance, salvation. The redeeming work realized for the whole human nature by means of the sacrifice on the cross, is called objective redemption, which becomes asset of the subjective man, by the appropriation, in grace, of the fruits of Christ's sacrifice; it is called subjective salvation or simply salvation, theosis.

Salvation consists, on the one hand, in the deliverance of man from sin, and, on the other hand, in the restoration of the communion with God and of the human nature. The connection between Christ's Person and the work achieved by Him for our salvation is inseparable. The Person is not a simple, abstract notion; it is a real and dynamic subject, always struggling and acting towards communion.

1. The need of Christ's embodiment

By his fall into sin, man got under the dominion of sin and of the devil, losing his community by grace with God; he entered spiritual death. But God did not want man to be lost for eternity, because it is not for this reason that man has been created. Therefore, in His infinite goodness and love for mankind, He found, by His wisdom, the best means of keeping man safe from harm, deciding the embodiment of Jesus Christ's Son, for the world's redemption (Ephesians 2:4-5;Titus 3:4-5). God's Son's descent through the embodiment for man's salvation was conceived by God since eternity (Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 1:20). God, knowing since eternity about man's fall, "*before the foundation of the world*" (1 Peter 1:20), decided the Embodiment of His Son, "*mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure*" (Ephesians 1:9), *the mystery hidden since eternity* (Ephesians 3:9) and the gift given for our salvation (2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Corinthians 2:7).

2. The preparation of the pagans and of the Jews for receiving our Redeemer

The preparation of mankind for receiving Christ occurred both **positively** by means of the Supernatural Revelation, and **negatively** by means of the natural revelation, and its

aim was to kindle the awareness of the Saviour's coming, announced (prophesied) by the first good news (Protoevangel Genesis 3:15), which God has given to our forefathers after their fall into sin, as a means of comfort and prevalence in the fight against the slavery of sin. The promise about the coming of the Messiah is always accentuated and expressed increasingly clearly by the prophets, starting with the patriarchs: Abraham (Genesis 26:4), Jacob (Genesis 28:14), to whom God reveals that, out of the loins of his son Judah, the Saviour will be born (Genesis 49:10); Daniel, who describes the time of Messiah's coming (Daniel 9:24-27); Micah, who shows the place of the birth – Bethlehem (Micah 5:1); Isaiah, who reveals that the Redeemer will be born of a Virgin: "*The Virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son and will call Him Immanuel*" (Isaiah 7:14); and also other prophecies related to our Redeemer's entire activity.

3. The possibility of man's salvation

If God has prepared the world, pagans and Jews, for salvation from death, it means that the salvation of the fallen man is possible. The basis of the possibility of redemption is the fact that the ancestral sin (of Adam and Eve) does not constitute a radical fall, like that of the bad angels. The bad angels fell into sin out of their own initiative and by themselves, without any temptation from outside their being; man, however, did not fall only by himself, but being deceived by the devil; with man, the corrupt will is accompanied by the sensual lust from outside him, which leads to the darkening of the mind.

Man cannot redeem himself because of the gravity of his fall and state of sin.

The reason of Christ's embodiment

The Holy Fathers, speaking about the Embodiment of the Logos, emphasize rather man's restoration and renewal, and for this reason the central goal of the Son's humanization is **the redemption of man**, who has been created in His image and after His likeness, by man's relation with grace.

According to the Holy Fathers, in general, and especially according to Saint Athanasius, one can talk about a series of causes, which necessarily mean the embodiment of the Word, out of which we shall enumerate a few:

- ❖ The main aim of the embodiment of the Logos is to lift man from the slavery of death, accomplished out of our Creator's great love and good will: "*it is necessary that, speaking about the Word's appearance to us, we should also talk about people's beginning, for you to know that we have been the reason of His descent, and our disobedience made the Word's love for the people, namely the Lord, come to us*" **[1],** bringing our salvation and redemption, lifting by grace the human nation to what He is by nature.

- ❖ The human person has been created by God as means of relation, who is finding himself and perfecting himself by participation to his Creator, as man has been created as partner of dialogue of the divinity. For this reason, since the beginning, there has been a calling (ἀνάκλησις) by which the whole creation is connected to the divine Logos, a connection realized by man, as he is a sort of "*shadow of the Word*" **[2]** by whom it [namely the whole creation] participates to the divine love.

- ❖ Man has not been brought into existence out of God's necessity, but out of His great love, clothing man in happiness and cleanliness. By the fall into sin, death enters the clean nature, following the divine commandment; consequently, to defeat it, God's embodiment was necessary. Nobody else could have changed the death, given as a law, into immortality, and restore man's image, except for God's Logos, Who has life

in Himself (α ύτοξωή), and Who, by taking on man's body and by His sacrifice, lifts man from under the jurisdiction of sin.

❖ Man, a rational being, created after the image of Christ, receives in the likeness the ultimate goal that he has to reach, as well. The aim for which man was created, had man been destroyed by sin, would have diminished the divine goodness and all perfection: "*God's skillfulness revealed in people's being would have demonstrated weakness*" **[3]**.

❖ The immensity of the resurrection of the Logos is the important factor of human life, being accentuated by the Holy Fathers, because, by Him, man is established in the true existence, having virtue as a means towards likeness.

The reason of the sending of our Savior is the divine love: "*for this is how God loved the world: He gave His one and only Son that everyone who believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life*" (John 3:16). Thus, by Christ, the whole creation receives once again its lost rationality. In Christ's divine-human person, it is not the whole Holy Trinity that is embodied, but the whole nature of the divinity fully possessed by the Hypostasis of the Son, which gets truly united with the entire human nature, and not with just a part of it, because Christ has not assumed in himself the human nature condensed in the species, but the one condensed in the individual, in His body living in a bodily manner the whole fullness of the divinity (Colossians 2:9). Yet, based on the community of being of the persons of the Holy Trinity, partakers are also: "*The Father and the Holy Spirit at the Embodiment of God's Word by good will and will. We say, therefore, that the whole being of God got united with the entire human nature*" **[4]**.

The Holy Fathers explain in detail the reasons why, for man's salvation, Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity, takes on a human body. In their thinking, we find eloquent conclusions, which can be summed up as follows:

1) According to Saint John Damascene, it was necessary for God's Son to take on a human body, in order for the property of Son to be preserved: "*The Father is a Father and not a Son; the Son is a Son and not a Father... This is why the Son of God becomes Son of Man, so that this feature may remain unchanged*" **[5]**.

2) The Logos or the Son is precisely God's Word: "*The Way, the Truth and the Life*" (John 14:6), this is why He makes Himself accessible to the people, to reconnect man with his Creator.

3) The entire creation is the work of the Son, this is why it was convenient for the One Who has made it to remake it, as well (John 1:3), because: "*The Almighty... did not send to the people a servant or an angel, but the Master and Creator of the universe Himself*" **[6]**.

4) The salvation brought by Christ means the resettlement of man in grace and the restoration of the image of man, who is made in God's image in order to attain His likeness.

4. The fullness of time or the time of Christ's coming in the world

According to the Holy Scripture, the Embodiment took place at "**the fullness of time**", a time included in the divine plan by which the Creator's will is made manifest to men: "*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those who were under law*" (Galatians 4:4).

Obviously, God could have achieved redemption differently, and the Son could have been embodied and could have saved man immediately after Adam's fall into sin. But this would have meant redeeming man without taking into account his will. This would have been impossible because the free man fell into sin without being forced; this is why he could not have been redeemed any other way except in freedom.

For man to get to want his salvation, a long time had to pass, so that:

a) people may know out of experience and get fully convinced of the gravity of sin and of the moral incapacity of getting free from the slavery of sin only by his own powers;

b) religious error and moral decay had to attain their maximum level so that evil may be driven away along with its roots and once and for all;

c) the Redeemer's coming, the time, the place and the circumstances in which He was to come as well as data on His life and activity had to be known as well as possible and by as many people as possible so that salvation may become an asset of the entire mankind;

d) Mankind had to have the time needed to get ready to appropriate the divine teaching that the Redeemer was to reveal to it.

Accordingly, it has been so necessary to prepare mankind, for it to be able to receive the infinite spiritual goods sanctifying it. The perfect cleanliness of the human nature assumed by Christ also makes it absolutely necessary for Him to get born out of the clean nature of the Virgin Mary, in whom the existence of the ancestral sin, although present, is reduced to a "*purely inactive possibility, by whose cleanliness and holiness the Word of God may be received among people*" **[7]**.

5. Christ's supernatural birth

Christ took on a human body and was born out of the Virgin Mary not according to the order of nature, but supernaturally. The conception took place by the work of the Holy Spirit, and Christ's birth did not affect the Theotokos' virginity. The Theotokos was a Virgin before birth and remained a Virgin during birth and after birth, forever. This dogma, about the ever-virginity of the Theotokos, relies on numerous places from the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition (Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:27-37; Matthew 1:18-24).

Mary's virginity is possible by the almightiness of God, according to the analogy of the bush which was burning without being consumed and to the appearance of the Saviour after the Resurrection, through the locked doors; virginity also appears in the vision of prophet Ezechiel 44:1-2 concerning the "*temple door which is to remain locked and no one will go through it, it will not open, and the Lord of Israel came through it and it will be closed*".

6. The hypostatic union

Jesus Christ is true God and true man, man-God having two natures, one divine and one human, united in a single Person or hypostasis. This is what the Church teaches, saying: "*In one Person, Jesus Christ is true God and true man*" (Marturisirea Ortodoxă /The Orthodox Confession, I, 38): "*We believe that Jesus Christ Son of God took upon Himself, in His own hypostasis, a human body (human nature), conceived of the Holy Spirit in the Ever Virgin Mary and became man*" (Dositheus' Confession, 7th Decree).

The union between God's Word and the human nature, called hypostatic union (ένωσίς ύποστατίκ). The dogma of the hypostatic union has been formulated by the Holy Church at the 3rd, 4th and 6th Ecumenical Synods. The definition of the 4th Ecumenical Synod, Chalcedon (451), fighting against monophysitism, shows that in Christ the Lord there are two natures: divine and human; in one hypostasis, united "*not in a mixed way, unchanged, undivided, unseparated, without annulling through the union the difference between natures, but each of them keeping its characteristic features*", and the 6th Synod, refuting the Monothelites' heresy, shows that each nature of Christ has its own will and work, while "*the human will submits to His divine and almighty will*" **[8]**.

The duality of natures and the unity of Christ's Person is expressed by Saint John Damascene by the term "reciprocal inhabitation", interpenetration or perichoresis: "*The Word appropriates the human aspects, for all the things belonging to His Holy body are His, He makes the body partake of what is His Own, according to the model of feature communication (ἀντίδοσίς ἰδίωμάτατων) because of mutual interpenetration*" **[9]**. Thus, the human nature receives divine characteristics, and the divine nature, human characteristics, because Christ is a complete man and a complete God, communicating to the human nature the divine powers "*He Who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man, is in heaven*" (John 3:13). By the communication of the features, there is no communication of the natures. Our Saviour's works are theandric, because He wills and works in both of the two forms of His nature, each being unseparated from the other.

The Orthodox Church teaches us that the hypostatic union, beginning with the moment of the conception, remains forever unseparated. The body taken on by the Word of God at the moment of His conception from the Virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:31-35) remains united for eternity with the divine nature.

7. Consequences of the hypostatic union

Communication of natures. Christ transmits to his human nature the features of His divine nature. Thus, His divine nature communicates holiness to His human nature.

The deification of the human nature in Christ is realized progressively, and the affects (passiveness) characterizing the human nature do not influence at all His divinity because: "*we need to say that God did suffer in the body, yet, by no means [was] the divinity [suffering],... while the body was suffering, the divinity was united with it, yet, nevertheless, it remained impassive and committed the redeeming things*" **[10]**.

The theosis of the human nature, by Christ, brings in it the transfiguring gifts, at the same time reinforcing man's will by grace, without changing its nature "*because out of the natures, one has deified and another one has been deified... has been made in the likeness of God ... And this [happened] not by the transformation of the nature, but by the union with a view of the embodiment, namely according to the hypostasis, by which the body has been united, without separation, with God the Word and by the interpenetration of the natures, one with the other, the way we talk about the iron becoming incandescent into fire*" **[11]**. The embodiment of God's Logos resettles man in his connection with the divinity, communicating to him, by the faith in Him, the divinity, because Christ ascends to the Father, with the humanity assumed, restoring in this way our kinship with the Father, Christ being the earnest of our reconstruction and the leaven leavening the whole lump of dough (1 Cor. 15:47-49).

Christ's sinlessness. Sinlessness in the sphere of will and action corresponds to lack of error in the domain of knowledge; it is only in knowledge that one can conceive a progress, yet a moral progress in Christ is unimaginable because of the union of natures in the person of the Logos. The Holy Scripture testifies Christ's sinlessness, calling Him Saint even since before He was born (free from the ancestral sin Luke 1:35; but also from our personal sins John 8:46; 14:30; 1 John 3:5; 1 Peter 2:12).

A single worship of Christ. Out of the hypostatic union, it results that a single worship ought to be given to Christ, namely adoration both according to his divinity and according to his humanity: "*Everybody ought to worship the Son as they worship the Father. Whoever does not glorify the Son, does not glorify the Father Who has sent Him*" (John 5:22-23; Revelation 5:11-13; Matthew 28:17; Hebrews 1:6).

The Virgin Mary is Theotokos. Of the Virgin Mary was born God's Son Himself, as person of the human nature. Birth is a feature of the person and not of nature, this is why the Virgin Mary is Theotokos, because the One born from her is the true God Jesus Christ. The Virgin Mary is honored by being called "*Theotokos*", not *Anthropotokos*, because God-the Son took a Body, for Himself, of her. At the 4th Ecumenical Synod, from Ephesus, of the year 431, the Virgin Mary has been "officially" recognized as "Theotokos".

In relation to the corrupt state of man's fallen nature, the Redeemer's activity appears under a threefold aspect: as a prophet, as a high priest and as a king.

The prophetic calling concerns the illumination of the mind, or metanoia, the transformation of the mind in Christ, "*the Way, the Truth and the Life ... the light of the world*" (John 14:6; 8:12) who illuminates every man by His teaching, as He is the prophet of prophets, master (rabbi), and great prophet, powerful in acts and in words (Hebrews 1:2; Luke 2:19); [this] calling [is] realized in the Church by the holiness given by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:20), to the apostles and their followers.

The service of High Priest of our Saviour represents the supreme and central act of the redeeming activity, because by His sacrifice has been and is worked man's reconciliation with God "*for His life was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of the people was He stricken*" (Isaiah 53:4-8), because "*the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many*" (Matthew 20:28), as He is the offering for our sins and for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). His sacrifice represents the means of redemption of the human nature from the slavery of sin, which is permanently updated until the end of the centuries, according to the Saviour's commandment: "*do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes*" (1 Corinthians 11:25-26).

The kingly dignity of Christ highlights the majesty and glory of the man-God, compared to the prophetic calling and the priestly service in which one can see rather the state of humility and kenosis. Christ is "*the King of kings and Lord of lords*" (1 Timothy 6:15), a dignity which He shows perfectly by the miracles made and by His resurrection; a defeater of death and a Judge of the world, He has lifted the human nature on the right side of the Father in the heavenly glory. Patristic theology, regarding the redeeming sacrifice and the acts by which human nature is resettled into grace, has formulated a series of theories which the Orthodoxy resumes taking into account the three aspects of redemption, namely: **the aspect of sacrifice, the ontological aspect and the resuming aspect**.

The aspect of sacrifice of Salvation is manifested in two directions, one towards God, by perfect submission to the point of death on the cross (Philippians 2:6-8), because by "*the blood of Christ, Who has brought Himself as a spotless sacrifice to God*" (Hebrews 9:14), the Creator is glorified. And another one towards man, which concerns the lifting of the punishment for sin "*Christ becoming a curse for us*" (Galatians 3:13), by Him nature being delivered from death and resettled in the state of relation [with God]: "*because Christ is redemption, giving Himself as a ransom for us, as Saint Gregory of Nyssa says, by this we understand that giving to us immortality as a special honor for every soul in turn, He has made out of all those whom He has ransomed, by His life, from death, an asset of His own..., thus, just as when we were under the dominion of death, the law of sin was settled in us, similarly, now, when we are under the dominion of life, we have the duty to harmonize ourselves with the way of being of the One Who is our master*" **[12]**. The Lord's submission and death, suffered for our sins, have turned, in Him, from just death (because it was connected to nature), into unjust death, because He was sinless and consequently death was

defeated, by life-giving death. **The ontological aspect of Salvation** highlights the reality of the body taken on by Christ, contradicting the appearance of the heretical Docetists, and shows that its subject is not an apparent Logos, because otherwise salvation would be something apparent, as well. Christ's work has an ontological efficiency reflected on His person, which comprises the whole mankind.

The resuming aspect Redemption. In Christ's Person is resumed the whole human nature, in truth, but this nature includes us as well virtually, this virtuality becoming actual by the faith in Christ, in which we can appropriate the fruits of the sacrifice on the cross; this thing is very clearly shown by the Holy Apostle Paul who says: "*and [God] raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*" (Ephesians 2:6).

The humanity of Christ is the model by which one can see the perfect purity given by the presence of the divinity, as He is the Archetype in Whose image Adam's image was created, and just as "*in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive*" (1 Corinthians 15: 22). The new Adam includes us all; taking the earthly image of the old Adam, breathing on it the life-giving Spirit, for death to be swallowed by life (2 Corinthians 5:4), Christ makes man like his Creator. *"Our Savior was the first of all and the only one Who has shown us in His being the image of a true and blameless man"* **[13]**. Only in Christ, Who made himself subject of the body, is radically extirpated the presence of any form of sin.

Conclusions

Redemption is the eternal work and giving of life, by the Son, to permanently reinforce the relation and the communion with the source of life - God the Father -, a relation by which man receives the divine goodness, shared by the Holy Spirit through the deified humanity of the Son, embodied, sacrificed and resurrected for the world to have eternal life.

Thus, the aim of God's Son's Embodiment has been the realization of God's Kingdom and the salvation of man and of mankind.

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The Holy Sacrament of Priesthood, the Central Sacrament of the Church

(Le Saint Mystère de l'Ordination, couronne des Saints Mystères de l'Eglise)

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ABSTRACT

English Abstract: *Saving work of Jesus Christ was committed to the "fullness of time" in a certain moment of history through the incarnation, teaching, life, sacrîfice and resurrection from the dead. But the appropriation of salvation is normal and safe in the Church and through the Church. The church is our life in Christ and therefore our salvation and sanctification body. The Ecclesiology is closely related to soteriology and Christology, since the Church is the reality session, the focus and specifies all teaching and Christian life. Sacramental priesthood is exercised really only in the Church and for the Church, and therefore ordinations are done always only in the Church in the Holy Shrine around the Holy Table.*

Keywords: *Priest, Holy Mysteries (Sacraments or) hiérurgie (or blessings) cheirotonia, Cheirothésia, pastoration (priesthood), Mission*

French Résumé: *L'œuvre rédemptrice de Jésus Christ a été accomplie quand « la plénitude du temps » est arrivée, lors d'un certain moment de l'histoire, par Son incarnation, Son enseignement, Sa vie, Son sacrifice et Sa résurrection des morts. Mais l'appropriation du salut se réalise normalement et de manière certaine dans l'Eglise et par l'Eglise. L'Eglise est notre vie en Christ et, par conséquent, l'organe de notre salut et de notre sanctification. L'ecclésiologie est étroitement liée à la sotériologie et à la christologie, car l'Eglise est la réalité plénière dans laquelle sont concentrées et concrétisées tout l'enseignement et toute la vie chrétienne. La prêtrise sacramentelle est exercée véritablement seulement dans l'Eglise et pour l'Eglise, et c'est pour cela que les Cheirotonia s'accomplissent toujours seulement dans l'Eglise, à savoir dans le Saint Autel autour de la Sainte Table, car dans l'Eglise la Sainte Table est source de sanctification et l'exercice du don de la Prêtrise est étroitement lié à celle-ci.*

Mots-clés : *Prêtrise, Saints Mystères (ou Sacrements), hiérurgies (ou bénédictions), Cheirotonia, Cheirothésia, pastoration (prêtrise), mission*

Introduction

Les Saints Mystères sont des actions vues, instituées par notre Sauveur Jésus Christ et confiées à Sa Sainte Eglise, par lesquelles à ceux qui les reçoivent est partagée la grâce

invisible du Saint Esprit, le but des Saints Mystères étant de sauver et de sanctifier les croyants par la grâce qu'ils confèrent.

La relation étroite, ontologique, entre les Saints Mystères et l'Eglise est donnée en Christ Lui-même, Qui a mis les bases et a institué par Son Sacrifice et Sa Résurrection l'Eglise et Ses Mystères, dans lesquels l'Esprit Saint est à l'œuvre, rendant présent le Christ à la fois dans l'Eglise et dans les Saints Mystères et dans la parole de l'Ecriture.

1. Le Saint Mystère de l'Ordination, couronne des Saints Mystères de l'Eglise

Le jour de la Pentecôte, lorsque l'Eglise entre dans l'histoire, on nous a donné, comme réalités divines-humaines, pour notre salut, l'Eglise et ses Saints Mystères. Pour cette raison, il n'y a pas de Saints Mystères à l'extérieur de l'Eglise, mais seulement dans l'Eglise, accomplis d'abord par les Apôtres, et ensuite, même depuis leur temps, par l'évêque et les prêtres de l'Eglise. Mais, il n'y a pas d'Eglise sans Saints Mystères non plus, car l'inclusion des gens en Christ, leur développement en Christ, comme membres de Son Corps, l'Eglise, ne se réalise qu'à travers les Saints Mystères. Par ceux-ci, le Christ est présent et à l'œuvre dans l'Eglise et dans ses croyants.

L'essence du Sacrement, comme œuvre et acte saint institué par Jésus Christ et accompli dans l'Eglise par l'évêque et les prêtres, est la grâce divine partagée aux croyants, qui reste cachée, non vue et non comprise par la pensée, mais qui est communiquée par des formes vues, acte et matière. Dans le Sacrement, il ne s'agit pas d'une symbolisation de quelque vérité de foi, mais d'un don réel de grâce divine.

Par les Saints Mystères nous comprenons donc les sept Saints Mystères que notre Sainte Eglise Orthodoxe possède, comme travaux saints institués par Christ Lui-même, par lesquels, d'une manière vue, on donne au récepteur, dans l'Eglise, la grâce divine non vue, absolument nécessaire pour le salut (cf. Jean 3, 5).

Les Saints Mystères ont un double caractère: Christologique et ecclésiologique (ecclésiastique). Ils sont institués par le Seigneur Jésus Christ pour l'Eglise et le salut des hommes. Ils sont les actes par lesquels Jésus Christ récapitule en Lui comme Eglise les hommes, qui étaient séparés avant par rapport à Dieu et l'un par rapport à l'autre, s'ils croient en Lui. Les Saints Mystères ont une fonction unificatrice. La base christologique des Saints Mystères consiste dans le fait que le Christ est l'Accomplisseur non vu des Saints Mystères, Qui descend dans l'être des croyants en même temps que la grâce des Saints Mystères, dans l'Esprit Saint, en vue de transfigurer l'homme et la création.

La base ecclésiologique des Saints Mystères résulte du fait que le Mystère de l'Eglise n'est pas séparé par rapport au Mystère du Christ, ni le Mystère du Christ par rapport au Mystère de l'Eglise, l'Eglise est l'extension du Mystère du Christ et Elle pleine du Mystère du Christ [1].

Le prêtre est appelé à une dignité personnelle aussi grande que possible, pour donner aux croyants l'occasion de vivre la relation avec Jésus Christ à travers les Saints Mystères. Certes, le manque de dignité du prêtre est suppléé par la dignité de l'Eglise, mais le prêtre doit faire preuve de dignité dans l'accomplissement de sa mission.

Dans chaque Mystère, Jésus Christ Se donne à travers un de ses actes à ceux qui croient en Lui, et, dans le Mystère de l'Eucharistie, Il se donne aux croyants avec Son Corps et Son Sang eux-mêmes. Mais, étant non vu comme Personne et voulant nous donner Son Corps et Son Sang de manière visible, Il a besoin de personnes vues qu'Il choisit et sanctifie Lui-même à travers le Mystère de la Cheirotonia. Alors que dans les autres Mystères Il est reçu comme Celui qui Se donne à travers l'officiant, dans le Mystère de la Cheirotonia, Il Se lie, comme sujet qui Se donne de manière non vue, à une personne humaine, et, en

consacrant la personne respective comme prêtre ou évêque, rend visible Son don de Soi-même envers nous à travers les autres Saints Mystères.

Si Jésus se donnerait à nous de manière visible ou s'il n'était pas personne, il n'aurait pas besoin d'une personne qui accomplisse les actes vus par lesquels Il se donne à nous. Sans un sujet humain représentant le Christ comme sujet de manière visible, Christ ne pourrait pas nous distribuer ses dons en tant que personne, ou bien ne se donnerait pas Soi-même dans les Mystères comme moyens vus. Le prêtre, comme organe personnel des Saints Mystères met en évidence le rôle du Sauveur Jésus Christ, qui se donne à Ses fidèles par l'action que le prêtre accomplit comme serviteur de Dieu.

Si le prêtre et l'évêque sont des organes vus par lesquels Christ Lui-même comme sujet distribue aux croyants Ses dons et Soi-même, il est évident qu'ils ne peuvent pas prendre d'eux-mêmes cette qualité d'organes du Christ, comme donneurs de Ses pouvoirs. Et ni même la communauté chrétienne ne peut imposer à Jésus Christ les organes vus par lesquels Il puisse donner Ses pouvoirs et Soi-même. La Cheirotonia de ces organes vus ne se réalise pas à l'extérieur de la communauté, mais dans son sein, par les évêques existants, porteurs autorisés de cette communion.

Par la Cheirotonia, ils sont situés dans le sein de la communauté comme organes visibles du Christ et de Ses dons, par lesquels la communauté est soutenue. Ainsi, le Saint Mystère de la Cheirotonia ne se réalise pas à l'extérieur de la communauté, mais dans la communauté, car elle constitue la condition par laquelle la communauté est soutenue au fil des siècles.

Les prêtres et les évêques sont appelés par le Sacrement de la Cheirotonia à servir le Logos incarné dans Sa mission de réunir en Lui les hommes éparpillés partout dans le monde, à travers les pouvoirs sacramentaux partagés à eux, en prêchant Son enseignement unificateur et en les guidant vers le Christ Incarné. Nous pouvons dire que la Cheirotonia est la condition des autres Mystères par lesquels la communauté est édifiée, bien que la Cheirotonia ne puisse pas atteindre son but sans les autres Mystères et sans la communauté [2].

La prêtrise sacramentelle tient à l'être de l'Eglise et l'exprime. Car là où il n'y a pas de prêtrise sacramentelle, il n'y a pas d'ecclesia non plus, car l'Eglise est une communauté sacramentelle avec des économes des Mystères de Dieu, désignés par Jésus Christ Lui-même à travers l'Esprit Saint. Par les organes d'institution divine, évêque et prêtre, sont reçus les autres Saints Mystères par les croyants, ou bien les derniers se joignent tout simplement à l'Eglise par les Saints Mystères accomplis par les prêtres et l'évêque [3]. Cheirotonia est par excellence le Mystère de l'Eglise, dans sa qualité de communauté, qui permet aux croyants de vivre le Christ, à travers les prêtres, comme Sujet séparé par rapport aux prêtres.

Lorsque le Saint Mystère de l'Ordination est accompli, le Grand prêtre sanctificateur prie ainsi : „Dieu très puissant et sagesse très profonde, Toi-même, Dieu, cet homme que Tu as bienvoulu élever au rang de prêtre, remplis-le du don de ton Saint Esprit, pour être digne de rester immaculé devant Ton saint autel, afin de T'apporter des dons et des sacrifices spirituels, afin de renouveler Ton peuple à travers le bain de la deuxième naissance" [4]. Sont compris et transmis par la grâce, dans l'atmosphère liturgique, les dons saints fondamentaux de la prêtrise : annoncer l'Evangile; offrir un sacrifice non-sanglant et spirituel, accompagné par l'accomplissement des autres mystères; renouveler et guider le peuple des bien croyants.

Suivant aux Apôtres qui ont été serviteurs de la Parole, le prêtre est, avant tout, lui aussi serviteur de Dieu-la Parole, il est enseignant.

2. Cheirotonia et cheirothesia

Serviteur de Dieu pour les croyants, le prêtre orthodoxe a la conscience qu'il sert ceux de son temps, avec les questions et les solutions qui doivent être cherchées et trouvées. Le serviteur de Dieu n'est pas seulement serviteur de la parole, mais aussi du sacrifice de Son Maître. Il est sacrificateur et sanctificateur, car le sacrifice est sanctification, sanctifiant ce qui est apporté au Seigneur.

Il va sans dire que la prêtrise comme sacrifice a son origine et sa base dans la prêtrise du Christ. La prêtrise du Christ consiste en essence en cela que Lui, comme Dieu et Homme en même temps, est à la fois sacrificateur et offrande, Celui qui apporte et Celui qui s'apporte, et saint et sanctificateur de Soi-même [5]. Dans cette identité du Grand prêtre avec le sacrifice on trouve la perfection de Son sacrifice éternel, sa qualité de Grand prêtre pour toujours.

Même le Christ, le Fils de Dieu, se fait homme pour s'apporter dans cette qualité offrande au Père non sans la volonté du Père, mais avec Sa volonté (Jean 4, 34). Le prêtre qui apporte d'autres au Père, ne fait pas cela sans Sa responsabilisation et Son pouvoir. Le prêtre doit avoir la conscience qu'il est envoyé par Dieu, afin qu'en lui puisse vibrer fortement le sentiment de responsabilité pour sa mission. Dieu appelle à ce service celui à qui Il a donné Son don pour cette mission. A celui-là, Il consolide le don semé dans la nature [humaine] par la grâce de la Cheirotonia [6].

Ainsi, la prêtrise de l'Eglise n'est pas un simple acte de commémoration ou d'imitation de la prêtrise du Christ; dans le sacrifice eucharistique, centre de la vie de l'Eglise et expression suprême de la prêtrise [7], le prêtre, de manière mystérieuse, sacramentelle, représente le Christ dans son acte unique et objectif de sacrifice.

Par conséquent, entre les sept Saints Mystères de l'Eglise, la Cheirotonia est le Saint Mystère qui, par la prière d'invocation du Saint Esprit et par la mise des mains par l'évêque, consacre des serviteurs sacerdotaux d'un certain rang dans une paroisse ou une éparchie vacante. Le Mystère de la Cheirotonia introduit et institue un membre de l'Eglise dans la prêtrise sacramentelle, en lui reconnaissant une autorité particulière et un statut permanent au service d'une communauté. Toutes ces choses représentent des dons de l'Esprit Saint que l'évêque invoque par une prière spéciale sur le candidat. On peut identifier ici une épiclèse, et c'est pourquoi on peut parler d'une nature épiclectique de la Cheirotonia, de l'Eglise même, qui consacre pour le service, pour le sacrifice, des personnes concrètes pour des communautés concrètes [8].

Entre l'Eglise et les Saints Mystères et entre ceux-ci et le Christ il y a une relation étroite, ce qui conduit à la conviction que, si, dans les autres Mystères, ce qui ressort plus évidemment est le conditionnement de l'Eglise à travers eux, dans le Mystère de la Cheirotonia, ce qui ressort le plus est leur conditionnement par l'Eglise, leur aspect ecclésiologique. Et cela signifie que la Cheirotonia elle-même a un caractère ecclésiologique[9].

Du point de vue étymologique, le mot grec *Cheirotonia* signifie tendre les mains, et ultérieurement voter ou élire car la désignation de quelqu'un se faisait et continue de se faire même de nos jours par le Grand prêtre en levant les mains ou en les mettant sur la tête du candidat. En sens chrétien, la Cheirotonia signifie initialement choisir ou désigner quelqu'un pour la prêtrise, ce qui avait lieu dans l'Eglise par le vote ; ultérieurement, vu qu'après ce choix suivait la confirmation par la mise des mains de l'évêque sur celui qui était choisi, le terme de Cheirotonia est passé sur l'entier ordre du service ou le cérémoniel religieux concernant la consécration des candidats à la prêtrise, service dont le centre est constitué par

l'activité théandrique de l'Eglise formée de la mise des mains de l'évêque sur celui choisi, unie à l'invocation de la grâce du Saint Esprit.

La Cheirotonia est ainsi le Mystère par lequel quelqu'un est investi du pouvoir du don ou du talent d'un des trois degrés de la Prêtrise sacramentelle. Elle est donc la transmission plus loin des „langues de feu", c'est-à-dire du pouvoir charismatique venu à travers les Apôtres, du Sauveur Lui-même, dans l'Esprit Saint, mais en même temps une descente réelle du Saint Esprit sur celui sur lequel l'évêque a mis ses mains. Le Mystère de la Cheirotonia, comme le mot l'explique aussi, se réalise par la mise des mains, comme le psalmiste le dit: „Tes mains m'ont fait et m'ont bâti". Les mains de Dieu le Père sont: le Fils et l'Esprit Saint [10].

Etant donné que, par la grâce de la Cheirotonia, on confère au récepteur le pouvoir du Saint Esprit, dans la Théologie de l'Ouest cela acquiert un caractère indélébile. Cette conception s'est imposée surtout aux XIIe-XIIIe siècles et a été formulée dans le Concile de Ferrare-Florence (1438-1439), sur la base de la théologie de Thomas d'Aquin. Au moment de la consécration d'une personne comme prêtre, la personne respective reçoit une grâce spéciale ayant une validité et une permanence absolue conformément au texte: „*tu es prêtre pour toujours selon l'ordre de Melchisédech*" (Hébreux 7, 21).

Bien que l'appel de Dieu soit définitif sur celui qui a reçu l'ordination, le pouvoir de la prêtrise – pouvoir qui a été confirmé dans l'acte de la Cheirotonia – ne représente pas quelque chose d'impersonnel, indépendant de l'inclusion dans l'Eglise de celui qui a reçu la Cheirotonia pour être au service de la communauté respective [11]. La prêtrise est un devoir confié à une personne choisie par Dieu et reconnue par sa vocation et acceptation dans l'Eglise et par l'Eglise.

Au début, dans l'Eglise primaire, par Cheirotonia on comprenait aussi ce que nous connaissons aujourd'hui par le terme de Cheirothésia – la mise des mains. Par Cheirothésia on comprend l'ordre du service divin par lequel on accorde soit un des degrés du clergé inférieur d'antan (lecteur et sous-diacre), soit un des degrés, des rangs honorifiques ou distinctions ecclésiastiques (sacellaire, econome, l'économe stavrophore – pour les prêtres séculiers, et sincel, protosincel et archimandrite – pour les prêtres moines), soit la confirmation dans une fonction ecclésiale administrative (abbé, archiprêtre etc.).

Entre Cheirotonia et Cheirothésia il y a une différence d'essence : la première est un Mystère, la deuxième est seulement une hiérurgie (bénédiction), c'est pour cela que les Cheirotonia sont accomplies seulement dans l'autel, alors que les Cheirothésia ont lieu seulement dans le naos. La Cheirotonia a un caractère indélébile, alors que les Cheirothésia peuvent être annulées formellement [12].

Ainsi, le Mystère par lequel un homme devient membre de la hiérarchie sacramentelle porte le nom de Cheirotonia, alors que la hiérurgie par laquelle une personne est consacrée à un service dans l'Eglise, lié aux attributions du clergé inférieur porte le nom de Cheirothésie.

Faisant un parallèle entre les deux termes, on observe que les Mystères sont absolument nécessaires pour le salut, car le salut n'est pas possible sans la grâce, et la grâce est donnée à travers les Mystères. Ils sont des moyens de la grâce qui est à l'œuvre dans l'Eglise, le champ du salut. Par eux, Jésus Christ est présent et laboure dans l'Eglise, par eux la vie religieuse-morale des Chrétiens est sanctifiée et soutenue.

En ce qui concerne les hiérurgies, nous constatons qu'elles existent, mais nous ne savons pas quels sont leurs effets et leur manière d'action, car l'Eglise ne s'est pas encore prononcée officiellement en ce qui les concerne. Deux idées se trouvent à la base de

l'utilisation des hiérurgies: 1. La solidarité entre homme et nature; 2. La richesse de la grâce et la nécessité de la grâce pour toutes les actions de l'homme.

Les hiérurgies apparaissent comme des services divins ordonnés par l'Eglise, ayant le but de purifier et sanctifier la nature et les hommes, leur communicant une grâce venant à leur aide dans certaines circonstances déterminantes de leur vie. La grâce donnée par les hiérurgies ne peut pas suppléer celle donnée par les Mystères, car la grâce donnée par les Mystères a certains effets, alors que celle donnée par les hiérurgies a d'autres effets.

Donc, la Cheirothésia est une hiérurgie instituée par l'Eglise, sur la base du pouvoir qui lui a été donné par le Sauveur Jésus Christ. La consécration ou la Cheirothésia de certaines personnes dans ces degrés est avant tout une séparation de ceux-ci par rapport aux autres, en dédicant ces personnes à Dieu et en leur donnant une grâce, pour venir à leur aide, autre que celle octroyée par les Saints Mystères [13].

Les hiérurgies donnent au prêtre la possibilité de connaître la vie de chaque jour de ses croyants, de montrer la voie qu'un bon chrétien doit suivre, d'encourager ceux qui sont dans la détresse ou de stopper des actions inadéquates pour le nom de chrétien.

Lors de ces rencontres, le prêtre aura l'occasion de pastoration et ouvrira des conversations avec les croyants tenant compte de leur degré de compréhension ou de leur formation intellectuelle, encourageant les malades et aussi ceux qui sont faibles dans la foi, leur montrant la voie vers le Christ [14].

Important est le fait que la prêtrise de l'Eglise apporte le Christ ici et maintenant au milieu des hommes, les unissant et les renouvelant en permanence. La prêtrise servante représente l'articulation du Corps de l'Eglise qui assure à celle-ci son dynamisme incessant dans le temps et dans l'espace, faisant face aux siècles et aux endroits depuis toujours et sortant triomphante de la lutte permanente contre les pouvoirs de l'obscurité. Exprimant le Christ, l'éternel Grand prêtre, la Prêtrise de l'Eglise est vraiment Sacrifice qui, placé à la base du monde, renouvelle le monde et l'aide à découvrir son vrai sens. La mission de la Prêtrise de l'Eglise est la mission du Christ Lui-même, Qui, par Son Sacrifice et Sa résurrection, a ouvert aux hommes, et, par eux, à l'univers entier, les portes de la déification. Lorsque cette mission sera complètement achevée, c'est-à-dire à la fin des siècles, et Dieu sera tout en toutes les choses, l'entier univers se transfigurera dans une immense Eglise, royaume de Dieu où règnent l'amour, la paix et la justice dans l'Esprit Saint.

La prêtrise chrétienne, comme expression et actualisation de la prêtrise sainte et universelle de notre Sauveur, est, en son essence, la même, hier, aujourd'hui et à jamais, devant tenir compte dans son déroulement concret à la fois de sa substance stable, et des conditions de l'esprit du temps. La prêtrise est la condition de l'existence et de la continuité de l'Eglise, son pilier et son pouvoir. L'Eglise vit, demeure et avance dans le temps à l'aide de ses serviteurs.

Le prêtre est celui par l'action duquel Jésus Christ donne abondamment ses grâces aux croyants. Il est celui par lequel les croyants élèvent leurs prières à Dieu. Dans son action, Jésus Christ rencontre les croyants et la grâce divine rencontre les aspirations des croyants. Le prêtre de nos temps est appelé à être profondément imbu de l'esprit du Christ, qui est toujours vivant et le même. Il est appelé avant tout par le Christ à collaborer avec Lui, ainsi qu'avec les gens de partout, non seulement pour annoncer l'Evangile, mais aussi pour soutenir la lutte des peuples pour une vie nouvelle, en amour, justice et paix.

Le prêtre est vraiment prêtre si et dans la mesure où il rend présente par la grâce et par son effort personnel la prêtrise par excellence du Christ, conformément aux besoins de son temps [15]. En servant l'homme, le prêtre sert Dieu et Son Eglise. Et, pendant ces

moments de l'existence humaine, lorsque la vie du monde même est en danger, les efforts de ceux qui servent aux saints autels doivent être accrus et intensifiés afin de sauver la vie, afin d'aider le monde à devenir conscient de la menace catastrophique qui le guette. L'Eglise et Ses serviteurs ne peuvent pas éviter de participer à cet effort humain général, pouvant contribuer à la promotion de la paix, de la justice et de la fraternité parmi les peuples.

Conclusion

En conclusion, le prêtre de nos temps est appelé à accomplir une mission à l'esprit de la tradition orthodoxe authentique, donnant une nouvelle brillance à la prêtrise chrétienne. Par conséquent, il devrait être l'exemple, pour ceux qui le suivent, de l'accomplissement plénier des saints devoirs envers l'Eglise et envers la patrie, sachant bien que la force de la prêtrise chrétienne consiste dans la fidélité envers Christ et envers le peuple. C'est seulement à cette condition qu'il pourra appeler de plus en plus efficacement les croyants à harmoniser leurs devoirs chrétiens et leurs devoirs de citoyens, à faire bruler en eux le feu de l'esprit de sacrifice pour le bien commun, au travail honnête et diligent, à l'union de tous pour toute bonne chose et à une vie paisible ensemble de tous les hommes.

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Christian community sanctification and leadership

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Abstract: *In general, it is necessary for the priest to always carefully control his aspect and behavior in his relations with the believers, always maintaining an attitude of seriousness and dignity that calls for respect, because an act of the priest cannot be without effect on the believers.*
Keywords: Priest, consecration, Holy Spirit, parish, Church, believer, spiritual relation.

Introduction:

As a representative and teacher of a religious doctrine affirming the value of the spirit in the human beings and in the universal culture, a priest should be remarkable among his believers not only by his spotless moral life, but also by an intense inner spiritual experience. It is about cultivating the spirit, that superior part of our being, which is the "image of God" in man and by which we are oriented towards Him and towards heaven. By mission and institution, priesthood forms "an aristocracy of the Spirit". [1]

According to the teachings of the great theologians of the Christian Church, the spirit, that innermost, intimate and noblest essence of our being is the general or elementary divine headquarters or altar, given to every Christian by baptism and by virtue of which all Christians constitute, according to the word of the Apostle Peter, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation..." (1 Peter 2:9) and the headquarters of the special grace given to the clergy by ordination. According to the word of our Saviour, "It is the Spirit Who gives life..." (John 6:63; compare to 2 Corinthians 3:6). He is the One Who enlivens all the work of God's servants in the world, Who supplies all the enthusiasm, dedication and zeal of the priest and Who maintains in him the sacred fire of love for God and for people.

This divine spark planted by God in the human being is the source radiating all the power of priesthood. The inner life of the spirit is absolutely indispensable for the priest, because it maintains the relation between his soul and God, from Whom he gets his authority and power and from Whom "every good and perfect gift is" (Jacob 1:17) and towards Whom the priest ought to turn not just his own eyes but also the eyes of the world. This inner life of the spirit is the "kingdom of God... within us" that our Saviour speaks about (Luke 17:21) and, in it, the priest finds the source and the support of his creative energy, because it helps him to see everything through the prism of eternity and of the high mission of priest. It is the sap of life flowing through all the being of the priest and yielding the flowers of virtues and the fruits of good works. The inner life is the secret chamber of the soul, from where the good man takes out his good things, as it is written in the Holy Scripture (Matthew 12:35 and Luke 6:45).

St. Paul the Apostle speaks frequently about the inner man (τονεσω ανθρωπον), to whom we must turn our attention, praying to God to "grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; ...rooted and grounded in love" (Ephesians 3:16-18)."The inner man" is, according to St. Paul, the ground and support of our being from eternity: "Therefore we do not lose courage; on the contrary, even if our outward man is wasting away, our inward man is being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16). [2]

The quality of the priest's external manifestations will be informed by the quality of the inner ground from which they arise, for "any action faithfully bears the stamp of the purity and intensity of the inner factor that produced it" [3]; or, as Mark the Ascetic says, visible actions are the offspring of the invisible actions. *An intense, rich and deep inner life naturally and necessarily flows out as the seep of the earth bursts into buds and flowers*; for, according to the word of our Saviour, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:34 and Luke 6:45).

Balance and harmony between inner ground and outer manifestations make the man of substance and ensure the success of priesthood. Moreover, for every man, his inner life, his spiritual life, is the soundboard (resonance board) that brings together, sifts as through a sieve and selects all the impressions, knowledge and feelings coming from the outside, which are subsequently turned into reactions, attitudes and actions whose quality depends on the vibrating force of each heart, as the sweetness of a violin sound depends on the quality of the material and the sensitivity of its resonance box. In the spiritual laboratory of the priest come to life, bear fruit and then come out into the external life, like branches full of fruit, all his private and public manifestations; here is the spring of his conduct in the family, among friends and acquaintances, in society and so on.[4]

Indeed, about the heart of a priest with an intense inner life one can say that "rivers of living water will flow out of it", as our Saviour says (John 7:38).

1. Spiritual mission of the priest

We could say that the spiritual mission of the priest does not start in the Holy Altar and pulpit of the church, but even from the altar inside his soul. "On the stage of the inner life are waged the most serious wars between the efforts towards good and temptations towards sin; it is here that the most brilliant moral victories against the evil thoughts and inclinations, against the temptations to sin, against sin itself, are being won. On the altar of the inner life are brought the hardest, but also the most delightful offerings, snatched from pride, selfishness, greed, mean instinctive impulses, snatched from the natural man...".[5]

Spiritual life is not the same thing as the priest's culture. Spiritual life includes, of course, a great dose of culture, but culture is not all. Because there can be priests who are highly educated, with a spiritual life that is dull and cold, which does not radiate any warmth; and inversely, there can be priests with less culture, but with an intense inner experience, able to arouse also in others sparks of spirit and enthusiasm. [6] As an instrument of divine grace and as an organ of sanctification of the world, the priest is obliged to pray not only for himself but also for his believers, whose mediator he is. As a priest, his primary function and mission is to pray for the Church, to transmit to God the prayer and the homage of the Church, of his parish, by the divine services ordained by the Church. The

spiritual life of the priest is maintained primarily by these sacred meetings with the believers in the Lord's house, occasioned by religious services. [7]

In this capacity, he is the announcer, the spokesman, the voice of the praying community or of the community he is leading, expressed through sacred formulas of prayer consecrated by the tradition and sanctioned by the Church. This is his main daily duty and task: to pray for the people; it must remain at the heart of his daily activities and prevail over all the other aspects of his priestly mission (teaching and management activity, social activity, cultural activity, household activity etc.). "The priest has, among other tasks, also the task of maintaining and kindling the fire of prayer in the house of David, in his parish and in his church. Woe to the priest who does not pray, who has not fought to win the habit of prayer, who sees the divine service as nothing else but a burden, who has extinguished in himself the spirit of prayer." [8] As a servant of the holy altar, the priest must be an example and model for his believers in point of the zeal for prayer, piety and warmth of prayer, motives or object of prayer and so on. The prayer of the priest during the divine services officiated inside or outside the church is the essential function of priesthood.

But the priest should not lower this Holy and capital duty to the level of a mere professional obligation, completed mechanically, out of routine, or out of the desire for material gain. The priest must not pray "only with his lips". He ought to behave as someone who is always before God and ought to serve Him piously and from the bottom of his heart, with awe and faith, warmth and dignity. He must pray from the heart and selflessly. He must put soul and conviction in everything he says and does during the divine services in order to encourage others to prayer, by his example. "The duty of the priest is not only to pray, but also to teach others to pray, giving them the habit of prayer. The grace and religiousness of a parish is decided by the priest. He ought to be and look like a man of prayer by his excellence in the mediation of the transmission of the divine grace, and in order to infiltrate the taste, the need and the manner of praying in his parishioners." [9] Therefore, one of the goals a priest must follow in his sacramental activity is to attract the faithful to prayer, especially, associating them particularly to the prayer of the Church, to pray and sing along with the priest and with the singers.

It is self-evident that the parish priest cannot meet every day, strictly, the entire order of prayer and divine services imposed to the dwellers of the monasteries, whose chief purpose and duty is precisely to pray incessantly. However, he is obliged to more than the minimum of prayer required from any lay believer every evening and every morning. He should appeal more often to the Book of Hours (*Ceaslov*), this code of sacred prayer of the Church, which should not be left solely to the singers of the choir in the church, but ought to be an indispensable prayer guide, a *vade mecum* of the priest, always present in his hand, in his house and in his religious life, where he finds the order of the Holy Communion, the daily Akathists and Canons of prayer, the Compline etc. The accomplishment in time, with love and awareness, of all the duties and rites that are to be accomplished by any servant of the holy altar characterizes a priest inspired by a high conscience for his mission and his responsibility. The priest should endeavor especially to respect the Rules ordained regarding his bodily and spiritual preparation for the Liturgy; he ought to make his whole being a worthy abode of the divine grace given to him through ordination, the grace that sanctifies and turns, through his lips and his hands, the honorable gifts into the Holy Body and Blood

of the Lord. [10] In fulfilling his duties called for by the divine service, the priest is officiating in the name and person of the Saviour, but also as a mediator of the community faithful to Him. The Holy Fathers and interpreters of the liturgy affirm that the celebrant represents, on the one hand, the person of Jesus Christ, but he is also the empowered representative, delegate or interpreter of the Church, namely of his community of believers, because he speaks and prays not for himself or on his behalf, but for the believers and on their behalf.

As a general principle, priesthood was established first of all for the needs of worship, namely to mediate the relation between people and the divinity: on the one hand, to give God the honor and glory owed to Him by the creatures, and, on the other hand, to acquire from Him and transmit to the people His sanctifying grace and all that is necessary for our spiritual life. When he completes the sacred services, the Orthodox priest is exercising his primordial, principal and characteristic calling. The priest is, therefore, first of all, a sanctifier and only secondly a teacher and a leader of his flock.

It is well-known that our Saviour has founded the Christian priesthood primarily in view of its sacramental mission, at the Last Supper, when He leaves His apostles the duty and the power to celebrate the Holy Eucharist ("do this in remembrance of Me..." [Luke 22:19]) [11], supplementing it after that with the power to bind and loose [sins] and only later do the Apostles receive full authority by the words sending them to preach, i.e. to convert the whole world. Actually, even regarding the historical heathen priesthoods, the dominant conception has always been that their main task, the one characterizing their office, consisted precisely in bringing sacrifices of public worship, whereas in the Christian Church, the bearers of the priestly grace are "servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries" (1 Corinthians 4:1).

2. The relationship between priest and believers

The office of celebrant of the Orthodox Christian priest is, therefore, not only the most sublime point of priesthood, but also the most important aspect of his mission, namely that of being, finally, the sanctifying organ of his believers' life. There is no need to remind that this priesthood, because of its sublimity, also constitutes a task meant for a person one can depend on, requiring from the priest a high degree of sanctity in his service. [12] This is, actually, one of the main differentiating points between us and the Protestants. It is known that in the Orthodox conception, as opposed to the Protestant one, the priest is an indispensable link connecting the ordinary or lay believers with God. In this capacity, he fulfills the double function we have talked about: on the one hand, he presents to God the believers' offering - namely their gifts, worship and prayers or supplications – and, on the other hand, he transmits to people what comes from God, i.e. His grace. [13] This is why the Orthodox priest has always been an organ of sanctification of his flock, a trustee and holder of grace from above, which grace he puts within the believers' reach, while the Protestant pastor and his modern version, the preacher of a sect, does not have either the preparation, or, by his calling or institution, the priestly powers vested into the legally established priesthood, which is the legitimate successor of the Apostles and of their successors, namely bishops and priests from everywhere.

Often overlooked is the great importance of the priest's person in the achievement and maintaining of religious unity, in the accurate preservation of the doctrine itself, by

respecting the unity and uniformity of worship. On the priest, as celebrant in his double quality: as interpreter of Christ's priesthood and as representative or intercessor of the believers, depends the accurate or inaccurate rendering of the characteristic meaning of each mystery of the Church. The celebrant is thereby a faithful sentinel preserving intact and unaltered the being of religion itself, if he keeps the liturgical unity, but he can be just as well - by ignorance, recklessness or negligence - a mediator for the insinuation in the cult of beliefs foreign to a Christian person or under the moral level of a Christian person.

The relation between the priest and his believers is the moral fundament and at the same time an essential condition of the success of the priest's activity in the parish. It is known that in the Church, the priest has, in the middle of his believers, on a religious level, a special situation, a mission and a spiritual authority that are based on the special grace of priesthood received at ordination. The priest is, in his parish, a servant of God, a representative or delegate of our Redeemer, meant to continue His work of salvation of souls, an organ of the Holy Spirit, meant to sanctify and lead the faithful on the paths of salvation. Due to this mission of divine origin, received from the Church by the bishop and reinforced canonically by him, the parish priest is, in the parish he is leading, a *teacher* of his believers, a spiritual leader or adviser, and, at the same time, their *sanctifier*. He teaches them the word of the Gospel, particularly through sermon and catechesis, guides them on the paths of salvation, sharing to them the Christian teaching of faith, advising them, encouraging them on the path of moral virtues, rebuking them or scolding them if necessary, and, at the same time, sanctifying their life, putting God's grace, blessing and help within their reach, by the divine services performed by him.

This quality of the priest is the first source of the connections created between him and his believers. The natural relationship between shepherd and his flock is the foundation on which, gradually, the religious relations between the priest and his believers grow, relations that are the most important and the most lasting and derive from the very mission of the priest, which is to mediate the connection between the believers and God and work for the salvation of their souls. This mission situates the priest in a position superior to that of his believers; in his quality of "man of God" - as St. Paul the Apostle called Timothy (1 Tim. 6:11), he becomes the spiritual father of his parish, and the believers are his sons. Due to the special grace of priesthood, acquired by cheirotonia, the priest is one who gives birth or rebirth to his believers for the spiritual, supernatural life, *the life in Christ*, as the great Byzantine theologian Nicholas Cabasilas called it (in the 14th century) in a famous book of his, bearing this title, translated into Romanian (by Fr. T. Bodogae, Sibiu, 1946). He can say, like St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians: "I have become your father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel" (1 Corinthians 4:15).

The priest baptizes his believers, thus introducing them, by baptism and chrismation, in the Church; through him, they become part of the Church, of this great spiritual family, joined together by their unity of faith, worship and organization. He blesses not only the cradle but also the home of family life by the Sacrament of Matrimony, which sanctifies, with God's blessing and the blessing of the Church, the relation between man and woman for bearing children and educating them as useful future members of the social organism. Also through the priest, the believers are reconnected with the Church, when their connection with it has been weakened or interrupted by sin. And it is also the priest who blesses his believers

on their last journey, the one to the grave, and maintains the memory of the deceased among the living, by divine services for their forgiveness, remembrance and eternal rest.

We see so many opportunities, situations, moments and circumstances in the believers' religious life that bring the priest into contact with his flock and in which he exerts his mission of spiritual "father" of his parish, maintaining their connection with heaven. The believers themselves recognize and honor, in their priest, this quality when they address him using the honoring appellative of "father". He has, towards his spiritual children, just as many rights, duties and responsibilities in the religious order as their bodily parents, in the material and social domain. He has the right to teach, bless and sanctify, guide, scold and reprove, and even punish them, if necessary, with the means available and for their own spiritual good. All, together, with no discrimination, make up the great spiritual family of the priest; they all owe him obedience, to the priest not as a man but as a representative of God, and, for all, he is indebted with the same care and the same responsibility to God.

We see a first category of relations that blossoms between the priest and his believers and which results from the very function or religious mission of the priest: namely to meet the spiritual and moral needs of his believers. The number, variety, frequency and durability of these connections depend, undoubtedly, on the richness and the religious life of the priest and of his parish. The richer the religious life of a pastor and of the believers of a parish is, the more numerous, the denser and the more durable the spiritual connections between these believers and their pastor will be. The divine services that the priest is officiating in the church and that the faithful are attending (Holy Liturgy, Church praise and Holy Mysteries), or those completed outside the church, at the request of the believers (religious services, such as consecrations of the water or of the home, Memorial Services and other services for the dead, "baptism" of the houses on certain dates of the year, Mystery of the Holy Unction) are just as many opportunities bringing the priest in relation with his faithful and helping him know each believer and thus know the parish, in general, especially at the beginning of his activity.

On all these occasions, the relationships between pastors and believers relies on the sacramental character of priesthood, on the priest's mission of holder and dispenser of divine grace, of sanctifier of the most important moments and circumstances of everyone's life and of the things that he needs for his religious life. In this capacity, the priest is at the heart of his mission, he exerts the holiest side of the sacerdoce that God and the Church invested in him. It is mostly from here that follows the halo of sanctity, prestige and authority that has always been given to priesthood, in which the believers themselves situate the priest and which in the old Church sometimes went up to worship, especially when the grace of ordination sealed distinguished personalities, being added to the worthiness of the man as it happened in the case of Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Basil etc.

Thus, it is up to the priest to maintain unbroken - in his relations of this nature with his flock - his prestige, authority and esteem that the believers are naturally willing to grant him. The more the priest knows and strives to fulfill better, in a more aware and selfless manner, the sacramental side of his mission and meet the religious needs of his believers, the more he will multiply the number of his contacts with the believers and their respect, their confidence and their love towards him. Fulfilling competently, with kindness and diligence, his duty of celebrant, serving with faith, with due respect for the traditional worship orders,

from the bottom of his heart and with sincerity, being relentlessly and graciously available to all his believers to meet their religious needs, the priest will be sure to enjoy not just the respect and love of his parishioners, but also the most sustainable foundation of his authority and success in his pastoral activity.

Two greater dangers lurk the priest and can lead him astray from the ideal accomplishment of this aspect of his mission: routine or a mechanical and unconvincing performance of his duty of celebrant and money-mindedness. These two great sins, of which some priests have made themselves guilty, not only put a stain on the halo of priesthood in general, but also endanger the spiritual connections between the priest and his flock. The believers do not joyfully run to priests who do their job "to get rid of this chore", who serve without conviction and not from the bottom of their hearts, who are in a hurry to finish the job faster. Moreover, the relations between the priest and his believers will get cooler if the priest demonstrates the sin of money-mindedness, when he lets the believers see that he serves for money or when he claims from his believers more than they are used to or can offer him as a reward for his work. It is self-evident how serious and how harmful this sin is both for the priests in question and their flock and for the prestige and the reputation of the clergy in general. This is one of the leading causes undermining the relations between shepherd and flock, gradually weakening these relations and even triggering conflicts between the Church servants and the lay believers, unfortunately sometimes resulting even in their leaving the Church.

The priest is connected to his parish especially by his house and his family. Unlike other confessions, where the priest is not married, the Orthodox priest is - as he was everywhere in the old Church - a married man, a family father. Through his family, he is integrated into the social life of the parish. Actually, the very ecclesiological conception of the Orthodoxy places the priest not over the Church or over the believers, but in the Church, together with the faithful. Priests and Christians make up a spiritual family where the distinction is made not as between rulers and ruled, but as between parents and children, who are all together "brothers", as sons of the same God. This is why Saint Paul the Apostle, like all the Holy Fathers, addresses not only the clergy but also the faithful by the appellative "(dearly) beloved brothers", which has been preserved to this day as a traditional way of address at the beginning of the pericopes of the Apostle, read at the divine services, and in the sermons or advice and exhortations addressed by the priest to the believers in churches. The connection between the believer and the priest is, in fact, the expression and mark of his connection with the Church, of his belonging to a parish. And, on the contrary, the interruption of the connection with the priest actually means breaking the ties with the Church, getting out of the Church community and becoming situated outside the parish, namely at the periphery of the Church or outside it. This is why it is so important for the destiny of the Church herself that the priest should strive, on the one hand, to create, maintain and strengthen as much as possible his spiritual relations with the believers, and keep them closely united around him, and, on the other hand, to beware of everything that could contribute to weakening, interrupting and compromising these relations, which represent the foundation and the key condition of success for his pastoral activity. Undoubtedly, today's situations are much different from those of the past, without fully justifying, however, the continual transfer of priests from one parish to another, as the

instability of the shepherd is detrimental to the Church. The close relationship of the priest with his flock and his permanence in the parish is also a means of strengthening the idea of parish and the conscience of parish in the believers' souls, a means of defending the unity of faith, a barrier against sectarian propaganda and a practical method of preventing the breaking up of the parishioners from the priest and from the parish, equivalent - as we have seen - to coming out of the Church, outside of which there is no salvation, as St. Cyprian says ("Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus"). To the priest's love for his flock, they respond with love and come all around their shepherd at his call. St. John Chrysostom is so loved by the people in Antioch that when he is to be promoted to the patriarchal throne in Constantinople he has to be simply kidnapped from among them, by a ruse of the Governor Asterius of Antioch, on the order of Emperor Arcadius and of Eutropius. And it is still he who expressed, magistrally, in his speech to his believers of Constantinople, before going into exile, the strong spiritual connection that is created between the good shepherd and the believers: "I encourage you today to take comfort, because no one can separate me from you: What God has joined together, no man can separate (Matthew 19:6)... Tomorrow I will be with you at the hour of prayer, because where I am, you are and where you are, I am, too. We are one body and the head will not let itself separated from the body, nor the body from the head. Even though we are separated by space, we are united by love. No death can separate us. If my body dies, the soul will live on and will always keep the memory of his faithful. I am ready to give my life a thousand times for you and you do not need to thank me for it. I am only doing my duty, because a good shepherd gives his life for his sheep." [14].

Tact, namely the ability to behave wisely with people, is usually the fruit of a maturity in thinking or even of a long experience that comes with age; this quality is, however, necessary even since the very beginning of our activity and we can acquire it as a lesson from the experience of our ancestors or those older than us, or from the sense of foresight and correct weighing of the realities, a sense that must never leave us. Tact is a quality - a virtue we could call it -, one of the most necessary for the priest, who in his activity is dealing with people of the most diverse characters and temperaments or natures. The Saviour Himself teaches His Holy Apostles: "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves..." (Matthew 10:16). He always knows how to keep the right balance between what is required of him as a priest, on the one hand, and the actual realities in which he is given to work, on the other hand. Without sacrificing the evangelical ideal or giving it up, he pursues it patiently, without neglecting or defying realities. Because, if lack of zeal and idealism makes priesthood fruitless, too much zeal can often be just as detrimental, when it compromises success by using inappropriate means. The Saviour condemns, for example, the overzealous Apostle Peter when he draws the sword in the Garden of Gethsemane, to defend his beloved teacher; the gesture, however spectacular and heroic apparently, was, in essence, useless.

Wisdom, tact and prudence are necessary to the priest in his daily relations with people. He comes in touch with all sorts of people, temperaments, natures and characters, of the most diverse types. The soul of each man in turn represents a world of his own, distinct from the worlds of the others. A priest must therefore be a good psychologist, a knower of souls; he has the duty to know people in all their spiritual external manifestations and inner folds, he needs to foresee, avoid and correct the evil inclinations of his believers or their

attitudes determined by ignorance, sinful passions or mean interests. A priest endowed with tact, wisdom and psychological sense does not treat all the faithful in the same way; he does as a gardener who knows that a plant needs more sun, another needs shade, another one grows in damp soil, and another one thrives on dry ground etc. According to the word of the Apostle Paul, a diligent priest, with zeal for the salvation of his believers, makes himself everything for everyone, to save at least some of them (1 Corinthians 9:19-20).

Priestly tact, in the good sense of the word, does not mean, however, slyness, guile or cunning, flirting with immorality and aiming to save or meet personal or earthly interests saving or earthly satisfaction; the tact and wisdom we are talking about here is the Christian goodness, which takes into account the supreme interests of the Church and of the Country that we are serving. Tact, wisdom, prudence, patience and steadfastness give the priest that complex quality or combination of virtues that is usually called equanimity (spiritual balance), which generally characterizes people of good sense and character. "Spiritual balance helps the priest to be equal to himself in all the circumstances, be consistent in his actions and worthy of his holy mission. Such a priest is not once full of zeal, and at a different moment discouraged and apathetic. He is not sometimes too severe with the believers, and at other times too lenient with their mistakes. The line of his activity does not consist of fragments, but pursues a high aim and diligently works to achieve it. He does nothing superficially, or out of vain ambitions. He does not preach himself; he preaches Christ. He does not talk about his alleged "thaumaturgies"; he talks about the Saviour's wonders. He does not do theater while carrying out the religious service and does not do it hastily or superficially." [15]. When, however, this balance is missing, good and zealous servants lose their compass, they think they are more than they actually are, become full of themselves and of an unpriestly pride, start preaching personal teachings, start using exceptional, curious and strange pastoral methods, with pretentions of replacing the twice millenary Church practice and method.

Conclusions

The priest's seriousness and dignity in dress, attitude and speech do not exclude simplicity and naturalness, good humor, friendliness, kindness and gentleness of manners, or familiarity. To his parishioners, the priest must never be distant and cold, indifferent or foreign, but close and familiar, like a true father to his children. Of course, familiarity does not mean sacrificing the priestly dignity or falling into vulgarity. The priest need not look by all means for popularity, familiarity or intimacy - exaggerated or misunderstood - with anyone, only to please everyone. The sanctified servants need some discretion and reserve to everything that could diminish or compromise their prestige in the eyes of the world; less familiarity and intimacy is recommended especially with those who do not know to respect priesthood, and the priest ought to avoid places or situations that could compromise his authority and prestige.

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The Role of Faith in Epistemology

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ABSTRACT

Abstract: *There is a startling lack of consensus among Christian philosophers as to whether faith relates to epistemology, and if so, how they relate. The problem is even less settled among Christians in general. Epistemologist Peter Boghossian seems attuned to this vulnerability, and uses it to undermine epistemic justification for religious faith. The disunity of response among Christian philosophers, unfortunately, only lends credibility to Boghossian's thesis. I offer here a biblical model of faith that seeks unity among both my predecessors and my contemporaries. And I offer this model to two camps: non-Christians that argue for faith as a failed epistemology, and Christians that argue for faith as non-epistemological. I show that a properly-conceived, biblically-accurate model of faith is incredibly robust, and illumines misconceptions among non-Christians and Christians alike. I argue that 1) Faith is epistemic in nature, 2) Faith is active, 3) Faith is trust, 4) Faith can be virtuous, and finally, 5) Faith, as experienced in Divine encounter, is an adjunct avenue in acquiring knowledge.*

Keywords: Epistemology, Religious Epistemology, the Nature of Faith, Faith and Epistemology, Spiritual Experience, Philosophy of Religion, Philosophical Theology, Peter Boghossian

INTRODUCTION

Is Faith epistemological? There is a startling lack of consensus among Christian philosophers as regards this question. And the problem is even less settled among Christians in general. It may be that, as William James suggested, talk of faith has been intentionally sequestered from the discipline of philosophy1.

Whatever the cause, epistemologist Peter Boghossian seems attuned to this vulnerability, and uses it to undermine epistemic justification for religious faith in general. The disunity of response among Christian philosophers, unfortunately, only lends credibility to Boghossian's thesis. I suggest with some urgency that Christian philosophers take up Boghossian's gauntlet and work toward a unified concept of faith.

To that end, I offer here a biblical model of faith that seeks unity among both my predecessors and my contemporaries. And I offer this model to two camps: *non-Christians* that argue for faith as a *failed* epistemology,2 and *Christians* that argue for faith as *non*-epistemological.3 What we will see is that a *biblically-accurate* model of faith is incredibly robust, and illumines misconceptions among non-Christians and Christians alike. I will argue 1) Faith *is* epistemic in nature, 2) Faith is active, 3) Faith is trust, 4) Faith can be virtuous,

and finally, 5) Faith is an adjunct avenue in acquiring knowledge. I will deal with Boghossian's claim first, and then examine the structure of faith.

BOGHOSSIAN and Scripture

Boghossian offers two definitions of faith: (1) Belief without evidence,[4] and (2)

Pretending to know things we don't know.[5] It seems trivial to state that few Christians, if any will subscribe to (2) as their working definition of faith. The biblical Hebrew for "faith" – הנומא ('emuna) [6] – has been translated variously into English as truth,[7] stability,[8] and honesty.[9]

Clearly, "pretending to know things you don't know" is a bizarre translation for הנומא – truth (or stability, or honesty). For reasons such as this, William James dismissed precisely (2) as the "schoolboy" definition of faith over a century ago.[10]

But the aim here is not whether faith has been poorly defined (it certainly has – even by Christians). The aim here is to discern a biblically-accurate definition of faith, and whether that model is epistemically justified. So let us begin by admitting that those who subscribe to (2) lack both scriptural support and, in agreement with Boghossian, epistemic justification. Let us then leave (2) behind in search of something more biblically accurate.

And Evidentialism

In epistemology proper, (1) "Belief without evidence" looks less like faith and more like an a priori belief,[11] or, more likely, some non-evidentialist epistemology. Supporting this latter notion is Boghossian's consistent appeal to "evidence" as an ideal justifier of beliefs, and faith's purported failure to meet this ideal.[12] It is important to note at this point that Boghossian is simply presuming evidentialism in much of his critique of faith. There are several problems here.

First, what Boghossian likely has in mind is a contrast between (a) taking a proposition on "faith", and (b) taking a proposition on "evidence", where (b) is obviously preferable. And while (b) may be preferable,[13] the only substantive difference between (a) and (b) is that in (b), evidence has been obtained, whereas in (a) evidence is being sought. Why assume (a) is something static rather than dynamic? And why assume that many well-established propositions in category (b) did not pass through a stage of (a)?[14] In fact, this seems to be exactly what St. Augustine and St. Anselm had in mind in their "faith seeking understanding."[15]

The second problem is defining what exactly counts as "evidence".[16] Is it demonstrative "proof"?[17] Or some distinction between objectivity and subjectivity?[18] Is evidence that which is delivered by the senses? Or by memory? Or testimony? Axioms? Etc.[19] We are owed some sort of criteria for which faith is ostensibly failing to meet. Also, if Thomas Reid is correct, that evidence is simply that which grounds a belief,[20] then it is truly impossible for beliefs to form in the absence of some sort of evidence. And in this case, (1), "Belief without evidence," makes no sense.[21]

The third problem is well-known issue of epistemic justification.[22] If my Belief A is evidentially based on my Belief B, and my Belief B is evidentially based on my Belief C, at what point does my evidential chain end? Do I come to some final Belief, Z, which is not evidentially-based upon another belief? If so, then we have come to some belief which has no evidential support, and we are forced to conclude that at least some beliefs are justified without evidence. Or, if I never come to a final, non-evidential belief, then I have no underlying support for my evidential beliefs. Or if my beliefs form a circular chain, such that Belief Z is evidentially based on Belief A, then my beliefs run the risk of forming a tautology. In any case, this is all to say that even if Boghossian is correct, that faith is belief

without evidence (which, as we have seen, may be impossible; and as we will see, is an unbiblical model of faith), it's still unclear what the problem is. Or, at the very least, the evidentialism implicit in much of Boghossian's critique of faith seems no less problematic than Boghossian's definition of faith.

And Objection Types

But leaving these problems aside, let us zoom in from epistemology proper to religious epistemology. Likely, then, Boghossian intends that: (1') [religious] faith is [religious] belief without evidence. Again, leaving aside that belief without evidence may be impossible, this would at most only leave one with fideism. But this is by no means the default position of all religious faiths. And all those whose faith is belief with evidence (whether compelling or not) are silently swept under the rug. But let us suppose, again for the sake of argument, that all religious adherents are fideistic.23 Does it follow then that religious faith, as Boghossian suggests, is a "failed epistemology"?24

Alvin Plantinga's distinction between de jure and de facto objections is helpful at this point.25 For Plantinga, de jure objections are those related to whether a particular belief is warranted. De facto objections are those related to whether a particular belief is true. Plantinga shows that a de jure objection to a religious belief is dependent on a de facto objection. Therefore, barring some propositional fallacy, one's religious faith can only be shown as unwarranted if it is also shown to be false. Or in other words, if a particular faith is in fact ultimately true, then belief in it is quite obviously warranted. When Boghossian objects to religious faith as a "failed epistemology" then, he seems to be making a de jure objection to its warrant; presupposing its falsehood. But he cannot do so without knowing a de facto defeater – a defeater to its truth. And Boghossian has not shown this: indeed he cannot, without engaging a discipline outside of epistemology. Regarding his overall thesis of faith as a failed epistemology then, even gracious attempts to rescue it fail. Nevertheless, Boghossian is to be commended for arousing contemplation as to what exactly faith is. Let us now examine this question.

THE NATURE OF FAITH
Faith as Epistemological

Boghossian suggests that faith claims are knowledge claims, are statements of fact about the world.26 But this is assuming only one of many models of faith. And models of faith run the epistemic gamut from non-applicable, to a belief-producing process, to belief itself, to an action based on belief, and finally, to the entire package of knowledge itself. So epistemologically speaking, where exactly is faith located? This appears to be the most contested feature in the topography of faith.

One might place faith outside the waters of epistemology altogether, with faith posterior to, or based upon, knowledge previously acquired, as William Lane Craig defends.27 Or one might approach the banks of epistemology with Thomas Aquinas, placing faith at home in the intellect.28 One might dip a toe in epistemology with Hugh of St. Vincent and place faith somewhere between opinion and knowledge.29 One might wade in epistemology and place faith as a species of belief with St. Augustine30 or William James, whose faith is a belief in something for which doubt is still possible.31 One might swim in epistemology and accept William Alston or Robert Audi's suggestion that faith is a doxastic (belief-forming) process.32 Or one might dive head-first into epistemology and equate the entire package of knowledge with faith as does Calvin33, or Plantinga's sensus divinitatis, in which faith is a special case of knowledge itself.34 Boghossian obtusely assumes all (or the majority) of religious adherents adopt some form of the Calvin/Plantinga model of faith-as-

knowledge. Yet this may be the single redeeming element in Boghossian's thesis: there do seem to be good reasons suggesting faith is epistemological. And, as we shall see, perhaps more properly epistemological than either camp realizes.

Faith as Justified True Belief

Accepting the traditional tripartite theory of knowledge (JTB),[35] a venture which consistently incorporates elements of JTB, such as belief, truth, or justification, is epistemological. And it seems that faith not only incorporates each of these elements, but in some cases, is isomorphic (identical in nature)[36] to them.

Regarding belief, for example, "I [have faith] that p" is isomorphic to "I [believe] that p". Robert Audi terms this propositional faith: the doxastic (and therefore, epistemological) component of faith.[37] This is not to say that faith is reducible to belief. But we observe faith paralleling belief when we at least consider that 1) both involve assent of something taken to be true, 2) both seem to come in degrees of certainty, and 3) both are voluntary (or, depending on one's school, both are involuntary). In other words, what is true of faith in (1)- (3), is true of belief in (1)-(3).

Next, if epistemic justification is that which indicates or points toward truth,[38] we are, as we have seen, inching closer to one of the several expressions of biblical faith (הנומא). As we saw, part of what the Christian is thus professing is a belief (propositional faith). But another part of what the Christian is professing is sufficient reason that their belief is true. This is seen when St. Peter urges the Christian to always be prepared to offer an ἀπολογίαν (apologian) – a justification, or reason – for his faith.[39]

Recall that while all Christians may not necessarily be able to enumerate such reasons, nor even that all Christians think they ought to be able to do so, scripture exhorts the Christian to cultivate such an ability. So the aim here is not the current state of Christian faith, but what a biblically accurate faith looks like. Thus St. Paul felt he was imprisoned for the sole purpose of giving good reasons (epistemic justification) for his faith.[40] This component of faith (let us term this apologetic faith) is virtually identical with Boghossian's understanding of justification – sufficient reason to believe.[41] The proposition "I have [faith] in Jesus's Resurrection" is therefore isomorphic to "I have [sufficient reason to believe] in Jesus's resurrection."[42] Thus when the Christian enumerates his faith in the Resurrection, he is providing reasons for which he feels justified in such a belief.[43] And epistemic justification, properly defined, is not necessarily showing that one is justified. One may potentially be justified but not be able to show how, as in epistemic internalism. When such a set of reasons comprise a person's justification for believing a particular faith claim, such reasons are, again, properly epistemological.

What is interesting in all this is not just that faith is an epistemic venture, but that faith, when biblically conceived, models each of the sufficient conditions for knowledge: belief, justification (ἀπολογίαν), and truth (הנומא). Thus when Boghossian suggests faith claims are knowledge claims, we ought, in a sense, to agree with him.[44] Faith is a unique cognitive venture which captures the three necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge (JTB).

Faith as Active

A quick word on another expression of faith. Thus far we have examined faith as belief (propositional faith), and faith as epistemic justification (apologetic faith). But these are propositional attitudes[45] or states of affairs[46] (respectively). This feature of faith might be described as "Belief in [X]" or "Good reason for believing in [X]," where X is some fact or state of affairs. But this doesn't exhaustively describe the phenomenon of faith. For

William James, religious faith is wholly dependent upon action.47 In other words, faith has an active component. Timothy McGrew (as well as Craig) rightly suggests faith is, among other things, acting on what one believes to be true.48   While faith as a psychological state may be described as "Belief in [X]," faith as active may be described as "Belief that [x]," where X is some active venture beyond mere attitude. But what sort of active venture?

Faith as Trust

Essentially unanimous among the aforementioned thinkers is faith as trust. This seems to be the least contested feature in the topography of faith. Yet Boghossian contends that "this is not how the faithful use the word 'faith' in religious contexts."49 Boghossian does not seem to provide any support for this claim (or perhaps his support is anecdotal). As a test case then, let us see whether his contention holds against scripture.

First notice that the root meaning of the Biblical (Koine) Greek πίστις (pistis), 'faith', is 'trust'. 50 Second, recall that the Biblical Hebrew for faith (מוהנ א) also denotes trust.51 But third, faith-as-trust is clearly inherent in scripture. As St. James explains, "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder."52 But if faith is only belief, as Boghossian suggests, then the Christian is willingly equating his faith with demonic faith, which is absurd. Clearly faith is more than belief, as St. James further clarifies.53 "[Abraham's] faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did."54 According to St. James then, faith is made complete (suggesting faith as a composite) with action. "Faith by itself," he concludes, "if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."55 Note that when St. James differentiates between dead faith and active faith, he is implicitly differentiating between the epistemic component of faith (faith-as-belief), and the active (or dead) component of faith.

Of course, even the demons act in scripture. What kind of action then differentiates Christian faith from demonic faith? St. James quotes Genesis, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."56 Note that for St. James, Abraham did not believe "in" God (a belief state): he believed God (an action). Faith here equates with trust. And for St. James, this is part of the proper model of faith: trust. This feature, termed the fiducial component of faith,57 is supported by the most famous of Christians ranging from St. Augustine58 in antiquity to the Reformers59 in the middle ages to William James60 and Alvin Plantinga61 in modernity. Now Boghossian may be right: some Christians may not equate faith with trust. But again, this only illumines a conceptual defect in such a Christian's conception of faith. And this serves to highlight precisely why, on a biblical model, faith – as trust – is a virtue.

Faith as Virtue

In Aristotelian ethics, virtue is the median point between deficiency and excess of some trait.62 Courage, for example, is the middle point between cowardice and recklessness. Courage, then, is a virtue, while cowardice and recklessness are vices. And for Aristotle, virtues come in two kinds: moral and intellectual.63 Now, Boghossian believes that our understanding of faith as a virtue is entirely mistaken: faith ought to be understood rather as an unreliable way of reasoning.64 "Having a firm belief is not a virtue,"65 he suggests. And he is right. But "firmness" of belief has not been marketed as virtuous among the thinkers (or scripture) in our discussion. How, then, is faith virtuous?

I suggest faith can be virtuous on at least three levels: morally, intellectually, and epistemically. It is crucial to note first that in this section that we are speaking of the active, trust component of faith. In agreement with Craig and McGrew, this component is based on previously established knowledge (or beliefs). First then, if one has good reason66 to trust in

some person or proposition, one is virtuous in trusting in, or having faith in such a person or proposition's offer.

Second, following the Aquinian model, faith is only virtuous when it expresses truth, never when it expresses falsehood.67 Further, for Aquinas, faith ought to perfect the intellect.68 In other words, an epistemology which profits its holder in new, bona fide knowledge, is virtuous. It is a spurious claim to dismiss all religious faiths (both in the form of beliefs and actions) as failing to produce knowledge.

And finally, employing epistemic tests in evaluating beliefs prior to acting upon them is virtuous. We shall touch on this in the final section. Now if, as I have argued, faith is a composite of at least (1) action and (2) belief, it becomes easy to see how faith carries virtue inherently. (1) Acting upon (2) a belief for which one does not have good reasons, is not virtuous (it is reckless – a vice). However, acting on a belief for which one does have good reasons, is virtuous. And failing to act on such a belief is a vice (cowardice). This model is summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1

	Faith-trust	No Faith-trust
Warranted Faith-Belief	Virtue	Vice
Not warranted Faith-Belief	Vice	Virtue

Boghossian complains that faith is commonly conceived as virtuous when one has "resolute belief in something – anything," or in the purportedly common sentiments that "faith makes us better people," or that "a man of faith is a good man."69 Again, no support is given that these are biblical or even traditional concepts of faith-as-virtue. But for those who conceive faith-as-virtue thus, we ought to side with Boghossian and agree, resolute belief alone is obviously not virtuous. As we have seen however, this is not the model of faith-as- virtue advocated in scripture or in the sample of highly influential religious thinkers (ancient and contemporary) under discussion. Rather, faith properly construed is virtuous. Two questions therefore remain from the current section: 1) can faith-trust in a faith-belief render new knowledge in a consistent manner, and 2) are there epistemic tests for such a process?

Faith as a Knowledge-Producing Process

Granting that we have several belief-producing processes ("cognitive faculties" – hereafter "CF") such as sense perception, reason, testimony, memory, intuition, imagination, sympathy, and so on, we see that knowledge comes from a variety of cognitive processes.70

Now if some sort of religious experience, causally related to faith, is shown to bring veridical knowledge, its faculty must be up for consideration as a valid knowledge-producing faculty, and therefore, properly epistemological.

Let us examine a single case from the prophet Isaiah, who professed both propositional 71 and fiducial faith72 in God. His faith brought new knowledge that, for example, Babylon would come to utter destruction, its land not to be inhabited again throughout all generations.73 This seems to be bona fide knowledge74 which remains testable today. And presumably, if Isaiah lacked any of the necessary conditions for Biblical faith – propositional, active, or fiducial – he would have lacked such knowledge. Again, this is not to say that faith is reducible to knowledge, but rather, that knowledge does factor into Biblical faith. And such cases of new knowledge abound through the corpus of the prophets, wisdom literature, the disciples of Jesus, etc.75

Now Boghossian suggests that faith is abandonment of reason.76 But reason is only one of many knowledge-producing processes.77 For example, when I use the CF of memory to recall what I ate for dinner a week ago; or I use the CF of introspective perception to know that I have a headache, I am using processes other than, or in addition to, reason. Reason is one faculty among many, and CF such as memory or perception may be used in conjunction with, or exclusively apart from, reason. But this is not abandonment of the CF of reason, any more than one abandons perception when one relies on memory.78

William Alston places the faculty of faith among the perception-based faculties: participants are passive, and experiences are simply presented to the participant, such as an object entering the field of one's vision.79 William James defines the faculty as, in part, perceiving new truths,80 which consistently render the most real experiences of life: experiences which unify and explain all our past experiences.81 This is no trivial phenomenon. Nor is it a marginal phenomenon: it factors into the lives of all walks of humanity, across all cultures, across all eras of recorded human history. This of course does not confirm them, but rather, commends them to our attention.

One objection may be that not everyone has shared such an experience. But as James points out, it makes little sense to exclude phenomena from our consideration merely because some of us have not participated in it.82 A more serious objection is that subjects of religious experience come to hold conflicting religious beliefs.83 But our CF regularly present us with conflicting beliefs. And yet we do not discard such CF as unreliable. Memories, for example, are notorious for coming into conflict with each other,84 yet we don't discount memory as a valid knowledge-producing faculty. Why? We generally filter our memory-produced beliefs through internal epistemic tests. In fact, it seems that we generally filter each of our CF- beliefs through epistemic tests. This is why we see the Biblical mandate to test faith-beliefs in 1 John 4:1, 2 Corinthians 13:5, etc.

Now, Boghossian rightly complains that faith, as a cognitive tool, cannot adjudicate between competing faith claims.85 And it doesn't take an epistemologist to see that using faith to establish faith is careless.86 Boghossian proposes that only reason and evidence can aid in discerning the truth of a faith claim.87 Boghossian is on the right track: I only propose we use our full set of CF in discerning the truth of a faith claim. This will include far more than just reason and evidence.

I suggest that if religious experiences are the result of CF, they be subjected to internal epistemic tests, just as with our other CF. For example, a memory of my three year old son teaching physics is presented to me. I would do well to employ other cognitive tools, such as reason or testimony, in evaluating whether such a memorial presentation is veridical. In doing so, I would discover this belief as the result of a dream I had a few nights ago. William Alston terms this the epistemic test of "internal consistency."88 If two perceptual beliefs contradict each other, at least one is false.89 Likewise, if I have some sort of religious experience-produced belief which has no testimonial support (or contradicts it), or fails a test of reason, or of memory (say, of another set of beliefs), I would be virtuous in treating it with skepticism, and favoring my other CF. But if I am presented with a belief which unifies and explains all my past experiences, brings with it a wealth of new knowledge, and passes internal epistemic tests, I am clearly virtuous in accepting it.

Further, as William James explained, if we are unable to truly experience the noumenal (objective), but rather have only the phenomenal (subjective), then the most important kind of knowledge is that which is most phenomenally profound.90 One could

make the case that the CF of faith is therefore the most important of our CF, and needs the most attention and careful cultivation.

The arguments in this section are exceedingly brief. But there ought to be sufficient support at least showing, again, if some sort of religious experience, with causal dependence on faith, is shown to bring veridical knowledge, its faculty is properly epistemological. In this way, faith, considered as a cognitive, belief-producing faculty, is properly epistemological, in divergence from Craig and McGrew, and in agreement with Boghossian.

CONCLUSION

Talk of faith is strangely absent in epistemology: we have Boghossian to thank for re- introducing it as a proper subject of epistemic investigation. But my intention here is not merely to correct the remaining misconceptions in Boghossian's critique of faith. We can go much further. To give an explicit voice to what has historically been implicit: faith, properly formed and exercised virtuously, merits a place alongside the established epistemic tools of perception, reason, testimony, memory, intuition, and so forth.

Faith straddles belief, justification, truth, action, trust, virtue, and knowledge. It stands unique among all human characteristics. Faith, a belief-producing process, carries virtue in morality and intellect, and when run through epistemic filters, is made complete when paired with an active trust. But perhaps most importantly, whether considered non-epistemological by one school of thought or a failed epistemology by another, both camps eliminate a perfectly valid cognitive tool from the art of knowledge-acquisition. And for many, this would exclude a tool for acquiring the most valuable kind of knowledge.91 A biblical model of faith is not a failed epistemology: it is not pretending to know what we don't know, nor is it belief without evidence. "Faith is not a spiritual blindness," Thomas Oden rightly explains, "but a spiritual seeing."92 To prohibit it from epistemology is to willingly prohibit one of our most unique and important of human gifts.

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6 The root of which is אמן, "amen".
7 Proverbs 12:17, "Whoever speaks truth (אמונה) gives honest evidence, but a false witness utters deceit." ESV. See also Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 33:4; Psalm 40:10; 89:49; 96:13; 98:3; 100:5; 119:30; Proverbs 12:17; Isaiah 25:1; Isaiah 59:4; Jeremiah 5:1, 3; 7:28; 9:3; passim.
8 Isaiah 33:6, "[The Lord] will be the stability (אמונת) of your times", ESV.
9 Kings 12:15, "they did not ask for an accounting from the men into whose hand they delivered the money to pay out to the workmen, for they dealt honestly (באמנה)." ESV.
10 "The faith you think of is the faith defined by the schoolboy when he said, 'Faith is when you believe something that you know ain't true.'" William James, The Will to Believe, 29.
11 "'a priori' typically connotes a kind of knowledge or justification that does not depend on evidence." Paul
Moser, ed. Edward Craig, Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy (London: Routledge, 2000), 1.
12 "All faith is belief on the basis of insufficient evidence. That's what makes it faith. If one had evidence, one wouldn't need faith, one would merely present the evidence." Boghossian, Ibid., 165 and passim.

13 Even belief with evidence does not guarantee knowledge. But for the sake of argument, let us grant that belief with evidence (which, as we shall see, is an elusive term) is more reliable than belief without evidence.

14 Underdetermined propositions, for example, almost always pass through (1). One thinks of historical scientific propositions such as heliocentricism, in which "evidence" cannot establish one proposition over another. Rather, one gives assent to some proposition, then seeks for it the state of (2). But a proposition which falls into category (1) is by no means necessarily a "failed" or "faulty" epistemology.

15 So Augustine, "Crede, ut intelligas" – faith seeking understanding, Sermon 43.7, 9; St. Anselm – "fides quaerens intellectum" – I believe so that I may understand, in Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 87.

16 Thus Oxford philosopher and historian RG Collingwood, "when we try to define 'evidence' … we find it very difficult." The Idea of History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 279.

17 For which, technically speaking, few philosophers will grant is attainable.

18 Subjective knowledge, such as "I am thinking of the number seven", seems to be knowledge, but lacks objective demonstration.

19 See Thomas Reid, On The Intellectual Powers of Man, Essay II, Ch. XX, for a fuller discussion.

20 Thomas Reid, Ibid.

21 See also, Joung Park, "The Anatomy of Faith," Revisions: A Journal of Christian Perspective 3, no.1 (Fall 2006): 18.

22 Related to Agrippa's Trilemma. See for example Duncan Pritchard, What is This Thing Called Knowledge? (New York: Routledge, 2010), 33.

23 Such as the philosophical minority of Pascal, Kierkegaard, or perhaps Wittgenstein.

24 Boghossian, Ibid, 30.

25 Alvin Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), xii.

26 Boghossian, Ibid, 29.

27 "Faith is not an epistemological category. It is not a way of knowing something. Faith is a way of trusting something," Craig continues in response to Boghossian. "Faith is trusting in that which you have reason to believe is true." http://www.reasonablefaith.org/a-manual-for-creating-atheists#ixzz3HjpT4lGT, accessed 10/31/2014.

28 "Faith, which is the proper principle of [belief], must needs reside in the intellect." Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, Pt. II-II, Q. 4, Art. 2.

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30 "Faith believes … [in] things not seen." St. Augustine, Enchridion, Ch. 2, 7.

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32 William Alston, Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 146-250. See also Alvin Plantinga's "faith is a belief-producing process" in Warranted Christian Belief (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 256. See also "Belief, Faith, Acceptance, and Hope" (Ch. 3)
in Robert Audi, Rationality and Religious Commitment (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

33 "Faith is a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us."John Calvin, Institutes III, ii, 7.

34 "Faith is a really special case of knowledge... Faith is not to be contrasted with knowledge: faith … is knowledge." Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief, ibid. Emphasis Plantinga's. See also Alvin Plantinga, Where the Conflict Really Lies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 178.

35 Which Boghossian seems to endorse. See Boghossian, Ibid., 247.

36 In the Carnapian sense, where two sentences are isomorphic when they exhibit logical equivalence. Rudolph Carnap, Meaning and Necessity (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1947), 56-59.

37 Robert Audi, Rationality and Religious Commitment, 58-60.

38 Manuel Vasquez, Philosophy: A Text with Readings, Eleventh Edition (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2011), 371.

39 1 Peter 3:15. See also Acts 22:1; Philippians 1:7, 16; 1 Corinthians 9:3; 2 Corinthians 7:11, 2 Timothy 4:16; passim.

40 Philippians 1:16.

41 Boghossian, Ibid., 247.

42 William Alston in Epistemic Justification: Essays in the Theory of Knowledge (New York: Cornell University Press, 1989), 83.

43 Ie extra-biblical attestation, the empty tomb, the post-resurrection appearances, etc.

44 Boghossian cites the miracle of Jesus walking on water in Matthew 14:22-27. This citation is a bit confused, as not much hinges on the historicity of this event, save for perhaps biblical inerrancy. But to make his point, we may consider in his stead the Resurrection, which is of utter importance to Christianity.

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47 "The whole defence of religious faith hinges upon action." James, The Will to Believe, 29.

48 "Faith is acting on what one has good reason to believe is true." http://www.premierchristianradio.com/Shows/Saturday/Unbelievable/Episodes/Peter-Boghossian-vs-Tim- McGrew-A-manual-for-creating-atheists, accessed 10/31/2014. Emphasis mine.

49 Boghossian, Ibid, 210. Emphasis his.

50 See for example Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 662-663.

51 Psalm 37:3; Proverbs 28:20; Deuteronomy 32:4, passim. Also Security or Stability (Isaiah 33:6); Steadiness (Exodus 17:12); Faithfulness in fulfilling promises (Psalm 37:3; Habakkuk 2:4).

52 James 2:19, NIV. Emphasis mine. All scripture hereafter is quoted in the NIV.

53 See also Joshua 22:16, in which "faith" equates to obeying God, and breaking faith equates to disobeying God. Both presume prior belief in God's existence.

54 James 2:22. Emphasis mine.

55 James 2:17.

56 James 2:23; see also Genesis 15:6. Emphasis mine.

57 See Robert Audi, Rationality and Religious Commitment, 71.

58 See his Enchridion, Ch. 2, 7.

59 See John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book II, Ch. 8, 16; Phillip Melancthon, Loci Communesn8 (CR 21:743); Martin Luther, "A Brief Explanation of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer", Werke, vol. 7, 25, etc.

60 See his The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956).

61 See his Warranted Christian Belief (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

62 Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics, Book II, Ch. 2.

63 More precisely, the "virtues of thought" and the "virtues of character". Aristotle, Ibid., Book II, Ch. 1.

64 Boghossian, Ibid, 80.

65 Boghossian, Ibid, 209.

66 Let us assume for sake of simplicity that "good reason" inherently carries the avoidance of morally wrong behavior. Trusting in a person or proposition whose offer is morally wrong is clearly not virtuous (nor presumably "good reason").

67 Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, Pt. II-I, Q. 57, Art. 2.

68 Thomas Aquinas, Ibid., Pt. II-II, Q. 1, Art. 4.

69 Boghossian, Ibid, 209.

70 The so-called "faculty approach" seen in Aristotle's De Anima, Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, John Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Thomas Reid's Inquiry into the Human Mind, Rene Descartes' Rules for the Direction of the Mind, etc.

71 Isaiah 43:10.

72 Isaiah 40:31.

73 Isaiah 13:20.

74 I.e., Isaiah believed the proposition, the proposition not only came to pass but continues to come to pass today, and for the Judeo-Christian, Isaiah had good reasons for his faith-belief.

75 One may counter that not every one of us is expected to receive knowledge in the manner of the prophets. But again, a Biblical (Christian) model will suggest something otherwise. The Christian, practicing virtuous faith, is guaranteed guidance "into all truth" (John 14:26, 16:13). This accepted,

it is difficult to see how one could be guided into truth yet lack new knowledge. In one manner or another, new knowledge (among many other traits) ought to characterize the transformed Christian life. See also Isaiah 11:2-3.

76 Boghossian, *Ibid*., 15, 17, 18, 23, 31, 32, passim.

77 Plantinga, Where the Conflict Really Lies, 46.

78 Plantinga, Where the Conflict Really Lies, 46. Thomas Reid goes so far as to ask, "Why, sir, should I believe the faculty of reason more than that of perception – they came both out of the same shop." An Inquiry into the Human Mind, ed. T. Duggan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 207.

79 "No effort of will is needed; no powers of attention or reasoning, no activities of formulating propositions are involved." Alston, The Epistemology of Religious Experience, 16.

80 James, Varieties, 248.

81 *Ibid*, 397.

82 James, Varieties, 109.

83 Boghossian, *Ibid*., 31.

84 Alston, The Epistemology of Religious Experience., 170.

85 Boghossian, *Ibid*., 31.

86 The coherentist, of course (such as the presuppositionalist), may find this circularity perfectly acceptable. But let us ignore this in virtue of showing that justification exists for virtually all epistemologies.

87 Boghossian, *Ibid*.

88 Alston, *Ibid*, 170.

89 Alston, *Ibid*.

90 James, Varieties, 498-499, 502.

91 I.e. the phenomenologist. But also the innumerable score of humanity that has shared in this common experience, knowledge of which unites a person's life experiences into a cohesive whole, somehow seems more "real" than other knowledge, heals broken lives, gives deep insight into matters otherwise unexamined, etc.

92 Thomas Oden, *Classic Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 598.

The specific features of the Evangels

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ABSTRACT

Abstract: *Since always, man has been aware that his destiny has to do with a superior reality, greater than what he can perceive and realize, a reality that he can hardly acquire, considering the limitations of his nature. This awareness has been maintained and reinforced by the conviction that his present state is not permanent and someone will come to help him to accomplish his mission. This hope has been maintained not just in the mentality of the Jewish people, by means of the Messianic prophecies, but also with the other peoples, as we can note from various legends or myths. For the Christians, Jesus Christ is the awaited Savior and this is why He is called the world's Savior, and His coming in the world is the Good News that God has given to man, as a manifestation of His unconditional love and as an accomplishment of all the promises made to man. Some of the acts and teachings of our Savior Jesus Christ have been written down by His disciples and constitute what we now call: the Evangels.*

Key words: Evangel, evangelist, Christ, Church, Christian.

Preliminaries

The Holy Evangels constitute the group of the first four books of the New Testament. The word *evangel* derives from the Greek word εὐανγγέλιον, which, in the Greek antiquity, designated the reward for the one who was bringing the good news – we find it with this sense in the Old Testament as well (2 Kings 18, 20, 25, 27; 4 Kings 7, 9) – while, later on, the word came to designate the very content of this piece of news.

The **Evangel** - *the Good News* of salvation brought to the world by the embodied Son of God, is one, namely the one lived and preached by our Savior Jesus Christ, yet, if we consider the form under which it came to be known by men, after the Savior's Ascension, then we can talk about several evangels. The Church of the first centuries acknowledged just four canonical evangels, because only they were carrying the seal of divine inspiration.

To differentiate between them, the evangels have been given a title, showing the person who endeavored to put down moments of the Savior's life and activity. Consequently, they were called: the **Evangel according to Matthew**, **according to Mark**, **according to Luke** and **according to John**. The preposition κατὰ ("according to") shows that the unique Evangel of our Lord Jesus Christ has reached us "according to" the way it has been drafted by one evangelist or the other[1]. They put down in writing only a part of the spoken tradition they had received, either directly, or indirectly, from eye witnesses or by means of documents. Yet, each of the evangelists has put his own mark on what he has

written, depending on the aim pursued, on the author's characteristic style and on the peculiar features of the people the evangelists were addressing.

Although the Evangel is one, according to its Unique Author – God, it is known to us under four different forms, completing one another and not overlapping. The unique origin of the four evangels has often been highlighted in the Church painting and in the writings of the Holy Fathers. So, until the 4th century, they were represented under the form of four springs coming out of the same rock – the Holy Spirit [2].

Due to the great similarities existing between the first three evangels, they are also called "*synoptical evangels*", and put in parallel, on three columns, they reveal the same general presentation, the same order of the events, the same vision on the teaching of Jesus Christ and even, in certain places, the same sentences. However, each one has its own peculiarities that individualize it, a fact that puts each of them under a special spotlight.

When we speak about the specific features of the evangels, we have in view precisely these differences, namely: the author; the language in which the evangels were written; the addressees; the aim pursued; the place where they were written and the time when they were written.

1. **The Evangel according to Matthew**

The author – Saint Matthew the Apostle, one of the twelve Apostles [3]. As he himself mentions, before having been called to apostleship he was a tax-collector (10:3) in Capharnaum. The evangelists Mark (2:13-17) and Luke (5:27-32) mention the name he had before being called: Levi. After the Savior's Ascension, he preached the Evangel in Palestine and after the persecution started against the Church by Herod Agrippa I, he went to Ehtiopia or Persia. The Church honors him on the day of November 16.

The language – the whole Church tradition, since the 2nd up to the 16th century, confesses that this Evangel was initially written in Aramaic, the Syro-Haldaic dialect, being translated later on into Greek, according to the opinion of some specialists, by the author himself.

The addressees – given the fact that this evangel was written in Aramaic, we can deduce that it was addressed to the Jews, who were speaking this language. We are thinking about the Christianized Jews of Palestine but also about the non-Christianized ones, who knew quite well the Scripture of the Old Testament, and the Jewish traditions. After its translation into Greek, it received a universal destination.

The aim pursued – to leave a written version of the Evangel preached, the moment when, forced by circumstances, the Holy Apostles were about to leave Palestine.

According to several church writers, the author also had a *missionary aim*, namely to prove the revealed truth that Jesus of Nazareth is precisely the Messiah prophesied by the Old Testament prophets and awaited for so many generations by the people of Israel[4].

There is also the opinion that the evangelist Matthew had in view *an apologetic-polemic aim*, as well, wanting to fight the false expectations of the Jews who, refusing to believe in the Savior, were waiting for the coming of a different Messiah.

The place – being initially written in Aramaic, the Evangel may have been written in a locality of the Holy Land, most probably in Jerusalem, where the apostle lived for a while. Another argument supporting this theory is also that, in its content, it reveals certain details that could only have been taken from the Temple of Jerusalem.

The time – the year must have been 43 or 44 A.D., seeing the numerous patristic testimonies mentioning that the Evangel according to Matthew is the first to have been

written and that it was put down in writing before the apostle left the Holy Land. Eusebius of Caesarea says that: "Matthew wrote his Evangel when he had in mind leaving Palestine and, by doing so, preaching to others as well" (The Church History 3:24). St. Theophylact of Bulgaria situates it 8 years after the Lord's Ascension (around 41-42 A.D.). The translation into Greek was achieved around the year 70 (68) A.D.

Themes approached:
- the Savior's descent from Abraham and the lineage of David;
- in the Person of Jesus Christ have been accomplished the prophecies of the Old Testament;
- by His teaching, Jesus Christ is the One announcing the divine will to men;
- Jesus Christ is the world's Savior and Judge.

2. The Evangel according to Mark

Author – John Mark, a Jew of the Hellenists' community of Jerusalem. He was neither apostle, nor disciple of the Savior; in exchange, he was a disciple of Barnabas, his cousin (cf. *Col.* 4:10), of Paul, until the end of his second journey, and of Peter (cf. *Acts* 12:25; 13:5; 15:36-39; *1Pt.* 5:13). It is in his mother's house that the Christians were coming together sometimes (cf. *Acts* 12:12-17), this being also the place where the Last Supper is supposed to have taken place (cf. Mk. 14:14-15; Acts 1:13-14).

The tradition affirms that Mark accompanied Saint Peter in his missionary voyages through Minor Asia and Italy (Rome), being "interpreter" (Papias of Hierapolis) – translator, secretary. He died as a martyr, probably in Alexandria, and his holy relics have been preserved in St. Mark's Basilica in Venice. The Church celebrates him on April 25.

The language – this evangel was written in a Greek of Alexandrian origin, sprinkled with Latinisms and Aramaisms. The vocabulary is reduced, yet precisely used, in a direct, vivid and spontaneous manner.

The addressees – are the Christians of Italy, more precisely of the capital of the Roman Empire, Jews but also pagans, of Greek-Roman culture, who are not so familiar with the interpretation of the Law and of the prophets' writings. This fact gives this evangel a universal character, since it addresses all those who want to know "the Evangel of Jesus Christ, God's Son" (1:1), who want to repent and to believe in the Good News (1:15).

The aim pursued – was to show its readers that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, God's Son, Who defeated the evil power by His miracles, and, especially by letting the readers know about His Passion, death and resurrection, to accomplish God's will: man's salvation. Jesus came into the world to reveal the Eternal Kingdom to men and to make known to them God's reign and sovereign will.

Emphasizing that the Kingdom of God has come near (1:15), the evangelist warns his readers about the moral conduct they need to have and about the fact that only by the Cross, by sacrifice, can they be called Christ's followers (8:34-38).

The place – The Evangel according to Saint Mark was drafted in Italy, probably in Rome. Saint John Chrysostom is the only one who states that the writing of the Evangel took place in Alexandria, Egypt. Other locations suggested are: Decapolis, Tyre, Sidon, Syria and even Galilee. The presence of numerous Latinisms is a strong argument in favor of Italy as place of its writing.

The time – for the time of writing there are two variants: 64-65 A.D., after the death of St. Peter or the year 63, when the apostle was still living. St. Theophylact of Bulgaria

situates it 10 years after the Lord's Ascension (about 43-44 A.D.), "being taught by Peter"[5]. There are also some biblical researchers who situate the writing of the Evangel before or immediately after the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D.[6].

Themes approached:
- Jesus Christ, as God's Son, reveals the Kingdom to men as already-existing reality and which will fully show itself in a near time;
- Jesus identifies Himself with the Son of Man (of the Book of Daniel, the Prophet), Who has come "to give His life as a ransom for many" (10:45).
- The universal character of the evangelical message: Mark commonly uses expressions such as: "all the people" (2:13; 4:1), "every nation" (13:10), "throughout all the country round about Galilee" (1:28, 33, 39).

3. The Evangel according to Luke

The author – of the third evangel is Luke "the beloved pysician" according to Saint Paul the Apostle (cf. Col. 4:14). As origin, he was from the Antioch of Syria, having a select education and a rich general culture, doubled by the fine quality of writing beautifully. The Holy Fathers count him among the 70 disciples of our Savior[7], being one of the two disciples who accompanied our Lord Christ on the road to Emaus (cf. Lk. 24:13-35).

Out of the Book of Acts, whose author he is, we find out that he was a close collaborator of Saint Paul the Apostle, accompanying him in his activity, starting with his second missionary voyage. The sure information on the life of Saint Luke stops at the death of the Apostle Paul. After that, the tradition affirms that he preached in Achaia, southern Greece, where he wrote his evangel and the Acts of the Apostles, and where he also died as a martyr, at the age of 84. At the same time, according to an old tradition (4th century), Luke was also a skilled painter, the author of a beautiful icon of the Theotokos. The Church celebrates him on October 18.

The language – the evangel was written in a beautiful and elegant Greek language, which betrays the author's qualities of endowed writer, but also of fine knower of the human psychology and mentality and good analyst of the social reality.

The addressees – as we find out from the beginning, both the evangel and the writing of the *Acts* were addressed to a certain *Theophilus*, a patrician who recently converted or on his way to conversion to Christianity, to whom Luke offers a "life" of Jesus according to the requirements of an authentic intellectual.

The aim pursued – is to reinforce the faith of the new convert, assuring him that the One he is preaching is the Word (1:2), Who came to bring salvation to all the people, including to those of other nations. For this reason, after much research, he composes his writing with a lot of vigilance, knowing that it is a holy narrative, rendering as exactly as possible the activity and the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, God's Son. The Savior's activity will be continued and accomplished by the Church, under the protection of the Holy Spirit.

The place – of writing is most often taken to be Rome, yet, opinions differ. A quite old tradition encountered at St. Iraeneus and accepted by St. Jerome or St. Gregory of Nazianzus indicates southern Greece as place of composition [8].

The time – Most of the biblical researchers consider that the year when it was issued is 63, namely before the end of Saint Paul the Apostle's imprisonment. Seeing that *The Acts* were written before the Apostle's deliverance from prison, it results that the Evangel had appeared before that. The St. Theophylact of Bulgaria's proposition to situate it 15 years after the Lord's Ascension (around 48-50 A.D.), has no real grounds.

If we consider the fact that Luke used the Evangel written by St. Mark, then the most probable date would be the middle of the 70s.

4. The Evangel according to John

The author – of the fourth Evangel is John, son of Zebedee, who was one of the first disciples of our Savior, together with his brother, James (after having been Saint John the Baptist's disciples, first). The Evangel presents him as "the one Jesus loved", who, during the Last Supper, leaned his head against his Master's shoulder (13:23). At the same time, he was part of the restrained group of three disciples (together with Peter and James), who witnessed really special events: the resurrection of Jairus's daughter (Mk. 5:37), the Lord's transfiguration (Mt. 17:1-13) and the tense moment that preceded Jesus's arrest in the garden of Gethsemane (Mt. 26:37).

John is the discile to whom the Lord entrusts His Mother (Jn. 19:26-27); he is the one who runs to the empty tomb, arriving there before Peter (Jn. 20:2-8), and the first to recognize the Resurrected Jesus.

In *The Acts of the Apostles*, we find him present at the Descent of the Holy Spirit and then preaching, healing and being imprisoned together with Peter. He is preaching the Evangel in Ephesus (around the year 69), then in Rome, where he was persecuted and immersed in hot oil, but came out safe; then, he was exiled on Patmos Island. Under the reign of the Emperor Nerva (96-98), the apostle withdrew to [9]. His celebration day is May8.

The Church considers him the author of three epistles and of the last book of the New Testament's canon: The Apocalypse.

The language – the Evangel was written in a Greek perfectly reproducing the everyday language of the time. The quite refined style characterizing it, compared to the different, less refined style, of the Apocalypse, determined some researchers to affirm that the Apostle John used, when drafting the Evangels and the epistles, a secretary-disciple whose Greek was superior to his own.

The addressees – the addressees of this Evangel are the Christians of Asia coming from among the pagans, a fact highlighted by the description of the Jewish customs it explains briefly (to be understood by those who do not know them), by the translation of the Aramaic words and by the universalist tendency characterizing its approach.

The aim pursued – is first of all a *theological one*: confessing Jesus Christ as true God and true Man, a thing also mentioned in the Evangel: "these are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name" (20:31). This citation also highlights another goal: *a missionary aim*, of conversion to Christianity of the Jewish diaspora, but also of helping the others to grow in faith. A third aim would be an *apologetic* one, meant to refute certain heresies emerging in those times.

The place – just as in the case of the other evangels, the place and the time of writing are hard to mention. Seeing the fact that during the final part of his life the Apostle lived in Ephesus, it is considered that it is here that he wrote his Evangel. Some more cities with a significant Jewish population were also mentioned in this sense – namely Alexandria and Antioch, in Syria [10], yet without many supporters.

The time – a date accepted by most of the researchers situates this Evangel towards the end of the last decade of the first century.

A special aspect brought by John is the one concerning the Savior's activity period of three years, the evangelist mentioning the Easter date three times.

Conclusions

In the first four writings of the New Testament, we find out the *Good News of salvation* brought by the Messiah, a salvation that God promised to the first men and awaited for generations. This Good News includes all about the embodied Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, namely: His embodiment, His life, His teaching and especially His crucifixion, death, resurrection and ascension – namely especially His three years of activity.

As there is just One Savior and one teaching, there is also just one Good News, one Evangel, announced by Christ our Lord and preached since the beginning by the Holy Apostles, then by their disciples, and which, at a certain moment, was put down in writing. From the multitude of writings, the Church chose just four, which it considered authentic, namely faithfully relating aspects of our Savior's activity and teaching – only a part of all that He did – only as much as man needs to know for his salvation.

The titles of Evangel *according to* Matthew, *according to* Mark, *according to* Luke, *according to* John show that each of these authors have left their mark on the composition and drafting of one and the same content. The Evangels constitute four ways, four possibilities for man to draw near God and know the mysteries of God's kingdom.

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*STUDIES OF EDUCATION, MORALITY AND SPIRITUALITY

Bioethics in the light of orthodox anthropology

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ABSTRACT

English Abstract: *This article presents the bioethics in the light of orthodox anthropology. Bioethics is called to face the new ethical issues that were and are created by research in the fields of Biology and Medicine. Its subject matter is completely fresh and in the main unexpected. Bioethics has a mission to evaluate this bold progress and to see if, and to what degree, it is compatible with the generally accepted values which govern human life. The Orthodox tradition steadfastly promises that greater value than what it is, has that what human person can become, god by grace.*

Keywords: Bioethics, orthodox, anthropology, human person.

1. Some preliminary Remarks.

Beyond the fact that the progress noted in medical science in the past few years, not only in the field of doctoral medicine, but also in the area of genetics and biology is impressive and often outside the limits of the human person's endeavors, it also provokes theology and seems to urge it towards reinterpretation and reconsideration of its traditional views. Nevertheless in theological circles, and elsewhere, the question is put: Does theology have the necessary attributes to answer question which are regularly posed by contemporary scientific research? Are the ethics of theology perhaps old-fashioned and ineffective, incapable of facing the new information and the great bounds of development which refer to the biological existence and function of human person? Is its message perhaps confined to the spiritual sphere of existence and is incompatible with the reality of development, or more precisely the revolution, that is taking place in the field of biology and medicine? Has the doctrine, the faith of the Church, perhaps imposed a typified ethos, which is noted for rigidity, inflexibility and the inability to adapt to the new accomplishments of science?

These are many sided question and one can find many grounds for discussion. It is well-known that Bioethics only appeared in recent years, first in America and then in Europe. It is therefore clear that it is a product of the new material presented by medical advances and research in the field of biology. The term Bioethics was first used in English in 1970 by Potter in environmental ethics and the Hellegers in the medical ethics movement.[1]

Bioethics came about as a consequence of these scientific developments and attempts a critical appraisal of the dilemmas and an evaluation of the consequences of this new knowledge that have emerged within society. This means that Bioethics arose from the need to face the

ethical questions linked to the progress of medical science, as well as those that followed from the experiments associated with biological existence of the human being.

Bioethics has appeared today as a new branch of the study of ethics or even as an academic subject in its own right, yet correspondent with ethics. As we have already stressed the study of Bioethics aims at approaching the moral and ethical dilemmas which flow from progress made in the fields of Biology and Medicine. **[2]**

Whatever, Bioethics is called to face the new ethical issues that were and are created by research in the fields of Biology and Medicine. Its subject matter is completely fresh and in the main unexpected. The accomplishments related to the human person's biological existence are frequently outside the sphere even of our boldest imaginings.

Consequently Bioethics has a mission to evaluate this bold progress and to see if, and to what degree, it is compatible with the generally accepted values which govern human life. That is to say, there are ethical consequences which accompany human person's presumably noble attempt to extend his knowledge, to make life easier and to carry out research within the field of biological inquiry.

2. Human Creativity and scientific Research as Gifts of God.

The societies that find themselves before these unbelievable scientific achievements often react with astonishment or mutually invalidating suggestions. There are many who argue that research and science cannot have barriers, others who consider the determination of some legal or moral framework to be absolutely necessary, because, they stress, if the need for controls on biological experiments and medical research is not recognized, the human person is reduced to a "laboratory rat", to an object of experimentation.

At this point it is essential to clarify that, research in general, and specifically the scientific investigation into new methods and new practices concerned with improving human life, fall within the human being's ability to enquire and create given to him by God Himself. Technology, and by extension biotechnology find their theological justification in the capability that God himself gave to the first-formed, to Adam and Eve, to tend and keep paradise (Gen 2:15) Creativity is woven into the nature of human person, who, as an image of God (Gen 1:27) and as a free person has something unique within the created world. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Gen 2:7)

The human person as a "living soul" is a creative spirit, that is to say he has something of divine creativity within his nature. This is truly a blessing, the importance of which is recognized and noted by theology. Nevertheless the human being, as a free person, is obliged to function discerningly. If his creativity is unchecked and without scrutiny, then he ceases to be authentic and whole. It is necessary for "discernment of the spirits" (1 Cor 12:10) to accompany creativity. Within the Orthodox tradition creativity finds its perfect consummation when it preserves its divine origin. The human person is not an autonomous and free-moving machine, but he can create precisely because he is a living image of God. In essence human person's ability to enquire and to discover has a divine origin. This means that human person's natural calling to create, to enquire, to discover, does not lose, under any circumstances whatsoever, its divine derivation and worth. The Fathers of the Church used the concept of "synergy" to demonstrate that human being, as a creative being, can be a fellow laborer with God.

"Synergy" is a basic and substantial category of Orthodox anthropology. Synergy, i.e. co-operation, with God, particularly in the service and function of medicine is pointed out in the Holy Scriptures. The Wisdom of Sirach records: "Honor a physician with the honor due unto him for the use which you may have of him: for the Lord has created him. For healing comes

from the most High, and he shall receive the honor of the king. The skill of the physician shall lift up his head: and in the sight of great men he shall be in admiration. The Lord has created medicines out of the earth; and he that is wise will not abhor them." (38:1-4) Besides, within the tradition of the Orthodox Church there is a whole host of saintly doctors, who are especially revered by believers, while the establishment of hospitals and medical centers falls within the Church's mission. Therefore, the Church attests to the work of medicine, which it considers to be a sacred undertaking, and even because it recognizes that the human body has in itself a form of sanctity as an inseparable part of human personality. The body is the temple of human person's soul. Throughout the history of each human person the body has to execute a unique task, it is the area where life is sanctified and the plane where human person's future immortality is prepared. There is no human person without the body. Thus, Medicine and Biology, sciences whose subject matter is human life, and more particularly the workings of the body, are seen to be effecting a divine task. This, of course, is to the degree that they do not violate the freedom of the person and they do not confront human being as an exclusively biological machine. The point is that the sacred function of the medical profession presupposes the recognition of human personality as a unique psychosomatic whole.

The question of the vocation of medicine and of research concerning biological functions is a delicate one, and it should always be examined in relation to the reality of the human person. Medicine and Biology are not concerned with soulless objects, that is to say they do not correspond to botany or even to zoology. Their subject matter is the unique actuality of human life, which is inseparably bound to the human person, which, being according to the Image of God, has the unique calling and prospect of immortality. This means that Medical Science and Biology are obliged to work in an auxiliary manner, not an authoritarian or domineering one. Absolute respect for the human person, not as a fleeting biological existence, but as an eternal and immortal being is a presupposition for a kind of medicine which will make a beneficial and helpful contribution to life. For example, medical intervention to halt pregnancy militates against the right of the embryo to life, which is equally alive and valid as any mature human being whatsoever. Indeed, the embryo or foetus as a living being, which already has the characteristics of a new human life, has even more need of medical protection. The embryo, the new-born baby, the young, the mature, and the old man or woman are stations in the same human life. The responsibility of Medicine and Biology lies in protecting the priceless gift of life, with their new discoveries and progress, at whatever phase at all that gift is found at. From the viewpoint of Theology this protection does not refer to a biological existence that will die, but to a human person who is destined not to die and who had the opportunity and utmost responsibility to create a unique and unrepeatable history within his biological journey.

3. Developments in the Field of Biotechnology and some Dilemmas produced.

Certain biologists, doctors, legal experts, and even theologians suppose that Bioethics will solve all the problems created by research and discovery in the field of Biotechnology. They view Bioethics like the *deus ex machina* of ancient tragedy. We know that in classical theatre when the tragedy reached a dead-end, some "god" suddenly appeared, by some mechanical support. This "god" gave the solution to the insurmountable problem and was called the *deus ex machina*. Some people imagine that Bioethics role is something like this. This is obviously a groundless hope simply because the biotechnological developments are in the main uncontrolled and they cannot be confronted with moral decrees and exhortations. We should give a few examples to make it clear that the problems and dilemmas that emerge with the

progress of science are complicated and immense. Confronting them demands a radically new attitude and a philosophy of life that spent on rules and regulations.

There are some proposals of Biotechnology which common opinion finds abhorrent and human conscience, quite independently of its moral convictions, reacts against. The debate about male pregnancy is a subject that causes natural repulsion in any normal person whosoever. Moreover, the announcement, some years ago, by the British embryologist Jonathan Slack, of Bath University, that with the manipulation of certain genes he managed to create headless frog embryos, and that with the same method he could create something similar for humans, using cloning, in order to produce human organs for transplantation, **[3]** is something that causes revulsion in common man. The prospect of the creation of headless humans, for the production of human body parts to order, conceals a cynicism and degradation of human existence and of biological function. This contrived creation of beings, or rather, more precisely monsters, whose only purpose will be to give their tissue and organs to some human master, even if it seems like a prospect that will work for man's "good", is provocative and without a doubt disturbs the ordinary person. The now infamous debate about cloning also causes a negative reaction, in general terms, to the common mind.

Cloning could procure the production of a limitless number of completely identical beings, human clones, while with genetic intervention their copies can even be improved. The question is why copies of humans, and who will judge genetic manipulation and its aims? Finally, how is the notorious improvement of cells perceived?

There are many other topics from the biological revolution about which ordinary people express various views and frequently contradictory opinions. Common opinion is, in general, much more sympathetic towards reproductive technology than it is on other matters of Biotechnology. The reason is clear. Reproductive technology, it is said, use scientific means so that a new human being can come into the world. However, the matter extends beyond this very simple position and has its own social side-effects. The preservation of sperm is a many-sided subject. In certain cases it happens when a man has been attacked by illness which demands treatment puts him in danger of becoming sterile. In this case the preservation of sperm is the only way that fertility treatment can occur. Further away from this and certainly morally unacceptable is when sperm is preserved for "gain". Someone has written that some young persons "deposit their sperm in a sperm bank and then undergo sterilization". Thus they have "easy" sexual relationships, and when they want to have children they refer to their bank. There are cases where the sperm remained in the bank for years after the death of the husband who donated it, and years later the widow requested her husband's sperm in order to have IVF treatment. Thus, the child who was born was an orphan of necessity, the child of a "father" who had died years before. Even more complicated is the resort to donor sperm. Certain parents in their desperation and natural need to produce a child resort to this morally reproachable solution. Frequently these donors who deposit their sperm function on the basis of financial transactions. The intervention of the Ministries of Health are mainly to regulate legal and judicial problems **[4]**. This begs the crucial question, if resorting to donor sperm is the proven and morally acceptable solution. Another similar question is that usually in the case of infertility treatment an attempt is made to guard the donor's anonymity, in order to assure that the family that was obliged to resort to this resolution is self-contained and coherent. However, this way creates other problems concerning the health of the child about to enter the world. When the origin of the sperm is unknown and any inherited conditions are unknown, with the result that the healthy protection of the child is not assured.

These examples do nothing more than record the crucial problems created by scientific development, and especially the discoveries made in the field of infertility treatment. Similar problems also exist with other questions that have arisen with the progress of Biology and Medicine, progress which covers the whole spectrum of life, from conception or from pre-conception procedures, until death. However, the timely question is, can these problems be faced with a "renewed" ethical teaching adapted to the new demands? Many sociologists, doctors, legal experts or theologians believe that yes they can. Their opinion is that an answer can be found to the problems if we renew our ethics, if we adapt our moral views to the latest demand of the time. Yet a serious question still occurs, is ethics a system of values which is modified by the different situations and "needs" that appear from time to time, or perhaps it has a timeless and interpersonal importance and worth?

4. The eschatological Attitude to Life or the Proposal of Orthodox Anthropology.

Orthodox anthropology and tradition has a lot to say on this point. Orthodox anthropology is realistic, but at the same time intensely ascetic and eschatological. What determines human life is not his biological behavior or his biological extension, but rather is that which human person can reach with his ascetic practice and the indication of it within Christian society. In the Orthodox tradition human person's being is illumined by what is going to happen. Thus, future life bears more weight than this present life. In the conscience of the Church what we are certainly counts, however what we are called to be has immeasurable importance. "For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven."(2 Cor. 5:1-2)

Within this eschatological attitude to life bioethical problems are seen in a different light. The major problem of Bioethics today is that it tries to give answers to questions of the present, for a human person who will die, enclosed within the human dimension and within the limits of worldly material reality. Biotechnology and accordingly Bioethics to a greater degree serve the material, and therefore the corrupt, needs of man. The endeavour to serve the needs of biological existence, frequently ignoring human person's spiritual dimension. It seems that contemporary Bioethics ignores the eternal, i.e. human person's divine potentiality. Consequently, we can talk about secularized Bioethics which serves the needs of a secularized world.

If anyone evaluates biological life solely on the basis of death, he will reach a completely different conclusion from that dictated by an evaluation which is founded on the belief that human person exists in order not to die. This means that human person's biological existence is a unique and priceless value, not because it is brief and ends in death, but because it is a unique opportunity for immortality. If someone sees biological life as a boundless gift from God for the preparation of spiritual life, then his estimation of things in the world will be evaluated differently. "For we who are in this tent groan being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us this very thing is God, who has also given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him." (2 Cor. 5:4-9)

5. The Mind-set of the Church a Foundation for authentic Bioethics.

Bioethics can really work for human person's redemption when it is established upon the Christian mind-set and denotes the ethos of *theosis*. It is a mistake to believe that Bioethics,

as a system of rules and moral commands, will be able to free man from the dilemmas that he is led to by Biotechnology. Each and every human being is a free and unique person, who comes to face situations within his own history that concern him exclusively. No codification of rules and moral dictates can solve the problems of any certain person. The question is for human person who lives within the spectrum of technology and progress, to have the mind (*nous*) of Christ, so that he can discern matters. If we conform and adapt to all that this present age renders without discernment, then our *nous* will lose its lucidity. St. Paul refers to the transfiguration of the mind and we believe that his message is especially timely today: "And do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:2) In order to be an authentic human hope and to substantially help solve the problems and to assist in the correct response to the dilemmas raised up by the progress of science, Bioethics must not simply be a handmaid of prosperity. It must see human person within his actual dimension and not exclusively and solely within his biological existence and his material comforts. Human person is not just a material - physical being. The most precious thing he has is not his body but his eternal soul which makes him a free person, an image of God, which can evaluate all that belongs to man and all that surrounds him. St. Basil clarifies the matter exquisitely: "Attend to yourself; that is, not to your own, not to that which is around you, but attend to yourself alone.

We are one thing, our own is another, and that which is around us yet another. We are indeed soul and *nous*, since we were made in the image of the creator; the body and its senses are our own; and that which is around us is our money, skills and all the other accoutrements of life. What does the word declare? Do not attend to the flesh, nor pursue all manner of its blessings: health and beauty and the enjoyment of pleasures, and long life; nor marvel at money and glory, and dynasty; nor at all you fulfill within this fleeting life, thinking it to be great, and in pursuing it neglect your life beforehand, but attend to yourself, that is, your soul. Adorn this, and take care of it." **[5]**

Orthodox anthropology with its ascetic mind-set and hesychastic tradition does not look at human person within the dry limits of his earthly life, but in his final glory. When human person evaluates his biological existence by the criterion of his ecclesiological one, his whole conduct is illumined and each action of his acquires a new meaning. The Orthodox tradition steadfastly promises that greater value than what it is, has that what human person can become, god by grace. If we look at the life of human person within this theological and Church-centered expanse, the consideration of the dilemmas created by biomedical methods takes on a different character. Then we can understand that each new medical method and every advance of biology is blessed, if it regards the whole human person, who lives in the present age but is journeying towards the age to come. Conversely, every discovery in the field of biotechnology that encloses human person within the dry limits of his biological life, however much it makes earthly life easier, conceals something tragic.

The **conclusion** is that the mind-set of the Church is what can overcome any bioethical dilemma whatsoever. I cannot overlook the relevance today of St. Paul the Apostle's words: "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you who are not in the flesh but in the spirit if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, he is not His." (Rom. 8: 5-9)

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The Christian Family in the secularized context of our society

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ABSTRACT

Abstract: *This article presents the problem of the family from the Christian perspective and its role in the postmodern society, but also the most serious problems affecting its functionality. As social form, the family is the environment of existence and training ordained by God for man. It has been instituted since the beginning of the creation of the first people, yet by Christ, by the Holy Mystery of Marriage, has been sanctified the union of love between a man and a woman. As time has gone by, under the impulse of the fundamental freedoms and rights specific of man, recognized especially by the modern society, serious abnormalities have appeared, affecting the integrity of the family, such as: sexual immorality as plague of the matrimonial life, divorce, abortion, the so-called "families" of same-sex people. The contemporary man adheres without due consideration to all these, without taking into account their consequences. Certainly, the Christian Orthodox norms bring along with their application the remedy as well, namely life in Christ, which means full humanization.*

Keywords: Christian family, postmodern society, humanization, sexual immorality, abortion

Introduction

The Christian family, in the secularizing and consumerist context of the postmodern society, is faced with special moral challenges affecting its integrity and functionality.

Family has always been more than a complex system of socio-affective life based on love feelings that have been generating mutual human relations; it has exerted a major influence on the development of man and of society.

As social form, family represents the basic cell of any type of hierarchy. In the context of every society, the human family has been playing a stabilizing role, yet due to the continual social changes, of mentality and of status, the problem of the family will remain a reality with a dynamic dimension and content, permanently engaged in the phenomenology of man's existence in the world.

In a compared and synthetic analysis of the Christian thinking and humanist logic, it is acknowledged that the organization of the human species had as fundament the family as core of the society, yet, at its basis, laity always puts the association of two beings free to live together, whereas Christianity institutes it by the Holy Mystery of Marriage. In Christianity, the family is not just a social form, a social group, but a reality in which God's love is at work.

Chap. 1. Family, man's environment of coexistence and mutual relations

The family is, first of all, a social form, involving a social life. While, according to the non-Christian vision, the civil society has been born based on an initial contract established between its first members, at the basis of community life has been people's consent to get associated and to be led by the public organs representing the power.

Even since the Antiquity, the family has been the social unit whose members lived in a certain **home,** submitted to the authority of the owner, usually called "pater familiae" **[1]**. The family members had a common identity and common aspirations. In general, a family defined as a "*home*" **[2]** was organized along with a common religion, led by a head taking care of everything related to its welfare.

In the Christian revelation, the relation between God and the creation is one of love and reflection; all the creation and especially man is part of the divine revelation, it attests the Creator's goodness. The man created in the image of God accomplishes himself by his relation and collaboration with the divinity, living in grace the fullness of the existence, and this state is actually the family environment.

Cohabitation, as a natural existential relation between a man and a woman, relies on the fact that together they make up the complete unity of the human nature. The first family was created in Heaven, having God Himself as priest and witness: "*And the Lord God said: 'It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable and complementary for him*" (Genesis 2:18) "*Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth*" (Genesis 1:28). The man and the woman express two modalities of existence of the human being, as reality of the [call to or possibility of] perfection of the two. Man has been created "*as duality to exist in relation, taken individually he does not feel complete, he looks for the other for accomplishment and creation*" **[3]**.

From a Christian perspective, the family is a divine institution and the basis of social, community life. Our Savior, by His presence at the wedding of Cana, Galilee (John 2:2-11), where he performed His first miracle, blessed the wedding elevating it to the rank of mystery. Marriage or the wedding is "*the mystery in which a man and a woman, agreeing freely to live together all their life, to give birth and raise children and help each other, receive, by the priest, the grace sanctifying their relation and helping it reach its aim*" **[4]**. The Christian family is founded by the Holy Mystery of Marriage, which consecrates the relation of love between a man and a woman. This relation is a natural accomplishment of the need of communion ordained by God for man. "*For this reason, a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*" (Ephes. 5:31). The main aim of marriage is the perfection of the two, which is configured by the mystery of marriage. Out of the need for accomplishment and cohabitation in the matrimonial world, other family aims emerge as well: reciprocal help of the wife and the husband to make their life easier; giving life and raising and shaping children; refraining from lusts to protect morality, "*as guard against sexual immorality*" (1 Cor. 7:2) and others.

The family defines a society in a certain stage of its civilization, but it also deeply marks the destiny of each human person. As institution, the family gives stability to the society, this is why it is protected by written and unwritten laws. The State takes on responsibility for regulating the relations between individuals inside the family, especially during crucial moments.

At the origin of life there is "*the family as a core of the society, and at the basis of the family is marriage*" **[5]**. Saint Basil the Great, in full agreement with the biblical teaching, presents the family as a divine institution, underlining its unity and indissolubility.

The full unity and harmony in the family as a micro-church is highlighted by the Holy Father Basil the Great by the prayer practiced in common by the family members **[6]**. Regarding the birth and the bringing up of children, the physical relation between husband and wife is not justified if it is viewed only as a remedy against lust; procreation is also to be had in view, as "*the acts of physical union combine with assuming a higher spiritual responsibility*" **[7]**. The dignity and the responsibility of the husband and of the wife in the family rely on the divine creation of both of them, in the divine image they both are endowed with to the same extent because "*male and female created He them*" (Genesis 1:27), this is why those who have "*the same nature also have the same works, and those who do the same deed receive the same reward*" **[8]**.

By virtue of the mutual love between husband and wife, it is possible to understand the place and the role of each of them in the unity of the family, each having rights and responsibilities in their cohabitation: the right to love (1 Corinthians 7, Ephesians 5), the obligation for the husband to take care of his wife as he takes care of his own body, sacrificing himself according to the model of Christ's sacrifice for the Church (Ephesians 5). The family founded by marriage gives the wife and the husband each other's virtues, namely: the unfaithful man is sanctified by the faithful woman and the unfaithful woman is sanctified by the faithful man (1 Corinthians 7).

Chap. 2. The issue of the family in the postmodern society

De-institutionalization, individualization and democratization of family life are the processes that have weakened, in time, the importance and the role of the family. The main challenges brought on the family by the contemporary society are an injury to and a denial of its Christian aims. The postmodern society focuses on the benefit of the individual, and not of the family or of the society. In this context, in Europe, for example, the number of marriages has decreased (5 marriages per 1000 people) and the number of divorces has increased, especially in Western Europe. The immediate consequence is the following: few young people, and an ageing continent.

If to the world's spiritual crisis we add problems like: poverty, unemployment, proselytist sects, violence, uncertainty regarding tomorrow, emigration and immigration, child abandonment, increased family violence and juvenile delinquency, certainly we shall direct the attention to the role and the importance of the family.

The main problems weakening family life are:

Sexual immorality as plague of conjugal life

"*But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery and whoever marries the abandoned one, commits adultery.*" (Matthew 19:9)

Debauchery or meeting one's physical lusts outside marriage is considered a serious sin, by which the body is reduced to the role of object of sinful pleasure, being no longer considered the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6).

Monogamy is justified precisely to fight debauchery and support faithfulness to God and to the members of the family. "*But because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital responsibility to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.*" (1 Corinthians 7:1-3). The excessive debauchery of the postmodern man has intensified the pornographic industry, the exploitation of women and human traffic, which some societies have even legiferated.

The issue of divorce

Founding a family by marriage is a theandric action, for eternity. The teaching of Christ our Saviour is firm: "*What God has joined together, no one must separate.*" (Matthew 19:6).

Today, one can notice that family and marriage are reduced to contractual acts, from which the partners exit in a consensual way, confirmed by the civil institutions responsible in the domain, whenever they want.

The issue of abortion

In the fact of creation, God commanded man: "*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it!*" (Genesis.1:28). The perpetuation of the nation is a mission of man in the world. The Church claims that the dual nature of man represents the synthesis between transcendent and immanent, and appears unitarily. The soul comes from God together with the body, "*life begins right at the moment of conception, because it is then that the cells' reproduction, specialization and functioning begin*" **[9].** The Church, with its whole revealed teaching, is against abortion as theory and practice, qualifying it as crime against human life, among the sins that cry to heaven.

Life is the most precious asset that God has endowed man with, and the premise of all the other goods. Life is for man an asset overflown from the divine love and he has the duty to perfect it for his own good and for his fellows' good. Since, in the womb, is present a living soul in relation to an undeveloped body, created by God even since the moment of the child's procreation, abortion is a crime, also forbidden by the 5th commandment of the Decalogue, which says: "*Do not kill*" (Exodus 20:13). From a Christian perspective, this fact does not remain without consequences. The effects of a crime are transmitted not just on the parents but also on the collateral branches of the family tree.

Abortion, as a legal act, contributes to the depersonalization and dehumanization of the human being, to the breaking up of the family, and makes the whole society ill, as it throws it into the torments of its own self-sufficiency. Abortive (and contraceptive) practices are a reality of the contemporary secularized world, offered to men as solutions of life.

Today, the bioethical conclusions support the idea that abortion, interrupting a life with a separate identity, is murder; that the embryo has a life with existence and identity of its own, which give him rights since the moment of its conception and especially the right to life.

The issue of the "families" of same-sex people

Worldwide, there are pressures with a view to adopting a legislation permitting marriages between same-sex people. This fact, invoked in the name of the fundamental human rights and freedoms really goes against the rationality of the human existence. The so-called "families" formed of same-sex persons are not justified from any logical, rational perspective. Their presence in the society is a pathological evidence of the downfall and decadence some of the postmodern men are struggling with. The existence of such cohabitations is prejudicial both to the partners involved, and especially to the children adopted, who are raised and educated in an environment that is hostile and harmful to life and to man. For Christianity, which really does treasure the human being and condemns the sinful passions mastering man, same-sex "cohabitations" are not considered families, and will never be accepted.

Chap. 3. The Christian family, an essential factor in man's education and training

The multitude of relations established between the members of the family include cultural values, including the educative ones, transmitted by means of these members, and

constituting together the family environment. Full harmony in the family is achieved based on just relations between its members, in the sense that one has to respect the divine commandment: "*Children must honor and obey their parents*" (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-3), and "*parents must raise their children in the teaching and scolding of the Lord, with all gentleness and patience, and under no pretext concerning them, should they stir their anger and sadness*" [10].

To sensitize to this relation between parents and children, Saint Basil the Great turns to another example from the animal world: "*If the lioness loves its offspring and the wolf fights for its cubs, what will man say, who does not obey the commandment and spoils nature, either when the child dishonors his father's old age, or when the father, by his second marriage, forgets the children of his first marriage. Unstoppable is the love between parents and cubs among animals, because God, the One Who created them, replaced in them the lack of reason by the richness of feelings*" [11].

The Christian family has a significant role in the education of the religious-moral character. Education is necessary even since [the child is in] the bosom of the family, because it is there that the temporary future begins and is founded - a future for which the Christian family is responsible to people and to God. The Christian family is meant to introduce the child in the religion he belongs to by baptism but also by the shaping of the first behaviors. The first religious notions are received by the child in the family, because parents ought to teach their children God's word, yet they ought to be models especially by their actions, their life and their virtues: charity, kindness, forgiveness, piety to the saints and to the Holy Mysteries of the Church.

The relations between parents and children suppose a special mechanism, filtered socially; these relations rely on the norms related to communication, by which a behavioral pattern is realized. Paternity and maternity is "*a rich source of love because a parent is not made a parent by the birth of his child ... but by his or her endeavor to teach the child all that is good and useful for the child's soul*" [12].

The Christian norms and values are meant to unite and bring people together, solidarizing them freely. Christian education relies on the personal capacity of openness and acceptance by love of our neighbor, life being a continuous high and low tide of revelation and generosity. The Christian Church is "*the repository of the divine and forever redeeming grace, the holy community founded by our Savior Jesus Christ with the aim of spiritual salvation*" [13]. By the divine cult, the Church is continuer of the religious-educative work begun in the family and in school.

Conclusions

The family is the "small church", comprising divine love, involving an ecclesial commitment and faithfulness to the Person and activity of Christ. As a member of the ecclesial family and community, the Christian intensifies the living and the union of faith, in order to acquire perfection in Christ, Who makes love present in the world, because "*if God loved us like that, we also ought to love one another*" (1 John 4:11).

The balance of the community order is supported by the reality of moral life, lived by following the commandments that Christ has asked unconditionally from any human person divinely bearing the imprint of His reason through the spiritual birth given by the Mystery of the Holy Baptism.

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Some contemporary aspects of Hindu-Christian dialogue

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"A basic prerequisite for such future dialogue is that all participants have accurate information about each other's religions. Fulfilling this prerequisite is probably the single largest obstacle to the success of religious dialogue. The majority of people today are illiterate of their own religion as well as the religion of others. The academic study of religion has a major role to play in overcoming this problem [1]." (Harold Coward)

Abstract. *The present paper deals with an important aspect of today's interreligious dialogue, that between Christianity and the second largest religion of Asia, namely Hinduism. The concern is centering around not the ancient or traditional links between these two expressions of the Sacred, but rather of the contemporary ones. But that requires certain knowledge of what has already happened. The dialogue comes from the heart of the people, and is situated in the middle of life. Unfortunately, many present-day dialogues set the stage according to the terms of one of the parties alone. But in spite of misunderstandings and difficulties of the Hindu-Christian dialogue, it has an unavoidable effect: it changes our vision and interpretation of our own religion. The main tenets would be: the future of Hindu-Christian dialogue will largely depend on future mutual interest; Hindu-Christian dialogue may be linked to the future development of Hinduism and Christianity; the future of Hindu-Christian dialogue may be endangered by an institutional misunderstanding of its nature; Hindu-Christian dialogue may have to be placed into a larger "secular" context; Hindu-Christian dialogue is inevitable. It is an imperative and it must exhibit more continuity.*
Keywords: interreligious dialogue, Christianity, Hinduism, vision, future, imperative, benedictive mood.

Preliminaries

The Hindu-Christian dialogue, in its present state, demands both a deep experience of one's own tradition and a sufficient knowledge of the other one. It requires certain knowledge of what has already happened.

The context of the Hindu-Christian dialogue, as well as of any interreligious dialogue, is not the narrowly specific "religious" field, but the arena of life, the daily struggle for justice, peace, happiness. We meet the true 'other' not in an artificial milieu, but as fellow-traveler in the concerns of real life. But today people meet in the streets of cities, in their places of work and entertainment, and normally exchange only information of superficial feelings, having put a mask on their true personalities. [2]

Over 250 million Hindus live today in the West and their number is multiplying. Not all of them are 'orthodox' Hindus. Of course, the archetypes still come from the Indian traditions. An increasing number of Westerners also have close ties with the Indian subcontinent. Not all of them are 'orthodox' Christians. Yet the archetypes still come from the Christian tradition. Mutual interactions are inevitable. Understanding between people

belonging to those two religions is imperative for peace in the world. It should be clear here that Hinduism is not reducible to orthodox Vedanta, and, likewise, Christianity not identical with the orthodox versions of it. Religions today, as in bygone eras, are living organisms. They are moving and changing realities. Only from outdoor one can perceive a static vision of a religion. If we live a religious faith consciously and sincerely, we experience at the same time the freedom to transform it precisely by living it. The Hindu-Christian dialogue of the present cannot be limited to discussing frozen doctrines of the past. And yet the past is still effective in the present. We cannot neglect it.

Each one of us struggles to understand the partner. In this exchange we discover points or perspectives lacking in our own beliefs, and something similar happens to the other partner. Then we discover that we have perhaps gone too far and try to retreat to our previous positions, but it is too late for both sides. Something has changed in each, although it sometimes goes unconfessed to the other party.

While some will stress the difficulties in academic dialogue, others will say that only Christians are interested in it. It all depends on what we understand by *dialogue*.

Those many levels may be bewildering for the neat minds of certain intellectuals but we back down that they have a deeper reason than sociological considerations. In fact, both Hinduism and Christianity are two abstract labels. Hinduism does not exist; there are only giving and separated traditions. Christianity also is non-existent; there are thousands of churches, doctrines, and groups that, seen from the outside, appear as baroque and overwhelming as Hinduism may appear to the outsider. There is not one Hindu-Christian dialogue. There are scores of them.

The Hindu-Christian dialogue is not simply a theoretical issue. It belongs to the life of the peoples of the world, and of the Indian subcontinent in particular. Many historical movements today are not only incomprehensible, but they would have been impossible without this mutual fecundation between religions (i.e. Hinduism and Christianity in this case) [3]

John Webster reminds us that Mahatma Gandhi, when addressing a group of Christians (in 1927), told them to use Hindi instead of English and to give the spinning wheel priority over literacy in uplifting the masses; Gandhi thus touched on two of the most fundamental pillars for dialogue: language *and* praxis. [4]

Firstly, *dialogue* has to be, in reality, *duo-logue*. There have to be two *logoi*, two languages encountering each other, so as to overcome the danger of a *double monologue*. One has to know the language of the other, even if one has to learn it precisely from the other, and often in the workout of dialogue. Dialogue engages the intellect, the *logos* and that is precisely due to the fact that the academic study of religion is not a luxury.

At the same time, it has to be *dia-logue*, that is, a piercing of the *logos*, an overcoming of the mere intellectual level, a going *through* the intellect into an encounter of the whole person. It has to proceed from praxis and discover the symbolic power of action.

The dialogue comes from the heart of the people, and is situated in the middle of life. The spinning wheel is the symbol of Gandhi's challenge to technocracy and the way of saying that the Hindu-Christian dialogue has to proceed starting from both sides. Many present-day dialogues set the stage according to the terms of one of the parties alone. To assume that Christocentrism – or Theocentrism, for instance – can offer a basis as unsatisfactory as to presume that *apaurusevatva* (that which is not man-made, such as Scriptures) – or *Karman* – are proper starting points. But there is a much more subtle partner for fruitful and unbiased dialogue: *modernity*.

The modern cosmology, which assumes that time is linear, that history is paramount, that individuality is the essence of Man, that democracy is an absolute, that technocracy is neutral, that social Darwinism is valid, and so on, cannot offer a fair platform for the dialogue. The basis for the dialogue would hardly be the modern Western myth. Modern Science has permeated the modern world to such an extent that it is difficult to avoid taking it as the basis of the dialogue.

Both Hinduism and Christianity have *to come to grips* with Modern Science, but it would not be fair to Hinduism to consider Modern Science as the neutral starting point. Though Modern Science is not Christianity, both share many common myths extraneous to the Hindu traditions. One can understand a certain Hindu resistance to an apparently neutral dialogue based on the assumptions of a scientific cosmology. In other words, a complete *dialogos* should be at the same time a *dia-mythos*. The respective *logoi* are bearers of meaning and life only within their respective *mythoi*. And it is by means of dialogue that we reach the myth of the other and create a climate of communication. [5]

In spite of misunderstandings, difficulties, and drawbacks of the Hindu-Christian dialogue, it has an unavoidable effect: It changes not only our opinion of the religion we study and dialogue with; it also changes our vision and interpretation of our own religion. It undermines the very basis on which one stood when beginning the dialogue. We may not convince the partners; we may even get irritated at the others; they may be impervious to our opinions. Nevertheless, we ourselves imperceptibly change our stance. The interreligious dialogue prompts the intra-religious dialogue in our own minds and hearts.

A good number of factors have changed in the present-day historical constellation:

1. Both Hinduism and Christianity have lost political power. India is no longer dominated by a Christian empire. Nor is she legally controlled by Hindu institutions. Both Hindus and Christians still have to overcome mutual suspicions and heal wounds of the past, but the meeting can take place without direct political interference.
2. Both Hinduism and Christianity are undergoing an institutional crisis, and this creates fellowship when the Hindus sense that the same difficulties and struggles are also felt by the Christians, and vice-versa.
3. Both religions are also facing a similar challenge from the technocratic complex. The challenge is not the same nor is it seen in the same way, but nevertheless it is there.
4. Due to many reasons, both religions are on the brink of a mutation, different as the two mutations may be. Perhaps the key word here is *secularitv*. At any rate, there is a re-interpretation of tradition and a reformulation of the main tenets of both religions. This puts the dialogue in a very peculiar and fruitful position. Unless we are going to discuss, for example, what Sankara and Aquinas wrote, that is, unless we are engaging in merely historical and exegetical research, when we come together ready for a dialogue we do not know much. Not only do we not know what the other is going to say, we don't even know what we ourselves are going to be provoked to articulate. The dialogue does not take place from two firm and well-delimited trenches; rather, it is an open field. [6]

That's why, precisely, dogmatism is not needed, and that even dogmas are on the move. Thus, a new and fundamental function of dialogue is the encounter of religions. The first aim was to better know each other, to dispel fears and misinterpretations; a second role was that of mutual influence and fecundation. But there are also, lately detected, a third function: that of positively contributing to the new self-understanding of both sides. If this is the case, the dialogue will become an indispensable element in the very formation of the new identity of each religious tradition. [7]

The Hindu-Christian dialogue has never been a roundtable conference, not a merely theoretical exercise in theological disputations. It is embedded in particular socio-political circumstances and takes place within a certain elusive myth.

1) *The first phase* was that of a tiny minority finding its own identity: Christians dialoging with the Hindu majority in order to establish their own identity. No wonder the dialogue was not one of the great theological speculations, as it has been noted. It was *the Christian dialogue with Hinduism.*

2) *The second phase* reverses the roles. Demographically, the Hindus were the majority, of course, but the power was on the other side. Hinduism had to establish its identity, and awaken from an alleged slumber that had permitted first the Muslim and later the Christian conquests. The so-called Hindu Renaissance is witness thereof. It was *a Hindu dialogue with Christianity*.

3) *The third phase* is the prevailing one today in religious and academic milieu. It is *the Hindu-Christian dialogue*. Christians, to be sure, have taken most of the initiative, and it has been a predominantly *Christian-Hindu* dialogue; but Hindu voices are also present and many of the Christians have adopted an unbiased stance. It has been a predominantly doctrinal dialogue. Christian doctrines have been deepened or enlarged for the sake of the dialogue. Hindu doctrines have been awakened so as to show that there was also 'science,' 'rationality,' service of neighbor, and the like in Hindu wisdom. [8]

This third phase has eliminated clichés of superiority, exclusivism, and absolutism from both sides. Yet Westerner's knowledge of Hinduism today seems insufficient. S. Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, similarly, had sympathy for Christianity and were somewhat informed. Yet their knowledge of Christian theology was rudimentary. It is to the credit of this third phase that it has created a more conducive climate for dialogue. And here one has to acknowledge the great services of academic studies. [9]

4) The fourth phase challenges the fixed identity of both parties. The fecundation of the previous phases has produced clear effects. The fourth phase is a genuine dialogue among people who happen to be Hindus and Christians. It is the *religious dialogue* among Hindus and Christians.

But here the problems begin and do not end. What does it mean to be a Hindu? Or a Christian? Is it a doctrine, an interpretation? A church or *sampradaya* (religious system)? A historical tradition? What makes one a Hindu? Or a Christian? Who decides? And even if we say a community, which one? And according to which criteria? Have we to prescribe once and for all what it is to be a Hindu or a Christian? [10]

As some contributors suggest, the dialogue has to be secular, it has to descend to the areas of mutual concern, it has to enter into the human and political arena of our times. But the understanding of the *saeculum* does not need to be the Christian notion of secularization.

The fourth phase starts a dialogue in which neither a politically dominating Hinduism nor an established and powerful Christianity has the upper hand or provides the framework in which the dialogue takes place. Nor is the dialogue purely dialectical or simply doctrinal. The dialogue has gone deeper, on the one hand, and more external, on the other. [11]

This fourth phase is, first of all, dialogue. It is a dialogue among experts or common people, merchants or industrialists, intellectuals or artists who happen to more or less love their traditions, but who are not tied to them to such an extent that they defend any fixed orthodoxy. The archetypes may play a more important role than the explicit ideas. To be sure, any authentic dialogue is a search for truth, and therefore it runs the 'risk' of finding itself 'outside' the fold.

The fourth phase is a new step. It is creative not only in interpreting the 'other.' It is also innovative in understanding oneself.

We could put it in terms of depth psychology. Should we not suspect also that one may one day fall in love with the person with whom one is constantly dealing? Cultural symbiosis is also a phenomenon happening among religious traditions. We also know that the constant encounter with each other may generate hatred and disgust. Fundamentalist reactions are also possible. And again one feels instructed with the lessons of history that leads us into a phase that is the prelude to overcoming religious nationalisms *pari passu* so that we may walk toward a healthy pluralism.

The Future of Hindu-Christian Dialogue

The English language has three moods that are future oriented: [12]

1. The future mood assumes that a certain event is going to occur, and that its occurrence can be anticipated with some confidence.
2. The subjunctive mood leaves alternatives open and attributes a certain probability to the occurrence of a future event.
3. The imperative mood expects a certain event to occur as the result of a command given or an order executed.

While in our daily use of the language we form future forms of verbs with ease and regularity, from a logic-epistemological viewpoint future - talk is quite problematic. Can meaningful and true statements be made about future events? Can the rules of thought that were developed on the basis of past experience be extended into the future? Must we not assume an unproven homogeneity of time when doing so? Things become even more problematic when we address the ontological status of future events. There are theories that assume all future events are already located in an eternal present. The *Bhagavad-Gita* maintains such a view, [13] and it could also be extrapolated from certain biblical passages.[14] Classical Galilean-Newtonian science operated with a similar concept: It did assume that all events were predetermined by the immutable eternal laws of nature, operating in a uniform, infinite space and time, that a complete knowledge of these laws would unfailingly allow us to predict all future events. [15]

Modern science, as well as modern religion, has become more careful. The acknowledged irreversibility of time, the asymmetry introduced by it into the universe, the relativity of space and time, both conceived as finite have led to an acceptance of indeterminacy, which at the very least, would (fundamentally) restrict our power to predict the future, because of our inability to know simultaneously all the factors necessary for doing so. The role of prophets and seers, shamans and yogis has been greatly diminished in the major religions of our time in comparison to former ages.

Since by its very nature the future is open, and since there is no claim to a special knowledge of future events, we are going to use grammar as the organizing principle of this paper and thus address the future of Hindu-Christian dialogue in the three future-oriented moods the English language offers.

1. What will be the future of Hindu-Christian dialogue?

There are many Hindus who are familiar with the New Testament and who are in sympathy with the ideals of the Sermon on the Mount. There are few Hindus who are interested in (contemporary) Christian theology, and there are fewer still who have a desire to enter into a dialogue with their Christian counterparts. There is a growing interest among Christians in India for Hinduism. Several Christian training institutions now have courses in Hinduism, and a fair number of good studies of specific aspects of Hinduism are appearing,

often authored by Christian clergy. That there is a certain amount of mutual interest today is certain. Whether that interest is going to increase is uncertain. Celebrations and affirmations of dialogue notwithstanding, there seem to be few new ideas; there seems to be little progress.

Hindu-Christian Dialogue Will Require the Affirmation of the Role of Scholars in Religion

Hindu-Christian dialogue at the level of theology is by definition a scholarly affair. While not wishing to see living religiosity reduced to mere intellectualism, I attribute an important role within major religions to the activity of scholars, to thought and reflection. R. Boyd has rightly said, "For the modern educated man in India religion is philosophy or it is nothing." [16] In contemporary organized Hinduism the trend appears to be toward the political rather than toward the intellectual, toward agitation more than toward reflection. Hindu-Christian dialogue is a frontier for both Hinduism and Christianity. It requires new thought and new articulations. It requires the honest work of true intellectuals. It is the perception of many of those working in this area that the institution is not behind them.

2. What may be the future of Hindu-Christian dialogue?

It is an oft-quoted affirmation according to which as institutions both Hinduism and Christianity are today in a severe identity crisis. It is very obvious in many areas. For an institution an identity-crisis arises out of a crisis of legitimacy. The institutional crisis is more radical than the crisis in individual lives. Institutions, Hindu or Christian, represent concrete interests, which have much to do with their own past and which they must legitimate. They have institutional rights to defend, a historically-grown identity to preserve, rules to enforce; they aim at self-sufficiency and ideally at an impersonal way of functioning. [17]

The Church, used to be terribly fast with its anathemas when it encountered new ideas, and so were caste-pancayats (i.e. paria) with excommunicating members. As an institution the church was all that the individual Christian was not supposed to be: [18] it made a show of its charities; it had no patience with its dissenters; it was vain and self-seeking, tough and suspicious, avaricious and unscrupulous in pursuing its supposedly divine mission. There is a Hindu counterpart to this too in many a *sampradaya* and many a temple board, which flatly contradict the lofty ideals of the Upanishads or the exalted image of a Vaishnava theism.

As long as the institutions have not come to terms with their identity crisis they cannot meet as institutions. Some individuals in them may be able to dialogue as private persons, but it will not be an institutional Hindu-Christian dialogue, nor will it have any repercussions on the majority of Hindus or Christians. There also may be not much future for Hindu-Christian dialogue if the prevalent right-wing, conservative and fundamentalist factions in both Hinduism and Christianity take over. [19]

A statement like the following would not be found very helpful for dialogue: "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made man, is our saviour.... He ascended to heaven but not before he had carefully prepared his apostles to bring salvation to all men, of all times, in all places."[20] While a Hindu might not have difficulty accepting such a statement qualified by a "we Christians believe..."-in its naive dogmatism it not only offends non-Christians but also more thoughtful Christians. Hindus, presumably, would take this as an expression of the church's missionary intentions rather than as an invitation to dialogue. Even less reassuring are some lines on the next page: "Interreligious dialogue would be unnecessary if all men believed in Jesus Christ and practiced only the religion which he established." Is it that easy

to make out "the religion which Jesus Christ established"? Or would interreligious dialogue also be unnecessary if all men believed in Buddha and the religion he established? Or in Mohammed, or ... or ...? Is the very mention of a possible single-religion Christian world not a sign of lack of realism, a revelation of a profound ignorance of history and uncalled-for Christian triumphalism?

The secular, science-based modem culture of the West has become the background to contemporary intellectual life almost everywhere – or is fast becoming so. Hindu-Christian dialogue of the future may not only have to take place in the awareness of this situation, but it may have to incorporate it into its agenda. Most Hindus and most Christians know very little of the traditions they belong to; most have no interest in acquiring any extensive knowledge of the ritualism or the theologies of their faiths.

The *de facto* emancipation of large populations in East and West from traditional religious domination has led to a great deal of independence *vis-à-vis* religious authorities also in matters where religions were traditionally thought normative. Hindu-Christian dialogue need not aim at preserving existing institutional structures or maintaining traditional beliefs. Largely unofficially as yet and not yet fully recorded, a massive shift has taken place in the understanding of key concepts of both traditional Christianity and Hindu-ism, much of it under the impact of modern science. There is much deep spirituality and religious searching in some of the writings of twentieth and 20^{-st} century giants of science and some contemporary scientists are quite clear about their offering a "new religion" in their thinking.[21] Hindu-Christian dialogue cannot detour this development, especially since these scientists quite often enter into dialogue with both Hinduism and Christianity, albeit in a somewhat eclectic and not always scholarly fashion.

3. Hindu-Christian dialogue in the imperative

Hindus and Christians in India share the same country and largely the same laws. They interact every day on many levels, and they cannot ignore each other's religions. Hindus and Christians must demolish the barriers that have been set up between them by zealous ecclesiastics and by centuries of sectarianism. [22]

While engaging in honest dialogue, both Hindus and Christians will discover that the denominational fragmentation of their traditions is against the true spirit of these traditions, and that they will have to recover an identity beyond that of denominationalism. In a sincere and open dialogue focused on the basics of religious life it will not be possible for participants to retreat to the safety of their narrowly-defined sectarian identities, to refuse to come out of their shells with references to their "Catholic tradition," their "Vaisnava background," their "Lutheran identity," their "Saiva faith." Hindu-Christian dialogue, if it has a future, must be a radical questioning of traditions and an in-depth searching for ultimates.[23] The sacred for both denominational Christianity and sectarian Hinduism is not sacred unless it carries their own trademark; the good is not good unless it is identified by sectarian signs. In the process Christians and Hindus have lost the ability to see goodness and truth where it appears and have been trained to look only for the external signs of their traditions, regardless of whether these signs are imprinted on the genuine article or on fakes.

There is a strong trend in present-day Christian theology to replace systematic thinking and philosophical engagement by story and narrative, to dismiss the intellectual approach to religion as irrelevant and to cultivate only its emotional and pragmatic sides. This trend may be both symptom of a lack of intellectual substance and cause for an erosion of intellectual content of Christianity. We see a similar trend also in contemporary Hinduism, especially in the "new movements." When they were really strong, both

Hinduism and Christianity were intellectually very vigorous. It hardly needs stating that the world today is neither governed by Christian nor by Hindu principles, and that both Hinduism and Christianity must fight hard to get a hearing. While in their best times religions lead the intellectual life of a civilization, today they are trailing it. Today religions are largely perceived as political lobby, as representing particular interests and as, generally, out-of-touch with the times. Hindu-Christian dialogue must recover the intellectual substance of Hinduism and Christianity and must contribute actively to the ongoing search for truth/reality in all spheres of life.

All too many organizers of dialogue conferences and writers of dialogue books believe, and claim, that they are the first who have seen the light, and that they are the ones with whom serious dialogue really begins. [24] If a dialogue is to be fruitful it must continue what was said and done before. An amazing amount of constructive work has been done, and many ideas have already been tried out. [25] Today's Hindu-Christian dialogue cannot begin with a *tabula rasa*, but it adds on to a page of history on which much has already been written. It may not have been called dialogue in former times, but meetings, exchanges and encounters have taken place in India between Hindus and Christians for centuries, and both sides formed opinions of each other, which have to be taken into account. Western Christian missionaries often carried tension and dissension into India and separated not only Indian Christians from their Hindu neighbors but also brought about a split within Indian Christianity.

4. Hindu-Christian dialogue in the benedictive mood

Over and above the three future-oriented moods of the English language, which we utilized, Sanskrit possesses a "benedictive" mood used to express wishes and blessings, hope and support. Our so-called hard-nosed (unsentimental) modern world does not believe much in these things. But wishes and hopes have come true before, and blessings and supportive words have helped many. Why not use them in the context of Hindu-Christian dialogue?

May Hindus and Christians discover in each other's traditions insights and values and blend them with their own insights and values.

May Hindus and Christians open up in dialogue toward each other and toward that which they call – by different names – God, Brahman, Bhagvan, Siva, Sakti... May Hindus and Christians gain respect for each other and may they have the courage to change their institutions accordingly.

May dialogue become the normal way of communication between Hindus and Christians rather than the exception.

May Hindus and Christians (in conjunction with all others) regain the center needed to order our social and political, our economic and our ecological lives.

May Hindus and Christians in dialogue shed all pretensions and all claims of racial superiority or religious privilege.

May Hindu and Christian scholars not only talk about dialogue but enter into genuine dialogue for their own enlightenment as well as of those for whom they teach and write. [26]

Conclusion

A consequence of the encounter between Hinduism and Christianity (and other religions and ideologies) might be a certain alienation from the local and accumulated traditions in the same sense in which the discovery of new continents brought about an alienation of Europeans from their homelands, and the discovery of distant planetary systems through the telescope brought about an alienation of humankind from earth. The process is not likely to be stopped. The attempt to conquer foreign continents and alien religions, to

missionize and to make them like one's homeland has ended in failure, and not only for reasons of strategy. Horizons have shifted and the point once considered the center has turned out to be on the periphery. [27]

John Archibald Wheeler (†2008), one of the most thoughtful astrophysicists of the last decades, ends a major essay with the remark that we only begin to understand the universe and to grasp how simple it is when we begin to see how strange, unexpected and different it is from what we had imagined. [28] This is true also of religion. Not only do we begin to understand in genuine, profound and personal Hindu-Christian dialogue how strange and different and also unsuspectedly familiar the "other's" religion is, but we also begin to understand something of the extraordinary strangeness of our own religion, which we believed we knew and were familiar with.

Dialogue requires compassion, which includes, necessarily, love of neighbor, especially when he does not resemble us. In Tibet, the following fable or parable is told: "One day, I saw something in the distance. Moving ahead I thought it was an animal. I went closer and I realized it was a man. He came closer and I realized that it was my brother." [29]

References

[1] Harold COWARD, *Pluralism: Challenge to World Religions*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985, p. 107.

[2] Raimundo PANIKKAR, *Foreword*, in: Harold COWARD (edit.), *Hindu-Christian Dialogue: Perspectives and Encounters*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1993, p. X.

[3] History is not only an account of wars. Che Guevera and Martin Luther King, Jr., are impossible without Gandhi, who is indebted to Tolstoy, who in turn is the product of an Eastern Christianity that has one of its roots in Eastern spiritualities of an extra- and pre-Christian nature. The great names of the school of Alexandria were strongly influenced by Indian doctrines. Pantaenus went to India; Ammonius Saccas, whatever his origin, was conversant with oriental religions. There is a *mala,* a rosary of living names, East and West, Hindu and Christian, which forms the warp and woof of real human history. In short, the Desert Fathers and the Hindu mystics as much as the British viceroys and the Hindu rajas or Muslim nawabs are latent partners in the present-day encounters. *Ibid*, pp. XII-XIII.

[4] John WEBSTER GRANT, *God's people in India*, Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1959, p. 13.

[5] Raimundo PANIKKAR, *op.cit.*, p. XIV.

[6] How often one has heard the criticism from the other side: "But you as a Hindu (or a Christian) should not be saying this."

[7] Gladys AMBAT, *Viewpoints: Why Dialogue With Hindus*?, in: *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies*: Vol. 2, Article 12, p. 3. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.7825/2164-6279.1021

[8] Comparative studies of great value have appeared. Shankara and Aquinas; Krishna and Christ; Hindu and Christian pilgrimages; the notion of grace, scriptures, God, and so forth, are today well-studied topics. But comparative studies are only implicit dialogues. Cf. Roland E. MILLER, *Trialogue: The Context of Hindu-Christian Dialogue in Kerala*, in: Harold COWARD, *Hindu-Christian Dialogue: Perspectives and Encounters,* p. 49.

[9] Nevertheless, the true pioneer in this respect was Max Müller († 1900), the initiator of the most celebrated work entitled: The *Sacred Books of the East* (50 vol.).

[10] Raimundo PANIKKAR, *op.cit.*, p. XVII.

[11] The Hindu and Christian contexts are different; they are religious and personal, but at the same time political, economic, secular, and they inform ordinary life. The fourth phase of the dialogue is a burning issue.

[12] Other languages have somewhat different arrangements.

[13] Bhagavad-Gita, 32 ff.: "Time am I, world-destroying, grown mature ... by me alone are they slain already. Be thou merely the occasion ..." (trans. S. Radhakrishnan). Foreseeing the future is one of the siddhis Yogis are supposed to be able to acquire. Cf. *Yogasutra*, IV, 16.

[14] Cf. Ps. 139:16: "You had scrutinized my every action, all were recorded in your book, my days listed and determined, even before the first of them occurred". It was the sign of the "true" over against the "false" prophet to be able to accurately predict future happenings.

[15] The power of accurate prediction was seen as the greatest strength and proof for the validity of the scientific method. Klaus KLOSTERMAIER, *The Future of Hindu-Christian Dialogue*, in: H. COWARD, *Hindu-Christian Dialogue: Perspectives and Encounters*, p. 263.

[16] R. BOYD, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* (Madras: CLS, 1979), p. 262.

[17] Both Hinduism and Christianity (in its mainstream) are mass-religions, "national religions," to which one belongs automatically by the sheer fact of being born into a certain community (infant-baptism, at least as it used to be practiced, is the equivalent of being born into a religion, as is the case in Hinduism). What we see developing today, both in Hinduism and Christianity, is the forcing of identities in contrast to "the others". See Klaus KLOSTERMAIER, *The future of Hindu-Christian dialogue*, p. 266.

[18] We are referring here to the portrait of a Christian drawn by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13.

[19] Klaus KLOSTERMAIER, *op.cit.*, p. 266.

[20] "The Urgency of Dialogue with Non-Christians" in Origins 39/14, Washington (March 14, 1985), pp. 641-50.

[21] Douglas HOFSTÄDTER ends the preface to his widely acclaimed *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Band* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980) with these words: "In a way, this book is a statement of my religion. I hope that this will come through to my readers, and that my enthusiasm and reverence for certain ideas will infiltrate the hearts and minds of a few people. That is the best I could ask for" (p. xxi). See also Ken WILBUR, ed., *Quantum Questions: Mystical Writings of the World's Great Physicists* (Shambhala, 1984). Books like Sin's *Tao of Science* and F. Capra's *Tao of Physics* have become "bibles" for a generation of science-and-religion-interested youth. See Klaus KLOSTERMAIER, *The future of Hindu-Christian dialogue*, p. 267.

[22] The sociologist L. DUMONT has said emphatically: "Cultures not only can be made to communicate, they must!" *Religion/Politics and History in India* (Mouton, 1970), p. 161.

[23] Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 1, 2 approvingly quotes Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus*, "*Fides est circa simplicem et semper existentem veritatem*" ("faith is about the simple and ever existing truth"). This must be the definition of faith adopted by both Christians and Hindus in order to enter into meaningful dialogue.

[24] Thus W. STROLZ and S. UEDA, eds., *Offenbarung als Heilserfahrung im Christentum, Hinduismus and Buddhismus* (Collected Papers from a Dialogue Conference: Vienna, 1992) begin their preface with the sentence: "Christian theology has just now begun the dialogue with the great religions of Asia." (Sic!)

[25] Just two major works – out of an impressive number – may be mentioned to substantiate the claim: R. BOYD, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* (Madras: CLS, 1979) and M. M. THOMAS, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance (*London: SCM, 1969).

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Religious Education – Paradigm for Contemporary Education

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ABSTRACT

Abstract. The current context of youth education promotes a model based solely on the transmission of information. One insists on the quantity and universality of the subjects and loses sight of the value of knowledge for life. Before this bareness of value and emotion, youth religious education has maintained since ancient times a catechetical model that integrates information with lifestyle. The initiated one is not conditional upon the information, according to the contemporary model, but the information contributes with other elements to the formation of personality in order to cultivate its characteristic dimensions
Keywords: religious education, holistic, Orthodox.

INTRODUCTION. EDUCATION BASED EXCLUSIVELY ON INFORMATION

In order to understand the current educational system, a return in time bringing the principles that guided this process is useful. Thus, the first landmark is found during the Enlightenment, when rationalism prevails before any human quality. The so-called formation of the human man was supported by Locke [1] or Rousseau [2]. They claimed that people are born equal from a cognitive point of view and that there are only small differences due to their nature. All depends on education and the society has the power to influence people's training. The Enlighteners' project was to build a society based on equality, guaranteed by reason. Their manifesto was structured around education for everyone, but only starting from everybody's common reason.

The literary movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries proposed a massive training of humanity. However, both the Enlightenment and the Humanism represented a secular and anticlerical movement which proposed abandoning all religious-type teachings. In Romania, the Transylvanian School supported the emancipation of people through culture and education. Gheorghe Şincai, director of the schools, established 300 schools that would benefit from the first printed textbooks or popularizing books [3]. The universality of education and the right to information represent a progress, but they are the moment in which a double rupture occurs: from an anthropological point of view, man is divided between mind and body, and from a theological point of view, man is deprived of a complete vision of the world, contrary to the logical and scientific explanations proposed. It should be noted that, as per the Enlighteners' vision, virtue as a goal of education did not mean following a model or achieving religious values. Reason is at the center of education, I can say automatic and independent, which excluded a full vision of achieving man as personality.

The industrialized society of the twentieth century brings new elements to the education. On the one hand, the Enlightenment project is continued and developed. Education in traditional terms of searching for virtues and happiness is replaced by an education of the mind. Thus, the natural evolutionary phases of the child in order to propose adequate methods are researched. Pedagogy becomes thus more didactic. Along scientific

psychology, the cognitive science brought an important contribution which proposed an intelligent and mechanical man. On the other hand, industrialization and robotization do not require educated people. More than specialists, people must be educated in order to constantly adapt to the context.

Dewey's modern democratic model is built around the concept of experience that becomes an instrument of adaptation to a global vision man – nature – society [4]. Man acts constantly and adapts to environmental requirements; in this vision, thinking is considered an instrument of action: it must find solutions when encountering obstacles. In my opinion, even if man regains his pragmatic and real dimension, in reality a new division is produced: education is externalized, meaning that one no longer seeks the subjective definition of personality, but solutions imposed by external conditions are sought. Pedagogy of young people is in fact a permanent formation for permanent reconstruction and reorganization of living conditions. Young people are invited to seek better solutions to common problems, without receiving criteria of values. Competitiveness in a globalized world requires knowing a significant amount of information and ability to reorganize it in order to remove a fault.

The last element that I mention in this introduction and that supports computerized contemporary education is the computer. This mechanism appeared relatively recently in human evolution is an element that plays an important role in everyday life of man. I would say, and certainly the majority states it, that education will be organized in the future around computer: evaluation, interaction and skills. On the one hand, this tool offers multiple possibilities, both by a varied value level and by the access to information. However, its use involves high risks: elimination of ethical and aesthetic judgments, the lack of a quality and truth criterion of the information, social isolation. The current situation, when most people have instant access to technologized information, is unprecedented and education seems to limit to its use. Computer brings benefits to education, but also high risks.

CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS-TYPE HOLISTIC EDUCATION

The Christian philosophy is hereditary to the Greek culture and retains certain elements: the manner to pose problems, the language or concepts. Educating young people at the ancient Greeks, also called Paideia, meant creating a virtuous person, fully developed. Not only knowledge of information is important – individuals were trained to be brave, righteous, strong, loyal and very harmoniously physically developed [5]. A good education was manifested in both bodily and spiritual beauty. One may speak about a state of excellence in all areas that Christianity will propose in its education. Saint John Chrysostom speaks in On vainglory and the right way for parents to bring up their children about education as a fundamental human process: "to educate means to care for children and young people in terms of soul cleanliness and decency, to bring up the child according to moral principles, a righteous and pious man, to model his intelligence, in a word to care for the salvation of his soul" [6].

Marcus Plested offers a series of arguments in favor of the holistic-type education of the first Christian centuries [7]. Education allows an individual to be what he is. Therefore, the freedom that every man to transform himself, to be wiser by improving soul and body is a prerequisite. The man receiving religious education did nothing but practice and develop his own potential. Professor Plested suggests a return to the sources, to this treasure of Christian teachings of the patristic age.

Education in different Christian denominations developed differently and the West turned to an oral transmission of the teachings. The Christian East has placed since the beginning the education on the church liturgical dimension. Father Alexander Schmemann is

the one who insisted that the liturgical cycles represent education by their nature. Moreover, catecheses were traditionally education methods in the religious services [9]. What Christian education seeks in the Orthodox is "to bring the individual into the life" [9]; the formative system is not limited to the transmission of dogmatic or moral teachings, but it seeks to create the participants. By the liturgical experience, those present are part of the Body of Christ. The Christian catechesis emphasizes exactly this participation before any logical explanation or understanding. For this reason, the educational program seems to be missing or to be confused with the ritual program in Orthodoxy [10].

Author Constance Tarasar has studied the topic of education in the Orthodox space since the '60s. Continuing the work of Schmemann, she supports the priority of education through experience since an early age: "The child learns to worship through experience from the very first moments in the Church. The child's first 'understandings' come through the senses" [11]. In another study, Tarasar analyzes the principle of restoring the connection between theology and liturgical experience in the context of catechesis as a form of life of the church [12].

The analysis is on the line of an ecological education in which not only the mind but also the body seem to contain more quickly and more deeply some religious realities. I would like to mention here that the history of education tried a new paradigm in the past decades. The vision of the Italian educator Montessori is revolutionary, who realizes that education is wrong when it puts an equality of mind between the adult educator and student. According to her, education is a self-learning through experience, an achievement of Ego through the tools provided by the educator. Education is free and harmonic and implies experimented knowledge, and the child's mind absorbs information from the environment in order to embody them [13]. With some obvious differences, we can say that the educational system seems to return to a model that has worked for two millennia in the Orthodox Church.

In the Christian West, Augustine was the one who succeeded for the first time to connect the ancient Greek and Roman philosophy with the Christian teaching [14]. In his main work on education – *De Magistro*, two ways are proposed: the one of dialectics based on concepts and that of direct experience that leads to the truth. Of Neoplatonic origin, Augustine realizes that the informative-type education has a limit, remains in the universe of words and signs. Knowing the truth is an experience lived by his own interiority. In fact, the Western author proposes a model found in the entire Christianity: religion is a mystery/secret and the circulated truth is superior to the understanding capacity of the human mind. Religious education is a revelation in which man, through faith, accepts unconditionally. The formula found by Augustine is Crede ut intelligas, intellige ut credas, which translates into Faith helps intelligence, and intelligence must be put at the service of faith.

FOLLOWING A MODEL

In Christianity, body and spirit education is not limited to the assimilation of theological information, but it is achieved by following a model. The Apostles were the first to receive the Christian religious education and the Saints followed the same model: Jesus Christ. The religious teaching is not one to inform, but it is one of association and identification with the master. It is neither hypothetical nor self-defining; it has a real purpose in its model. According to the Greek model, the purpose of religious education is not knowledge of the historical or dogmatic realities, but the total transformation of man. The Theological Pedagogy of the Fathers confirms that education consists in the ennoblement of the life up to fullness of assimilation to God [15].

I can say that the Christian model of education in school, family or church institutions is more or less one of discipleship. A person who wants a religious training gets into a relationship with a master who asks him to undergo a series of stages to reach the level of the master. Unlike school based solely on information, discipleship provides accompanying the master. Things do not seem forced when we consider the education of young pupils: on the one hand, teachers are mostly priests or have theological training, which indicates that there are more than teachers; on the other hand, religion classes at school are only part of the religious education. Often, and especially in rural areas, young people find the religion teacher in church, where he participate in the liturgical and community life of the parish.

The advantage of following a master-model is that the disciple, knowing him more than what he says, succeeds through these contacts to acquire a whole vision on the world. The master's qualities are fundamental in this system; he must embody an intellectual and also ethical authority. Those who listen to him expect from him not only to convey them the teachings of faith, but also to be their embodiment.

The connection between priesthood and education is very close. The priest is an educator not only in the school department, but throughout the entire liturgical and pastoral mission he undertakes. The fact that not science makes him an educator is significant, but the ability to convey what he knows through a certain refinement or even his own way of life: "The priest ... is especially an educator. His life is a lesson. His sermon is a lesson. Confession is a lesson. In all there is a lot of pedagogy, and in confession, he himself is as if before judgment, when he listens to the one presenting his facts at the judgment. The judge must know the value of everything that is confessed. He needs unequivocal, precise and clear criteria. Being an educator – it was said – is real art. But it was also said that it is also science. Art gives the priest the mobility, method, adaptation to the psychology and character of the previous speaker, gracefulness and kindness, but science, which means the priest's culture, gives solutions. Without the former, it is not possible, without the second, the first remains meaningless and without content" [16].

CONCLUSIONS

Saint John Chrysostom compares education with an art, and the child's soul with wax, pearl, statue or painting. As soft wax can be easily modeled, so can the child's soul be easily formed from an early age [20]. Therefore, education in Orthodoxy, along with the firmness of the subject, contains different ways to become a Christian. This flexibility, resulting from the holistic manner of education, differentiates the East from the Christian West. Studying the history of the Church, Boojamra notes that religious education was more formal than informal [21]. The ultimate goal is not the acquisition of information and adaptive capacities, but creating a person complying with the Christological model. *Metanoia* or *paideia* of the person is different from simply informing the individual, as proposed by the modern education [22]. It is the opposite of today's pedagogical context abusing the amount of information.

Another conclusion results that deserves a future study. No person can be educated outside a community; either it is a family, a school, a monastery or a parish. To be trained, a person patiently follows a journey in the company of a master. To get into a process of religious education means both membership and participation in the community life.

However, the bodily dimension of education in Orthodoxy brings also some gaps. Unfortunately, there is a lack of research of the argument and its rare systematization. The

need for a greater awareness of the pedagogical act is highlighted by Kallistos Ware, by the fact that any living tradition is not a mechanical repetition, but a work with which culture and nature associate [23].

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Globalization and Technology

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ABSTRACT

English Abstract: *Globalization, very complex phenomenon, involves overcoming the barriers between different states, which allowed the rapid transfer of capital, technology, information, and the "toxins" from one country to another. First, the technology formed the basis of rapid expansion of great ideas promoted by globalization. Undeniable progress in the field of technology and science has conferred to the man extraordinary powers that have been used most often to the detriment of his spiritual progress. We must not deny that science and technology have brought many benefits to human, and he could expand the knowledge horizon upon the world in which he lives, exploiting information acquired and share them with others. Science and technology must become for postmodern man ways of talk and communion between human and divinity, all to the praise of God and the perfection of the creature.*

Keywords: *globalization, technology, science, spirituality, postmodernism.*

INTRODUCTION

The term "globalization" is Anglo-Saxon and he expresses the tendency of enterprises to develop simultaneously the processes of internationalization and digitization. The increasing complexity of multinational organizations that operate in different countries who adopt from now flexible working patterns, which are not only standardized according to a unique pattern, becomes manageable only if, at the same time, increases the power and the centralization of the informational system. Globalization takes systematically overturn what "the first Modernism" had as the central premise, namely the possibility of coexistence between the borders of national states. Just this overcoming of national borders in various fields such as economics, computer science, ecology, technology, culture, is proposed to us by the globalization. What the globalization proposes to us is something familiar at first glance, but if we manage to trace his implications, we conclude that our daily life is essentially modified and we are forced to adapt and to provide answers. Barriers between countries have been canceled and this has led to the rapid transfer of capital, technology, information and even of "toxins" from one country to another.

Globalization "is the way to things, people or ideologies, which governments may wish to lock them out of the country (drugs, illegal immigrants, criticism of human rights violations). Understood thus, the globalization represents the death of distances; abandonment transnational forms of life, often unwanted and misunderstood - based on the the definition of Anthony Giddens - the action and (co) existence beyond the distances (seemingly separate worlds of national states, religions, regions, continents)." [1]

1. The technology in the service of globalization

Of course, eliminating distance allowed orientation regardless of the point on the globe where there is a man. The possibility of globalization existence is due primarily to modern means of communication and transport, therefore to the technology development. Thus, globalization is an everyday experience for the entire population of the world. Heroes such as Odysseus or Robinson would be for today's world personages at least ridiculous, despite today's multicultural exchanges possibility, brotherhood among peoples from thousands of kilometers away are commonplace and protests against North Korea nuclear tests are organized all over the world, working very hard to imagine some time ago. [2]

"The countless eras of many regions of the world were compressed into a single standardized global time, which becomes normative. Not only because modern media can achieve ‹‹virtual›› simultaneity of non-simultaneous events, so each non-simultaneous occurrence, maybe only local or regional, to become part of world history, but also because synchronic simultaneity switch diachronic non simultaneity and may cause in this way, artificial chains of cause and effect. He was born ‹‹the compact globe in terms of time››."[3]

It may readily be constant reference to a single temporal axis of events in terms of different significance and provenance. Thus, if we take as an example the stock exchanges and securities from Frankfurt, we see that the time when they are opened, the values closure of stock exchanges in Singapore, Hong Kong or Tokyo, are already known, as they are known also growth tendencies or decreasing of courses on European exchanges, at the opening stock exchange day in New York, on Wall Street. In fact, do not have to be physically present on the premises of any of exchanges, the Internet gives you the opportunity to trade shares and to profit from exchange rate differences, wherever you are. The possibility of communicative interconnection caused the earth to be, in economic terms, a compact space, and financial markets of distant countries to be as close to each other. This thing is facilitated by actual lower costs of financial transactions, they became paractic insignificant. [4]

Globalization does nothing more than to guide humanity into two directions extremes: can inspire people to see the earth as a prison where they are detained, or may arise the consciousness of unity of humanity, can make people be aware of the mission that they here and now. Globalization can offer to the man and history a finally sense. Globalization is just a product of technological development. [5] "Of course, it is not an accident that globalization is realized at the moment when man sank in two infinites: in the small infinite of the matter and in the large infinite of the stars." [6]

As one of the major causes of globalization, technology has provided world media and mass communication. Technology has made those ideas to circulate easily and quickly from side to side of the world.

The technique facilitated to human the amplification psycho-physical capabilities (television - the eyes, the radio - ears, car - feet etc.), and has managed to overcome natural barriers imposed by time and space. As argued John McLuhan, man turns into a "super-man" and due to technical discoveries manages to conquer spaces, easily to impose his own ideas and his way of life. [7]

It was found that if you reduce the cost of communications, the new technologies enables the globalization of production and the financial markets. Financial markets, in turn, play a stimulus for technological progress, intensifying competition and accelerating the spread of new technologies through foreign direct investment.

In recent years, global telecommunications network (computers, televisions, telephones, etc.) has increased considerably the ability to transmit information. About 30 years ago, there were only 25,000 telecommunications providers worldwide; today, their number has exceeded 140 million, and it is in a continuous growth. In 1844, S. Morse gave the start of the era of instant communication through the invention of the telegraph, and in 1960 could be transmitted simultaneously 138 conversations through a transatlantic telephone cable. Nowadays, thanks to optical fiber cables can be transmitted simultaneously 1,500,000 conversations. [8]

But the greatest achievement today, on communications, is the Internet, which has developed rapidly, the number of users at the end of 2015 will reach 3.2 billion, as shown in a report of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). [9]

Progress in the area of telecommunications have made the international trade and financial transactions to have an impressive growth. Movement from one country to another of huge amounts of money is possible by pressing a single key.

Indisputable technical advances in the field of science has conferred to human extraordinary powers, but they do occur also self-destruct capabilities very dangerous. Therefore it requires careful reporting to the morality rules, in order to avoid a possible catastrophe caused by the transformation of technological progress into a curse for humans. [10]. We must keep in mind that technology "can serve after the fall: the good and evil; the life and death. It depends on our consciousness, on our spiritual condition that science to serve the life "[11].

2. Science, Technology and Christian spirituality

We were talking before about technique as one of the major factors of globalization. We can say that science and technology have brought to the humanity many benefits and that if we think only a few, such as conquest by man of the macrocosm, exploring thorough world microcosm, the diminishing of human suffering caused by disease, the possibility to prolong human life, the emergence of a more civilized life and more, made available to man by science and technology. Thanks to science and technology man has the opportunity to expand their horizon of knowledge of the world he lives in, can exploit information gained and to share with others. This progress in the knowledge and exploitation of the world can not be stopped by worries such as the energy crisis that is looming as a result of achieving a maximum exploitation of oil reserves and hydrocarbon, the maximum that would imply that the level of consumption of these fuels can no longer grow. The man has managed to find other forms of energy like wind, solar, tellurium etc. So, technological progress is not, yet, in danger to stop because of some obstacle.

But it is equally true that the development of science and technology led to the disaster caused by humans in the two world wars, which were the most destructive, wild and bloody in the history of mankind. These have led to nuclear weapons, the worst environmental disasters and an accentuated spiritual crisis. [12] Therefore, it can be said that the moral development of the world is far behind the technology, and if things do not evolve so as to reach an ethical organization of everything that means scientific progress, then the total decline of humanity will become reality.

Today we are the witnesses of a paradox created by science: on the one hand, science has made the man master of the external world, material, but on the other hand she turned the plane of the interior and spiritual life, into a slave of instincts altered by sin. "Feeding continuously the pride that through science and technology he dominate more like a god the external modern world, man has strayed so far from the truth by the illusory utopias of its

autonomy as it got more and more dominated by their passions, more dehumanized, in fact increasingly demonized. In this degradation of secularized human being, we can see the consequence and the fruit of unbalanced conception about God, world and man, poisoned conception by her characteristic anthropocentrism." [13]

The spiritual crisis came with the scientific progress, but man needed in these times spiritual power to remove the danger that the technique no longer serve the life but the death. The technology is today, for many, a means of departing from God. They think that it gains its freedom, but it is lost and the man falls under the influence of evil that restricts him until suffocation. Caring for a more comfortable living for human, proves to be a dream so selfish that makes him forget the supreme purpose that we have to fulfill, namely, the deification. Way in which man do science today and "the approach of the world's resources as goods for human whims, considerably impede the access to higher meanings of the world and life. The instrumentalization of nature, the concern for progress, our way of living in the world are put across the way which man could move towards a spiritual life in communion with others." [14]

Theology has always held that science has a duty to serve the good. But for this to be achieved, it is necessary the communion with the Creator in everything that means act of knowledge, science, understanding of life. Everything must be based on God's will. God has never been against the act of knowledge, He did not put gates in the way of scientific progress. That paradisiacal commandment given by God, "of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you may not take" (Genesis 2, 17) has meant His care for the created being, as she does not suffer tear inward and not to fall into the unfortunate ambiguity of good and evil. [15]. So science and technology were not given to man to remove his Creator, because if this were to happen, he would suffer an infinite spiritual decay. Science and technology are meant to be ways to talk and communion between humanity and divinity, everything in praise of God and the perfection of the creature. Everything God created enables the man to dialogue and to meet God, to help spiritual and moral progress. [16]

3. Instead the conclusions - the hypermodern man and the technology

The technology is not bad in itself, it is an instrument morally neutral. Evil comes from its wrong use by humans.

The technique, by rapid means of communication available to the people, made them interact from distance, faster and more frequently, but most often not in favor of creating a state of communion, but rather to emphasize competitive condition, quarrels, up to mutual destruction. [17]

Man acts today almost exclusively on material things, aiming its pronounced possession and accumulation of more material things. This inevitably led to a degradation of the soul which caused exacerbated depersonalization of hypermodern man.

The excessive technicization, the mechanization of operations that once were done through people, has most often dramatic repercussions on hypermodern man. Besides the undeniable advantages (such as speed, uniformity, perfection, saving energy, time and money), mechanization led to an increase of greed gone, so far as hypermodern man came to be regarded as omnipotent. This enables the man to trust the machines and make them an worshiping idol.

"Increasing and improving the means for rapid information led to a kind of delirium of information. Then, knowing everything that happens in the world, without wanting you actually participated to the suffering of others, you suffer more, or fall into a kind of

indifference to the sufferings of others."[18] The fact that you're close to your brother who is suffering cannot be wrong, since we have the duty to relieve his pain. Wrong is the attitude of indifference, lack of responsibility, noninvolvement in solving the problem of our neighbor. Jesus Christ did not extend the boundaries of the concept of "neighbor" beyond those we know?! There are people in the world that we do not know, but that we can help them only through a simple gesture to save even a drop of water that does not mean anything to us, but for others represent the hope to live.

"The speed of locomotion brought a kind of delirium of speed that makes the man of today to crush the pedestrians only to arrive a minute faster on target, in contrast to the modest claims and calm of the man who once was content with post chaise." [19]

We can talk today about desensitization of the hypermodern man, him being increasingly "intoxicated" through the technology, the size and the strong emotions. [20]

In **conclusion**, we can say that although we live in a society where communication has reached global dimensions, where distances have suffered a major contraction through the faster mobility, "people are increasingly alone, because all live less and less deeply and directly the personal mystery of other. The excessive technicization, the procedures mania, the formalization of individual and collective action in the the public space, the concern for improving human relations in the educational area or professional field, all these "objective constraints" impoverished the community space of initiatives, of mutual aid, by expressions of love for one another" [21].

We no longer have a dialogue face to face, the cyberspace replaced the real one, the people become alienated from one another believing, at the same time, that they acquired through modern means of socialization the fastest and most concrete form of closeness.

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Restoring the moral credibility of the accounting profession: a Malaysian university example

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Abstract. *This study sought to assess the moral competencies of third-year accounting students enrolled at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). An instrument was developed through a collaboration with Islamic accounting and Fiqh Muamalat scholars to measure the moral competencies of these students from a wholly Islamic perspective. 105 enrolled third-year students were surveyed. The results of the survey revealed that according to IIUM's own grading system, the current crop of third-year accounting students were not morally competent enough to deal with the inevitable moral dilemmas they would face in the work place. The implications of these results is that at the moment, IIUM's accounting department is not meeting the government's mandate to produce morally competent professionals. The department has to re-examine its current curriculum as to it's ethics coverage, particularly regarding qualities that the students scored very low on.*
Keywords: Moral competence; Accounting students; University education; Ethics education; Islamic perspective;

Introduction

In the earliest part of the twenty-first century, the world was rocked by several financial scandals; from Enron to WorldCom; Tyco to Parmalat; Arthur Andersen to Shell, and more recently, the global financial crisis and the Toshiba financial scandal (Bayou et al., 2011; Addady, 2015); these scandals directed the world's attention towards the issue of ethics education, and its role in developing the moral competencies of future accountants and corporate leaders.

The concern about the rampant increase in immoral practices of accountants and businessmen was not restricted only to America and Europe; there was also concern in Malaysia (Abu Bakar et al., 2010; Yunus and Abdul Rashid, 2011; Eid, 2012). In order to address this alarming increase in unethical and immoral behaviours among business people in Malaysia, the government focused on the educational sector as a viable mechanism for checking this growing menace. This is evidenced by a 2012 blueprint to overhaul the Malaysian educational system within thirteen years (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, 2012). This blueprint had eleven key objectives, one of which was directly targeted to the issue of moral competence amongst young Malaysians, and was stated as follows: "Every student leaves school as a global citizen imbued with core, universal values and a strong Malaysian identity" (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, 2012, p34).The Malaysian government's message to all educational institutions in Malaysia regarding moral competence is clear: Produce students who have excellent moral values and ethics.

Three years have passed since the government's 2012 mandate to universities for the production of morally competent professionals. This paper sought to shed light on how well Malaysian universities are fulfilling this crucial mandate specifically regarding future accountants by assessing the moral competencies of third-year accounting students enrolled at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). With 61.3% of the Malaysian population being Muslims, accounting students enrolled at IIUM represent a sample of the majority of the next generation of Malaysian accountants. As this paper dealt exclusively with Muslim accounting students, moral competence was viewed from a wholly Islamic perspective with complete reliance on Islam's primary sources of guidance: The Noble Quran and *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him [PBUH]).

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows: Firstly, a literature review of the scholarship on the relationship between university education and moral competency is presented. Secondly, this paper's conceptual framework is presented, followed by the research methodology adopted. The findings of the paper are then presented, along with a discussion of their implications. Finally, the paper ends with a conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW: UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AND MORAL COMPETENCE

The papers reviewed were concerned with the relationship between various aspects of education and the development of the moral competence. Specifically there were two key concerns: 1) The impact of education in general on moral competence, and 2) The impact of "ethics" education on moral competence. An overview of each of these concerns is provided below.

The impact of education on moral competence

Swiss psychologist and philosopher, Jean Piaget was arguably one of the most influential proponents of the importance of education in the moral development of individual, particularly those of children (Rest, 1989). In his 1932 landmark work entitled "The Moral Judgment of the Child", he sought to investigate the moral developmental process of children by interviewing a large number of children from various schools in the Swiss towns of Geneva and Neuchatel. The results of these interviews led to the postulation of a theory of child moral development that consisted of four developmental stages: The first stage was called sensorimotor stage; the second stage called the preoperational stage; the third stage was called the concrete operational stage, and the final stage was the formal operational stage. Piaget (1932) concluded that children's morality is shaped by what they observe, and thus educational institutions have a critical role to play in their moral development by providing an interactive learning environment.

Lawrence Kohlberg, an American psychologist, built upon the work done by Piaget (1932). Kohlberg (1958) argued that the main goal of education should be moral development. He sought to assess the impact of education on the moral development of children of ages 10-16 by assessing their responses to various moral dilemmas. The major fruit of his research was the postulation of the now very famous "stages of moral development". Kohlberg's (1958) theory of moral development identified six stages of moral development, classified under three levels, each level containing two stages. The first level is called the pre-conventional level containing stages 1 and 2; at stage 1, a child acts morally so as to avoid punishment, while at stage 2, he or she acts morally to earn a reward. The next level is the conventional level containing stages 3 and 4; at stage 3, a child acts in a way that is accepted by society, and at stage 4 a child obeys the established laws of the land. The final

level is the post-conventional level containing stages 5 and 6; at stage 5, a child chooses actions that will benefit the majority (this is similar to the utilitarian rule of ethics), and at stage 6, a child acts based on universal principles.

Rest (1986) followed in the footsteps of his mentor, Kolhberg, by theorizing that if educators were to effectively enhance the moral development of students, they had to understand the psychological processes that needed to take place for moral action to occur. He developed a four-component model of ethical behavior to explain these processes. The 1st component was moral sensitivity which is the recognition of the existence of an ethical problem; the 2nd component was moral judgment which is making a determination of the right course of action to take in that specific ethical context; the 3rd component, moral motivation refers to the strength of an individual's conviction to actually follow through with the right course of action identified through his moral judgment, and the 4th component, moral character represents the actual implementation of the chosen course of action. Rest (1986) argued that by understanding these four components, educators could develop ethics curricula that would enhance each of these components, and thus improve the moral competencies of students.

After these landmark pieces of scholarship by Piaget (1932), Kohlberg (1958) and Rest (1986), several studies have sought to empirically test the role of a university education on the moral competencies of students. A majority of these studies, Chafi's (2013) and Özdemir et al.'s (2015) studies being the only dissenting voices, provided evidence to support the assertion that education, regardless of the level, has a positive impact in developing students' moral competencies (Liaquat et al., n.d., Al-Ansari, 2002; Schillinger, 2006; Thomas, 2012; Clipa and Iorga, 2013; Doyle and O'Flaherty, 2013). Moral development was more pronounced in students of the humanities than those involved in technical disciplines (Lofstrom, 2012; Lajciakova, 2013).

The impact of "ethics" education on moral competence

Unlike studies in the section above that focused on the impact of education in general on moral competence, those reviewed in this section focused on determining the impact of ethics education, be it a stand-alone ethics course or integrated ethics coverage within the curriculum, on the moral competencies of students. A review of these studies revealed that the results were mixed, with some studies finding a positive relationship between ethics education and moral competence (Sullivan, 2004; Dellaportas, 2006; Abdulmohammadi & Baker, 2007; Bosco et al., 2010; Saat et al., 2010; Pleban et al., 2011; Holmes et al., 2012), and others finding no significant relationship between these two concepts (Altmyer et al, 2011; Chaganti, 2012; Padia & Maroun, 2012; May & Luth, 2013; Self et al., 2013).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As previously discussed, the *sole* focus of this study was on future *Muslim* Accountants, which are identified as third-year *Muslim* accounting students enrolled at IIUM. For this reason the concept of moral competence was considered from a wholly Islamic perspective, which is to say from the concept of The Noble Qur'an and *Sunnah*. Thus, a morally competent Muslim accountant was defined as one who has the ability to make moral decisions in line with the commands of Allah in the Noble Qur'an, and in accordance with the *Sunnah* of the Noble Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), in discharging his or her duties as an accountant.

In Islam, this concept of moral competence is made up of two separate but interdependent parts: 1) doing the right thing (moral action), and 2) doing the right thing for

Allah's sake alone (moral intention). In the sight of Almighty Allah, a moral action is only acceptable if the moral intention is solely for His pleasure. The Blessed Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explains this very important point in the famous *hadith* narrated by Umar bin Al-Khattab: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "The deeds are considered by the intentions, and a person will get the reward according to his intention. So whoever emigrated for Allah and His Messenger, his emigration will be for Allah and His Messenger; and whoever emigrated for worldly benefits or for a woman to marry, his emigration would be for what he emigrated for" (Riyad as-Salihin, Book 1, *Hadith* 1). This is a very crucial concept which this study took into consideration when assessing the moral competencies of Malaysia's future Muslim accountants. Figure 1 below illustrates the above mentioned conceptualization of moral competence.

Figure 1: Conceptualization of Moral Competence

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              ┌─────────────────────────┐
              │    MORAL COMPETENCE     │
              └─────────────────────────┘
                 ↙                  ↘
┌──────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐
│ MORAL ACTIONS IN LINE│   │ MORAL INTENTION       │
│ WITH QUR'AN AND SUNNAH│  │ (ACTIONS DONE SOLELY  │
│                      │   │ FOR ALLAH'S PLEASURE) │
└──────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────┘
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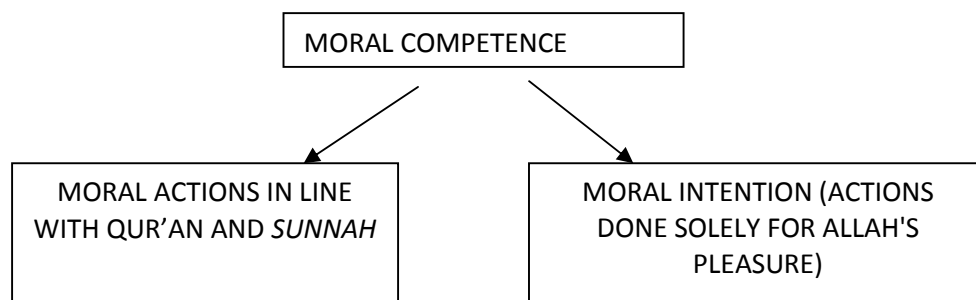
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section of the paper present the study's research design and methodology. Firstly, an overview of IIUM is provided, with particular emphasis on the accounting department from which the students that participated in the study belong to. Secondly, the steps followed to develop a profile of a morally competent Muslim accountant are presented. Thirdly, the steps followed to develop the instrument to measure the moral competencies of Muslim accounting students is presented. Finally, the actual procedure adopted for measuring the moral competencies of the specified students is discussed.

An overview of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM):

IIUM was established on 23rd May, 1983 based on the philosophy that all fields of knowledge should lead toward the recognition of, and submission to, the fact that Almighty Allah is the only one worthy of worship and is the Absolute Creator and Master of the universe. IIUM has a four-pronged mission of Integration, Islamization, Internationalization and Comprehensive Excellence (International Islamic University, 2014). IIUM's accounting programme claims to integrate Islamic principles with contemporary accounting knowledge. At the time this study, IIUM department of accounting had 28 academic staff and 552 undergraduate students enrolled.

Third-year IIUM accounting students were selected for this study for two reasons: Firstly, these students have been in the system for three years, and thus the impact of IIUM's accounting curriculum would have taken a significant effect on their moral competencies. Secondly, as these students still had one more year before graduation, whatever deficiencies in moral competency that this study discovered could be addressed and rectified by IIUM's accounting department before these students graduated.

Developing the Profile of the morally competent Muslim accountant

This section described the process adopted in order to develop the profile of a morally competent Muslim accountant. The profile was developed from the perspective of the Muslim accounting graduate, and was divided into two components: 1) Finding the "right" job, and 2) Following an Islamic "code of conduct".

For the Muslim accounting graduate, the first challenge that faces him or her is finding the "**right**" job**.** The "right" job is one where all activities are in line with the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. After securing a job at an Allah-approved organization, the next concern for the morally competent Muslim accountant is to fulfill his or her duties in accordance with the commands of Almighty Allah. This "Code of Conduct" represented the second component of the profile. The objective of this component of the profile was to develop a comprehensive Islamic code of conduct that includes all the qualities that a morally Muslim accountant must display in order to please his Creator. In order to develop this code of conduct for Muslim accountants, the study adopted a two-pronged approach.

The first prong was to adopt the code of conduct for Muslim accountants developed by the Accounting and Audit Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) as a foundation for this component of the profile. AAOIFI's code of conduct for Muslim accountants was published in 1991 and is derived from the Noble Qur'an and *Sunnah*; this made it an excellent starting point. AAOIFI's code of conduct contains five ethical principles described below:

1. Trustworthiness: The Muslim accountant should be straightforward and honest whilst discharging his duties, and must never present untruthful information. 2. Objectivity: The Muslim accountant should be fair, impartial and free from any conflict of interest. 3. Professional competence and diligence: The Muslim accountant must possess the requisite skill necessary to successfully discharge his duties. 4. Confidentiality: The Muslim accountant must never divulge information obtained about an organization during the course of discharging his or her duties without permission unless he or she is legally or professionally obliged to do so. 5. Professional conduct and technical standards: The Muslim accountant must observe the rules of professional conduct and obey the accounting and auditing standards of Shariah-compliant organizations.

The second prong was to interview and consult extensively with five Islamic scholars well versed in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, particularly in the areas of "Islamic accounting" as well as "*Fiqh* Mu'amalat" (Laws of Islamic business transactions). These consultations established the content validity of AAOIFI's code of conduct. In addition to the five qualities listed by AAOIFI's code of conduct, the scholars suggested that three more qualities be added under the umbrella of "Faith-Driven" conduct, which are unique to the Muslim accountant. These qualities included 1) Avoiding interest, 2) Avoiding gambling, and 3) Avoiding physical contact with the opposite sex (*non-mahram*).

Developing the Muslim Accountant Moral Competency Test (MAMOC)

A collaborative effort with five Islamic accounting and *Fiqh* Mu'amalat scholars resulted in the development of nine interrelated ethical scenarios to measure each of the nine qualities of a morally competent Muslim accountant highlighted above. The instrument thus developed is called "The Muslim Accountant Moral Competency Test" or "MAMOC".

MAMOC had a title and three main sections: The instrument was titled "Understanding the Career Aspirations and Work-Related Decisions of Future Accountants". In order to minimize social desirability bias amongst the respondents, the study's objective was disguised by giving the instrument this neutral heading without any obvious moral

overtones. The first section was a demographic section. The second section was titled "Choosing your dream job". Here, the respondents were given a choice of five job offers from companies in different industries. Each job offer had a company description, a job description and an annual salary. This section sought to determine if the Muslim accounting students knew what the right job was from an Islamic perspective.

To test this important aspect of the students' moral competencies, all the jobs offered were unacceptable from an Islamic perspective; it was expected that the morally competent student would recognize this, and consequently reject all job offers on the basis of their unacceptability islamically. The third section was titled "Living your dream job", and contained eight ethical scenarios, with each scenario testing each of the eight qualities of a morally competent accountant mentioned earlier.

The ethical scenarios contained in the instrument were then resolved by the scholars based on evidence from the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. Their solution served as the model answer to each scenario, and also served as a scoring guide for determining the moral competencies of the students surveyed. A pilot student using 1st-year Muslim students from the Economics and Management Faculty at IIUM revealed that MAMOC's instructions were clear to the students, and that the model answers were reliable.

As specified in an earlier section of this paper, moral competence (MC) from an Islamic perspective is a product of two components: moral action in line with the Qur'an and *Sunnah* (MA) and moral intention to please Almighty Allah alone (MI). Participating students were asked to resolve each scenario by stating the action they would advice their friend to take (MA), and providing a reason for that advice (MI). If a student's MA corresponded with the model MA, a score of 1 was given; if it did not, a score of 0 is given. The same rule applied for MI (1 for the correct reason, and 0 for incorrect reason). For each scenario, a student's MC = MA * MI. For a student to have a score for any scenario, both MA and MI must have corresponded with the model answers, otherwise he or she scored 0 for that scenario. Scores for each scenario were added to provide an overall MC score for each student; MC scores could range from a minimum of "0" to a maximum of "10"

Measuring the moral competencies of third-year Muslim accounting students at IIUM

All sections of a compulsory third-year accounting course were surveyed using MAMOC. 105 third-year students completed the questionnaire.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section of the paper presents the research findings and their implications. The descriptive statistics of the study's respondents is presented first. The students' mean MC scores are presented next, and this is followed by a more detailed analysis of their performance for each scenario and the implication vis-a-vis their future as Malaysian accountants. To provide insight as to the performances of the students overall vis-a-vis their moral competencies, as well as their performance for each scenario, IIUM's undergraduate grading system was utilized. The lowest grade for a pass is a grade of "C". The grading system is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: IIUM Undergraduate Grading System

Percentage Score	Letter Grade	Quality Point Equivalent	Remark
85-100	A	4.00	Excellent
75-84	A-	3.67	Extremely Good

70-74	B+	3.33	Very Good
65-69	B	3.00	Good
60-64	B-	2.67	Fairly Good
55-59	C	2.33	Satisfactory
50-54	C-	2.00	Quite Satisfactory
45-49	D	1.67	Poor
40-44	D-	1.33	Very Poor
35-39	E	1.00	Extremely Poor
0-34	F	0.00	Failed

Source: IIUM website

Moral Competencies of Third-year Muslim Accounting Students at IIUM

Tables 2 and 3 below present information about the study's sample via descriptive statistics: The 105 students sampled had an average age of 21.99 years, and females made up 73.3% of the sample, with 77 out of the 105 being females. Table 4 presents the mean moral competency of the 72 third-year Muslim accounting students surveyed at IIUM. The students' had a mean moral competency of 5.27 out of a maximum of 10; This is a percentage score of 52.7%, which according to Table 1 means that the third-year accounting students surveyed earned a moral competence grade of "C-" which IIUM considers "Quite satisfactory", but interestingly is below the "C" grade necessary for graduation from the accounting department. The implication of this statistic is that according to IIUM's own grading standards, their third-year class is not at an acceptable level of moral competence needed to deal with the inevitable moral dilemmas in the work place.

The Malaysian government's 2012 mandate that all universities are to develop morally competent accountants is not currently being achieved by IIUM's accounting department, based on the university's own grading system. Additionally, the department is falling below its stated aim of producing accounting professionals that "observe ethical norms in their conduct" (Bachelor of Accounting Programme Description, n.d.). In light of these revelations, it is very important for the department to review the ethical content of its curriculum, and hold targeted discussions with the academic staff in order to come up with strategies to address this important task of enhancing the moral competencies of these students before they graduate in a year's time. An examination of how well the students performed vis-a-vis each scenario will shed more light on the specific qualities the department needs to focus on developing amongst their accounting students. Table 5 below presents the students' mean moral competence scores for each scenario.

Section 2: Choosing your dream job

Table 5 below shows that only 21% of the students were able to understand that none of the five jobs offered were acceptable from an Islamic perspective. According to IIUM's grading system, the students scored a failing grade of "F" in this scenario. In assessing the responses of the majority of the students who failed to successful resolve this scenario, it was observed that salary was the major motivation for job selection, closely followed by personal interest.

This statistic has grave implications regarding the moral competencies of Malaysia's future Muslim accountants. This is because working in an organization that is involved in *haram* (prohibited) activities has devastating spiritual effects on the soul of a Muslim. All earnings from such a job are considered *haram*, and thus any usage of those earnings are also considered *haram*. In fact, choosing to work in a *haram* organization negates all the other eight qualities included in the profile of a morally competent accountant. Being trustworthy

and professionally diligent whilst working in a *haram* organization has no value in the sight of Allah, as the foundation is rotten, and Allah only accepts what is pure. The following *hadith* provides a clear description of the grave consequence of choosing a *haram* job: Narrated Abu Hurairah: that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "O you people! Indeed Allah is Tayyib (good) and he does not accept but what is good.

And indeed Allah ordered the believers with what He ordered the Messengers. He (PBUH) said: 'O you Messengers! Eat of the good things and do righteous deeds. Verily I am well acquainted with what you do (Q23:51).' And He said: 'O you who believe! Eat from the good things We have provided you (Q2:172).' He said: "And he mentioned a man: 'Who is undertaking a long journey, whose hair is disheveled and he is covered with dust. He raises his hands to the heavens and says: "O Lord! O Lord!" Yet his food is from the unlawful, his drink is from the unlawful, his clothing is from the unlawful, and he was nourished by the unlawful. So how can that be accepted?'" (Jami at-Tirmidhi, Book 47, *Hadith* 3257).

This statistic also serves as a a much-needed reminder for the accounting department at IIUM. The department has claimed as its mission statement, the development of accountants inculcated with Islamic values; However, close to 80% of their third-year class do not possess the fundamental moral competence to understand that they must work in an organization approved by Allah to be successful in this world and the next. It is hoped that this will spur the department to make sure that these students are inculcated with this fundamental aspect of Islamic moral competence before they graduate.

Table 2: Average age of respondents

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
AGE	105	21	24	21.99	.353
Valid N (listwise)	105				

Table 3: GENDER

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	MALE	28	26.7	26.7	26.7
Valid	FEMALE	77	73.3	73.3	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Mean moral competence scores for third-year IIUM accounting students

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
MCSCORE	105	1	10	5.27	1.943
Valid N (listwise)	105				

Table 5: Mean Moral Competence scores for each scenario

Scenario	Mean MC score	Grade	Remark	Status (Pass/Fail)
Job selection	.21	F	Failed	Fail
Professional Conduct	.70	B+	Very good	Pass
Trustworthiness	.77	A-	Extremely good	Pass
Professional Competence and	.30	F	Failed	Fail

Diligence				
Avoiding interest	.37	E	Extremely poor	Fail
Avoiding gambling	.44	D-	Very poor	Fail
Avoiding contact with the opposite sex	.59	C	Satisfactory	Pass
Objectivity	.89	A	Excellent	Pass
Confidentiality	.50	C-	Quite satisfactory	Fail
Final choice	.50	C-	Quite satisfactory	Fail

Section 3: Living your dream job

Scenario 1: Professional Conduct

Table 5 above shows that unlike in the "choosing your dream job" scenario where the students' had a failing grade, they did much better regarding resolving the professional conduct scenario, with a percentage score of 70% corresponding to a "B+" grade which is ranked as "very good". The implication of this statistic is that a majority of IIUM's third-year accounting students understood that a job was a trust and that Allah would hold them accountable for fulfilling that trust. Almighty Allah says: "Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing" (An-Nisa: 58).

Scenario 2: Trustworthiness

Table 5 above reveals that 77% of the students showed signs of trustworthiness by correctly resolving this scenario. This earned them a "A-" grade and an "extremely good" performance regarding this quality. The students who successfully resolved this scenario revealed an understanding of the fact that they had a moral obligation to avoid the manipulation of financial statements despite external pressure from superiors. As Muslim accounants, accountability is first and foremost to Allah above all else: That is only Satan who frightens [you] of his supporters. So fear them not, but fear Me, if you are [indeed] believers (Ali 'Imran: 175).

Scenario 3: Professional Competence and Diligence

Table 5 above reveals that only 30% of the students correctly resolved this scenario, thus earning them a failing grade of "F". 70% of the students put their personal interests over their diligence as accountants by advising their friend in the scenario to place RM20 of his own money into the company account to rectify a discovered irregularity, so as to make a flight for a holiday; The justification for this choice was that the amount was immaterial. Islam holds Muslims to a much higher standard, and regardless of the amount of the irregularity, the correct resolution that reflected professional competence and diligence was for the accountant to go through all the company transactions again so as to identify and rectify the irregularity. This is what his job entails and as a Muslim accountant, he is obligated to fulfill. "O you who have believed, fulfill [all] obligations..." (Al-Ma'idah:1).

Scenario 4: Avoiding Interest

Table 5 above shows that 37% of the students correctly resolved this scenario, which earns ta grade of "E" and a remark of "Extremely poor". Only 38 out of the 105 students understood that dealing with interest is strictly forbidden in Islam.

IIUM's accounting department has significant room for improving the students' moral competence regarding dealing with interest, as it is a major sin with severe consequences: "O you who have believed, fear Allah and give up what remains [due to you] of interest, if

you should be believers. <u>And if you do not, then be informed of a war [against you] from Allah and His Messenger.</u> But if you repent, you may have your principal - [thus] you do no wrong, nor are you wronged (Al-Baqarah: 278-279).

Scenario 5: Avoiding gambling

Table 5 above reveals that only 44% of the students correctly resolved this scenario, thus earning a "very poor" grade of "D-". The students' responses showed that 56% of them did not realize that any form of gambling is prohibited in Islam, even if it is done supposedly to encourage a virtuous behaviour, as was the case in the scenario. "O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, <u>gambling</u>, [sacrificing on] stone altars [to other than Allah], and divining arrows <u>are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful</u>" (Al-Maidah: 90).

Scenario 6: Avoiding physical contact with the opposite sex (*non-mahram*)

Table 5 above reveals that 59% of the students correctly resolved the scenario, earning a grade of "C" which is deemed "satisfactory". This statistic is important due to the fact that in Islam, men and women who are unrelated (non-*mahram*) are not allowed to have any physical contact whatsoever. This is evidenced by the following hadith: Ma'qil ibn Yassaar said: the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "For one of you to be stabbed in the head with an iron needle is better for him than that he should touch a woman who is not permissible for him." (At-Tabarani, *al-Kabeer*, 486).

Scenario 7: Objectivity

Table 5 above reveals that 89% of the students correctly resolved this scenario, thus receiving an "excellent" grade of "A". 93 out of the 105 students understood that as Muslim accountants, they have to be objective in discharging their duties; There is no room for bias as an accountant. This is a comforting statistic regarding Malaysia's future Muslim accountants, considering that in Islam, objectivity is synonymous with justice and is a very important virtue: O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah , witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah ; indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do (Al-Maidah: 8).

Scenario 8: Confidentiality

Table 5 above reveals that only 50% of the students correctly resolved this scenario, earning them a "C-" grade which is regarded as "quite satisfactory". The scenario was designed to test the students' understanding regarding the limits of confidentiality as Muslim accountants. Muslim accountants are bound to keep the secrets of the company as long as their actions are good; once they venture into systematic evil (cooking the books in this scenario), their loyalty ends and they have to become whistleblowers so as to safeguard the rest of society from the evil consequences of the company's actions: "... And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah ; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty" (Al-Maidah: 2).

Scenario 9: Final Decision

Table 5 above shows that exactly 50% of the students correctly resolved this scenario, thus earning a "quite satisfactory" grade of "C-". The students were asked if they would still work in the company considering their experiences in all the previous scenarios. The students who successfully resolved this scenario understood that as Muslims, they were not allowed to stay in an environment where evil activities are predominant. The following verse explains this fact: And it has already been revealed to you in the Book (this Quran) that when you hear the Verses of Allah being denied and mocked at, then sit not with them, until

they engage in a talk other than that; (but if you stayed with them) certainly in that case you would be like them. Surely, Allah will collect the hypocrites and disbelievers all together in Hell" (An-Nisa: 140). As-Sa'di, the renowned commentator of the Noble Quran, explains this verse as follows: "That is, if you sit with them in the situation mentioned <u>then you are like them, because you have approved of their disbelief and mockery, and the one who approves of sin is like the one who does it</u>. The point is that the one who attends a gathering in which Allah is disobeyed has an individual obligation to denounce them, if he is able to do so, or to get up and leave, if he is not able to denounce it" (*Tafseer* As-Sa'idi, p210).

CONCLUSION

Two decades of financial scandals have seriously damaged the credibility of accountants as guardians of financial information. To repair this credibility, universities have been identified as crucial to the development of morally competent accountants for the future. In 2012, the Malaysian government joined this crusade through the release of a blueprint to revolutionize the Malaysian educational system. One of the key mandates of this blueprint was for Malaysian educational institutions to produce morally competent professionals. This study sought to assess the progress of Malaysian universities in meeting this important mandate by evaluating the moral competencies of third-year accounting students enrolled at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM).

As IIUM is an Islamic university, and all its third-year students are Muslims, an instrument was developed through collaboration with Islamic accounting and Fiqh Muamalat scholars to measure the moral competencies of these students from a wholly Islamic perspective. Islam's two primary sources of guidance, The Noble Quran and *Sunnah* were relied upon to develop this instrument. The instrument called Muslim Accountant Moral Competency Test (MAMOC) contained ethical scenarios to measure nine qualities required for a morally competent Muslim accountant; 105 third-year students were surveyed using MAMOC.

The results of the survey revealed that according to IIUM's own grading system, the current crop of third-year accounting students were not morally competent enough to deal with the inevitable moral dilemmas they would face in the work place. The students were particularly weak regarding selecting an Islamically-appropriate place to work as well as in being diligent when discharging their accounting duties. On the bright side, the students showed a very clear understanding of the importance of being trustworthy and objective as professional accountants.

The implication of these results is that at the moment, IIUM's accounting department is not meeting the government's mandate to produce morally competent professionals. The department has to re-examine its current curriculum as to its ethics coverage, particularly regarding qualities that the students scored very low on. The department has as its stated mission the production of accounting graduates "who are professional competent and observe ethical norms in their conduct" (Bachelor of accounting programme description, n.d.). It must make sure it does all it can to fulfill this noble mission.

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