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The Expression “A New Heaven and a New Earth” in the Theology of Saint Peter the Apostle

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Abstract

My research involves exegetical prospects regarding one of the most encouraging verse of Saint Peter the Apostle: “But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3: 13). The word keys I thickened, will meet special commentaries during my study, because those are the main arguments in order to combat false instructions that still dwells in our contemporary society. Besides hermeneutical approach, I questioned the idea of recapitulation theory that suites best in our verse, the statement above, implies truly dogmatical challenges.

Keywords

New Testament, new heavens, new earth, righteousness, recapitulation theory

1. Introduction

The 2nd epistle of Saint Peter is part of the corpus of “catholic epistles” (ἐπιστολαὶ καθολικαί) which also comprises the books: *James*, *1 Peter*, *1-2-3 John* and *Jude*. Even though until the end of the 2nd century the

word καθολικαί designated an individual epistle, or even extracanonical epistles, starting with the following centuries, the concept develops the distinction between the universal and the local Church. From the 4th century, the name of “catholic epistles” is applied to all seven canonical books of the New Testament previously mentioned in the form we have inherited them until today¹. By contrast with the Pauline corpus the catholic epistles are destined to larger groups of Christians².

The Epistle 2 Peter is a testamentary one³, a last will of Saint Peter, who sensed his close departure (ἡ ἀπόθεις τοῦ σκηνώματός μου), and transforms this writing into a duty of conscience, with the help of which he militates for wakefulness and for the guarding of the holiness, but also of the hope of the Parousia (in the idea of the imminent coming of Christ, Saint Peter advises his readers to remain faithful and to avoid the false teachings).

What draws our attention on a first reading, is the style, grammar and the theological concepts of the epistle 2 Peter that cannot be found in 1 Peter⁴. The vocabulary seems academic, and the style is characterized by an exaggerated rhetoric. The stylistic problem in the present epistle is rather hard to follow, long phrases are reunited especially to underline

¹ David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. II, Doubleday Press, New York, 1992, p. 569.

² Nicolae Crîngașu, *A doua epistolă sobornicească a Sfântului Apostol Petru*, Editura Alma Mater, Cluj-Napoca, 2005, p. 21.

³ A literary form rather popular amongst the Hebrew, since they had in their tradition several similar books: the discourses of Moses in *Deuteronomy* or the *Testament of the 12 Patriarchs* – a very popular writing. See also E. Cothenet, *La Tradition selon Jude et 2 Pierre*, in „New Testament Studies”, vol. XXXV, no. 3, 1989, 410: “Because of its form, we may classify the Epistle 2 Peter in the testamentary category, a literary genre present within the Hebrew space as well as in the writings of the New Testament”.

⁴ In fact, even the first epistle of Saint Peter was considered suspicious by the modern critics, who consider that the epistle is developed on a liturgical-homiletical skeleton containing obvious similitudes with the patristic thinking from the post-apostolic era. Their conclusion: Saint Apostle Peter is not its author. But Gundry, through a very well documented study, analyses the epistle through the lens *Verba Christi* - trying to prove thus that the author of the epistle remember precisely the words of Christ, so he must have been one of the eye witnesses of the most important events of the salvation. See Robert H. Gundry, “*Verba Christi*” in *1 Peter: Their Implications Concerning the Authorship of 1 Peter and the Authenticity of the Gospel Tradition*, in „New Testament Studies”, vol. XIII, no. 4, 1967, pp. 336-348.

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the feast of the classical tendencies, and the elaborate constructions are chosen on purpose over the simple ones. Epistle 2 *Peter* was without a doubt tributary to the cultural imperatives of the era of the 1st Christian century⁵. These stylistic aspects may be ascribed to the two different writers as intellectual preparation, but persons close to Saint Apostle Peter who wrote the epistles dictated by Peter, and who did not deflect from the main theological axioms of Saint Peter (in the case of the epistle 1 *Peter* we are entitled to identify Silas (5: 12), but regarding the epistle 2 *Peter* we cannot now exactly who the reader is⁶).

The authenticity of Peter's second epistle has been and still is a discussion topic, but it was proved subsidiarily, by comparison with the other so-called “Petrine literatures”: *The Gospel of Peter*⁷, *Peter's Sermons*⁸, *Peter's Acts*⁹, *The Revelation of Peter*¹⁰, this one (2 *Peter*) being obviously superior both from the point of view of the paternity and of its theology. The epistle was accepted in the Church from the very first centuries of Christianity (*just as 1 Peter*), even more, it was quoted as authentic from the 1st century in *1 Clement* (95 AD), but also before the

⁵ Albert Wifstrand, *Stylistic Problems in the Epistles of James and Peter*, in „Studia Theologica”, vol. I, no. 1-2, 1948, pp. 175-177: “The technique of the diatribe in Epictet, which reproduces a highly colloquial discourse does not comprise more than two participial occurrences per page, while 1 *Peter* has more than six, and 2 *Peter* an average of more than ten per page”. See also Robert L. Webb, *The Petrine Epistles: Recent Developments and Trends*, in vol. „The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research”, eds. Scot McKnight, Grant R. Osborne, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2004, pp. 373-390.

⁶ We think that a certain disciple (secretary) of the Apostle, who had strong knowledge of the Greek language, wrote the epistle on Peter's request, guarding strictly both the theology and the imperatives of Saint Peter. Most probably through dictation, the scribe polishing only the topic.

⁷ Theodor Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Petrus: Das Kurzlich Gefundene Fragment Seines Textes*, Deichert, Erlangen, 1893; Paul Foster, *The Disputed Early Fragments of the So-Called Gospel of Peter – Once Again*, in „Novum Testamentum”, vol. XLIX, 2007, pp. 402-406; Othmar Perler, *L'Évangile de Pierre et Méliton de Sardes*, in „Revue Biblique”, vol. LXXI, 1964, pp. 584-590.

⁸ J.K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament. A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation Based on M.R. James*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993, pp. 20-24.

⁹ J.K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament...*, pp. 390-431.

¹⁰ J.K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament...*, pp. 593-616.

great destruction of the temple of Jerusalem (70 AD)¹¹. Then, from the 2nd century, Origen testifies its authenticity (*Homilies to Joshua VII, 1*). We must mention that all the important Synods of the first four Christian centuries (Hippo, Laodicea, Carthage) accepted it as canonical, although there have been retractions, such as the case of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, says N. Hillyer¹².

Although there are minor differences between the two Petrine epistles regarding the vocabulary and structure, the three chapters of the epistle 2 *Peter* develop three important preoccupations of the author: digressions on the virtues (1: 4-5); warning against the danger of the false prophets that bring disunion¹³ (2: 1-3) interpreting the Scriptures according to their own will (1: 20-21); preoccupation for the delay of the Parousia and the elimination of the skepticism created around the idea of the second return of Christ (3: 4-10).

The Petrine message may be condensed in this manner: his readers should maintain the apostolic faith (1: 12-21; 3: 1-2); they should live a holy life rich in love and righteousness (1: 3-11; 3: 11-18) but they also should be aware of the consequences that follow for those that denied the true way (2: 1-22)¹⁴.

If in the first epistle, Saint Peter is concerned of the cultural impact on the daily life of the community, in the second epistle he seems to be worried by the fact that the cultural vectors of the time might influence in a certain manner the main ideas of the Church, as S. Ringle remarks¹⁵.

¹¹ J.A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, SCM Press, London, 1976, pp. 327-335.

¹² Norman Hillyer, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, (New International Biblical Commentary 16), Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, 1992, p. 10.

¹³ In this respect, see the excellent study of Einar Molland, La thèse „*La prophétie n'est jamais venue de la volonté de l'homme*” (2 Pierre 1, 21) et les Pseudo-Clementines, in „*Studia Theologica*”, vol. IX, no. 2, 1956, pp. 67-85.

¹⁴ Scot McKnight, *2 Peter. Introduction...*, p. 1504.

¹⁵ Sharon H. Ringe, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude*, in vol. „*Global Bible Commentary*”, ed. Daniel Patte, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2004, pp. 549-550.

*The Expression “A New Heaven and a New Earth” in the Theology...***2. The expression καινούς δὲ οὐρανοὺς καὶ γῆν καινὴν (2 Peter 3:13¹⁶).
The perfection of the creation in the light of its recapitulation in Christ.**

This verse is connected directly on one hand with the answer that Peter offers for those that contested the reality of the Parousia (3: 1-7), and on the other hand it comes as a continuation of the plastic description that will constitute the palpable return of the Lord (3: 8-12). With the contribution of this text, as well as with those from *Matthew* 24: 1-42; 25: 1-46; *1 Corinthians* 15: 20-58¹⁷; *1 Thessalonians* 4:13-18; *2 Peter* 3:8-13 and *Revelation* 21-22, we may take a glimpse of what will be and how the return of Christ will take place. In the rational thinking of Saint Peter, the delay of the Parousia is the result of God's decision to give everyone more time to repent (3:11; *Revelation* 2: 5, 16: 21; 3: 3. 19). This idea of the God long suffering may also be found in the Petrine theology, in the text from *1 Peter* 3:20, but just as then, He will restore¹⁸ righteousness, even though this action will be synonymous with punishing the wicked¹⁹. However, this patience will have an end, that is why Peter emphasizes the fact that the Parousia will produce extemporaneously,

¹⁶ The fragment from *2 Peter* 3:10-13 from the perspective of the epistolary genre of the New Testament, belongs to the apocalyptic style, which was quite popular in the literature of the Old Testament, but also in that between the testaments, characterized by revelations; visions; prophetic valences; the annunciation of the Kingdom of God; excessive use of the metaphors etc. For more details see Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovering of Apocalyptic*, SCM Press, London, 1972; T. Todorov, *Genres in Discourse*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978.

¹⁷ Saint Paul describes the salvation of the Christian in the terms of a conflict between God and death, on the base of the discourse on resurrection, emphasizing the victory of Christ as a promise of our future victory: “Where, oh, death is your victory?” (15:55). Although there are other references too, this one is the most representative. See J.F.Healey, *Death is Swallowed up in Victory (1 Corinthians 15: 54): Canaanite Mot in Prophecy and Apocalypse*, in vol. “New Heaven and New Earth Prophecy and the Millennium. Essays in Honour of Anthony Gelston”, eds. P.J. Harland, C.T.R. Hayward, Brill, Leiden, 1999, p. 211.

¹⁸ Because Peter preached the Gospel in the threshold of Solomon (*Acts* 3:1-26) and speaking about Christ's work, he uses the term ἀποκαταστάσεως (v. 21) which means the restoration of a thing or of a person to its initial state, and in a medical sense it means a total recovery of health (as we may find in the Greek authors such as Plutarch, Diodorus, Polybius etc.), the great Hebrew writer Josephus Flavius speaks of the return of the hebrews from the Babylonian captivity into the native land, in terms of restoration; and Plato in an astronomic language, uses ἀποκατάστασις to define the rotation movement of a celestial body. For more details see Eugéné Jacquier, *Les Actes des Apôtres*, J.Gabalda Éditeur, Paris, 1926, p. 112.

¹⁹ Scot McKnight, *2 Peter. Introduction...*, p. 1510.

similar to a “thief in the middle of the night” (3:10²⁰), a recurrent theme in the area of the Hebrew apocalyptic literature. The first references to *kiriaki himera*²¹ are almost always placed in close proximity to the idea of resurrection²², a syntax which is well known to Saint Apostle Peter (3:14). *The Day of the Lord* will bring for those who because of it “lived holy and godly lives” (3:11) the fulfilment of Christ’s promises, Who promised to the faithful the communion with the Holy Trinity in a new earth (3:13), where all the tears will be wiped and there will be no more death, nor shout, or pain because all that belonged to this sinful world passed (*Revelation* 21:1-4). But let us take a closer look to our text:

Καινοὺς δὲ οὐρανοὺς καὶ γῆν καινὴν²³ κατὰ τὸ ἐπάγγελμα²⁴ αὐτοῦ προσδοκῶμεν, ἐνοῖς δικαιοσύνη κατοικεῖ (“But in keeping with his

²⁰ According to all the occurrences found in the New Testament (*Matthew* 24:43-44; *Luke* 12:39-40; *1 Thessalonians* 5:2; *Revelation* 3:3) this expression derives from Jesus’ parables, declining both stupor and fear for those that didn’t repent for their deeds. In fact, as researchers state, this metaphor is common in the Hebrew literature. See D. von Allmen, *L’apocalyptique juive et le retard de la parousie en II Pierre 3:1-13*, in “Revue de théologie et de philosophie”, vol. XVI, 1966, p. 263.

²¹ The Day of the Lord occurs mostly in the prophets of the Old Testament in period of moral decadency of the people, when the hebrews forgot the Law of YHWH. The prophets propose the moral law of justice, because when He comes to judge, God will not distinguish between the Hebrew and their enemies, but will judge with righteousness. The prophets Amos and Joel protest against the hopes of the people who thought that the “day of the Lord” will be a victory for them and a reason for celebration. This being rather a “day of darkness, not of light” (*Amos* 5:18); “day with clouds and thick smoke” (*Joel* 2:10; 4:14). The book of Zephaniah also announces a day of wrath and judgement, a prophecy given in the context in which Jude and Jerusalem were praising the idols of the heathen. See Pr. Petre Semen, *Sensul expresiei Iom – Iahve - Ziua Domnului la profeții Vechiului Testament*, in „Studii Teologice”, no. 1-2, 1978, p. 150; Horst Dietrich Preuss, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2, Westminster/John Knox Press, Louisville, 1996, p. 273; Bruce C. Birch, *Hosea, Joel and Amos*, Westminster/John Knox Press, Louisville, 1997, p. 218; Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity*, (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 163), Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2003, pp. 178-179.

²² Kenneth A. Strand, *Another Look at Lord’s Day in the Early Church and in Rev. 1:10*, in „New Testament Studies”, vol XIII, no. 2, 1967, p. 177.

²³ The expression γῆν καινὴν (“new earth”) is given by the following witnesses: ⋈ A Ψ 048. 5. 33. 81. 436. 1735. 1739. 2344 t vg.

²⁴ In manuscripts C³ sy^hmss we find the construction κατὰ ἐπάγγελμα (omitting the definite article τὸ); in a Ψ 5. 1735 t vg^{cl} sy^hmss bo cv^{vid} we have the following version: κατὰ τὰ ἐπάγγελα (so the version proposed is in the plural – “promises”); respectively the reading καὶ τὰ ἐπάγγελα (“end his promises”) in A vg^{st.ww}. See Barbara and Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, *The Greek-English New Testament...*, p. 1428.

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promise²⁵ we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells²⁶.)

First let us look at this text on a printed structure: promise – recapitulation/ redemption– rebirth. The bond between the texts (1:4 – 3:13) is this noun ἐπαγγελία (“promise”), in the first case in the plural, in the second in the singular. The insertion of this *epaghelma* is not natural, but has a specific role: before speaking to the Christian of the implacable “fire” that will melt this sinful world, you first must protect them from the temptation of fear. That is why this word is linked to the one from (1:4), which is one full of hope, which inoculates the reality of the promises made by God, the One who will save them from all danger²⁷. Christ being simultaneously the cause and the purpose of the creation confers unity and unicity to the sense of the creation: that of being restored (*Romans* 8:21), assuming it wholly in order to renew it permanently. That is why the Parousia does not mean an annihilation of the creation, but its transfiguration²⁸, because it too was affected by the sin committed by man, falling into the impossibility to exercise its original beauty²⁹.

²⁵ τὸ ἐπάγγελμα occurs in the *textus receptus* – except for the marks mentioned above, in the singular Accusative; that is why the correct translation would be “his promise” as it is given by the editions: Cornilescu 1921; Biblia 1914; Gika 1857; Blaj 1795; Biblia 1688; and not “of the promises” as we find in the editions: †Anania 2009; Sinodală 2005; 1988; 1982; Galaction-Radu 1939; Nitzulescu 1897.

²⁶ In fact, the Greek κατοικέω means more than this simple “to dwell”, in its metaphorical sense it underlines the intimate relationship of communion between people and God (*Ephesians* 3:17). All the more the Petrine discourse is dubbed by an eschatological perspective, the realities it mentions, and that we wait for empathetic, uncover a new perception, that escapes clichés. In the absence of a correspondant as powerful as this, we chose this version: “to dwell” that may also be understood as “to live with somebody, to cohabit”, instead of this traditional “to dwell”, which expresses rather a static reality, and not a dynamic one. See Barbara Friberg, Timothy Friberg, Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament...*, footnote 15685.

²⁷ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Peter and Jude...*, p. 339.

²⁸ Adrian Lemeni, *Sensul Eshatologic al Creației*, Editura ASAB, București, 2007, p. 144: “Men, being real, will not perish, but will progress in nature. Neither the substance, nor the material of the creation will not disappear, but *the image of this world* (*I Corinthians* 7:31), meaning the elements in which the fall took place, because man has aged within them. When the image of the world will be gone, and man will be renewed and mellowed for incorruptibility, reaching a stage where he does not age anymore, then there will be *a new heaven and a new earth* (*Isaiah* 45:17) in which the new man will dwell, speaking with God in a renewed way, which will last forever, according to the words of the Prophet (*Isaiah* 46:22)”.

²⁹ Jean-Claude Larchet, *La Divinisation de l’Homme selon Saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 1996, pp. 254-255.

The idea of the renewal of the creation is intuited by Saint Paul (*Romans* 8:19-23), a classical text that speaks about the relationship between man and nature, in which the apostle sees the future glory as in a mirror, the nowadays time is the reflection of the beginning of our relationship with Christ. Paul proves the fact that the relationship between man and nature has the feature of a future event by reference that is why the Christian waits and lingers his revelation as son of God in fullness, to the return to Christ. Both the rebirth to glory of nature and of man will be possible at the Parousia, the transformation from a perishable material into an incorruptible and eternal one becoming effective in a moment. This will be the moment in which the truth will be fully revealed, the telos of the human being and of the whole creation come into close relationship³⁰. But to understand better the intention of Saint Peter, we appeal to the following logical scheme:

δέ³¹(However) – Conjunction

- (1) προσδοκῶμεν καινοὺς οὐρανοὺς (we wait for new heaven) – *Verb Indicative/ Adjective in Accusative/Noun in Accusative*
καὶ (and) – Conjunction
- (2) γῆν καινὴν (new earth) – *Noun in Accusative/Adjective in Accusative*
κατὰ (according)– Preposition
- (3) τὸ ἐπάγγελμα αὐτοῦ (to his promise) – *Noun in Accusative/ Personal pronoun*
ἐν οἷς (in which)– Preposition/ Relative pronoun in Dativ, masculine
- (4) δικαιοσύνη κατοικεῖ (righteousness dwells) – *Noun in Nominative/Verb Indicative-active voice*

As one may observe Saint Peter chooses to write his text using in most of the case nouns and adjectives in Accusative, respectively one case in Nominative. The verbs occur in Indicative, coordinated by two conjunctions respectively prepositions. These show both the clear target (who?) determining the direct complement (designating the object over which the action is performed – “heavens and one earth” [new]), but also the reality

³⁰ Stelian Tofană, *Suspinul creației și slava fiilor lui Dumnezeu, după Rom. 8, 19-23*, in „Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai Theologia Orthodoxa”, no. 1, 2007, pp. 15-17.

³¹ Coming into close relationship with the previous verse, this simple particle offers the necessary transition to v. 13 which constitutes in the same time the logical conclusion of the entire apocalyptic corpus (3:3-13). See Eric Fuchs, Pierre Reymond, *La Deuxième Épître de Saint Pierre...*, p. 121.

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of the action, which will take place in the future (“we wait”). This attitude does nothing else than emphasize the tension of the waiting for the Parousia, which the Apostle inoculates amongst the readers, just as Saint Paul did 10 years before in (*1 Thessalonians* 4:17). In fact, in the early Church, this fervent waiting for the return of Christ, constituted a key aspect in the completion of the dogma of the Parousia, as we may well see it condensed in the end of the Symbol of faith which appeared for the first time in the churches of Rome³². The conjunction δὲ launches the entire argumentation of our text, and together with the insertion of the verb Indicative followed by the nouns and adjectives in Accusative, Peter reaches the heart of the problem which he referred to until now only typologically. The preposition κατὰ confesses the actual reality through the placing of the stress on the One Who offered Himself as guarantee for this promise (ἐπάγγελμα) – Christ. The final preposition ἐν οἷς anticipates to a certain extent the attribute of the excellence that will characterize the new reality (right, righteous). Choosing its form of noun (δικαιοσύνη) Peter transmits the idea of a personification, of an incarnated reality as I would dare to consider it. In general, the text is conceived on the structure of four great constructions: *prosdokomen kainous ouranous* followed by *gen kainen*, coordinated prepositionally by *to epaghelma autou* respectiv *dikaiosynē katoikei*. I will analyze below each of these, and I will focus especially on the last noun (*dikaiosynē*) because of its theological profound meaning. The noun οὐρανός³³ (11 occurrences in our epistle³⁴) may be translated with: “sky, part of the universe, firmament,

³² Abbé Constant Fouard, *Saint Peter and the First Years of Christianity*, Longmans Green and Co., New York, 1893, pp. 232-234; Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians. A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (The New International Greek Testament Commentary), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, [Michigan], 1990, pp. 174-176.

³³ In Hebrew, (*sāmāyim*) is the translation of οὐρανός and from all the 420 occurrences in the Old Testament only a few refer to *sāmāyim* as being an exclusively sacred place. It draws its origin from the area of the Semitic languages (the Akkadian *šamū*; Ugaritic *šmm* respectively the Arabic *samā*), but the etymology of the word cannot be precisely established, although researchers consider it may come from the Akkadian *ša mē* “from water”. Vezi M. Hutter, M. de Jonge, *Heaven οὐρανός (-voí)*, in vol „Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible”, eds. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, Pieter W. van der Horst, Brill, Leiden, ²1999, p. 388; F. Vigouroux, *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, (Contenant tous les Noms de Personnes, de Lieux, de Plantes, d’ Animaux, mentionnés dans les Saintes Écritures...), tome deuxième, première partie, Letouzey et Ané Éditeurs, Paris, 1912, pp. 750-751.

³⁴ It may be found in the texts: 1, 11, 15, 17, 18; 2, 10, 11; 3, 5, 7, 10, 12, 13. In the corpus

the place where God lives together with the angels and the saints”. The plural οὐρανοί is an original Hebrew concept, found in the Septuagint, where it is expressed the fact that the sky is divided into spheres, and God resides in the farthest of them³⁵. According to the biblical language, *ouranous* quadrates a few complementary interpretations in the New Testament: in a physical sense, it refers to the sky above the earth, in which the clouds are suspended, where the rain forms, where both the sun and the moon are placed within the same celestial space (*Matthew* 6:26; *Mark* 13:25; *Luke* 12:56; *James* 5:18; *Hebrews* 11:12). But the concept is used to describe the place where God dwells, called by the psalmist “His holy sky” (*Psalms* 19:7), the reward of the immaculate (*Matthew* 5:12; *1 Peter* 1:4). The heavens in the Old Testament refer metonymically to God Himself (*Isaiah* 37:16; *Daniel* 4:28), used with the same meaning in the New Testament as well (*Matthew* 21:25; *Mark* 11:30; *John* 3:27), respectively the Kingdom of heaven compared to the Kingdom of the Lord (*Matthew* 19:23-24). In the text from *2 Corinthians* 12:2, Saint Paul was caught up “in the third heaven”, meaning to the place where the pure will rejoice with God, having a clear way to the tree of life (*Revelation* 2:7). Nonetheless *ouranous* having its derivatives (*epouranios* – heavenly; *ouranothen* – that which is in heaven; *messouranema* – the middle of heavens), it may also mean the last heaven (*Hebrews* 11:16) which refers to a more profound heaven, or to the holy city, to the new Jerusalem (*Revelation* 21:2³⁶). As an adjective, οὐράνιος is also used in the Gospels to refer to the Father

of the New Testament we count the following: *Matthew* (x 82); *Mark* (x 18); *Luke* (x 35); *John* (x 18); *Acts* (26); *Romans* (x 2); *1-2 Cor* (x 5); *Gal* (x 1); *Eph* (x 4); *Phil* (x 1); *Col* (x 5); *1-2 Tes* (x 3); *Heb* (x 10); *James* (x 2); *1-2 Ptr* (x 14) and *Rev* (x 52). Statistic taken from the Exegetical Guide: *2 Petrus* 3, 13 (NA 27) “Libronix Digital Library System v. 3.0”. See also Thomas Newberry, George Ricker Berry, *The Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament*, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., Bellingham, 2004.

³⁵ Timothy, Barbara Friberg, Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament...*, p. 288.

³⁶ Spiros Zodhiates, Warren Baker, George Hadjiantoniou, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary. New Testament*, AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, 1993, note 3772; James Swanson, *A Dictionary of Biblical Languages. Greek New Testament*, vol. 5, Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2001, p. 497; Alfred E. Tuggy, *Lexico Grieco-Español del Nuevo Testamento*, Editorial Mundo Hispano, El Paso, Texas, 1996, pp. 699-700; Hermann Cremers, *Biblisch Theologisches Wörterbuch des Neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, Verlag Friedrich Andreas Perthes, Stuttgart, 1923, pp. 825-829.

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(*Matthew* 15:13) or to the angels (*Luke* 2:13), and as an adverb, οὐρανóθεν is used to underline the unearthly character of a thing (*Acts* 14:17; 26:13³⁷).

Besides all these applications, in order to succeed in better understanding this οὐρανός, it becomes imperative to include in the equation its cultural and social dimensions in the context of the Ancient world. Here, what governed man or what stood at the basis of all his actions was this very heavenly world. In the experience exchange with other people and cultures, as well as due to the effects of the persecutions and of the prolonged sufferance, ouranous encountered an etymological explosion quadrating a whole range of occurrences and significances (visionary heavenly excursions, ecstatic experiences, soteriological features of the “heavenly” beyond it, rendering mythical again, but also a lot of skepticism). Besides all these speculative elements, Christ’s baptism is a key element: the new heavens (οἱ οὐρανοί) open above Jesus and His Father confesses about Him, here the prophets’ expectations reach their end (*Isaiah* 63:19) – from now on in the person of Jesus Christ the eschatological blessing is active and He is no longer just the door or the way to οὐρανοῦς, but the heaven itself (*John* 1:51³⁸). For this reason, the experience of the Kingdom of Heaven is possible from the earthly life, tasting it in advance, so that it could be perfected after Parousia, and the target to which Saint Peter directs us is uncovered by the adjectives καινός, καινήν “new” expressing the quality of what will be as expression of the replacing of the old things. Heaven and earth that we have now are still under the curse of the sin because of Adam’s mistake, that is why the present text announces a new beginning, “a new heaven and a new earth” unperishable, beyond any human imaginative projection³⁹, where God Himself will dwell (κατοικεῖ) with His saints in purity. This is the main meaning that Peter offers to οὐρανοῦς – that of restoration, of recreation of Christ⁴⁰, waiting (προσδοκάω) for an end and a radical

³⁷ W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, vol. 2, Fleming H. Revell, Grand Rapids, [Michigan], 1981, pp. 208-209.

³⁸ U. Schoenborn, *οὐρανός, οὐ, ὁ ouranos Himmel*, in vol „Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament“, hrsg. Horst Balz, Gerhard Schneider, band 2, Verlag W.Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 1981, pp. 1329-1334.

³⁹ Kenneth. S. Wuest, *Second Peter in the Greek New Testament*, in vol „Wuest’s Word Studies in the Greek New Testament“, ed. Kenneth. S. Wuest, William B.Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, [Michigan], 1970, p. 74.

⁴⁰ The first exegetes wondered on the manner in which God will bring these two realities physically to fulfilment, and so many questions occurred, such as: Peter teaches that

renewal, beyond all the other dimensions more or less speculative that the term receives, as we have already seen.

In order to understand better what will constitute the inauguration of the Parousia, it is not enough to understand the literary-theological inflexions of the expression καινός οὐρανός, but we must understand the meanings of the γῆν καινήν⁴¹. The earth (γῆν) as home for the fighting Church, as region or native place (*Acts* 7:3), as a terrestrial surface (*Matthew* 10:29⁴²), according to the teaching of Saint Peter, will burn under the impulse of the purifying fire, after the judgement of the world by Christ⁴³. How all this will happen we don't know exactly⁴⁴, but one thing is for sure, the new creation

the earth and sky will be destroyed and instead of them God will create something completely new, or God will simply purify, restore the old creation? Interpreters such as Saint Justin the Martyr and Philosopher and Minucius Felix support the first idea, and on the other side we find exegetes such as Irenaeus of Lyons and Origen. See Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, (The New American Commentary), eds. E. Ray Clendenen, Kenneth A. Matthews, David S. Dockery, vol. 37, B&H Publishing Group, 2003, p. 392.

⁴¹ From the group of the two Greek words of the adjective “new” (*neos*; *kainos*) the first refers to newness in relationship of temporal interdependency (young, recent); while *kainos* means new in relation to time, to shape (fresh; unused). The New Testament uses most of the times *kainos* to refer to the “new Law” (*Luke* 22:20); to the “new teaching of Jesus” (*Mark* 1:27); to “new tongues” (*Mark* 16:17); to the new commandment of Jesus (*John* 13:34); to the “new creation in Christ” (*2 Corinthians* 5:17); to the new name and to the new chant from heaven (*Revelation* 2:17; 5:9) etc. See Norman Hillier, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude...*, 221; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke. A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (The New International Greek Testament Commentary), eds. I. Howard Marshall, W. Ward Gasque, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, [Michigan], 1986, pp. 805-807; Ioannis Karavidopoulos, *Evangelhia după Marcu*, trans. by Sabin Preda, Editura Bizantină, București, 72. p. 385; André Scrima, *Comentariu Integral la Evangelhia după Ioan*, trans. by Monica Broșteanu, Anca Manolescu, Humanitas, București, 2008, pp. 202-203; Theodor Zahn, *Der zweite Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Leipzig, 1918, pp. 261-263; Daniel Mihoc, *Epistolele Apocalipsei. Introducere, traducere și comentariu*, Editura Teofania, Sibiu, 2003, pp. 76-79.

⁴² Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature...*, p. 196.

⁴³ Pavel Florenski, *Stâlpul și Temelia Adevărului...*, p. 145.

⁴⁴ However, Kalomiros states that in the icon of the Last Judgement we may observe a fiery river that bursts towards us from the throne of Jesus, which “watering the garden flowed from Eden” (*Genesis* 2:10) and which is none other than the river of God's grace, the overflow of His love towards His creatures. Hence, love is fire love is the spring of fire but this fire burns all those who are not fire themselves, and makes shiny

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will not be characterized by the promise of prosperity – as the Talmud and the entire Muslim world suggest, but it will sooner be an incorruptible justice, sign of the absolute theocracy (*Matthew* 5:6⁴⁵). The purpose of this conflagration (vv. 10-13) is not to destroy the universe, but rather to purify the sinful world in which we live, in order to cast out everything that is corrupted within the creation, thus issuing the basis of a new dimension⁴⁶. Of course, this recreation sends to an eschatology perspective, a simple broad image reveals the fact that within this epistle, the adjective *aionios* completes the noun *Basileía*, in fact *aionios* being a key term of the Scriptures: proving God’s eternity and its field of aplicability; promising the handsel of the eschatological redemption; emphasizing the perspective of eternity without beginning⁴⁷. Venerable Bede links this projection to the following conclusion of our text: “where righteousness dwells”, as a reward for the effort⁴⁸.

The expression κατὰ τὸ ἐπάγγελμα αὐτοῦ (keeping with His promise) is the mobile of what we have previously stated, it is the strong anchor to which all our hopes hold on. This ἐπάγγελμα⁴⁹ is a noun used only in this

those that already are fire themselves. According to Kalomiros, the expression of the fire which is in fact the expression of the divinity, defines God’s love Who recreates the world cleaning it from all sin, and for this reason neither the immoral, nor the worshippers of idols, or the fornicators, or the sinners of all types, or the homosexual, or the thieves, or the glutton, or the drunk, or the bully (*I Corinthians* 6:9-10) will not be able to inherit this γῆν καινὴν, because they cannot stand this burning love of Christ and cannot bear to be in its proximity. See Alexandros Kalomiros, *Sfinții Părinți despre originile și destinul omului și cosmosului...*, pp. 91-92.

⁴⁵ Ceslas Spicq, *Les Épîtres de Saint Pierre*, (Sources Bibliques), J. Gabalda et Cie Éditeurs, Paris, 1966, p. 260.

⁴⁶ Corneliu Constantineanu, Marius Ungur, *The New Heavens and New Earth: Explorations in Biblical Eschatology*, in „Plēroma”, no. 2, 2010, p. 59.

⁴⁷ Karin Sonnleitner, *Die Eschatologie des 2 Petrusbriefes*, Dissertation aus Evangelischer Theologie zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades an der Fakultät der Evangelischen Theologie der Universität Wien, Wien, 2008, p. 132.

⁴⁸ Bede the Venerable, *Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles*, Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo, [Michigan], 1985, p. 151.

⁴⁹ This accusative ἐπάγγελμα has the general meaning of “declaration”, as one may observe from the writings of Homer. But in the case of Plato, the word (πόλεμον ἐπαγγέλλειν) is used to promise war to someone. In the history of Thucydides (V, 47; VII, 17) the term is used when the rulers of the country address imperatively to their subjects, and in Aeschines, ἐπαγγελία becomes the technical word for “law” (in declaring a complaint against someone) or simply to orchestrate judgement. Besides these brief examples, in the Greek thinking the word also refers to the promises

epistle (x 2) and only by Saint Peter, so we would call it a poetical license, or a touch of the Petrine originality using the Accusative⁵⁰. Although other authors of the New Testament use either the nominative *ἐπαγγελία* (*Acts* 2:39; *Romans* 4:13-14), or the genitive *ἐπαγγελίας* (*Acts* 7:17; *Romans* 9:8; *Ephesians* 2:12; *Hebrew* 4:1). The promise that we are reminded of here, invokes the reality of the heaven and of the new earth based on the prophecies from *Isaiah* 65: 17, 22 and that can also be found in the Hebrew apocalyptic literature (*Book of the Jubilee* 1:29; *1 Enoch* 45:4-5; *2 Baruch* 32:6; *Apocalypse of Elijah* 3:98⁵¹). In all three occurrences of the word (vv. 4, 9, 13), Saint Peter chooses to insert the context of the Parousia, and the promise⁵² is comprised in the data of the history of salvation (from the creation of the heaven and earth [*Genesis* 1:1] and to the end of times, when God will recapitulate the creation in Christ through the purifying fire⁵³). The last promise is given to us in *Revelation* 21:1 and it is a very clear one: *the old* is cast away after God's intervention, and *the new* is part of God's plan⁵⁴.

made by man to the divinity, but never the other way around. In the Hebrew thinking, so in the thinking of the Old Testament as well, the term cannot find a place, it does not have deep roots in the history of the Hebrew people, it is not used until the writings of Saint Paul, who sees in the entire history of the Old Testament from the perspective of the promise. On the other hand, *ἐπαγγελία* for the apostle of the nations is a perfect synonym for the *εὐαγγέλιον* the transliteration of the Hebrew *בשר טוב* which means "good news" or "reward for the good news" (*2 Samuel* 4:10; 18:20). That is why Peter's intention must be understood in the context of the writings of Saint Paul (*Romans* 4:21; *Galatians* 3:19; *Hebrews* 10:23) from which he inspires. For more details Schniewind, Friedrich, *ἐπαγγέλλω, ἐπαγγελία, ἐπάγγελμα, προεπαγγέλλομαι*, in vol „Theological Dictionary of the New Testament”..., vol. 2, pp 576-581.

⁵⁰ Luke also uses the accusative (24:29) and also Saint Paul (*Galatians* 3:14; *Romans* 4:16), but using the term of *ἐπαγγελίαν* respectively *εὐαγγέλιον* (*Ephesians* 1:13). Apostle John is the only one who changes the narrative register, working with the verb (indicative aorist) *ἐπηγγείλατο* (*1 John* 2:25) to clarify the same reality.

⁵¹ Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*..., p. 325.

⁵² This promise has kept alive for centuries many of the local Churches, small communities pastored by people who were not very spiritual, surrounded by violence and by a deep hunger for Christ. See Fred B. Craddock, *First and Second Peter and Jude*, (Westminster Bible Companion), Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, [Kentucky], 1995, p. 122.

⁵³ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Peter, and Jude*..., p. 339; Matthew Henry, *Comentario de la Biblia. En un Tomo*, Editorial Unilit, Miami, 1999, p. 1024.

⁵⁴ Paul A. Cedar, *James, 1, 2 Peter, Jude*, (The Preacher's Commentary 34), Thomas

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For the final pile of the verse (ἐνοῖς δικαιοσύνη κατοικεῖ - *where righteousness dwells*) it is necessary a more detailed approach. In the Old Testament, the semantic register of δίκαιο comes into close relationship with the root צדק (*to do justice, to arrange things*⁵⁵) which in the “Kittel” edition⁵⁶ can be found 504 times, and in the “Ralphs LXX” edition⁵⁷ the occurrence of the word is diminished by 10%⁵⁸. This judgement imposed by authorized persons, didn't have as a final goal the condemnation, but the correction, just as David asks God for judgement (*Psalm 25:1*), which means that the judgement reestablishes the balance of the community⁵⁹. In the history of Israel, the king was invested with the judgement of the social behaviors (*2 Samuel 14:1-20; 15:1-6; 2 Chronicles 19:5-7; Psalm 70:1-2*⁶⁰). In all the other circumstances, the Hebrew turned their depreciations towards YHWH – the ultimate authority in matters of judgement⁶¹. The derivatives of the verb צדק are: *Hiph'il, Qal, Pi'el, Niph'al, Hithpa'el*. *Hiph'il* is the synonym of δίκαιου and the main sense is the emphasizing of the innocence, of righteousness, in both cases man is declared to be righteous because of his acts (*Job 27:5; Isaiah 53:11; Daniel 12:3*). Hence, *hiph'il*

Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1984, p. 236.

⁵⁵ Francis Brown, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1907.

⁵⁶ Rudolf Kittel, *Biblia Hebraica*, J.C. Hinrichs, Leipzig, 1909.

⁵⁷ Alfred Rahlfs, Robert Hanhart, *Septuaginta*, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007.

⁵⁸ J.A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul. A Linguistic and Theological Enquiry*, (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 20), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1972, p. 18.

⁵⁹ W.F. Lofthouse, *The Righteousness of God*, in „The Expository Times”, vol. L, 1939, pp. 341-345.

⁶⁰ Cătălin Varga, *Teologia și Exegeza episodului „Schimbarea la Față” (varianta lucanică)...*, p. 84.

⁶¹ Henri Cazelles, *A Propos de quelques textes difficiles relatifs à la justice de Dieu dans l'Ancien Testament*, in „Revue biblique”, no. 2, 1951, p. 169. As king of the chosen people, YHWH is the One Who governs over history, stepping in in the difficult moments (*Joshua 1, 9; 2, 24; 3, 7; 6, 20* etc.) through His prophets and messengers (*Isaiah 1, 18; 25, 6-7; 40, 4-5; Jeremiah 6, 16-19; 15, 19; Ezekiel 33, 2-20; 37, 9*). As Judge (*Psalm 95, 10-13*), YHWH inspires the writings of the Old Testament of the responsibility of the distribution of a social justice equivalent to the pathology of the act. See Leo G. Perdue, *The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 2001, p. 243; Aubrey Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1967, pp. 6-7; Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1, SCM Press Ltd, London, 1975, p. 372; Edmond Jacob, *Théologie de l'Ancien Testament*, Delachaux&Niestle, Neuchatel, Paris, 1955, pp. 75-82.

represents the restoration of the community or of the relationships from the perspective of the Covenant, thus assuming an ethical dimension. *Qual* may be translated with “to be righteous” in civic or judicial logic or in both senses. *Pi’el* has four occurrences (*Jeremiah* 3:11; *Ezekiel* 16:51-52; *Job* 32:2), all proving the real existence of justice. *Niph’al* can be found only in (*Daniel* 8:14) meaning without a doubt the action through which order is restored, created by God Himself. Finally, *hithpa’el* (*Genesis* 44:16) is synonym for the case *pi’el* showing the fulfillment of justice from ethical and judicial perspectives⁶². In accordance with the verbs mentioned above comes the noun *sedeq*, *sedāqāh* (justice) bearing the same significance⁶³. Hence, the concept of “justice” or “correction” in the Old Testament is concentrated in terms such as: objects; man; God, having a decisive value in the economy of our acts. Thus, the corrected man is a man that obeys the Law (*Leviticus* 19:36⁶⁴), is a man who fulfills the Covenant, because the terms of conscience, worship, justice, law, social relationships, nationality are all comprised in this concept⁶⁵.

In the New Testament, δικαιοσύνη refers in general to God’s judgement professed through Jesus Christ at the Parousia (*Acts* 17:31; *Revelation* 19:11), respectively at God’s rule in the middle of the Church (*2 Peter* 1:1). In the text from *Matthew* 3:15 he indicates the fact that Jesus thinks rather to something characteristic only to Him and to Saint John, than to a general principle such as: God needs to be baptized by John. In the other cases

⁶² J.A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul...*, pp. 18-21; R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1980, pp. 947-949; Martin H. Manser, Alister E. McGrath, Donald J. Wiseman, *Zondervan Dictionary of Bible Themes*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, [Michigan], 1999, note 1270; James Swanson, *A Dictionary of Biblical Language. Hebrew Old Testament*, Logos Research Systems, second edition, 2001, note 9151.

⁶³ James Hardy Ropes, „Righteousness” and „The Righteousness of God” in the Old Testament and in St. Paul, in „Journal of Biblical Literature”, vol XXII, no. 2, 1903, p. 215.

⁶⁴ Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1946, p. 73; C.H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks*, Hodder&Stoughton, London, 1954, pp. 44-45.

⁶⁵ J.A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul...*, pp. 38-43. But Lyonnet comes with an important contribution, proving that δικαιοσύνη is a translation of the Hebrew word “tsedaká” which means God’s work through which the salvation of man becomes possible. See Vezi Stanislao Lyonnet, *La soteriologie paulienne*, Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao, p. 840.

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of the Gospel, δικαιοσύνη indicates a basis understanding of the conduct that God awaits from His people⁶⁶. In the episode of His baptism, Jesus, by using the word δικαιοσύνη, is presented by the author as fulfilling the necessary conduct through which He becomes mellow before His father. Saint Luke in *Acts 10:35* speaks of the good deeds performed by the heathen that became mellow before God, in terms such as δικαιοσύνη, although this ἐργάζεσθαι δικαιοσύνην ("works what is right") is not at all enough for salvation⁶⁷. Construction which, in its idea of affiliation to the impartial God, resembles obviously to the one from *Romans 2:10-11*⁶⁸. Here Saint Peter starts his discourse suggesting that in the last days God revealed to him an older truth: before the Creator, the inner man comes before the exterior man, thus finding his correction in Christ. Meaning, if someone receives as guidance God's will and listens to His commands, his rightfulness no longer cares for its origins⁶⁹. Hence, from what the author presents us in this text, there are two main requirements for a man to be righteous in Christ: to fear God and to profess justice in all the situations⁷⁰. Apostle John, by contrast with the others, speaks of a *dikaioσynē* inseparable from Christ's justice, and he offers each time Christological implications to the noun. According to the text from *John 16:8*⁷¹ our term is interlaid

⁶⁶ R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, (The New International Commentary on the New Testament), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, [Michigan], 2007, pp. 117-118; Eduard Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, (Das Neue Testament Deutsch), Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Berlin, 1977, pp. 28-29. U. Luz asks here a fundamental question: Does righteousness in Matthew means a duty of conscience that each man must fulfil, or is it just that jurisdiction of the Old Testament instrumented on the basis of the holiness of the Law? See Ulrich Luz, *El Evangelio Segun San Mateo. Mt 1-7*, vol. 1, Ediciones Sigueme, Salamanca, 1993, p. 208.

⁶⁷ Gottlob Schrenk, Gottfried Quell, *δίκη, δίκαιος, δικαιοσύνη, δικαίω, δικαίωμα, δικαίωσις, δικαιοκρισία*, in vol. „Theological Dictionary of the New Testament”, vol. 2..., p. 199; Horatio B. Hackett, *A Commentary on the Original Text of the Acts of the Apostles*, Gould and Lincoln, Boston, 1867, p. 183.

⁶⁸ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (Sacra Pagina Series), vol. 5, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, [Minnesota], 1992, p. 191; I. Howard Marshall, *Faptele Apostolilor*, trans. by Lăcrămioara Novac, Editura Scriptum, Oradea, 2009, p. 202.

⁶⁹ Alfred Wikenhauser, *Los Hechos de los Apóstoles*, (Biblioteca Herder. Sección de Sagrada Escritura 96), Editorial Herder, Barcelona, 1973, p. 179.

⁷⁰ C.K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments), T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1994, p. 519.

⁷¹ "When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: καὶ ἔλθων ἐκεῖνος ἐλέγξει τὸν κόσμον περὶ ἁμαρτίας καὶ περὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ περὶ κρίσεως".

between sin and judgement, forming a triad, having the centre in an eschatological plan, when Jesus will return to judge the world both for its sins and for not having recognized Jesus' righteousness to declare Himself Son of God⁷². Justice is mentioned only here and in close relationship with the promise from 16:10, and the other occurrences from *1 John* 2:29; 3:7 refer simply to a correct and moral behavior involving righteousness in Christ respectively the justification⁷³. Saint James speaks in his text from 1:20⁷⁴ of the man that does what is right, as being an active part of God's justice, and in this case *dikaioσynē* must be understood as a synonym for *tó dikaion* ("a correct/righteous action"). The reverse is *érgazestai hámartían* ("work sins") and the whole phrase condemns anger as being an obstacle in the way of justice and its work⁷⁵. The author of the epistle to Hebrews speaks of Christ's anointing by the Father as a reward for His righteous life (1:9⁷⁶). In fact the anointing, says Rev. Tofană⁷⁷, suggests an interior transformation, serving as action of the Holy Spirit, thus suggesting the

⁷² †Bartolomeu Valeriu Anania, *Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură...*, p. 1576.

⁷³ J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, (The New International Commentary on the New Testament), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, [Michigan], 2007, pp. 833-834. The text from *1 John* 2:29 starts with a long presentation of the fundamental connection between the knowledge of God and the acting of righteousness (2:29-3:10) thus offering the basis for the differentiation between the sons of God and the sons of the devil. The differentiation is based exclusively on this conditional: "If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him". See Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, (The Pillar New Testament Commentary), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, [Michigan], 2000, p. 113; Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, Macmillan and Co., Cambridge, 1892, pp. 82-84.

⁷⁴ "...because human anger does not produce the *righteousness* that God desires: ὀργή γὰρ ἀνδρὸς δικαιοσύνην θεοῦ οὐκ ἐργάζεται".

⁷⁵ James Hardy Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James*, (The International Critical Commentary), T.&T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1916, pp. 169-170; Mark Edward Taylor, *A Text-Linguistic Investigation into the Discourse Structure of James*, (Library of New Testament Studies 311), T&T Clark International, London, 2006, pp. 50-51; Sophie Laws, *The Epistle of James*, (Black's New Testament Commentaries), Adam&Charles Black, London, 1980, p. 81.

⁷⁶ "You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy: ἠγάπησας δικαιοσύνην καὶ ἐμίσησας ἀνομίαν διὰ τοῦτο ἔχρισέν σε ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεὸς σου ἔλαιον ἀγαλλιάσεως παρὰ τοὺς μετόχους σου".

⁷⁷ Stelian Tofană, *Iisus Hristos Arhiereu Veșnic după Epistola către Evrei*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2000, pp. 134-135.

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deification of the Son. Here *dikaiosynē* is directly inter-correlated with the matter of faith (11:7), outside this spectrum it does not present other theological connotations⁷⁸.

In the Pauline theology, the term meets different nuances⁷⁹. In his sermon on righteousness and the reformation brought by Christ, the Apostle Paul enumerates in the same time references from the Old Testament but, even more important than this, he brings into discussion the ones from the New Testament. For Paul the divine righteousness is the means through which He communicates Himself to the people, making them part of His divine nature, and through faith he establishes the communion with them⁸⁰. A special meaning of the noun is identified when Saint Paul states that righteousness is the result of a statement of God. In *Romans* 4:9-12 Abraham's righteousness appears in a new light, by virtue of his faith he is not just father of his children, but father of all the faithful⁸¹. The faith that was ascribed to him through righteousness is in essence the same with the faith of all the Christians, for Abraham became righteous before God not through the acts of the Mosaic Law but exclusively through the strength of his faith. Saint Paul reserves to this subject the text from *Galatians* 3:6⁸², where he again emphasizes only the faith of the patriarch, because if Abraham did not listen to God's word and had stayed in Ur, in his homeland,

⁷⁸ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews. A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (The New International Greek Testament Commentary), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, [Michigan], 1993, p. 124.

⁷⁹ Taking into account the fact that Saint Paul uses frequently the version LXX of the Hebrew Bible in his writings, we must also place into the equation the importance of the correspondent concepts. For example, in English *dikaiosynē* is translated either with "justification", or with "righteousness", sometimes these etymons may have the same connotations, other times not, that is why in the effort of the interpretation some philological problems may occur. See Daniel G. Reid, *Dicționarul Noului Testament. Un compendiu de învățătură biblică contemporană într-un singur volum*, Editura Casa Cărții, Oradea, 2008, p. 313.

⁸⁰ H. Seebass, *Justicia*, in vol. „Diccionario Teologico del Nuevo Testamento”, vol. 2..., p. 408.

⁸¹ W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. 2, George H. Doran Company, New York, 1910, pp. 616-617; George Arthur Buttrick, Nolan B. Harmon, *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 9, Abingdon Cokesbury Press, New York, 1954, pp. 442-444; Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, (Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament 4), Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1978, p. 166.

⁸² "So also Abraham "believed God, and it was credited to him as *righteousness*: Καθὼς Ἀβραὰμ ἐπίστευσεν τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην".

he wouldn't be called now the father of all the faithful⁸³. In the Pauline theology, *dikaioσynē* is perceived as a gift that God puts in His faithful and the text from *Romans* 5:17⁸⁴ is representative for this matter. In fact, this verse brings into discussion the contrast of the division of the human subject that in the Pauline logic refers strictly to σαρκικός ἄνθρωπος (the physical man) respectively πνευματικός ἄνθρωπος (the spiritual man⁸⁵). The purpose is not to present a fatalistic image through the analogy Adam/death, but on the contrary, he means to show that only through Jesus Christ, righteousness and grace are inherited by the faithful and the righteous, this being God's gift. Because of this Pauline text, corroborated with the universal testimony from v. 15f, there is no limit now, and the grace is given to everyone (*pantas*). This πάντα from v.18 must be necessarily understood as being the chance of the return of each man⁸⁶. Because of the presence of Christ's name within this text, Paul does not present here a simple comparison between Adam and Christ, but emphasizes an infinite growth: πολλῶ μᾶλλον underlining this very nuance⁸⁷.

⁸³ Don Earl Boatman, *Guidance from Galatians*, (Bible Study Textbook Series), College Press, Joplin, [Missouri], 1987, p. 100; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, (Black's New Testament Commentaries), A&C Black, London, 1993, p. 160: "There is nothing artificial hidden in this reference to Abraham. He was considered by everyone to be the father of the Hebrew people, the founder of the nation. The Hebrew people himself thought he was the seed of Abraham, and this ancestry was understood as a symbol of pride".

⁸⁴ "For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ: εἰ γὰρ τῷ τοῦ ἐνός παραπτώματι ὁ θάνατος ἐβασίλευσεν διὰ τοῦ ἐνός, πολλῶ μᾶλλον οἱ τὴν περισσείαν τῆς χάριτος καὶ τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης λαμβάνοντες ἐν ζωῇ βασιλεύσουσιν διὰ τοῦ ἐνός Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ".

⁸⁵ Grigorie T. Marcu, *Antropologia paulină*, (Seria Teologică 20), Sibiu, 1941, pp. 102-103.

⁸⁶ Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, (Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 6/1), Benziger Verlag, Zürich, 1978, p. 325.

⁸⁷ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, (The New International Commentary on the New Testament), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, [Michigan], 1996, p. 339; Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, (The Pillar New Testament Commentary), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, [Michigan], 1988, p. 236: "We have here another conditional clause, but which involves that fact that it has been achieved... Then Paul moves the attention to this construction: *all the more*, the sentence was given rightfully, the sin got what it deserved – death. But things are not like this regarding grace as well. One cannot measure grace

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The righteousness of the faith is another Pauline extension, the reformation being offered by God through faith, an idea supported by Paul in contrast with his previous experience, when he perceived himself as “righteous”⁸⁸ based exclusively on the Law. In the text from *Philippians* 3:6⁸⁹ he presents his old life synonymous to that of the Pharisee, who, in their exacerbated puritanism, separated themselves from the sinners, trying to apply the precepts of the Law in their daily life, considering themselves to be righteous before God⁹⁰. Hence, *dikaiosynē* in this context, means the superior quality of a pure soul, but all the righteousness that comes as a consequence of fulfilling the law, Paul considers to be nothing in comparison with the righteousness that comes from the grace of Christ’s Sacrifice. Furthermore, he considers all this “purity” achieved through the Law as a spoil and that only for the love of Christ (v. 7)⁹¹. In *Ephesians* 4:24⁹² Paul associates our noun to holiness, placing it in the same time

in terms of equivalence or in terms strictly judicial. Grace is more generous. Grace is very abundant”.

⁸⁸ Daniel G. Reid, *Dictionarul Noului Testament...*, p. 316.

⁸⁹ “...as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless: κατὰ ζῆλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος”.

⁹⁰ John Reumann, *Philippians. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, (The Anchor Yale Bible 33b), Yale University Press, New Haven, 2008, p. 484. This opposable reality between the Hebrew that fulfills the Law and the Christian become righteous through the grace of Christ, reconfigures dramatic accents in the text from *Romans* 7:17, underlining in the same time the drama that is consumed in the inner self of the man who is not baptized yet, unborn to a new life, but who according “the inner man” rejoices in the Law (v. 22) and longs to fulfil it, but because the “outside man” (of his members, of his body) does not help him, he succumbs. All these due to the fact that the fleshy man has his own law, one of sin, which comes into obvious contradiction with the Law of God. See Claudia Baracchi, *Aristotle’s Ethical as First Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 2008; Ernst Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, (Studies in Biblical Theology 41), SCM Press, London, 1964, p. 119; Emma Wasserman, *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7: Revisiting Paul’s Anthropology in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology*, in „Journal of Biblical Literature”, vol. CXXVI, no. 4, 2007, pp. 795-800.

⁹¹ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, (The Pillar New Testament Commentary), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, [Michigan], 2009, pp. 228-229; Chas J. Ellicott, *St. Paul’s Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians and to Philemon*, Gould&Lincoln, Boston, New York, 1865, p. 82; Bernhard Weiss, *Der Philipper Brief*, Verlag von Wilhelm Heress, Berlin, 1859, pp. 236-237.

⁹² “and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness:

in opposition with the acts of the old man. The new man, or the inner man (2 *Corinthians* 4:16) passes through a daily renewal, says Saint John Chrysostom⁹³, practicing virtues and confronting temptations, hurting his body so that the soul becomes gold purified in fire. This expression καινὸν ἄνθρωπον (“the new man”⁹⁴) appears only one other time in *Ephesians* 2:15 and comes into close relationship with its antithesis ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν (*Romans* 6:6), outside this structure it can hardly be explained⁹⁵. This expression is an original Pauline creation, and it cannot be found neither in the ancient writings nor in LXX or in any other book of the New Testament. It refers to the old man, the fleshy man⁹⁶, the man subjected to corruption, concupiscence and physical impulses from the egocentric nature, the law

καὶ ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ὁσιότητι τῆς ἀληθείας“.

⁹³ Ioan Gură de Aur, *Tâlcuiri la Epistola a doua către Corinteni*, trans. by Theodosie Athanasiu, Editura Sofia, București, 2007, p. 95.

⁹⁴ George H. van Kooten, *The Two Types of Man in Philo of Alexandria and Paul of Tarsus. The Anthropological Trichotomy of Spirit, Soul and Body*, in vol. „Philosophische Anthropologie in der Antike”, eds. Ludger Jansen, Christoph Jedan, Ontos Verlag, Frankfurt, 2010, p. 298: “the gift of the spirit is the proof of an achieved eschatology. The restoration of the spirit of man is the result of the eschatological gift of the Holy spirit who’s actions are already effective (*1 Thessalonians* 4, 8; *2 Corinthians* 1, 22; *Romans* 5, 5; 8, 15, 23). In the context of the text from *1 Corinthians* 15, Paul thinks that although the Holy Spirit works, yet he is not completely experienced. Only at the end of times the Spirit will transform the physical bodies into spiritualized bodies (*1 Corinthians* 15, 44-49)”.

⁹⁵ Saint Maximus the Confessor states that the soul and the body cannot exist separately, because there is an organic link between the two, using the expression “composed nature” in order to be better understood, an aspect which implies both the reciprocal independency of the two elements and their indestructible relationship. Their union is effective from the very beginning, thus rejecting Origen’s conception on the pre-existence of souls, but also the idea according to which their bodies were created as a natural consequence of the fall. See Lars Thunberg, *Antropologia teologică a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul. Microcosmos și Mediator*, trans. by Anca Popescu, Editura Sofia, București, 2005, pp. 112-116.

⁹⁶ The word σαρκῶς together with its derivatives, is much more frequent in the Epistle to Romans than any other of the anthropological references (approximately 26 occurrences), but it does not come into close relationship with the situation of the Church from Rome. Most often it is used in a parenetical context (*Romans* 13-14), once in the context of the gathering of goods for the Church of Jerusalem (*Romans* 15:27), and another time in the prologue (*Romans* 1:3). Most of the occurrences of the word may be found between chapters 6-8 (17 of a total 26). See Robert Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms. A Study of their use in Conflict Settings*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1971, p. 135.

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of the sin dwelling in his members (*Romans* 7:23⁹⁷). In the Pauline thinking the man of the sin is the slave (*douloi*) of pleasures (*Romans* 6:17), he is the man sold under sin (*pepramenos hypo tēn hamartian* - *Romans* 7:14⁹⁸), because we all are under the sign of sin (*Romans* 3:9⁹⁹). But with the Resurrection of Christ, man becomes free from sin living under the auspices of the grace, that is why the apostle insists on the renewal of life based on a continuous process (*Titus* 2:12). This is how the new man is born, or the spiritual man, his change happens by faith and through the work of the Holy Spirit, Christ becoming our righteousness so that we are able in holiness to resemble the divine nature¹⁰⁰. The Christians renewed in the spirit of their mind are already a part of the new creation of God (*Ephesians* 2:10), that is why their behavior must follow the principles of *dikaiosynē*, they must be righteous because Christ is righteous, they must be saints because He is a saint¹⁰¹.

Saint Apostle Peter presents mostly the same situation, the text from *I Peter* 2:24¹⁰² suggests a *dikaiosynē* used as a Dative of reverence. Both in this context and in the one from *I Peter* 3:14, it means “righteous behavior”

⁹⁷ Grigorie T. Marcu, *Antropologia paulină...*, pp. 106-107; Robert H. Gundry, *Sōma in Biblical Theology with Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology*, (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 29), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976, p. 206; Ulrich Volp, *Die Würde des Menschen. Ein Beitrag zur Anthropologie in der Alten Kirche*, (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 81), Brill, Leiden, Boston, 2006, pp. 120-121.

⁹⁸ Brice L. Martin, *Christ and the Law in Paul*, (Supplements to Novum Testamentum 62), Brill, Leiden, 1989, pp. 69-70.

⁹⁹ Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 29), J.C.B. Mohr, Tübingen, 1987, p. 97.

¹⁰⁰ Wilbur Fields, *The Glorious Church. A Study of Ephesians*, College Press, Joplin, [Missouri], 1992, pp. 138-139; Helge Stadelmann, *Epistola către Efeseni*, Editura Lumina Lumii, Sibiu, 2001, pp. 168-169.

¹⁰¹ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letters to the Ephesians*, (The Pillar New Testament Commentary), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, [Michigan], 1999, p. 332; Martin Kitchen, *Ephesians*, (New Testament Readings), Routledge, London, 1994, p. 123: “Correction and righteousness have together a corporative dimension, drawing their sap from the resurrection of Christ, through which His body was glorified when He resurrected for our correction (*Romans* 4:25)”.

¹⁰² “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed”: ὁς τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἀνήνεγκεν ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον, ἵνα ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἀπογενόμενοι τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ ζήσωμεν, οὐ τῷ μῶλωπι ἰάθητε”.

as well as “to live righteously, to do only what is right”. Either referring to the ancient Israel, or to the early Christian groups, *dikaiosynē* denotes fulfillment of God’s will by man (*Job* 27:6; *Psalms* 44:7; *Matthew* 3:15¹⁰³). Understanding Saint Apostle Peter in this manner, taking into account the valences of δικαιοσύνη in all the other occurrence of the New Testament, we may say that the great fisherman uses this term with the intention to offer an image of what this new world recapitulated in Christ is, its purpose being by excellence righteousness, purity, in obvious contrast with the old world subjected to corruption and all sorts of injustices. In the new earth, in the eschatological earth, righteousness will rule, and no type of crime can find place anymore. As we may observe, in the Petrine theology, *dikaiosynē* declines the same directions as his predecessors, offering a complementary image as he chooses to place the action in an eschatological perspective.

According to the inter-textual perspective, this *dikaiosynē* had to occur in the text from *2 Peter* 3:13, because one cannot speak of a new creation, incorruptible, without placing it under the sign of another noun, one of complete righteousness and purity.

3. Conclusions

Many of the wicked prophets that appeared in the heart of the community denied the perspective of the return of the Lord, that is why Saint Peter resumes this idea assuring the faithful of the imminence of the second coming of Christ, speaking in this context of the idea of “new heaven” and “new earth” in which righteousness dwells. The earth (γῆν) will burn under the impulse of the purifying fire after the judgement of the world will be judged by Christ in order to eliminate all that is rotten in creation, thus initiating a new order. The plural οὐρανοί is an original Hebrew concept, found in the Septuagint, where it is expressed the fact that heaven is divided into spheres, and God dwells in the farthest of them. However, the concept is used to describe the place where God lives, called by the psalmist “His holy heaven” (*Psalms* 19:7), the reward of the pure (*Matthew* 5:12; *1 Peter* 1:4).

The notion of δικαιοσύνη in the biblical language has many dimensions. As righteousness, Christ is the paradigm by excellence of δικαιοσύνη

¹⁰³ John H. Elliott, *1 Peter*..., p. 535.

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in Whom the sinners find rectification. For man in general δικαιοσύνη belongs to his natural dimensions or to his knowledge obtained through a high philosophy, respectively through the Law, a righteousness obtained through grace with the help of faith, as is the case of Abraham, or to the effects of baptism, or to the fear of God, or to the initiation of the conversion of the mind and soul. Christians are guided based on the sacrificial service of Christ and through the work of the Spirit of God. For Saint Paul, God's righteousness in the means through which He communicates Himself to the people making them part of His divine nature, and through faith establishing communion with them.