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
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 today. By contrast with the Pauline corpus the catholic epistles are destined to larger groups of Christians.

The Epistle 2 Peter is a testamentary one, a last will of Saint Peter, who sensed his close departure (ἡ ἀπόθεσις 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 Peter. 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

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 I Peter: Their Implications Concerning the Authorship of I Peter and the Authenticity of the Gospel Tradition, in „New Testament Studies”, vol. XIII, no. 4, 1967, pp. 336-348.
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 Peter⁷, Peter’s Sermons⁸, Peter’s Acts⁹, The Revelation of Peter¹⁰, 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

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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.


great destruction of the temple of Jerusalem (70 AD)\textsuperscript{11}. Then, from the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century, Origen testifies its authenticity (\textit{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 \textit{Epistle of Barnabas}, says N. Hillyer\textsuperscript{12}.

Although there are minor differences between the two Petrine epistles regarding the vocabulary and structure, the three chapters of the epistle 2 \textit{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 disunion\textsuperscript{13} (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)\textsuperscript{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 remarks\textsuperscript{15}.

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\textsuperscript{12} Norman Hillyer, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, (New International Biblical Commentary 16), Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, 1992, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{13} In this respect, see the excellent study of Einar Molland, La thèse „\textit{La prophétic 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.
\textsuperscript{14} Scot McKnight, \textit{2 Peter. Introduction...}, p. 1504.
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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: 20-58; 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 restore righteousness, even though this action will be synonymous with punishing the wicked. However, this patience will have an end, that is why Peter emphasizes the fact that the Parousia will produce extemporaneously,
similar to a “thief in the middle of the night” (3:10), a recurrent theme in the area of the Hebrew apocalyptic literature. The first references to kiriaki himera are almost always placed in close proximity to the idea of resurrection, 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 fulfillment 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:

Καὶ νοὺς δὲ οὐρανοὺς καὶ γῆν καινὴν κατὰ τὸ ἐπάγγελμα αὐτοῦ προσδοκῶμεν, ἐνοἷς δικαιοσύνη κατοικεῖ (“But in keeping with his promises, we expect, in those where righteousness resides.”).

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 2:2; 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, Sensus expresiei Iom – Iahve - Ziua Domnului la profetii 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.


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

24 In manuscripts 3 syh mss we find the construction κατὰ επαγγελμα (omitting the definite article τὸ); in a Ψ 1735 t vg el syh mss bo cvvid we have the following version: κατὰ τὰ επαγγελματα (so the version proposed is in the plural – “promises”); respectively the reading καὶ τὰ επαγγελματα (“end his promises”) in Α 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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promise\textsuperscript{25} we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells\textsuperscript{26}.

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 danger\textsuperscript{27}. 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 transfiguration\textsuperscript{28}, because it too was affected by the sin committed by man, falling into the impossibility to exercise its original beauty\textsuperscript{29}. 

\textsuperscript{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: Cornilesceu 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.

\textsuperscript{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 correspondent 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.

\textsuperscript{27} Simon J.Kistemaker, Exposition of Peter and Jude..., p. 339.

\textsuperscript{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 (1 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)”.

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 infullness, to the return to Christ. Both the rebirth to glory of nature and of manwill 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:

δὲ31(However) – Conjunction

(1) προσδοκῶμεν καινοὺς οὐρανοὺς (we wait for new heaven) – Verb Indicative/ Adjective in Accusative/Noun in Accusative καὶ (and) – Conjunction

(2) γῆν καινήν (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 choses 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

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 apocalyptical corpus (3:3-13). See Eric Fuchs, Pierre Reymond, La Deuxième Épître de Saint Pierre..., p. 121.
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 Rome. 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 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 οὐρανοὺς (11 occurrences in our epistle) may be translated with: “sky, part of the universe, firmament,  


33 In Hebrew, (šāmayim) is the translation of οὐρανοῦς and from all the 420 occurrences in the Old Testament only a few refer to šāmayim 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 sama‘), but the etymology of the word cannot be precisely established, although researchers consider it may come from the Akkadian ša me “from water”. Vezi M. Hutter, M. de Jonge, *Heaven οὐρανοῦς* (-voi), in vol „Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible“, eds. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, Pieter W. van der Horst, Brill, Leiden, 1999, 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 οἱ 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” (Psalm 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 Ptt (x 14) and Rev (x 52).

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

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, οὐρανός 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 1:51).

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 καινοὺς, καινὴν “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 οὐρανοὺς – that of restoration, of recreation of Christ40, waiting (προσδοκάω) for an end and a radical

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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 καινοὺς οὐρανοὺς, but we must understand the meanings of the γῆν καινὴν. The earthly (γῆν) as the home for the fighting Church, as region or native place (Acts 7:3), as a terrestrial surface (Matthew 10:29), according to the teaching of Saint Peter, will burn under the impulse of the purifying fire, after the judgement of the world by Christ. How all this will happen we don’t know exactly, 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.


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
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 5:6*). 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 dimension. Of course, this recreation sends to an eschatology perspective, a simple broad image reveals the fact that within this epistle, the adjective *aìonios* completes the noun *Basileia*, in fact *aìonios* being a key term of the Scriptures: proving God’s eternity and its field of aplicability; promissing the handsel of the eschatological redemption; emphasizing the perspective of eternity without beginning. Venerable Bede links this projection to the following conclusion of our text: “where righteousness dwells”, as a reward for the effort.

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 ἐπάγγελμα is a noun used only in this

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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, ἐπαγγέλλω 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 Accusative\textsuperscript{50}. 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 3:98\textsuperscript{51}). In all three occurrences of the word (vv. 4, 9, 13), Saint Peter chooses to insert the context of the Parousia, and the promise\textsuperscript{52} 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 fire\textsuperscript{53}). 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 plan\textsuperscript{54}.

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

\textsuperscript{51} Richard J. Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter..., p. 325.

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{54} Paul A. Cedar, James, 1, 2 Peter, Jude, (The Preacher’s Commentary 34), Thomas
For the final pile of the verse (ἐνοἷς δικαιοσύνη κατοικεῖ - where righteousness dwells) it is necessary a more detailed approach. In the Old Testament, the semantic register of δίκαιος comes into close relationship with the root סָדַר (to do justice, to arrange things) which in the “Kittel” edition can be found 504 times, and in the “Ralphs LXX” edition the occurrence of the word is diminished by 10%. 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 community. 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). In all the other circumstances, the Hebrew turned their depreciations towards YHWH – the ultimate authority in matters of judgement. The derivatives of the verb סָדַר are: Hiph‘il, Qal, Pi‘el, Niph‘al, Hithpa‘el. Hiph‘il is the synonym of δίκαιον 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

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56 Rudolf Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, J.C. Hinrichs, Leipzig, 1909.
60 Catălin Varga, Teologia și Exegeza episodului „Schimbarea la Față” (varianta lucanică)…, p. 84.
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 perspectives. In accordance with the verbs mentioned above comes the nouns *sedeq*, *sedāqāh* (justice) bearing the same significance. 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* 19:36), is a man who fulfills the Covenant, because the terms of conscience, worship, justice, law, social relationships, nationality are all comprised in this concept.

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

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of the Gospel, δικαιοσύνη indicates a basis understanding of the conduct that God awaits from His people. 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 salvation. 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 origins. 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 situations. Apostle John, by contrast with the others, speaks of a dikaiosynē inseparable from Christ’s justice, and he offers each time Christological implications to the noun. According to the text from John 16:8 our term is interlaid

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71 “When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: καὶ ἐλθὼν ἐκεῖνος ἔλεγξε 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 God\textsuperscript{72}. 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 justification\textsuperscript{73}. Saint James speaks in his text from 1:20\textsuperscript{74} of the man that does what is right, as being an active part of God’s justice, and in this case dikaiosynē must be understood as a synonym for tó dikaiaion (“a correct/righteous action”). The reverse is èrgazestai hámartían (“work sins”) and the whole phrase condemns anger as being an obstacle in the way of justice and its work\textsuperscript{75}. The author of the epistle to Hebrews speaks of Christ’s anointing by the Father as a reward for His righteous life (1:9\textsuperscript{76}). In fact the anointing, says Rev. Tofană\textsuperscript{77}, suggests an interior transformation, serving as action of the Holy Spirit, thus suggesting the

\textsuperscript{72} †Bartolomeu Valeriu Anania, Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură..., p. 1576.


\textsuperscript{74} “…because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires: ὀργὴ γὰρ ἀνδρὸς δικαιοσύνην θεοῦ οὐκ ἐργάζεται”.


\textsuperscript{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: ἡ γάπηςας δικαιοσύνην καὶ ἐμίσηςας ἀνομίαν δία τοῦτο ἔχρισέν σε ὁ θεός ὁ θεός σου ἐλαῖον ἀγαλλίασεως παρὰ τοὺς μετόχους σου”.

The Expression “A New Heaven and a New Earth” in the Theology...

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 connotations.

In the Pauline theology, the term meets different nuances. 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
them. 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 faithful. 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
3:6, 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,

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78 Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews. A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (The
New International Greek Testament Commentary), William B. Eerdmans Publishing

79 Taking into account the fact that Saint Paul uses frequently the version LXX of the He-
brew 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 phi-
notological 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 Com-
pany, 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

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

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he wouldn’t be called now the father of all the faithful \(^\text{83}\). In the Pauline theology, *dikaiosynē* is perceived as a gift that God puts in His faithful and the text from *Romans* 5:17 \(^\text{84}\)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 man \(^\text{85}\)). 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 *πάντας* from v.18 must be necessarily understood as being the chance of the return of each man \(^\text{86}\). 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: *πολλῷ μᾶλλον* underlining this very nuance \(^\text{87}\).

\(^{83}\) 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 ἕνος παραπτώματι ὁ θάνατος ἐβασίλευσεν διὰ τοῦ ἕνος, πολλῷ μᾶλλον οἱ τὴν περισσεύσειν τῆς χάριτος καὶ τῆς δικαιοσύνης λαμβάνοντες ἐν ζωῇ βασιλεύσουσιν διὰ τοῦ ἕνος 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
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” based exclusively on the Law. In the text from Philippians 3:6 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 God. 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). In Ephesians 4:24 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”.

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.
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 Chrysostom\(^{93}\), practicing virtues and confronting temptations, hurting his body so that the soul becomes gold purified in fire. This expression καινὸν ἁνθρωπον (“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 explained\(^{95}\). 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 man\(^{96}\), the man subjected to corruption, concupiscence and physical impulses from the egocentric nature, the law}

\(^{93}\) 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. Microrocos și Mediator, trans. by Anca Popescu, Editura Sofia, București, 2005, pp. 112-116.

\(^{96}\) The word σαρξ 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.
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 1 Peter 2:24102 suggests a dikaiosynē used as a Dative of reverence. Both in this context and in the one from 1 Peter 3:14, it means “righteous behavior”

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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”: ὃς τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτός ἀνήνεγκεν ἐν τῷ σῶματι αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον, ἵνα ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἀπογενόμενοι τῇ δίκαιοσύνῃ ζήσωμεν, οὗ τῷ μώλωπι 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; Psalm 44:7; Matthew 3:15). Understanding Saint Apostle Peter in this manner, taking into account the valences of δικαίωσίνη 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 οἱ 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” (Psalm 19:7), the reward of the pure (Matthew 5:12; 1 Peter 1:4).

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

103 John H. Elliott, I Peter..., p. 535.
in Whom the sinners find rectification. For man in general δικαίωσις 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.