

SAINT JUSTIN POPOVICI, *The Way of the Knowledge of God*, translation from Serbian language by the nun Domnica ȚALEA, the Egumenița Publishing House, 2014

Father Iustin Popovici lived between 1894 and 1979. He was born at Branje, a locality in the south of Serbia, in the family of a priest. He graduated the Seminary from Belgrade and then he became a monk. After that he studied at Sankt Petersburg University, Oxford and Athens, where he presents in the year 1926 the doctoral thesis with the theme: “The Problem of the Person and of the Knowledge according to the Teaching of Saint Makarios the Egyptian”. After his return in Serbia he will teach at the theological seminaries from Sremski, Karlovci and Bitolia; and after that at the Faculty of Theology of Belgrade. He published many articles and philosophical – historical essays in the volumes: “The Man and the God-Man”, “The Abysses of the Philosophy”, “The Progress in the Life’s Mil” and “Dostoievsky, the Europe and the Slavism”. During the Second World War he retired himself in the most isolated Serbian monasteries. After the war, due to his attitude of opposition to the communism he was arrested in the year 1946. From 1948 he settles himself at the Celie monastery where he will remain to the end of his life. His labors were woven with the composing of the twelve volumes from the Life of the Saints, as also with the finalization of the Dogmatic. He passed the way in the day in which he turned on 85, namely in 25/5th of March 1979. In the council of 29th of April 2010, the Saint Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church canonized the archimandrite and the theologian Iustin Popovici (1894-1979), fixing as day of his celebration the first of June (on the old style / 14th of June on the new style).

The book *The Way of the Knowledge of God* is composed by three studies elaborated by father Iustin Popovici. The first part presents the doctoral thesis presented at Athens in the year 1926 and having the theme:

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“The Problem of the Person and of the Knowledge according to the Teaching of Saint Makarios the Egyptian”. The work has as its basis the partial edition of the work of Saint Makarios the Egyptian, present in the Greek Patrology. In the chapter I it describe the state of the human person before falling into the sin; here the author shows that into the man there still is the original and without sin man, the first human person, the one built by God. On this original without sin it has been built the whole Adam’s personality until the falling in sin. It lives in God – the Word Who dwells into it and gives birth to his personality. God – the Word by dwelling into Adam gives to him the seal and His characteristics, and makes him able of knowledge. Through the fact that he is created in the image of God, the man/Adam represents the godlike worthiness, and exceeds through virtue every creature, and it is found worthy of being the place of the resting of God. The soul has many limbs but he is one. Are mentioned here the four leading faculties of the soul: the will, the conscience, the mind and the power of love.

In the second chapter, *The Disintegration of the Person*, it is shown that since the occurrence of the sin in the life of the man the godlike-human order of the human person is lost; in the same time is lost the harmony of the person; the man loses his peace. By the transgression of the godlike commandment, the soul destroyed his countenance (p. 35); but we cannot say that it totally perished, that it was destroyed and it died; for it died for God, but lives according to its nature. Through the sin the man becomes lonely, forsakes God and reaches under the domination of the cunningness of the devil. With the help of the sin, the devil dressed itself in the soul of the man (p. 37). The man unites himself potentially with the fallen Adam. Through the universality of his being Adam is present in everything that is called man. Each of his actions has inevitably a universal character. From here comes that the sin has a universal character both by the content and by the consequences. Through his falling the whole humanity has fallen. In a secret way the sin encompasses the human nature, it works through its thoughts and deeds. The sin encompasses the soul with all its faculties: the will, the conscience, the mind and the heart. The accompanying with the sin it brings the disintegration and the lost of the person’s identity (p. 58). In what regards the relation between the sin and the knowledge here it

is affirmed that due to the sin the gnosiologic capacities are disintegrated. The clean knowledge of God it is not possible for the man united with the sin (p. 67).

In the third chapter, *The Reintegration of the Person*, the author analyzes the mystery of Christ God-man, showing that the coming of Christ it has as goal also the turning back of the man in the bosom of the Holy Trinity, giving back to the human nature the worthiness of the nature of the proto-parent Adam (p. 77). Christ is the model of the beauty from the beginning. The hypostatical union of God and of the man in the Person of Jesus Christ it is the only new thing under the sun. The goal of the embodiment is the deification (ἡθεωσις) of the man through the union of the godlike image of the man with God, through the union of the One alike with the ones likewise (p. 91). The knowledge of the Truth is directly proportional with the living into love as essence and nature of God (p. 127). The salvation of the man depends directly on the together-working of the will and of the grace. Through this together-working it is build up the personality of the man through the ethical triad (faith, hope, love); this together-working move it in the most intimate report with the Person of Christ, and the knowledge of the Truth results in an absolute manner from this personal reports, because the Person is known by person (p. 148).

In the forth chapter, *The Deification of the Person*, it is shown that by being transfigured by grace through the medium of the ethical triad, the human person gradually becomes formed according to Christ, and impropriates His Person into its own, until in the end becomes the image of Christ itself, until becomes deified (p. 148). Christ changes, renews and deified entirely the nature of the human person, mixing it with the Ghost of His Godhead. By his kinship with Christ, the man finds out his godlike image in God-man and Christ shows Himself as restorer of the person.

In the fifth chapter, *The Gnoseology of the Deified Person*, the author shows the process of the deification of the man's personality. The likeness according to God, the likeness according to the image of Christ, it is reestablished through the personal participation of the man to the living Person of God-man: the soul is reintegrated through the union with the Soul of Christ, the mind through union with the Mind of Christ, the conscience through union with the Conscience of Christ. The knowledge of God is the

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component part of the knowledge of the self. The Pious Makarios offers a full use of the Christian principle of the knowledge: what is alike is known through the ones that are alike; what is spiritual is known by the Ghost (p. 187). In the human-divinized deified soul, the trinitized one, there dwells the Godlike Triad (p. 214).

In the second part of the book the author analyzes **The Gnosiology of Isaac the Syrian.**

The man, according to the relativist philosophy, it is submitted to a tragic destiny, because he demonstrated that the truth transcends both the man and the matter. There is an impassable precipice between the man and the truth. The man is on one side of this precipice and cannot find out the way to reach on the other side where the transcendental truth is. The transcendent truth crosses over the precipice, reaches on our side and reveals Himself into the wonderful person of Christ, God-man. Through Him, the transcendental truth becomes immanent into the man. Christ reveals the truth through Himself; He reveals it not by thinking or by rationality, but through His living Person. He not only that possesses the truth, but He is the Truth Himself. Into Him, the Being and the Truth are one. Thus through His Person not only that He defines the truth but He shows also the way of the knowledge of the Truth: who remains into Him, he will know the Truth and the Truth will liberate him from the sin, from the lie and from death (John: 8: 32).

In the first chapter it is analyzed *The Disease of the Organs of the Knowledge*. The character of the human knowledge depends on the predisposition, on the nature and on the state of the organs of the knowledge. The sin makes these organs of the knowledge ill; the passions are diseases of the soul. The passions are: the thirst of richness, the bodily delights, the rush after honors, the thirst of power, the lust after high offices, the disrespectful and dominating haughty, the adornment and the pride, the thirst of the worldly glory and the fear of the body. The passions are attacks of the world upon the man which can be rejected only by the godlike grace. The passions uproot the soul, darken the mind by filling it up with fantastic images and desires and that's why the thoughts are troubled, and full of imagination. The soul, the mind, the heart and the will, if they are ill, they give birth to sick thoughts, to sick feelings and to a sick knowledge.

In the second chapter, *The Healing of the Organs of the Knowledge*, the author describes the Saint Isaac the Syrian's conception referring to the healing of the organs of the knowledge; thus, as the passions are sickness for the soul, the virtues are medicine for the sickness of the soul. Each virtue is a cross. The man must liberate from the material ones in order to know God. So it is the oikonomia of the grace and of the knowledge. The achievement of the virtues is an organic and progressive process. A virtue follows to another one. Each virtue is the mother of the other one. Between virtues there is also an ontological order but also a chronological one. The first of them is the faith. The faith is the light of the mind which banishes away the darkness from the soul. The language of the faith is the prayer. The prayer is the killing of the bodily thoughts, and it is the spring of the salvation. The ceaseless prayer is the sign of the consummation. The love it is born from prayer. The love is from God, because God is love (I John: 4: 8). The humble cogitation is a fruit of the love. Where flourishes the humbleness there the glory of God plentifully increases (p. 238). The Person of Christ God-man presents in Himself the ideal image of the human personality and knowledge.

In the third chapter, *The Mystery of the Spiritual Sight and of the Knowledge*, it is analyzed the connection between the healing of the organs of the knowledge and the clean knowledge. According to Saint Isaac the Syrian there are two sorts of knowledge: the physical knowledge, the natural one, which consists in the discernment of the good from bad; and there is also the knowledge which is born from the faith, namely the spiritual knowledge which represents the feeling of the mysteries, the sight of the unseen. There are also two sorts of faith: the faith through heed and the faith through sight. For achieving the spiritual knowledge the man must firstly to liberate himself from the natural knowledge. This is the work of the faith, because only through faith the man can be shadowed by the power of the grace. The natural knowledge at which the Saint Isaac the Syrian refers, it appears in the modern philosophy under three names: the realism based on the senses, the epistemological criticism and the monism. All these recognize the power, the reality, the value, the criteria and the amplitude of the knowledge in the limits of the seen nature, on the measure in which these ones coincide with the limits of the human senses as organs

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of the knowledge (p. 252). When this knowledge is united with the faith, then it is raised from the grown, in the Kingdom of its Creator, above nature. This knowledge realized through the faith achieves the power of getting upward, of feeling what it is above any feeling and to watch at that not-understandable shininess for the mind and to enjoy of the knowledge of the created being. The knowledge is the level at which the man is elevated on the heights of the faith. When he reaches at these peaks, he does not need it anymore, because it is written: "For we know from part... But when what is consummated will come, then what is in part will be abolished" (I Corinthians: 13: 9). The deeds of the straightening are: the fasting, the watchfulness, the bodily cleaning, the love for the neighbor, the humble cogitation, the forgiveness of the sins, the cogitation at the heavenly goods, the occupation with the reading of the Holy Scripture, the cogitation at the most consummated deeds. With the help of these virtues the soul is raised on the highest peaks of the faith. The knowledge is elevated with the three spiritual entities: the body, the soul and the ghost. The spiritual knowledge into humbleness consummates the soul of the ones who have achieved it. The third stage of the knowledge it is the one of the consummation (τῆς τελειότητος). The first step of the knowledge cools down the zeal of the soul for labors of the path towards God. The second one reignites the soul on the path that leads towards faith. And the third one is the rest after so much toil, when the mind is sweetened by the mysteries of the eon to come (p. 257). The spiritual sight is the sight of the mind; during it the heart is renewed and cleaned of evil, achieving the mysteries of the Ghost and the discoveries of the knowledge, increasing in knowledge and from view to view and from understanding to understanding. There are three kinds of natural sight in which the mind is elevated, it works and it experiments: two sights of the seen world, of the rational ones and of the irrational ones, of the spiritual ones and of the bodily ones, and the third one which is the sight of the Holy Trinity.

In the third part the author gathered **One Hundred - Gnosiologic Heads**. Through their content they belong to the frame of this work. In them we find considerations referring to sin and to virtue and to their work into the heart of the man; we also find considerations referring to knowledge and to faith, to the importance of the faith in achieving

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the knowledge, to the connection between cross and faith. To the true knowledge of God and of himself, the man can reach only on the way of the working love. Loving God and the people, the man finds out the real way and he experiences the fact that his soul is the image of Christ and that it is immortal (head 17). The mystery of the knowledge develops itself and takes amplitude in the complex mystery of the person. The origin, the limits and the criteria of the knowledge disappear in the unknown mystery, in the complex configuration of the person, and the problem of the problem of the knowledge becomes a fundamental problem.

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