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## Clarifying Approach of the Relation between Christian Morality and Moral Philosophy

### Abstract

Christian morality has as its basis the Divine Revelation, comprised in the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition, both of them preserved by the Church. Christian morality is Theonomous or more precisely Christonomous, its whole content being based on God's authority, Who orders everything, being at the same time the Supreme Legislator of the moral norms that He reveals in Jesus Christ's Person and Life. The moral good that the believer needs to realize is God's will, revealed in His commandments. Moral philosophy claims to be autonomous since its content is referred exclusively to human nature and reason.



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## Keywords

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## 1 Introduction

According to Moral Theology (also called Christian ethics) regarding the authenticity of a Christian life strongly anchored in the teaching of our Saviour Christ and concretely reflected in the Church's life of communion, fundamental is to live (experience) the personal, aware and free, relation of the believer with God.

On the way the Christian understands and lives, at the same time, the personal relation of love between himself and Christ, depend at the same time his salvation in the afterlife and the welfare and accomplishment of his everyday existence. A religious living of the truths of faith gives content to the Christian life "*religious living is the integral participation of the human soul to the organization of a free, aware and living relationship with God*".<sup>1</sup>

The Christian's integral religious life is manifested within the boundaries of man's three faculties: reason, will and affectivity. The religious act, according to the Christian Orthodox teaching, comprises in its structure both intellect and will and sentiment, yet, without dissolving itself in these faculties, but preceding them all as a constitutive element of the life of our soul, situating them all in a unitary synthesis, in a specific relationship with God.

In the authentic religious act, all these faculties are updated by the ontological basis of religion, namely God. If the believer's final target is God, namely the communion of life with Christ,

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<sup>1</sup> Petre Rezus, *Religiozitatea*, in: "Glasul Bisericii", nr. VIII, an IV, aprilie, București, 1949, p. 17.

with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, then the believer needs to permanently advance with all his powers, being supported by the divine grace, towards this target. Thus, in the Christian's authentically religious life, it is necessary for all the powers of the soul to be actualized and penetrated by the idea of God's absolute personal existence.<sup>2</sup>

The Christian's religious act manifests itself initially as religious knowledge; first of all, it has an intellectual charge. The knowledge of God, which is in a permanent tension, precedes any religious manifestation. If the authentic religious act means the personal, free and aware relationship between man and God, then it must naturally precede man's free decision of entering into communion with the Persons of the Holy Trinity.

The knowledge of and the love for God are the two elements giving the true religious and Christian act a special specific.

The Christian must first know God, with whom he ought to enter into a relationship, and at the same time, he must also know the means by which this personal relationship can be realized in the communion of love.<sup>3</sup> God knows us, and we are known by Him, but the Christian, too, must know Him, because only by knowing his Creator is he able to understand himself, his fellows and the entire objective reality of the created world. It is only when you know God that you can have a personal attitude and living about Him.

The Holy Fathers pay special attention to religious knowledge in the religious act. For them, knowledge and virtue are the two poles of the Christian's religious activity, "*in this knowledge is revealed immaculate, the dignity of the divine image*",<sup>4</sup> as St. Maximus the Confessor teaches.

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<sup>2</sup> Vasile Găină, *Universalitatea, fîința și originea religiei*, in "Candela" an XVII, nov., 1898, p. 568, apud Pr. Petre Rezus, *Religiozitatea*.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>4</sup> Sf. Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, 54, scolia 2, "Filocalia", translation from Greek by D. Stăniloae, vol. VIII, Sibiu, Tipografia Arhidiecezană, 1948, p. 248.

## 2 Moral Philosophy and Christian Morality

The Christian's foundation is the unique and supreme teaching of our Saviour Christ. The believers conform their life to this teaching, living intensely on all the levels of the spiritual life, in communion of love with God and with their fellows, in their ascent towards the obtaining of salvation, realized objectively by Jesus Christ, God's Son, by His Embodiment, Life and teaching, His Passions, His Cross, His Resurrection and His Ascension, as we are to appropriate its fruits each one of us by grace, faith, and good deeds, in the Church. Christianity is not a philosophical system, a sum of philosophies or only a religious doctrine, but life, life embodied in Jesus Christ's Person.

It is usually known that Christianity, with its superior teaching and morality, was at first operating on the background of the Greek-Roman world, where prestigious philosophical schools excelled, which gave the world-wise people such as Heraclitus of Ephesus, Protagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, etc.

All these philosophical systems, which also had their ethics, were not able to impose ethical norms and were only able to influence to a small extent the life of their followers, and sometimes even the founders or leaders of the respective philosophical schools were not able to respect the ethical sentences they had stated. We will refer, especially, to the Greek philosophy and ethics of the Antiquity, since most of the ethics systems in history have their source in the philosophy of the Antiquity.

These systems, in the course of the history of ethics, are numerous, and, for this reason, we will use the general name of moral philosophy, a syntagm designating especially the theoretical aspect of ethical systems in the course of history, the philosophical reflections on the general principles of morality. Even since the first Greek philosophers, *ethics meant but one and the same thing: the reflexive study of what is good or bad in the human condition, of which man is, more or less, personally responsible*. For the ethics of the Antiquity and the Middle Ages,

the central problem was: *How can man attain happiness?* Before the Renaissance, it was thought, in general, that people were directed by their nature to reach a final target, yet this global perspective differs with various philosophers. The modern and contemporary ethical theories are interested especially in the issue of practical reason and duty.<sup>5</sup>

Christian morality is not more accomplishing some duties leading man nowhere in this earthly life and assuring him an exterior reward in the future life. These duties are just for the external level of human life, for an orderly life together, for instance, but in Christian morality, only this is not sufficient. Here, Christian, sacrificial, giving love comes to the forefront, which ought to be accomplished.

Therefore the accent falls on the things inside, on man's inner being. *"Free action is always the transposition into the action of the soul, its concrete, exterior expression. Moreover, its value does not sprout from its external aspect, but from its soul, from its inner springs. Inside is the root; this is the life-giving seed from which the leaves, the flowers, and fruits emerge."*<sup>6</sup>

The Christian leads a life in Christ, adorned by virtues, in sacrificial love, gradually growing in Christ; as he advances in the spiritual life, he becomes a creation in the Spirit of Christ, even in the course of the earthly life, because accomplishing and living His teachings transform man's entire being. When we talk about Christian morality, they do not mean a purely scientific, theoretical discipline, but an explanation or description of the Christians' life in Christ, in His Church.

The specialized language distinguishes between ethics and morality. Often, ethics goes with "philosophical" and morality with "Christian".

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<sup>5</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *Ortodoxia*, translated into Romanian by IPS Irineu Slătineanu, București, 1996, p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> \*\*\*, *Teologie Morală Ortodoxă*, vol. I, EIBMBOR, București, 1979, p. 309.

*Ethics* – is a philosophical discipline whose object is to found the moral principles and behaviour, exclusively based on human nature and reason.

*Morality* – refers to the way these general principles are applied in practice, in the most diverse concrete situations; the basis is the Divine Revelation, natural and supernatural.

Founded on the Divine Revelation, morality is based, mainly, on the teaching of faith comprised in the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition. As a specificity of Christian morality is that *MUST: what must, how must, why must, where must, when a man must act to accomplish God' will mirrored in the Moral Law, whose aim is one's salvation and the salvation of one's fellows. Unlike Christian morality, moral philosophy, being founded on reason, usually ignores the relationship between man and God. It is only in morality that this relationship is fundamental and existential.*

While moral philosophy is descriptive, static and ascertaining, Christian morality, on the contrary, has a dynamic, active character. Its aim is to promote the moral values: good, truth, beautiful (*kalokagathia*) comprised in God as absolute personal existence. The dynamism Christian morality is talking about has its theological grounding in the teaching about *man as a carrier of God's image*; God's image which refers to man in his entirety, body, and soul, represents the ontological core of the human being. The man is who he is only to the extent to which he remains "God's image". Eclipsing "the image" triggers the weakening of the moral, physical and intellectual forces by which man can reach "the likeness of God".<sup>7</sup>

The freedom man has been endowed with (one of the features of "the image") is so high that it can go up to denying God. From the perspective of Christian morality, denying God is equivalent to denying yourself.

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<sup>7</sup> See for more details: Ștefan Florea, *Spiritualitate și desăvârșire la Sf. Grigorie de Nyssa*, ed. a II-a, Editura Bibliotheca, Târgoviște, 2015.

Moral philosophy keeps man only in the world here (immanent character), whereas Christian morality combines God's transcendence to immanence, by His presence in the world and the creation, in general.

Ethics has to do with ideology; morality is theology, namely life. Regarding the aim of moral theology, morality gets to establish certain relations between different phenomena, therefore to establish some laws or general principles according to which the human conduct ought to guide itself. Christian morality aims to guide man's life according to certain principles, for a man to be able to realize the good (that moral good embodied in the Person of our Saviour Christ).

According to the Christian teaching, "the notion of moral good is inseparable from the notion of God, because of He, as absolute spirit, is the Supreme Good, both in a metaphorical and in a moral sense, and reveals His life to the believers, by the moral law... from a Christian perspective, to do good is synonymous to accomplishing the will of God".<sup>8</sup>

Christian morality aims to lift the faithful to a supernatural spiritual life, as it results from the Christian teaching, a thing that cannot be reached except by the use by the believers of the grace-filling means placed by our Saviour Jesus Christ in the Church.

Having a dichotomic constitution, psycho-physical, and meant to attain the state of perfection in an eternal dimension, man is "the most valuable being", "the crown of the creation", superior to all the other living beings. The Holy Fathers call Man a "microcosm", namely a synthesis of the whole universe, material and spiritual, who by his body belongs to the temporal world and, by his soul, which is of divine and eternal nature, belongs to the Christian world. In this sense, the great Saint Gregory of Nazianzus says: "like earth, I am tied to the earthly life, yet being

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<sup>8</sup> \*\*\* , *Teologie Morală Ortodoxă*, vol. I, p. 78.

*part of the divinity I carry in me the longing after the eternal life*".<sup>9</sup>

As a personal being, a characteristic feature of "the image of God", man can enter a relationship of saving love with God. Most of the Holy Fathers identify "the image" with the moral and moralizing conscience, calling it "*God's voice in man*" or "*man's awake and never sleeping Judge*". "*There is no greater accuser than one's conscience, therefore if this very severe judge were to rebuke us, we should endure with pain the exterior accusers who are kinder than our conscience*"<sup>10</sup>, says St. John Chrysostom, the saint of our daily Liturgy.

The moral perfection of the human being has been one of the essential preoccupations of all times. For the Christian spirituality whose target is man's salvation in the Church by the grace-filling communion with God in Jesus Christ, perfection is a major problem of existential importance (Matthew 5: 48). It imposes the real presence of Jesus Christ, God's Son, Embodied in man's soul, a presence permanently updated by the grace of the Holy Spirit, which the Holy Mysteries transmit grace.<sup>11</sup>

The moral perfection to which man has been called is inscribed in a pneumatic-ecclesial-sacramental horizon in which human nature is purified of sin and lifted to a state of maximum spiritualization, and the model and the power by which man grows and is accomplished in this horizon is the Man-God, Jesus Christ.<sup>12</sup>

The Holy Fathers have shown that the ontological truth about man has not comprised of man himself, as many philosophers of the Antiquity used to believe, this truth is not in the "image", but in the "Archetype" – in God. The man truly knows himself

<sup>9</sup> \*\*\*, *Despre preoție*, EIBMBOR, București, 1998, p. 191.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 38.

<sup>11</sup> Dumitru Radu, *Îndreptarea și Îndumnezeirea omului Iisus Hristos*, in "Ortodoxia", 1988, nr. 2, p. 30.

<sup>12</sup> Gheorghe Popa, Gheorghe Petraru, *Patimile omenești și implicațiile lor social-morale*, in "Teologie și viață", anul V, nr. 1-3/1995, p. 59.



only if he has received and known the Man-God, in himself. "This is all the more so because of Christ, being "the Image of the Father", man is "the Image of Christ", namely "the image of the Image"."<sup>13</sup>

The relation between man and God has a central value in the Christian moral life. It is out of this relation that the moral attitudes and the final target, to which everything is heading, sprout. Offering our whole being to God, to get united with Him, constitutes the Christian cult. It springs out of the conscience of our dependence on God and our filiation by grace. The cult is the dedication that "the Son" offers to His Father in heaven, is the adoration of love.

### **3 Converging points of Christian Morality and Moral Philosophy**

Christian morality and moral philosophy, although separated by many differentiating points, nevertheless have points of contact, similar, yet which they reach from separate levels.

1. Both Christian morality and moral philosophy have, at their heart, man and his moral manifestations. Moral philosophy generally supposes man's happiness, which it obtains here on earth and the fallen nature restores this happiness only by human means; according to Christian morality, the aim of man's life is also happiness, perfection, holiness, acquiring salvation in the true sense of the word, which starts here on earth, is a long process continuing in the afterlife as well, and man's fallen nature is restored only with the help of the divine grace.<sup>14</sup> Both domains undertake the same investigations on the reality of the

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<sup>13</sup> Panayotis Nellas, *Omul – animal îndumnezeit*, ed. a II-a, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 1999, p. 24.

<sup>14</sup> Hristu Andrusos, *Sisteme de morală*, translation from Greek by Ion Lancreanjan and Ermis Mudopoulos, Sibiu, 1947, p. 9.

moral factor, on the laws of the moral action and the general moral manifestations.<sup>15</sup>

2. Moral philosophy places its greatest accent on the human reason as the foundation of morality, thus being intellectualist, whereas Christian morality must also include man's facts, accomplished in agreement with his human nature (this being a norm of morality) but referred to the absolute Being, identified with the Highest Good, i.e. God. Otherwise, the believer's (human) nature would remain only an incomplete and unsure norm for the true Christian morality. Referring the creatures' world to their Creator and the aim pursued by Him, by the act of the creation, one can speak about the human nature as about the closest norm of morality.<sup>16</sup>

3. Christian morality supposes moral philosophy "*the way the Christian conscience supposes the science of morality in man's nature.*"<sup>17</sup> The moral precepts are valid for all people, at all times and in all places. The Christian moral character represents precisely the nature of the man renewed inside, referred to an absolute being – God, imbued with the power of His Spirit.

4. Between Christian morality and moral philosophy, there are certain affinities, for instance regarding virtue. From our perspective, these are explainable based on the primordial revelation. This also explains the fact that certain philosophers of the Antiquity are painted on the outer walls of certain churches. God's ubiquity gives room for the possibility of our reason to apprehend, to a certain extent, the divine wisdom. Based on these considerations, the pagan philosophers had an impetus towards knowing the divine truth using the natural

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<sup>15</sup> I. Scriban, *Curs de teologie morală*, București, 1915, p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> \*\*\*, *Teologie Morală Ortodoxă*, p. 84.

<sup>17</sup> Hristu Andrutsoș, *op. cit.*, p. 6. The Greek author highlights rather the kinship between Christian morality and philosophical ethics, whereas other Greek moralists accentuate the differences between them.

revelation.<sup>18</sup> Some of the Holy Fathers and Church writers, such as: St. Justin, Martyr and Philosopher, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea, although, sometimes, minimize the contribution of philosophy, nevertheless, strongly plead in favour of its use, accepting some elements of the philosophers of the Antiquity in their thinking and considering them forerunners of the Christian religion and morality. Clement of Alexandria says: “*And I will show in all my Stromata, that philosophy is in a certain way the work of the divine commandment, that it is no evil thing.*”<sup>19</sup>

Saint Justin, Martyr, and Philosopher, observes that: “*Indeed, philosophy is the highest thing, and the most worthy of God. Only it can lift itself up to God and get us close to Him, and saints are truly only those who accustom their mind with philosophy.*”<sup>20</sup> In the philosophy of the Antiquity, the mind and the word, both designated by the term *sofos* (Aristotle, *Politica*, I, 9), had an ideal character for man, and man participates to this absolute, which the old Greeks called “divine”.

Epictetus had affirmed: “*according to your logos, you are no weaker and no smaller than the gods*” (Convorbiri I, 9).<sup>21</sup> Some philosophers of the Antiquity had been able, only thanks to the natural light of their mind, to catch a glimpse of true religion and true morality and enjoyed the consideration and admiration of the church. Saint Justin, Martyr, and Philosopher, situated *Heraclitus of Ephesus* (the first pre-Socratic philosopher who has a well-consolidated philosophical system where one can find a metaphysics, cosmology, a theory of

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<sup>18</sup> \*\*\*, *Teologie Morală Ortodoxă*, p. 365; Hristu Andutsos, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> Clement Alexandrinul, *Stromate*, PSB vol. 5, EIBMBOR, 1982, p. 20.

<sup>20</sup> Sfântul Iustin Martirul și Filosoful, *Dialog cu iudeul Trifon*, translation by O. Căciulă, PSB, vol. 2, EIBMBOR, București, 1980, p. 92.

<sup>21</sup> Apud, Anton Dumitriu, *Aletheia. Încercare de stabilire a ideii de adevăr în Grecia antică*, Editura Eminescu, București, 1984, p. 279-280.

knowledge, anthropology and ethics) along with *Socrates*, counting the latter as “a Christian *avant la lettre*”.<sup>22</sup>

5. Theoretically, Christian morality and moral philosophy have a point in common regarding the cultivation of the moral values, a group of values appearing principally as values of the person. Things do not carry values since they are not responsible. By these values, one can hierarchize a person’s attitudes, intentions, and actions.<sup>23</sup> The qualitative specific of the moral values which differentiate them from the other values consists in the way they refer themselves to man’s freedom and to reason, essentially spiritual qualities that man has been created with.<sup>24</sup> All the moral values rely on the fundamental value of good.

6. Both morality and ethics ask a man to do good and avoid evil. Any moral law requires a man to do good. All the moral systems unanimously agree that well represents the essence of moral life, the only difference between them concerns the way these systems understand and define the essence of good. Ethical systems make out of a particular value the axis of the entire moral mix, which cannot be stated about Christian morality. The Holy Scripture, the Holy Fathers’ works and life highlight benefaction whose origin is in God, the Supreme Good.

7. Both Christian morality and moral philosophy have in view the cultivation of truth. In this sense, St. Justin, Martyr and Philosopher, observes: “*for those who are truly pious and philosophers, their reason dictates to them to honor and love only the truth and to give up following the opinions of those of yore, in case these opinions were wrong. Moreover, it is also the wise reason that dictates the truth-lover not just never to follow those who do or teach some injustice, but also, in every way and above*

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<sup>22</sup> See for more details Nicolae Balca, *Istoria filosofiei antice*, EIBMBOR, București, 1982, pp. 39; 115-123.

<sup>23</sup> Isidor Todoran, *Bazele axiologice ale binelui*, Sibiu, 1947?!, p. 110.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 111-112.

*his soul, to prefer to do and say only what is just, even if death threatened him.*"<sup>25</sup>

Plato places truth above good; he says that the principle of existence, of truth and beauty is precisely "good".<sup>26</sup> With the Greeks of yore, philosophy meant theory of existence, then knowledge of the truth.<sup>27</sup> We ought to note, however, that truth was not related to love.

8. Christian morality and moral philosophy have common points also concerning the notion of beautiful, a constant of the human soul. The value of "beautiful" became "*the ideal of the first order of the Greek, contributing along with goodness to the assembling of the beautiful kalokagathia. Beauty and to the same extent goodness, as major virtues, were, since early times, although not constantly, attributes defining the superior beings, then the gods and the principles.*"<sup>28</sup>

The idea of "beautiful" was put in the Greek ethics in relation to the divinity. In Christian morality, the Holy Fathers located and identified absolute beauty in God. God is defined as pure beauty. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite says that this is one of God's "names".<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, Blessed Augustine says that God is the supreme beauty. Both good and beauty are one with the Supreme Principle. God alone is the One Who has given each creature beauty and the possibility to be beautiful.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Sf. Iustin Martirul și Filosoful, *Apologia întâia*, cap. II, translated by Pr. Olimp Căciulă in "Apologeți de limbă greacă", PSB, vol. 2, București, EIBMBOR, p. 26.

<sup>26</sup> Platon, *Republica*, apud. Anton Dumitru, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>28</sup> N. Corneanu, *Frumusețea ca atribut al Dumnezeirii*, in S.T. N (1959), nr. 5-6, p. 299.

<sup>29</sup> Dionisie Areopagitul, *Despre numele divine*, Iași, 1936, p. 37.

<sup>30</sup> Apud. N. Corneanu, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

#### 4 Differences between Christian Morality and Moral Philosophy

1. The Christian life is a life lived on all the levels in agreement with the teaching of our Church, plenary life in Christ *“the Way, the Truth and the Life”* (John 14: 6). True life is gained as a gift from above but also by our endeavor.<sup>31</sup>

The teaching of the Church is righteous (Orthodox), true and unitary. The unique and supreme Teacher and Prophet by His Person are Christ. Jesus Christ does not offer us a teaching as a fruit of creative imagination, but a real teaching which, if we appropriate it, we attain, like Him, the state of *“mature adulthood”* (Ephesians 4: 13).

He does not present an image of what man can become, but what a man in Christ has become. When Jesus Christ tells us: *“Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”* (Matthew 11: 29), those who believe in Him, they too can become gentle and lowly in heart like our Saviour, yet only receiving power from Him.<sup>32</sup>

While Christian morality has a unitary teaching, we cannot say the same thing about moral philosophy. Here we are speaking about several systems of ethics based on different philosophical, therefore, non-unitary, systems: primitive Greek eudaemonism (the Pythagoreans, Heraclitus, Democritus, Anaxagoras, Protagoras, Socrates, Plato), teleological eudaimonism (Aristotle), Hellenistic ethics: stoicism (Zeno of Citium, Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius), Epicureanism (Epicurus), Neoplatonism (Ammonius Saccas, Plotinus), scepticism (Pyrrho of Elis), moral idealism (Leibniz, Berkeley, Malebranche, Fichte, Schelling), utilitarianism and subjectivist ethics (Bentham), axiological ethics (Max Scheler, Husserl,

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<sup>31</sup> Nicolae Cabasila, *Despre viața în Hristos*, translated by Teodor Bogodae, Sibiu, 1946, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> D. Stăniloae, *Teologie Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. 2, EIBMBOR, București, 1978, pp. 115-116.

Hartmann, Shirley), analytical ethics (G. E. Moore, Wittgenstein, John Austin), existentialist and phenomenological ethics (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky, Martin Buber, Paul Tillich, Gabriel Marcel, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus).<sup>33</sup>

2. Christian morality is universal whereas moral philosophy is local, limited to just a few individuals or a few philosophical schools. Ethics differs from one philosophical school or direction to the next or even from one philosopher to the next.

3. Christian morality and moral philosophy also differ in point of the sources they draw their inspiration from. The most important source of Morality is the *divine Revelation*, comprised in the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition, whereas the main source of moral philosophy is only the *human reason*. Another source of Christian morality is the human nature and reason lit by the divine grace. For ethics, reason is the foundation of morality, the only and ultimate instance man addresses and the only authority intervening in man's action.

4. Christian morality has a double use: theoretical and practical, in an indestructible unity. The history of philosophy and ethics shows that no ethical system has been able to comprise in its formula the entire reality of the moral phenomenon, which cannot be comprised of a unique formula. In ethics are presented some debatable conduct principles, which man follows only if he finds them valuable through the prism of his thinking.

5. The content of Christian morality is superior to that of moral philosophy because Christian morality founds its entire content on the divine authority and teaching. Saint Justin, Martyr, and Philosopher, says that "*our teaching is not a reprobable*

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<sup>33</sup> For the newer philosophical systems, see for more details, Vernon Bourke, *Histoire de la Morale*, translated from English by J. Mignon, Les Editions cu Cerf, Paris, 1970.

*teaching, but is superior to all human philosophy.*"<sup>34</sup> Moral philosophy is totally alien to some virtues, in a Christian sense, for instance: mercy, taking care of the widows, orphans, diseased, poor.

6. Christian morality puts emphasis on man's soul, given man's creation with a dichotomic constitution, with body and soul, in God's image (Genesis 1: 26-27). Man is free and aware, dialogical relationship with God can be met only in Christian morality. It is missing from moral philosophy, which is reduced only to man's relation with himself or only with his fellows. In morality, the body is not seen as deprived of value, as the Manichaeans (Gnostics) or the Platonic spiritualism saw it, on the contrary it has a great value and a well-determined sense in the oikonomia of salvation, its importance starting from the Embodiment of our Saviour and from the fact that the body is meant for the Resurrection.

In Christian morality, man has a special value in the eyes of God. Both the knowledge of God and the recognition of man's unique greatness in the eyes of God have remained alien to the philosophy of the Antiquity. In Christian morality, man's soul prevails, being the principal leader of the body, the direct subject of the grace-filling goods, of the divine love and of the divine contemplation, which brings salvation and eternal happiness.<sup>35</sup> The soul transcends the materiality of the body, makes man "someone", being endowed with conscience and with the capacity of aware and free reactions.

The body ceases with death, while the soul does not. The soul can gather together and influence, by the body it lives in the whole world; the soul is subjective and endlessly rich

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<sup>34</sup> Sf. Iustin Martirul și Filosoful, *Apologia a II-a*, translated by Olimp Căciulă in "Apologeti de limbă greacă", PSB, vol. 2, București, EIBMBOR, p. 88.

<sup>35</sup> \*\*\*, *Teologie Morală Ortodoxă*, pp. 86; 112.



rationality, by its relation to the superior order of things.<sup>36</sup> The human person is invited to a Christian spiritual-material life, in communion with the divine Logos<sup>37</sup>, therefore not just to a material life.

Christian morality gives major importance to both the body and the earthly life. In moral philosophy, the moral value of the earthly life “ranges” between two extremes: one that gives it supreme and unique value, starting with the naturalist systems and culminating with Nietzsche’s system, and another of the pessimistic religious and philosophical systems that consider life as a radical and irremediable evil (gnostic heresies, Buddhism, Schopenhauer’s system). These two conceptions are wrong, because the first gives importance to the maximal expansion of the biological life, neglecting the spiritual life, while the second supports and exhorts to breaking free from the earthly life by suicide.<sup>38</sup>

Christian morality considers the body valuable and emphasizes man’s earthly life as a gift from God that man needs to use to obtain eternal life. St. John Chrysostom says: “*Do you want to know why this life is valuable? Because it becomes for us the foundation of the future life and an opportunity and battlefield and stadium for the celestial crowns.*”<sup>39</sup>

Moral philosophy concerns only the affirmation of the present existence, therefore only the happiness of the earthly life.<sup>40</sup>

7. Christian morality tends to the transcendent, to God. Saint Gregory of Nazianz says: “*It is for You that I live, speak and*

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<sup>36</sup> D. Stăniloae, *Teologie Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. I, EIBMBOR, București, 1978, p. 375.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 376.

<sup>38</sup> \*\*\*, *Teologie Morală Ortodoxă*, p. 114.

<sup>39</sup> *Omilia VI Către antiohieni*, nr. 4, P.G., XLIX, p. 86.

<sup>40</sup> Grigore T. Marcu, *Omul cel nou, în concepția antropologică a Sf. Ap. Pavel*, in S.T. nr. 7-8, 1951, p. 422.

sing"<sup>41</sup>, and Blessed Augustine, too, says: "*Restless is my soul until it finds its rest in You.*"<sup>42</sup>

This tendency towards the transcendent is entirely missing in moral philosophy, which is but natural since reason is the foundation of morality. "*Living according to nature*" means living in conformity with the individual's reason.<sup>43</sup>

8. Christian morality highlights the patience of suffering, as an occasion of meeting the virtues, a means of moral purification founded on Christ's suffering on the Cross. "*The one who endures to the end will be saved.*" (Matthew 24: 13).

Patience in the suffering of the stoic philosophy does not have the character of Christian patience but is due to man's helplessness in facing difficulties. Suffering in stoicism is accepted as an unavoidable necessity, whereas Christian patience has a superior moral sense, of spiritual purification and ascent on the way to perfection.

9. Specific of Christian morality is sacrificial love, which can go up to losing one's life. The essence of Christian love consists in loving both God and our fellow. In Christian morality, virtues culminate in love. The cardinal virtues can be found as well with Socrates, Plato, and the stoicism. In Christianity, the sense and the content of the cardinal virtues are changed, having in view a new meaning and a new content compared to the philosophical virtues with which they need to maintain an indestructible connection.

The Christian virtue serves a supernatural goal, whereas the philosophical virtue serves only an earthly, natural goal. In moral philosophy, virtue is identical with happiness, has an individualistic character as a consequence of intellectualism, springs from pride and lacks the virtue of love for our fellow.

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<sup>41</sup> Apud Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologie Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. I, p. 395.

<sup>42</sup> Fericitul Augustin, *Confessiones*, I, 1.

<sup>43</sup> Șerban Ionescu, *Axiomatica unei "Filosofii creștine"*. *Istoric, elemente, principii, obiectii*, in S.T. V (1936), p. 9.

## 5 Conclusions

Christian morality is founded on the divine Revelation, comprised in the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition, preserved by the Church. Christian morality is theonomous or more precisely Christonomous because their whole content is founded on God's authority, who orders everything, being at the same time the Supreme Legislator of the moral norms that He reveals in Jesus Christ's Person and Life. The moral good the believer needs to realize is God's will, comprised in His commandments.

Moral philosophy claims to be autonomous, since its content is referred, exclusively, to human nature and reason. Christian morality, unlike moral philosophy, brings to the forefront of human existence, *the acquisition of salvation*, which begins even since here on earth and, in order to attain this desideratum, it uses not just natural means (such as ethics) but also supernatural means (the cult, in general, the Holy Mysteries, the Hierurgies), by means of which the believer receives the divine grace. We say about Christian morality that it is Christocentric, because it offers Christ to the Christian, not just as a model of living, but also as a spring of power in the Christian and social life.

As we have shown in the present study, the relation between man and God is fundamental for Christianity. Man is referring himself to God, man's relation with God is what gives meaning to man's relations with himself and with his fellows. Christian morality is not individualistic. The believer obtains salvation only in communion with God and with his fellows, in Christ's mysterious body, namely the Church. Thus, Christian morality is characterized by their Christological and Christocentric character, by their Trinitarian character and, at the same time, by their pneumatological-ecclesial character.

Christianity is not a social, political or economic system, but a life lived according to God's word, among the people and with the people. In Christian morality, good, truth, beauty, justice,

holiness are not simple ideas or impersonal values, as in moral philosophy, but values embodied in Him Who is the Truth Himself (John 14: 6).

In Christianity, the Orthodoxy needs to be made perfect in Orthopraxy, the word must become action, knowledge must be turned into love, the truth must be a norm of life, because *“Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.”* (Matthew 7: 21).