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Summary

***(Mission and material disinterest in the writings and life of the Holy Apostle
Paul)***

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Keywords: Apostle Paul, mission, sacrifice, example, material law, disciple, clergy.

PRELIMINARY

The paper analyzes the convergence between spiritual norms and the vulnerabilities of the human condition in contemporary theology, identifying the “love of money” as a major obstacle to the fulfillment of the priestly mission. In order to overcome this historical fragility, the study proposes the model of material detachment of the Holy Apostle Paul as a fundamental landmark in regaining missionary independence. From a terminological and conceptual perspective, the author justifies the integration of the term “mission” in Orthodox theology as a direct participation in the apostolic mission, relying on a vast bibliography that brings together the patristic exegesis of Saint John Chrysostom and modern theological research.

From a methodological point of view, the research correlates the sociological analysis of the historical context with the exegesis of the Pauline texts and maintains that the financial disinterest of the Apostle Paul constituted a deliberate strategy to guarantee the freedom of the Gospel. Structured in three chapters, the academic approach follows the formative evolution of Saul from the Jewish environment to his conversion and the exercise of the apostolic dignity. The final goal of the work is to provide practical solutions for current pastoral care , optimizing the relationship between the management of material resources and the soteriological finality of ecclesial ministry.

Chapter 1. Discipleship and model in missionary formation

The first chapter bases missionary imperatives on the authority of Holy Scripture, seen not as a simple historical deposit, but as a living revelation of the divine Word that traces the ontological landmarks of the Christian vocation. The author highlights the synergistic model of collaboration between man and God, reflected in the lives of the prophets and apostles as an existence governed by sacrifice and love. In the context of the New Testament, this dynamic is reconfigured by Jesus Christ, who offers human reason an intelligible path towards the sacred, a perfect model of integrating the spiritual dimension into everyday reality being offered later by the Holy Apostle Paul, whose exhortations trace clear guidelines for both the clergy and the laity .

The ecclesial community is defined as the organic and indispensable environment for the formation of the missionary, surpassing the status of a simple social association through the invisible presence of the Savior and the sharing of the grace of the Holy Spirit. In this living space, the transmission of moral values and the crystallization of religious identity are achieved, ascetic isolation being refused in favor of a practical testimony through the power of personal example. Based on natural and supernatural Revelation, ecclesiological responsibility starts from the primordial unity of humanity and reaches fullness in the Pauline vision of the Epistle to the Galatians , where the equality of all people before grace transfigures natural differences without canceling them, transforming them into bridges of communion.

A central conceptual pillar is the “new man”, defined by the profound transformation of the human being and the ontological union with Christ, a process that requires a synergistic collaboration between personal freedom and divine grace in view of moral perfection. This spiritual renewal also redefines the nature of the priesthood, which is extracted from the administrative-secular sphere and reestablished on a rigorous sacramental foundation under the paradigm of “ steward of the mysteries of God”. Finally, the study reveals that, although the authority and efficiency of the priestly mission are conditioned by moral integrity, the Pauline grace received through ordination – a source of power, love and wisdom – transfigures the very human weakness assumed, transforming it into the privileged space for the manifestation of the work of Christ and divine providence.

The first section highlights gentleness as a dynamic virtue and an essential spiritual power in managing community tensions, the author showing that the interior life of the servant represents the ontological condition of an authentic pastoral care, free from formalism. Next, the study analyzes the formative profile of the Holy Apostle Paul, demonstrating how the cosmopolitan environment of Tarsus of Cilicia and the rigor of the Jewish educational system shaped his intellectual and missionary skills. Anchored in rabbinic erudition and in the cult of the moral law, Saul assumed his Pharisaic devotion as a fundamental meaning of existence, transforming fidelity to Revelation and pedagogical rigor into providential support for his future apostolic calling.

The second section analyzes the distinct status of the tribe of Levi, exempted from traditional economic activities in Canaan to ensure exclusive dedication to cultic service and community education. This theocratic model, juridically consolidated in the era of Ezra , did not aim at the isolation of a privileged caste, but at the establishment of an organic solidarity in which the material support of the clergy depended directly on the prosperity of the people. Through their logistical, pedagogical and liturgical role, the Levites maintained the purity of

religious identity in the face of cultural assimilation, the text concluding that any fracture in this symbiotic bond between the servant and the ecclesial body jeopardizes the spiritual balance of the entire society.

The reevaluation of Jewish identity in the context of early Christianity constitutes a turning point in Pauline theology, where ethnic and cultural elements are transfigured by the priority of divine grace. For Saul of Tarsus, the initial zeal for paternal customs and the scrupulous rigor specific to Pharisaism after the Maccabees represented fundamental pillars of identity which, although remarkable for their discipline, risked degenerating into a formalism that obscured the spiritual dimension of the relationship with divinity. Theological analysis demonstrates that his encounter with Christ does not annul the validity of the Mosaic revelation, but sanctions its hermeneutical deformations, offering a superior eschatological perspective in which the finality of the normative prescriptions is fully realized in the Person of the Savior. Thus, by overcoming the letter in favor of the spirit, the concept of the "new man" underpins the universalization of the evangelical message, eliminating social barriers and opening the way to a universal communion.

Chapter 2. The Holy Apostle Paul – missionary by call from God

The theological analysis of the Pauline mission reveals a process of divine economy in which grace does not annul previous human experience, but transfigures it through the synergy between Jewish preparation and heavenly order. The direct encounter with Christ reconfigures the doctrinal basis of the servant, orienting it towards material disinterest and soteriological responsibility. The inalienable foundation of the priestly mission resides in direct divine election, a principle historically validated by Saint Cyril of Alexandria through the analysis of the Levitical priesthood as an exclusive gift of God. Although he did not belong to the group of the twelve disciples during the earthly period of the Savior, Saint Paul defends his apostolic authority by invoking this status of direct calling, epiphanically manifested on the road to Damascus.

This vocation underpins the missionary's relationship with the legacy of the Old Testament, where Christocentric authority integrates the letter of the law into a superior perspective of the fulfillment of the spirit. In the Epistle to the Corinthians, Saint Paul uses Scripture as legal and moral authority, elevating the agricultural prohibition of "muzzling the mouth of the ox that treads out the grain" to the rank of a general divine principle. This hermeneutics demonstrates the divinity's primary concern for the workers of the Gospel,

establishing a legitimate right to material support in the Lord's field. Following the Christic pedagogical model, the Apostle shows that the essence of the Law resides in compassion and order, the radical transformation of the heart by the Holy Spirit being the only way to overcome the limitations of the Sinaitic covenant.

Pauline rhetoric, also analyzed by Saint John Chrysostom, authentic freedom or *elpis* (hope) marks the clear distinction between legalistic Judaism and the new reality of grace, identifying the state under the Law with a spiritual slavery that only emphasizes human helplessness. The Christological approach reestablishes love as the engine of voluntary submission and reinterprets the right to material support as a reflection of divine mercy integrated into the logic of spiritual sowing. Saul's transformation goes beyond simple psychological analysis, being an epiphanic event of total reorientation of reason. In the context of the era, in which the Temple and the recognition of the Messiah represented distinct modes of existence, Christ becomes for Paul the ontological convergence point where heaven and earth unite.

The blinding light on the Damascus road is identified in exegesis as a manifestation of divine glory (*Shekinah*), the direct presence of the glorified Christ, placing the moment among the great biblical theophanies and suggesting a universal prophetic call. Saint Paul insists on the supernatural origin of his Gospel, directly revealed, which allows him to reevaluate the knowledge of the Old Law from a Christocentric hermeneutical perspective. This vocation, described as a choice "from the womb", highlights a providential continuity in which the fanatical persecutor becomes "the slave of Christ". This status grants him absolute missionary freedom and independence from popular validation or material benefits, fidelity to the message received becoming the ultimate criterion against opportunism.

Pauline mission is defined by the permanent tension between divine responsibility and duty towards the Gentiles, marking a new stage of revelation in which the God of Abraham confirms His faithfulness through His Son. This perspective integrates all humanity into the new covenant, transforming the rigor of the Mosaic law into an apostolic zeal aimed at universal salvation. A defining element of this missionary profile is the integration of physical effort into the dynamics of spiritual service, an approach founded on the original principle in Genesis and reconfirmed by Jesus Christ in Nazareth, demonstrating that manual labor is fully compatible with the highest spiritual values.

In the Pauline vision, work acquires a therapeutic and soteriological value to combat laziness, considered a major danger to salvation and a factor of social disorder. By practicing the profession of tentmaker, the Apostle Paul deliberately renounced the legitimate right to be

supported by the community, thus eliminating any suspicion of material interest and offering a model of self-sufficiency. In his pastoral testament addressed to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus, philological analysis (FAp . 20,33-35) confirms the historical reality of his personal effort, he indicating his own hands as proof of ensuring the material needs of himself and his collaborators.

The central concept of the Miletus sermon is the passionate refusal to covet the goods of others, a position that strengthens his moral authority before the community and gives the evangelical message an unquestionable authority. His work has an altruistic purpose, oriented towards supporting the physically and spiritually helpless, transforming the maxim “It is more blessed to give than to receive” into the motto of his entire existence. Pauline rhetoric also includes a prophetic warning regarding the appearance of “grievous wolves”, identifying major ecclesial dangers both from outside the Church and from within the hierarchy, through leaders who will distort the truth out of personal pride.

The proposed solution to these threats is constant vigilance or vigilance, understood as a state of permanent communion with God that allows the discernment of spirits and the protection of the deposit of faith. This surveillance acquires a special gravity in relation to the Crucifixion and the blood with which Christ redeemed the Church. The Pauline model of service is fully assumed by the new generation of hierarchs, an example reflected in the spiritual path of Saint Timothy. Coming from a mixed environment and benefiting from an early scriptural education , Timothy was selected based on his virtues and evolved from the status of disciple to that of hierarch of Ephesus.

The relationship between Paul and Timothy goes beyond the boundaries of an administrative collaboration, constituting the basis of an essential pastoral pedagogy in which the disciple adopts the way of life of the teacher , including the rigor of asceticism and the sacrificial character of preaching. Timothy's fidelity to the teaching and conduct of the Apostle ensures the dogmatic unity of the Church in the face of imminent ecclesial challenges. A central pillar of this training is the principle of theological gratitude (charis), used as an expression of awareness of transforming grace and as a guard against pride. The mission presupposes a permanent availability to preach "in season and out of season", success being conditioned by the ability to prepare new leaders capable of ensuring the continuity of the witness.

The chapter concludes by affirming the normative character of the Pauline experience for contemporary clergy, demonstrating that material disinterest, work discipline and fidelity to Revelation represent the only guarantors of freedom of preaching in a society dominated by materialism. The model of the “new man”, which transfigures normative rigor into the zeal of

love, offers concrete solutions for combating divisions and protecting ecclesial unity, having as its ultimate purpose the eschatological orientation of the faithful towards the acquisition of the Kingdom of Heaven. Ultimately, apostolic authority remains anchored in the “Word of grace”, and the synergistic mission of Saints Paul and Timothy goes beyond the historical context of the first century, becoming a living icon of authentic priestly ministry, defined by the perfect balance between mystical living and active social responsibility.

Chapter 3. Zeal for mission – parallel between the apostle’s model and the practice of our days

The analysis of the last chapter begins by highlighting the missionary dynamism of the Holy Apostle Paul, whose authority is not a static given, but a reality confirmed by facts in the paradigm of the road to Golgotha. Refusing any compromise that could alter the nature of his mission, the Apostle firmly rejected preachers interested in personal profit. In the city of Corinth, nicknamed the "new Rome", Paul confronted the Judaizing missionaries who proposed a salvation based on the letter of the Law and the denial of the Cross. The strategy of these "false apostles" to simulate an ontologically non-existent virtue is indicated by the term *metaschēmatisō*, an action unmasked by Saint John Chrysostom as a diabolical imitation under the guise of an "angel of light", which requires a discernment capable of distinguishing between the mask and the face.

In this context, Paul's refusal to accept financial support in Corinth generated the paradoxical accusation of lack of love for the community. However, Stanley Horton and Nicholas Wright emphasize that this position constituted a deliberate strategy to cut off any "reason" of the opponents, Paul assuming through the verb *poieō* to the future an unwavering material disinterest. Urging the believers to put on the "armor of God" against sin, so that the gratuitousness of his preaching represents an act of missionary *kenosis*. The sufferings listed in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians are not a form of pride, but a Christological confession in which the toil, hunger, cold and lack of clothing attest to fidelity to the Crucified Lord.

Pauline mission assumed a state of continuous wakefulness indicated by the term *agrypnia* (watch), which combines exhausting physical work with incessant prayer to restore spiritual balance, following the model of Christian retreat. The apostle correlates bodily vulnerability with the remedy of asceticism, overturning the values of the era by transforming material precariousness into gaining an ontological dignity based on putting on Christ. Likewise, in the community of Colossae, he transforms work from a necessity of subsistence into a universal

spiritual duty, affirming that any work done "as for the Lord" relativizes the authority of earthly masters and elevates the effort of the slave to the rank of sacred service.

The etymological analysis of the term *psychē* (soul) demonstrates that the Pauline recommendation to work with goodwill aims at freeing man from external determinisms by exercising freedom of will, transforming work into a space of encounter with divine grace. The worker thus acquires the dignity of a responsible steward of divine gifts, whose daily activity is anchored in the certainty of eschatological reward. In the community of Thessalonica, where the imminence of the Parousia had caused states of inactivity and social disorder, the Apostle intervenes firmly invoking collective memory through the formula "for you yourselves know" and proposing the imitation of one's own conduct as a norm of ecclesial living.

Although he had the authority (*exousia*) and the divine right to be supported, Paul chose physical labor "night and day" so as not to become a burden, unifying daily effort with interior prayer in a single existential doxology. In this sense, the contemporary transposition of this Pauline model is analyzed in the historical context of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Although tradition has long preserved an organic link between the priest and the agricultural community, the secularization of monastic assets under the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza broke the balance of church self-management, determining successive reforms to improve the material condition of the clergy, culminating in the current regulations that equate the salaries of priests with those of teaching staff.

Justinian's strategy during the communist regime, by integrating priests into the "field of work", constituted a providential moment in preventing the social marginalization of the clergy and in ensuring legal protection, a model that prefigures today's mixed salary system, intended to offer the minister political independence and material stability in order to dedicate himself exclusively to the spiritual mission.

Faced with the challenges of secularized and materialistic modernity, where administrative responsibilities and pressing financial needs risk eclipsing the Pauline ideal of self-denial or favoring the passion of greed, the work proposes as a fundamental remedy the restoration of impeccable moral integrity and transparency in the management of parish assets, seen as levers of philanthropy. Thus, by affirming the priority of the soul over matter and by insistently returning to the study of Tradition and the duty of teacher of the Gospel, the contemporary priest validates his authority necessary for the soteriological guidance of the faithful, guaranteeing the dedicated performance of the holy services for the entire community.

Conclusions

The spiritual journey of the Holy Apostle Paul is defined as a complex process, in which the social and family environment constituted the fundamental premises of his religious character. The family offered him the protective framework in which traditional Jewish education and moral rigor became the foundation of his ministry. This early preparation was consolidated by academic study under the guidance of Rabbi Gamaliel, from whom he learned the balance between didactic rigor and experience, although his zealous nature initially interpreted the defense of the Law through a militant and persecutory struggle against early Christianity.

The ontological turning point remains the theophany on the Damascus road, a divine intervention that reconfigures Saul's legalistic perspective, based on the formal fulfillment of normative prescriptions. The supernatural light revealed the insufficiency of the justice of the Law, transforming the persecutor into the "Apostle to the Gentiles" dedicated to the universality of the Gospel. Under the new name of Paul, he assumes the mandate to restore the Law to its spiritual source and to place it under the authority of the law of love, a process through which the work of grace transfigures his previous preparation for the proclamation of the riches of Christ to the pagan peoples.

Pauline missionary strategy is the paradoxical relationship to material resources, the Apostle opting for manual labor in order to ensure his subsistence, although he had the full right (*exousia*) to be financially supported by the community. This option had a profound pedagogical value, emphasizing the absolute priority of preaching in relation to biological needs. The renunciation of these due rights, addressed primarily to the communities of Ephesus, Corinth and Thessalonica, constituted a model of sacrifice intended to prevent the transformation of the mission into a source of gain, transforming service into an act of giving independent of any earthly conditioning.

Pauline model is highlighted by its impact on the contemporary church hierarchy, offering concrete solutions for the revitalization of parish life in a context marked by secularization. The contemporary priest, in the dual position of missionary and steward of church goods, is warned against the temptation of the love of money. Pauline material disinterestedness represents an asceticism of service, assumed out of love for Christ, which gives the altar server the freedom to preach, the management of material resources having to be assumed as an extension of the liturgical work, oriented exclusively towards the soteriological finality.