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**The Right to Sanctity/Sanctification as a Crowning of Human
Rights Laid Down in the Law of the Old Testament**

- PhD Thesis Summary -

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Cluj-Napoca

2020

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Keywords: Hebrew Bible, human rights, natural law, ethics of the Old Testament, Code of Law, Covenant Code, Code of Sanctification, prophet - civil authority relationship, Israel's wars, right to sanctification.

Summary. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in Paris, on December 10th 1948, represents a social, cultural and political ideal of modernity, a new “conquest” of the anthropocentric spirit. The declaration is based on the acknowledgement of universally applicable human principles, which are every human being’s inalienable rights (the right to freedom, dignity, equality, protection, work, marriage, private property etc.). However, as archbishop †Yannoulatos well noted, human rights, as put forward by the political community, are, in their nature, civic declarations, which facilitate the enforcement of legal restrictions, politically compelling and following an agenda opposite to the fundamental values of Christianity. This is why Orthodoxy has not always subscribed to the challenges of the politics of human rights, but only when man’s fundamental rights, such as religious freedom or the strengthening of human dignity, were being protected.

The gap between this secular form of rights, expressed in contemporary society, and their originally biblical nature is almost insurmountable. The politics of human rights follows the legislation of man’s selfish behaviour, one which defends some of his/her rights, but which, most of the times, affects the fundamental freedoms of his/her neighbour who, being weaker, cannot assert him/herself in corrupt courts. Hence the failure of their implementation at a universally valid level, which is why experts such as C. Douzinas fearlessly speak of a possible end of human rights as we know them today. On the other hand, the biblical understanding of human rights reveals the source of human dignity, namely God’s glory (*kavod YHWH*). Nourished by this transcendental source, rights become duties and responsibilities towards God’s creation. The message of the Leviticus (19: 18 “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself”) and the evangelical message (*John 15: 13*: „Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends”) come to show us what the nature of interhuman behaviours should be like: man was not created to be a tyrant in relation to his neighbour, enforcing arbitrary rights upon him, which he is forced to observe beyond his will, but he was created in God’s Image and after God’s Likeness (*Gen. 1: 26a*: “Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...”), to sacrifice himself for the good of his neighbour; such a person will respect everyone’s rights, promoting those of his neighbours more than his. The biblical teaching on rights tells us that, after all, there is only one universal right valid for all men, the right to sanctification (*Lev. 19: 2*: „You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy!”), ensured by God’s Law (*tôra*). The messianic kingdom is founded on the virtue of love (*Matt. 22: 36; John 15: 13; I John 4: 20*); according to Fr. I. Zăgrea, it is from this point that all social relations genuinely develop, it is from this love of Christ that the old biblical principles of human rights can be fairly established in the community, these rights having been disregarded because of the sin which enslaved man’s dignity of being free in Christ.

The biblical sphere of human rights is linked to the work of Providence, which is achieved within creation in several ways: firstly, through God's written Law (*Tôrâ şebiketav* – Ex. 31: 18) and, secondly, through the advice and commandments of the oral Law (*Tôrâ şebeal pe* – Lev. 26: 46), which He gives to men through Moses or through the chiefs of the elderly (שׂר – *sar*) and through the judges (שׂפָט – *shāpat*) of the people, respectively (Ex. 18: 24-27). God places teachers within His people to discipline Israel (יָסַד – *yasar*) so that they may know him (Deut. 4: 36). There is, without any doubt, a great number of methods through which God accomplished divine pedagogy, leading His people towards the observance of the Law: through direct communication (Isa. 8: 11); through oneiromancy (Ps. 16: 11); through prophecies (Jer. 7: 28; 32: 33; Amos 3: 7-8; Zech. 3: 2); through suffering (Prov. 3: 11) – the message sent by Yahweh through Moses, in the form of the Torah, represents a continuous method of revealed instruction and pedagogy.

We cannot doubt that the promise of occupying the land of Canaan (אֶרֶץ הַחַיִּים אֲתֵּן אֵתָהּ לְךָ), made by God to Abraham, is a right (*mishpat*) of the people of Israel: “Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, To your offspring I will give this land.” (Gen. 12: 7). We thus see how rights are part of a close connection between man and creation, which is why the earth must always be kept clean, unexposed to the pollution of human sins, through the ritual of the celebration of the Sabbatical Year when, for a year, the earth (*hā 'āreṣ*) reposed within the dignity of its primeval glory (*tôv m'ōd*). Later on, Mount Sion, through the presence of the Temple which was filled with God's glory (*kavod YHWH* – 2 Chron. 5: 14), would become the topos *par excellence* for man's encounter with Yahweh to the glory of the dignity of the Image. However, above this right of the chosen people to inherit the Land of Canaan and along all other man's rights, which ensue in syntony from this principle of divine right, there is the sole right, which belongs to God.

We can summarise human rights (*mishpat* - Ex. 23: 6; Deut. 18: 1-2; 21: 17; 24: 1, 7; 1 Kings 8: 9-11; 10: 25; Isa. 10: 1-2; Jer. 32: 7-8) from the ethical perspective of the Old Testament, according to the following biblical categorisation: the right to freedom (Ex. 21: 16; Deut. 24: 7); the right to dignity (Gen. 1: 26-27; Ex. 21: 18-26; Lev. 19: 17-18; Deut. 24, 16; 2 Kings 10: 2-11; Prov. 24: 28-29; Ezek. 18: 20); the woman's right to dignity and civic decency (Deut. 22: 13-21); the right to property (Lev. 25; Deut. 15: 12-15; 24: 19); the right of every man, free or a slave, to benefit from the provisions of *lex talionis* (Ex. 21: 20-21, 26-27; Lev. 25: 42, 55); the right of the sojourner, of the widow and of the fatherless to nondiscrimination (Ex. 20: 10; Lev. 16: 29; 17: 8; 19: 33-34; Deut. 10: 19; 24: 19; 2 Kings 15: 19; 1 Chron. 29: 15; Ps. 94: 5-6; 146: 9; Jer. 7: 6); the right of refugees to protection (Ex. 22: 21; 23: 9; Deut. 10: 19; Zech. 7: 10; Mal. 3: 5); equal rights for the observance of religious requirements (Ex. 35: 15; Lev. 22: 25); equal rights in front of courts (Ex. 23: 1-3; Deut. 19: 16-19; Prov. 20: 28; 31: 5, 8-9; Isa. 1: 17); the right to interethnic tolerance (Jer. 29: 4-7); the right to fair remuneration for one's work (Lev. 19: 13; Deut. 24: 15); the right of slaves in Israel to minimal decency (Ex. 21: 8-9; 21: 11; 21: 20; Lev. 22: 11; Deut. 15: 13-15; 23: 15-16; Job 31: 13-14) etc.

The main right pertains to Yahweh Who, from His position as Creator, has full rights over life and death (*Deut.* 32: 39b) and no one can oppose Him. It is very important to understand that, on the one hand, the Law of God gives rights, but, on the other hand, it also reclaims duties and obligations, the greatest being that of abiding by the Covenant and by its requirements (*Shema Yishrā'ēl*: “Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey” – *Deut.* 6: 3).

Human rights exist in the Old Testament to maintain the order of creation (the order of justice – *צדק* *tzedek*); if they are not respected, then the cosmic order envisaged by God in His creation is disrupted, just like it happened upon Adam’s fall, when disorder and a certain movement towards decomposition permeated creation – the process being stopped by our Lord Christ, Who moved the order of creation forward towards transfiguration. By offering the Law and the rights implicitly ensuing from it, God wants to draw certain guidelines to maintain the order left after man’s fall, so that chaos and anarchy do not fully take over humanity. They have a temporary destiny for, when assumed internally, in other words, when, through repentance, man internalises the Word (*Deut.* 30: 14; *Jer.* 31: 31-34), namely Christ – then there is no need for rights as rules of conduct – as sanctification automatically means loving the other and, when one loves, the whole world around one feels free and respected. This is why the right to sanctification (*mishpat kadosh*) and its fulfilment represent a corollary of all rights and the target towards which every person should aim. For a thorough understanding of all the nuances related to the area of human rights, we shall analyse in detail the entire linguistic sequence of the notion, starting with the legal terminology (*Tôra/mishpāt/hōq; shāpat/shōhad/dyn*) and ending with the terminology belonging to the area of communion between Yahweh and His people, in strict reference to the issue of human rights (*Tôra/ tzedek/bērît*).

Human rights are a series of human privileges, ensured by the sovereignty of the Creator and protected by the Law. However, rights are in fact supernatural gifts offered by God to all people, which is why, in their natural – meaning biblical (revealed) – dimension, they have a universal ethical status. For, the very moment the subject of the ethics of the Old Testament is tackled, one enters into direct contact with the theology of justice, of *tzedek*. The notion of Jewish ethics has to do with the icon of the righteous man, who suffers for the salvation of His people (*Isa.* 53) or in order to strengthen God’s glory even more within him (the case of righteous Job). The failure of their promotion at a global level is due to man’s inability to fully and permanently align himself with God’s will, with His plan of universal salvation. Human creatures have the natural moral freedom to choose how to behave with one another. Nonetheless, the ultimate control of mankind and, implicitly, of history is in the hands of God, the One Who desires all people to be saved (*1 Tim.* 2: 4), which is why the fate of humanity does not depend entirely on the work of man, but especially on God’s grace. Since nature as a whole is His creation, it evades full human control, although, by virtue of free will, man can act subjectively, causing a series of arbitrary consequences – however, it is God Who has full responsibility for the plan of man’s salvation. This is precisely why He is the only one entitled to

claim that: “I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand” (*Deut.* 32: 39). Therefore, the Bible and the Talmud inspire humanity towards altruistic actions, based on the respect and promotion of human rights at a universal level.

Undoubtedly, the Torah strengthens the notion of man’s right, of his dignity, which, according to most Church Fathers (St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Athanasius the Great, St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Gregory Palamas, St. Nicholas Cabasilas etc.), emerges from God’s glory (כְּבוֹד *kavod*), from the Trinitarian dimension of man, who was created in the Image and after he Likeness of the Holy Trinity (*Gen.* 1: 26-27). In the Old Testament, Yahweh’s glory is attributed only to Him (with the exception of the episode when Moses came down from Mount Sinai, his face shining, dazzling – *Ex.* 34: 29-30), but in the New Testament, through the Person of Christ, glory (*doxa*) is communicated to man and to creation (*John* 17: 22). The theme of glory is fundamental for man, for his salvation, for his initiation in spiritual mysteries, as, deep within him, there is this yearning for the sight of God’s glory (*Ex.* 33: 18: “*Please show me your glory*”). Man’s dignity holds within itself the necessary potential to become covered in glory, which is why he only needs to align his will with the divine will expressed through the Law, through the Torah, which protects human dignity, so that man can partake of the divine nature (*2 Pet.* 1: 4). Thus emerges the greatest virtuousness of human dignity, which is the state of deification (*theosis*), a continuous process of sanctification of man, who is subject to the work of the uncreated energies of the Holy Spirit, all human beings, due to their dimension of *tzelem / Imago Dei*, having this right to sanctification (*mishpat kadosh*). The Covenant made by God with Israel on Mount Sinai contains the Torah, for the Torah is given in the context of the Covenant, the two of them being organic realities. Israel thus becomes the witness to a special relation with Yahweh, its Creator, the Torah having in this respect a legal status as well. And this status is justice (*tzedek*) as a legal and ethical norm, through which the chosen people distinguished itself from all the other neighbouring pagan peoples, who acted according to corruptible standards. We shall embark upon this issue at the right time, when we shall analyse whether the laws of the Ancient Near East were operational at an objective level or whether they presented a great risk of implosion due to the deliberate ambiguity with which certain legal bodies were proliferated. Analysed from the perspective of God’s justice and grace, the Torah surpassed its exclusive legal character, becoming a pedagogical and salvific law. On the basis of this relationship between God and man, facilitated by the existence of the Law of justice, man had to always act according to God’s will, obeying divine advice and commandments. It is from the perspective of this dimension of the Covenant and of the law of justice, offered for man’s sanctification, that human rights must be analysed and understood. This is what we aim to do in the following chapters of our research. As a consequence, human rights, in their genuine biblical character, cannot be separated from this meaning of social justice; otherwise, rights would become a means of exploiting one’s neighbour according to personal, malign interests. In part, that is exactly what is happening nowadays with rights, in a secularised society, which has drifted away from God’s justice and from the honest desire of serving one’s neighbour.

We also consider the Jewish reference points related to man's dignity and freedom as points of convergence in the Jewish-Christian dialogue. In this respect, we shall resort to the information in the Jewish tradition (Philo of Alexandria, Flavius Josephus, the Babylonian Talmud, the Mishna, Halakha etc.) and in the scientific analyses carried out by renowned Jewish contemporary personalities (Emanuel Tov, Jacob Neusner, Jacob Milgrom etc.). Even if rabbis insist more on man's spiritual nature, they do not disregard the human body, emphasising its value and dignity (*Avoth de-Rabbi Nathan* 31: 1; *Niddah* 31a; *The Babylonian Talmud. The Sanhedrin* 38a). The Talmud insists on the fact that man is as valuable as the entire creation, being considered a microcosmos, as he is the binding agent between the material and the spiritual world – his dignity is underscored by all this and by the fact that he was created in Yahweh's Image.

Human rights are also linked to the area of natural laws (natural right), which are basically laws of nature, for, upon Adam's very creation, God made extremely clear moral distinctions. These could capture the distinction between good and evil and the conscious reason of the first man had the necessary power to make an ethical distinction (*Gen. 2: 16-17*). Man was created in God's Image, meaning with discernment, with judgement, with reason, with will – this is why St. Gregory Palamas used to say that man was created with a gnostic will, namely with the possibility of sinning or of sanctifying himself (free will), but mostly with an innate reasoning nature, willing to be united with its Creator. It is on this free choice of man that his staying in a personal relationship with God depends, for St. Gregory claims that choosing to do the evil leads man against his nature, against moral natural laws, causing ontological denaturations – this being, in fact, the damaging consequence of passions. According to the Serbian theologian V. Perišić, the entire patristic theology on anthropology actually refers to man's state of sanctification. Formulated on this note, human rights belong, without a doubt, to a religious environment and not to a secular or agnostic one. As such, human rights come to strengthen this ontological disposition of the human being towards ethics, inspired by the law of his/her nature (*Rom. 2: 13-16*), which is why rights cannot go beyond natural law. This is the genuine meaning of human rights from a biblical perspective – that of strengthening human dignity and freedom, which are gifts offered to people by God the Creator, so that the human subject may soteriologically enhance them by deepening the relationship of communion with Him (during the times of the Old Testament, through the Covenant) – *bērit*).

The right to freedom is ensured by the *Geneva Convention*, adopted on September 25th 1926 and fully enacted in the year 1953, through article 2 of the Law. We encounter something similar with the Babylonians, in the Code of Hammurabi (1592-1570), and, marginally, in the system of laws of the Egyptian Pharaohs. A special nuance is offered to us by the Mosaic law, with respect to the right to freedom of fugitive slaves: "You shall not give up to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you. He shall dwell with you, in your midst, in the place that he shall choose within one of your towns, wherever it suits him. You shall not wrong him." (*Deut. 23: 15-16*). The laws of the Ancient Near East forbade the hiring of slaves who ran away from their cruel masters and international case-law treaties required their extradition. In

exchange, Jewish law pinpointed man's dignity and protected the miserable slave from a possible death if he/she were to be returned to his/her original owner.

It is precisely this understanding of human rights as a law referring to the spiritual freedom of the soul and of reason which is missing from today's International Bill of Human Rights. Beyond any criticism, we must also take into consideration the clear positive dimension of the Declaration. We can see certain common topics in that which was enacted in 1948 and the general missionary programme of the Orthodox Church. The right to life, stipulated in article 3 of the Declaration, the right to freedom of thought and religious conscience, stipulated in article 18 of the Declaration, the right to property, provided in article 17 of the Declaration, the right to just remuneration for work, provided in article 23 of the Declaration, the right to rest, described in article 24 of the Declaration, the right to a fair trial, stipulated in article 11 of the Declaration etc. – all these rights, provided in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are themes inspired from the Old Testament of the Bible, constantly present in the missionary programme of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Moreover, there are certain similarities between the Declaration and the Book of Deuteronomy. For instance, the themes related to freedom, equality and fraternity of the first four articles are found under a similar form in the revealed text, especially in what God's Torah stipulates with respect to human dignity (15: 12; 22: 13-19; 23: 8, 16) and to the issue of life and liberty (5: 17; 15: 12; 16: 11; 18: 10; 21: 14; 22: 8; 27: 24;). Likewise, article 5 of the law on human rights prohibits cruel human punishments, just like the Mosaic law (*Deut.* 25: 3). Articles 6-12 of the law refer to the administration of justice (integrity in front of the courts of justice, the right to impartial tribunals, accusation only after the evidence has been declared valid, the right of witnesses to protection and intimacy), as these are legal perspectives encountered in the Deuteronomic law as well (1: 16; 5: 20; 15: 16; 17: 8-13; 19: 16-19; 24: 16). Articles 13-29 of the Declaration deal with the securing of certain civil rights (the right of residence, the right to request political asylum, the right to the protection of family and of private property, the securing of religious freedom, the right to social security and free marriage, the right to remuneration), much like the provisions of the Torah (*Deut.* 5: 14, 19; 10: 19; 14: 27; 18: 1-8; 19: 1-10; 21: 10-13; 22: 22; 23: 16-17; 24: 6, 14; 25: 5-10; 29: 9-14). Article 29 of the law on human rights refers not only to man's rights, but also to his obligations towards the community he belongs to, which is a legal constant ensuring the free and complete development of human personality, exactly like the provisions of the Law of the Old Testament: „...And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us.” (*Deut.* 6: 20-25).

We must say, however, that the divine origin of human rights represents even nowadays (after quite some time since their enactment) a very lively controversy among researchers. Most of them challenge the biblical religious origin of rights, considering biblical law to be in direct opposition with the modern precepts of the Universal Declaration. They do not only omit to point to the natural law of man, who tends towards communion with his Creator, but they also deny

(through evasion) the divine-right principle of human freedom and dignity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted in 1948, through the special contribution of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, appeared as a profoundly secularised institution, within which any religious or biblical origin of the concept is denied – this is precisely why the failure to apply universally the provisions of human rights, without giving rise to discriminations, is the painful reality of the marginalisation of God, the Only One Who can give value to the correct understanding of human dignity – for, as we were saying, this emerges from God’s glory. The international historical context of the birth of human rights comes as an immediate reaction of the international community to the atrocities of the Nazi dictatorial regime. It is basically a social and political philosophy which researcher H. Joas defined in terms of a conversion of unjustified violence, in view of embarking upon a collective positive commitment, taking the form of the respect of the other’s dignity.

For example, article 2 of the Declaration of Human Rights mentions that the human person is endowed with certain freedoms and dignities, which must be protected and supported, but it is intentionally quiet with respect to the One Who gave these ontological, natural rights to the human person. Nonetheless, this unjustified ambition of pushing God towards the periphery of our lives unfortunately has disastrous consequences with respect to human capital and its fructification. Although it enjoys an existence of more than half a decade, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is actually salutary with respect to the order it establishes in society by means of law, exhibits, however, a veritable gap between what it stipulates and everyday experience. We have yet to eliminate corruption, discrimination and the damaging of human dignity on the globe and the question regarding the cause thereof becomes more and more rhetorical with every day that goes by. Likewise, the Charter of the United Nations, adopted in June 1945, in chapter I, “The Purposes and Principles of The United Nations”, specifies that it protects human rights, particularly the peace and security of nations. It also aims at developing friendly relationships among people, based on mutual respect and the protection of rights – yet nothing is said with respect to the transcendental source of interhuman communion and love – as the entire text of international law is based on a deeply secular construct.

Moreover, the Declaration also has certain drawbacks with respect to the national cultural component. The list of human rights, promulgated as being “the first generation”, offers a series of universal rights (civil and political): the right to life, to freedom, to property, to freedom of expression, to the free practice of religion, to peaceful assembly etc. It also includes a list of socio-economic rights, called “the second generation”, which refer to the right to work, to organise trade unions, to education and to a healthy standard of life (medical care). Contemporary researchers also speak about a “third generation of rights”, related to the area of cultural rights – yet, their legislation is vague, especially when the Declaration mentions the right to a nationality or the right to participate freely in the cultural manifestations of a society. This legal lapse contributes decisively, through its deficiency, to the impossibility of universally applying the rights and the human dignity which our Lord Christ has restored in His Person, thus promoting discrimination and corruption. Both these equivocal forms of legal vocabulary and the

obstinacy to eliminate the religious nature of human rights are genuine expressions of the process of secularisation of Christian thinking.

The secularisation of human rights is an undeniable reality of our times, which is why the whole concept of human rights must be revised – since the current approach is falling apart, we can speak, without mistake, in terms of a demise of human rights in their current universal form. We shall try to revive the concept by repositioning it on its original path, on its Old-Testament Biblical note, a vision directly inspired by God to Moses, aiming to outline a minimal set of laws to ensure man’s emotional, intellectual and religious development in view of his collaboration with God towards the persistence and transfiguration of creation. The Biblical recalibration of the concept must take into consideration the roots, interpreting them in their historical, religious and cultural matrix. This is what we aim at in the present Thesis, namely a solution offered by underscoring the right to sanctification (*mishpat kadosh*), which is an original working hypothesis as, in our opinion, it is the only constant which can still save the reality of human rights from its conceptual death. The solution we put forward to overcome the current crisis of human rights is the return to biblical sources and the understanding of the fact that human rights are offered to us by God in order to enhance them, thus leading to the sole right of man capable of bringing salvation: the right to sanctification, which is manifested in communion, through the willingness to self-sacrifice for one’s neighbour, out of love. It is a humble proposal for the recovery of the concept of “human rights” and for its repositioning on the Jewish-Christian path. Given that, the manner in which human rights are presented nowadays seems to justify a selfish approach to reality, as, most of the time, the rights of the strong are protected to the detriment of the weak, thus perverting any system of justice. Through this secularised approach to rights, a constant tension is maintained between the rights of a person and those of another, which causes conflictual situations where the rights of one person encroach on those of another. From a biblical point of view, human rights do not mean self-exoneration or self-justification, based on civil laws, but self-renunciation for the sake of one’s neighbour, out of love for him (*Lev. 19: 18*). In fact, the message of the Gospel, brought by our Saviour Jesus Christ, which establishes the true measure of human dignity, teaches us precisely that: self-sacrifice or, in the language of rights, the conversion of what can be called “legal right” into a sacrificial duty (*Matt. 25: 34-40*). It is this reality of the transfiguration of the notion of “human rights” through sacrificial love that we have in mind when we propose the solution of demysification, of returning to the original biblical source, which we call “the right to sanctification¹”. It is only when societies everywhere understand and apply human rights in this way, in their biblical meaning, that rights will become sacrificial duties and good will be done not as a constraint or under the imminence of civil laws, but out of conviction and full devotion to one’s neighbour, for his right to be loved, respected and saved by God.

It is clear that, from a historical, cultural, social and theological perspective, the Orthodox Church has borne testimony throughout its existence to the importance of promoting and protecting human dignity, long before it fell under the cultural slogans of the Renaissance. The teaching of the Church on human rights is almost entirely inspired by the biblical revelation, which, according to researcher L. Wittgenstein, is the highest expression of ethics, and by the

¹ We would like to take this opportunity to thank Father and Professor Ioan Chirilă, the supervisor of this PhD thesis, for having inspired us to use the notion of “*the right to sanctification*” – he is, in fact, the moral author of this term/concept, which we believe to be original in the Romanian Orthodox Theology.

writings of the Church Fathers, which is why we must thoroughly study the contribution of the Old Testament in particular to the area of rights offered to man by his Creator.

Authoritative voices from the Orthodox Church (†Bartholomew I; †Kiril; †Yannoulatos etc.) speak extensively about the danger of the secularisation of human rights, about their current obsolete application at a universal level and about the urgent need of filling the notion of human rights with Christian spirituality. However, they do not succeed in offering a concise analysis of the revealed biblical dimension of human rights in order to present to the world the manner in which they were conveyed by God in the history of the chosen people, namely as emerging from His glory, of which human dignity partakes, so that man may transform them from rights into sacrificial duties. It is clearly a drawback that we shall try to correct in our research. This shall be the fundamental objective of our thesis and, through the theme revealed in the title, the present research seeks to raise the interest of theologians, jurists, politicians and historians in the recovery of the original, biblical meaning of human rights, despite all the political difficulties, which aim at evading the religious dimension of the concept. During our interdisciplinary journey, we shall resort to a descriptive, analytical methodology and the data interpretation is intended not only to be critical, but also to bear the imprint of the scientific criteria of authenticity, objectivity and academic thoroughness. By using the method of historical and critical exegesis, we have tried to combine the rigours of such a scientific endeavour with the spiritual dimension of the anthropological patristic vocabulary. This latter method, already acknowledged in the field of biblical studies, will contain several stages: textual criticism, literary criticism and the linguistic analysis of texts which are fundamental for the understanding of human rights in the Old Testament. Regarding this latter point, whenever we considered that certain biblical texts deserved more attention, due to slight changes of nuance and meaning (in some cases) caused by the process of translation into Romanian, we decided to resort to our own translation technique (specifying it precisely, each time), with the purpose of getting as close as possible to the original meaning of the Masoretic Text. It is well known among biblical scholars that certain terms or expressions present in the Old Testament are very similar to the vocabulary of Semitic languages (Akkadian, Ugaritic, Arabic, Phoenician, Aramaic etc.), which is why the clarification of certain Hebrew words belonging to the area of rights and of the etymological roots borrowed from the Semitic languages of the Ancient Near East shall be a priority for our textual analysis and for the final process of term translation. Whenever our translational intervention is not mentioned, the text has been taken from the diorthosis of Abp. †Bartolomeu Anania.

In order to meet all the rigours of scientific research, the present paper resorted to the newest scientific results and studies in the field of human rights, the universal literature on this subject being considerable – especially at an interdisciplinary level. Starting from the few writings which make up the existing biblical analysis of human rights, we have tried to clarify potential research difficulties and to launch new directions of study, so as to have as exhaustive an approach as possible. The present thesis represents the crowning of several years of intensive study on the theme of human rights, but our research, which attempted to slightly open new study directions (the ethics of the Old Testament and human rights; the biblical codes and human rights; the relationship between the prophet and civil authorities from the perspective of human rights; Israel's wars from the perspective of human rights – all these themes being centred around the manifestation or the elusion of the right to sanctification), clearly remains perfectible through future studies by Romanian specialists, who will push the boundaries of this knowledge

even further, possibly expanding the subject towards other connected areas of Biblical research on the Old and the New Testament, respectively.

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