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NEW LIFE IN CHRIST IN THE PAULINE EPISTLE

Ph. D. THESIS SUMMARY

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Keywords: justification; justice; faith; sin; death; new life; in Christ; together with Christ; baptism; new humanity; new creation; community; ethics; eschatological; glorification; present age; future age.

PH. D. THESIS SUMMARY

The doctoral thesis, *New life in Christ in the pauline epistles*, is the result of studies that are extended over texts which belong to the pauline corpus and the theological literature specialized in this area of study. The final content of the written thesis reflects the understanding reached as a result of research on theological thought which provides background concept of new life in Christ as it appears to us in the Pauline texts.

The introductory chapter presents the motivation and the importance of this scientific approach, both of which are anchored in the reality of the contemporary society where Christians seek the place, role, and relevance of their Christian experience. In this way, observations were made which represent a picture of the current situation. For example, the Christian existence in the context of the contemporary world is understood through different modalities, being established in different paradigms of post-modern thoughts, which in the most evident way have personal consequences, with social and spiritual importance. Moreover, the Christian existence has received and continues to receive multiple explanations, often caused by trying to adapt the understanding of the Christian life to the evermore numerous and aggressive forms of the systems and structures of the modern society. All of these negatively affect the ordinary and unsuspecting people, who are forced by the challenges of the world in which they live, to resort to methods of harmonization between living a Christian life and the world view typical to the society in which he lives as a Christian. A major cause of this decline is constituted by the tacitness or explicit abandonment of fundamental biblical landmarks that strictly define the origin, beginning, character and purpose of the Christian existence.

Taking in consideration that a meaningful understanding of *the new life in Christ* concept represents the basis for the Christian experience, it has constituted our motivation to serve a dual purpose. On one hand, the emphasis of the subjective importance was followed, and the vital need for the reconsideration of the Christian existence in the light of values and truth source – who claimed this existence throughout the Christian centuries – the texts of the Holy Scripture,

expressly those of the New Testament, and in this paper, the texts of pauline corpus. On the other hand, the scope of this study was to provide pertinent understanding of the pauline thinking regarding the theme of *new life in Christ* with the basis of interpreting the respective texts in a historical-critical method.

In the second part of the introductory chapter, several observations were made regarding various perspectives of modern research on the concept of *new life*. The works of Eric H. Wahlstrom; Herman Ridderbos; Richard E. Howard; Hans Klein, were investigated; and the findings were evaluated in terms of contributions as well as limitations, regarding the concepts that depict the Christian existence as a *new life in Christ*.

In the third part of the introductory chapter, *Boundaries, objectives and methodologies*, it was shown that the new issue of Christian existence in the pauline corpus is complex. Having this in mind, the paper explored three basic themes: justification – the legal aspect of new life, the incorporation in Christ, and sharing Christ's fate. These three dimensions of Christian existence represent a support, as well as a premise of Christian life. Thus, the research area was narrowed, specifically following the meaning of the *new life* concept, together with the delineation *in Christ* in Paul's theology.

Investigation of the significance of the three concepts and their purpose in the understanding of the Christian existence was based on the analysis of the language used by Paul in the representative texts according to the following strategy: in analyzing the concept of justification found in the first part, we started with The Epistle to the Romans since the fundamental thesis of 1:17 was considered a central theme in the epistle because of the importance granted to the subject in the passage of Rom. 3: 21-31 as in the early chapters of Romans, even though the texts from the The Epistle to the Galatians were written earlier. Texts from Romans were correlated adequately with the ones from Galatians, 2Corinthians and Philippians. As a result of research in this area, several observations were made and thus the position assumed in this paper which take in consideration the understanding of the Pauline language and its' implications for the believers' new existence in Christ, was finalized.

In the second part of the introduction, attention was given to the Pauline texts following their chronological editing, while exploring the theme *incorporated in Christ and the sharing of His fate*. Firstly, the early epistles of Galatians, 1Thessalonians, 1Corinthians, 2Corinthians,

Romans and Philippians, were considered, followed by the captivity epistles – Colossians and Ephesians – and finally, the pastoral epistles.

For the purpose of this study, the texts utilizing the following expressions, *in Christ* and *together with Christ* as well as other related phrases, were investigated. Starting with earlier texts, the development of a unified perspective regarding the significance of the language used was followed, resulting in a better understanding of the new Christian existence in Christ.

Attention was granted to the historical context, the grammatical structure, and the semantic content corresponding to apostle Paul's lexicon, in order to provide a greater understanding of the intentions of the biblical author. The analytical approach allowed for the conclusion of relevant ideas mentioned by Paul, as well as other plausible implications. The different conceptions and results reached in biblical research as well as the plausible interpretations of several subjects which raise different possibilities for interpretation, were reviewed and discussed. Our assumption which formed the basis of this study, was the belief that behind the biblical texts, there exists the providence and the divine intention to create a message with a specific purpose, as shown by the apostle Paul in his understanding of the Gospel, "*it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes ...*" Rom. 1: 16. Starting with a fundamental concept of a heightened conviction regarding the inspiration of the Scripture, the result of this research is anchored in the belief that the sole message of the texts is to serve a divine purpose. This is accomplished through the use of a rich vocabulary of accents and appropriate historical, literary and theological contexts.

The paper is formatted in two parts consisting of 7 chapters, followed by a chapter reserved for final conclusions, and a closing list of references.

Part One

Chapter 1 - "Justification – the legal dimension of the new life in the early writings of the apostle Paul", analyzes the use and the significance of the **δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ**/expression, in the early letters.

In Romans, with the exception of the situation in 3: 5, the phrase **δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ** implies God's salvation based on His ability to enlighten and justify man by faith. It is shown that *God's righteousness* as revealed through the Gospel could be viewed from the complex

perspective of its two dimensions: (a) the divine act through which he who believes that what was revealed through the Gospel, is justified i. e. considered right, correct, properly declared, and thus placed in a real and blessed relation with God, and (b) the fundamental cause through which God carries out the act of justification i. e. the act of crucifixion where His Son was the object of expiation and redemption – God’s righteousness as presented in history.

Theologically, the expression *God’s righteousness* can be applied to the entire divine plan for salvation: the sending of His Son, the cross, justification, consecration, the consummation of salvation in eschaton. However, while exploring the language used by the apostle in different contexts, it was argued that Paul was specific in his use of this expression with the main emphasis on the genitive of source and legal sense. God declares the believer to be in right standing and conformed to His expectations, so that the believer is considered as one who reaps the benefits of righteousness. The basic principle of the divine approach is Christ’s redemption, which can be considered as background of justification, in the context of the significances of the phrase, *God’s righteousness*.

It was also argued that since the pauline language denotes an evident correlation between justification and salvation, only those justified through faith in the present can hope for the consummation of future salvation.

Therefore, the understanding of the Christian existence in the present age inaugurated by Christ, the life of those justified by God must integrate the new judicial status for the believer in relation to God, as well as the obvious results together with the subjective consequences, being anchored in God, the Initiator and Sustainer of the new existence.

Following the analysis of the texts from The Epistle to the Galatians, it was shown that the interest of the apostle Paul was to clarify the perspective of one of the fundamental doctrines: man’s justification before God, and more specifically, the way in which one can obtain it. Through the antithesis to which Paul refers, he strongly discourages any perspective that accentuates the human merit or purity through personal actions (in the epistle text, the achievement of the works of the Law). In no way, shape, or form, does this conclusion imply an understanding in which a person’s moral quality or good deeds are depreciated.

According to the pauline arguments regarding the justification through faith in Galatians, the Christian existence carries the mark that corresponds to the implications of this doctrine. On

one hand, the universal and unitary aspects of justification, together with the divine acceptance and the declaration of righteousness to those from faith, determine a reconsideration of interpersonal relations which were previously separated by strong cultural barriers. In the virtue of justification through faith, the Jewish and the non-Jewish may share the same judicial position before God and thus have a communion with one another. On the other hand, living the Christian life means liberty because of Christ. The life of Christ's believers is no longer dependent on the works of the Law given the approval and attainment of divine righteousness.

In First Corinthians, the theme of justification is found in two texts: 1: 30 and 6: 11. In both situations, the entitlement is seen as a result of the initiative and divine mercy. Being encompassed within the new Christian existence realm, *in Christ*, the believers benefit from Christ's appropriate justice, God considering it as theirs, so that they become acceptable before God.

In Second Corinthians, one refers to the theme of justification only twice: in 3: 9 and 5: 21. In the two texts, the apostle Paul transmits a complex and profound message which can be considered central to the formulation of the Gospel: (a) he defines the new covenant emphasizing namely God's act of justifying those that return to the Lord; (b) God acted through Christ Who assumed the human nature and human sin, motivated by the highest possible purpose regarding a human being namely, the possibility that a man may become God's righteousness *in Christ*. In this way, God gave man the opportunity to be justified, and also to live the Christian life motivated by the divine grace shown in the act of justification and its significance.

In The Epistle to the Philippians, the depiction of the new situation in which the Christian existence is described, i. e. *in Christ*, involves the understanding and the assumption of the final revelation based on acquiring the right by which man can stand before God: not the right acquired personally but that acquired through faith in God, 3: 6, 9. Such an understanding has important practical implications. According to personal testimony, in the context of the new situation, Paul's fundamental concern in living the Christian life no longer presumes the meticulous following of the legalistic standards to obtain the divine approval and acceptance, but to approach the Christian existence, *in Christ*, being motivated by the bright prospective of

the eschatological future owing to righteousness received from God and by the hope of fully experiencing communion with Christ.

Chapter 2 “Justification in the recent Pauline texts”, analyzes the language regarding justification in the only text that refers to it: Titus 3: 4-7. In the more recent texts, we occasionally encounter terms specific to the justification register from earlier text; however, they are used as having other connotations.

According to the text and the concepts utilized in Titus 3: 4-7, it is concluded that in this epistle, the concept of justification – even though it is used only once – is found in an important and soteriological context. Unlike the early epistles, the role and importance of belief in justification is not mentioned in Titus, it being the divine work of God through which men are blessed. The justification of those whom God saved, represents the basis in which the eschatological hope – the inheritance corresponding to the hope of eternal life – is anchored.

Final conclusions for part I

Summarizing the perspective of the Pauline texts concerning the concept of justification, final conclusions were drawn regarding the values and implications of the divine approach. It has been shown that justification represents the contexts in which the Christian benefits from the resources and the possibilities of experiencing and living the new life *in Christ*, as can be observed in the following conclusions:

The declaration of the believer as a person who acted correctly, believing the message of the Gospel, marks the beginning of the experience and the new Christian existence.

On the basis of personal belief, God rightfully considers the believer, assigning him justice as a gift, *de jure*, not *de facto*.

In this way, the believer is engaged in a correct relationship with God, being justified according to the Law, and declared without any conviction and fully protected from the claims of the Law.

Justification by faith has opened the possibility and redirected the existence of those who are declared righteous, towards a way of living which carries the mark of faith alongside the juridical components - the practical components evident as divine purpose and intention.

The act of justification implies the forgiveness of sins and the freedom from sin which masters, enslaving human beings.

In Christ, the believers have the possibility to become the righteousness of God with Whom they were reconciled.

The Reconciliation with God as a result of justification opens the possibility of reconciliation with one another.

The justified believer now holds a new position in relation with God: he no longer finds himself under curse. He is no longer a slave of sin or the Law; and being freed, he is made a slave of righteousness unto God. He is no longer the God's enemy, but rather he stands before God as a son and joint heir with Christ.

The believer's justification inaugurates a new life in Christ: those who receive the gift of righteousness will reign in life through Jesus Christ.

The new life of the justified is defined by his relationship with the Law, to which he is now dead, and his relationship with God, for Whom he was brought to life and lives, Gal. 2: 19.

Once accepted through faith, God's gift brings responsibility and must be *carried* i. e. must be revealed through the livelihood of those who accepted it. The declaration of righteousness of he who believes, as a gift from God, implies ethical significance as personal responsibility.

The gift of justification assigned to the believer contains the divine intention of sanctification of life.

The attribution of the gift of righteousness has offered the believer, incorporated in Christ, the possibility to become an instrument of the manifestation of God's righteousness, a way of living according to Christ, to the new creation, and to the new eschatological age.

The justification of the believer means his integration in the group of those justified by God through faith, Jews and non-Jews alike.

The justification that benefits he who believes, represents a foundation and a beginning of the eternal life together with Christ. God's creation is the source of the divine grace through which someone is saved, and it functions as a basis in which the hope for eternal life is anchored.

All of these significances portray and define the new relationship between the believer and God in the context in which the believer has the chance to live the new life in Christ.

Part II

“The believer’s new life anchored in his incorporation in Christ and in the sharing of Christ’s fate”

In the second part, the experimentation of a remarkable reality was investigated, described by the expressions formulated with the help of the phrase *in Christ* and other related phrases such as: *in Him*, *in Jesus Christ*, *in Lord*, *in the Lord Jesus Christ*, *in Whom*, and also by the expressions built with the help of prepositions such as, *with*, *together with*, **sup**, or with phrases constructed with these prepositions. Here, it relates to the special condition of the justified believer and the special relationship with the Son of God, i. e. the believer’s new life understood through the concepts of *in Christ* and *together with Christ*, representing one of the fundamental themes of Paul’s theology.

Chapter 3, analyzes the believer’s new life through the significances assumed through the concept of *in Christ*, as can be observed in the pauline language and his conception from the earliest epistles. After observations were made regarding the possible interpretations of the phrase **en** and its role in the understanding of the *in Christ* concept, one of the earliest texts was analyzed, Gal. 3: 26-29, a pericope which sheds an important light on the background in which the understanding and significations of the phrase *in Christ* may be based in the pauline writings.

According to the reasoning and the language used by the apostle Paul, Christ’s Person is representative to the believers; all those baptised in Him are placed under His Personality and enveloped by His Personality, in a way in which they are viewed according to what is appropriate to Christ’s Personality. What is fundamentally representative to each and every Christian as a human being no longer requires searching the ethnic, racial, cultural, social and aspects which belong to the sex class (male, female), but in the corresponding aspects of Christ’s Personality – a specific set of truths which belong to Christ’s Personality and which now are available for every Christian. Now, all are *one* in Jesus Christ, all being integrated in the Same Personality – Christ, all harmonized in a single whole, yet without the dissolution of the ego or the loss of personal identity. Based on these observations, it was noted that the significance of the phrase *in Christ* in the different contexts used by Paul, should be understood in terms of this

perspective: the relationship between Christ and the believers, conceived and understood in the light of solidarity existing between them.

Considering the fact that in one of the apostle Paul's earliest texts, such an understanding of the relationship between Christ and the believers can be observed, the conclusion can be drawn that it is very probable that this perspective and the corresponding significations constitute the background for the *in Christ* formula, a phrase so often used by Paul's in his own writings. Based on such hypothesis, a unitary concept towards the understanding and the use of the respective phrase can be drawn.

It was further observed that the new life in Christ is the appropriate existence for the new humanity, belonging to the new creation: a life that can be lived due the eschatological gift of the Holy Spirit – the guarantee for the future life. The benefits given to the believer *in Christ* represent the ingredients of the new life and at the same time the divine resources, such that the new life may be reflected in the daily Christian living. Even though the believers live in *this era* and manifest themselves among the old humanity, due to their incorporation in Christ's Personality, they become part of the new humanity and part of the new creation.

Taking in consideration the analysis of these particular texts, it was observed that the new life in Christ can be seen and understood from two complementary perspectives: (1) from the ontological point of view, it reflects everything that was given to the believers through their incorporation in Christ's Personality; (2) from the practical point of view, the new life in Christ is reflected behaviourally through new approaches and manifestations corresponding to the new ontological realities which define their existence. Therefore, it was concluded that the believer incorporated *in Christ* and the new life which he lives, is an eschatological image, an appearance through which the aspects of the future age are reflected in the present context of this era.

Chapter 4, considers "The new life in Christ through the meanings which are assumed by the concept *together with Christ* in the earliest letters". The analysis of the language used in the particular texts, allows for the clarification of the fundamental idea having a unifying purpose, i. e. the thesis of the believers sharing Christ's fate. In light of analysis of the earliest texts, it was concluded that the apostle Paul integrates the use of expressions constructed with the help of the preposition **sun** and terms composed using this preposition, in his use of language and reasons to lay down the following truths: (a) the believer's affiliation and the sharing of Jesus

Christ's fate through their inclusion in the redemptive historical events – a participation together with Him in His own substitutionary death with all of the corresponding implications – the realities that are embodied in the significance of water baptism; (b) the incorporation in Christ and all of the consequences following this act – the possibility of living a new life in the present; (c) the Christian's hope of continuing existence after physical death together with Christ; (d) the hope of resurrection together with Christ and of continuing existence after this resurrection; (e) the hope of inheritance and glorification together with Christ, being conformed to the image of Christ, after the Christians resurrection in eschaton. The last two aspects (d) and (e), imply the sharing of Christ's fate regarding the resurrection and existence after this event. The incorporation in Christ's Personality leads to the conclusion that in between these two events, the conversion and the physical death, the believer shares in Christ's power of resurrection in living the new life. In addition, given the language used in Philippians 1: 23, between the moment of physical death and that of the resurrection of the body, the state in which the believer finds oneself (in the text Paul speaks of himself) is named "*together with Christ*", implying the conscious state, as justified fully in the basis of the meaning and the implications of their incorporation in Christ and sharing His fate.

Chapter 5, discusses "The use of the concepts *in Christ* and *together with Christ* in The Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians". Compared to the earliest texts, these two epistles show a development of the language built around the two concepts. That which is proper according to Jesus Christ, the Lord, is representative for the believer's identity, belonging to the person who is undertaking a new path in life. People that are *in Christ* were liberated from the power of sin, saved, already resurrected together with Him, made living together with Him, and settled together in heavenly places. Evidently, this resurrection is not that of the body, but a resuscitation through divine power, transforming the death of sin into the new life, which is clearly Christ. The analysis of the language used in these letters, allowed us to conclude that the author of these texts stresses an eschatological fulfillment by bringing forth these aspects in the believer's present experience. Although still on this earth, the condition of their eternal destiny is already realized, fulfilled: *Christ is glorified at the right of The Father*. Communion with Him derived from the two concepts – the incorporation in Christ and the sharing of the same fate in life – represents the boundaries of this destiny. On the whole, the reality that defines Christians

through certainty disregards the temporal aspect of the equation because they are already saved and assigned in the heavenly places together with Christ, thus being the bearers of new life corresponding to these realities.

As part of the new creation, the Christians are part of a new humanity together belonging to a single entity “*one new man (humanity)*” contained in Christ’s Personality, the Church – Christ’s body, Christ’s new people. The interpretation of the texts in which the aspect of the community is approached, leads to an understanding of the new life where its interpretation is viewed in the context of the community. Therefore, the new life in Christ is not an isolated existence strictly individual, but rather a social existence in community, of a special kind properly suited to the realm where it was planned to be manifested, *in Christ*.

Chapter 6, addresses the use of the *in Jesus Christ* and *together with Christ* concepts, in the pastoral epistles. In epistles 1 and 2 Timothy, the phrase *in Jesus Christ* is used in relation to specific ingredients and important resources of the Christian life, being a conventional formula for the pastoral epistles recipients, through which the new reality of the Christian existence is designed. The fact that the new realm of the Christian existence among the present world, together with all the meanings which it assumes, may be rendered in an expressive way through the phrase *in Jesus Christ*, sustains the truth that all those that are part of the authentic Christianity, are considered by their relation with Jesus Christ. The Christian existence is a new way of life which characterizes those that belong to the Lord and those that belong now to Christianity, as well as involving the community, the Church.

Compared to the epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians where the language of certainty stresses the fact that in Jesus Christ the Christians were resurrected together with Him and settled in heavenly places with Him, the epistles to Timothy reveal a different understanding. Here, it is spoken about the life promise in Jesus Christ, the eternal life that is coming and that must be grasped.

Compared to the undisputed epistles, in the pastoral letters, ideas such as a new humanity as a new creation, adoption, and the solidarity between Christ and His believers, are not stressed through the use of the expression *in Christ*. Moreover, neither the idea of being incorporated *in Christ* is evident, even if *in Jesus Christ* implies it to be included in the realm of the Christian existence, belonging to Christianity where the idea of faith community is concerned. Instead,

similar to the earliest epistles, the expression defines the Christian existence, having laid down a few specific blessings which benefit *in Jesus Christ* believers: love, faith, the promise of life, grace and salvation. Therefore, they have the possibility to live a Christian life in the context of today's era in a godly manner, using the blessed resources given by God in the Christianity realm.

The use of the concept *together with Him* in 2 Timothy, occurs in a text belonging to an earlier tradition with which the author of the letter is in full agreement, and also intends similar significations of those met in the other epistles from the pauline corpus, with respect to sharing Christ's fate.

Considering all these observations, it is concluded that the two concepts, *in Jesus Christ* and *together (with Him)*, in the epistles 1 and 2 Timothy do not evidently note the new life in Christ in the present time, but rather Christian living carrying the hallmark of piety, the realm of existence and the Christian experience together with the blessings to which Christians have access. The acceptance and the assuming of faith as well as Christ's cause, has introduced the believers into the position of being partakers with Christ in His death, while their identification with this faith and cause, opened the possibility to confront the suffering caused by the persecution from the world. Thus, this identification together with its implications and consequences represents a condition for fellowship with Him in life and in administration of governing in eschaton.

Chapter 7, discusses the expressive and behavioural language of a new Christian's existence as well as the ethical implications of the new life in light of the meanings of justifications and that of the concepts *in Christ* and *together with Christ*, were analyzed. The corresponding consequences of the new reality denote a Christian living through which the new life of the believer may manifest in today's world. The complexity of the Christian experience according to the ontological and juridical aspects which it entails, along with the manifestation of this aspect in a new manner of life in middle of the society, has allowed the understanding of the new life through its two true dimensions.

Firstly, it is the indicative aspect, i. e. what God achieved in giving the believer the fundamentals of this life: (a) the incorporation of the believers in Christ, which mean their inclusion in His Personality, and (b) sharing Christ's fate through the redemptive events. An

implied consequence is the integration of the Christian in the community of faith, the Church, and also the possibility to view and to understand the believers in the context of the realm of the new Christian existence.

Secondly, it is the imperative aspect of the new life in Christ, the personal responsibility of each and every believer to live properly with that which was made to be in Christ – a new creation. In one's new aspect, *in Christ*, the believer is able to harness behaviourally all the resources of his new existence from which he benefits in the realm delineated by Christ's Personality.

The incorporation in Christ's Personality together the sharing His fate, allowed for the conclusion that between the two moments, conversion-initiation and the eschatological resurrection, the believer partakes of Christ's power of resurrection in living the new life through the mediation of the Holy Spirit, being a member of the community as the body of Christ. Also the believer partakes with Christ's power of resurrection in the existence together with Christ after physical death.

Based on the analysis of the respective language, it was concluded that value, meaning, and dimension is given to the Christian life which transcends the experience of the present age, being an existence profoundly correlated and filled with the eschatological realities of the future age, already present in the life of the believer. Thus, the new life in Christ has an eschatological character which Christians attempt to integrate in their daily lives by bringing in the present life modalities of expression corresponding to the future age, a way of conforming to Christ's Personality.

In **Chapter 8**, "Final Conclusions", several general conclusions were derived which note a more comprehensive perspective regarding the messages resulting from analysis of the language used in the texts. It has been shown, that the new life in Christ is God's realization in the human being, a consequence of the divine work through which the believer becomes a new creation. To obtain an overview of the new life in Christ in the Pauline texts, an evaluation from the multidimensional perspective written by Paul himself, was necessary:

- (1) The juridical dimension points to the divine act through which the believer is considered right: justified, reconciled with God, adopted, dead to sin, included in the death of Christ, included in His resurrection and glorification (the last two only in Ephesians and Colossians). This is the soteriological aspect.
- (2) The ethical dimension is translated in the behavioural outcomes through which the new life is externalized in the context of the present age.
- (3) The new life is the life corresponding to the new creation *in Christ* and that of a new reality in a new eschatological age inaugurated by Christ. It is the new life of a new humanity.
- (4) The new life *in Christ* now has an eschatological character. The Christians in which this new life is present and is lived out, are eschatological people i. e. persons who have received the Holy Spirit (the guarantee) being incorporated *in Him* Who is the “*last Adam*”. Therefore, already manifested through Christians are the aspects which pertain to the future age: new principles and characters transformed, conformed to the proper Personality of Christ, reflecting the fellowship with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- (5) The new life in Christ also implies a mystical dimension due to the presence and workings of the Holy Spirit in the believer.
- (6) The new life is also defined by the eschatological dimension regarding its future aspect when those *in Christ* were offered the possibility to live a new life (earliest letters), the promise of eternal life reserved for those that experience the new Christian existence was made (pastoral epistles), having already shared the new life in communion with Christ (Colossians and Ephesians), they will experience it fully starting with the eschatological resurrection.
- (7) The aspect of the community or the ecclesiological dimension views the new life in the context of the Christian community to which the believers belong.

The Christian existence and its behavioural expression acquire a supreme value through their intimate connection with Christ. Each manifestation may be more than just a simple human act, becoming an expression of cooperation and association between man and the Son of God through the power of the Holy Spirit, an expression specific to Christ’s Personality. One such understanding is also confirmed by the body metaphor in 1Cor. 12.

This pauline perspective regarding the new life in Christ is quite different from the two extremes of modern thought overlooking the possibility of redemption. One extreme is the modern antinomism, which renders supreme importance over the judicial aspect of the divine work in conversion at the expense of the moral responsibility of the believer or giving that responsibility less attention and importance. The other extreme is the consideration that the personal effort towards a faithful path as translated in their performance of Christian morals with the formal fulfillment of religious duties represents the fundamental condition of salvation.

According to the apostle Paul's teachings, salvation is *in Christ* is for this reason accessible only to those that are *in Christ* and *together with Christ*.

The apostle Paul's teachings about the believer's possibility of expressing the behavioural qualities appertaining to their new existence in Christ, justifies the following conclusion: the way one lives their life – the externalized expression of their mental life considered as a whole – may act as an indicator of the human condition as applied to the respective person, whether they are or aren't together with Christ, whether they are or aren't guided and led by the Holy Spirit, and also whether they are or aren't found on the path of salvation. On the other hand, the ethics of the new life should not be understood as the effort of a human to reproduce God's justice or the new creation's way of being, without man having been first justified by faith and without him having become a new creation in Christ. Man cannot stand with his own justice before God, but with the justice that is attributed *in Christ*. Only *in Christ* can the actual justice, as objectified through the behaviour of the believer's living, truly be God's justice. *In Christ*, he was made a member of His Church thus becoming part of a new ethical and spiritual identity, through which the Church distinguishes itself, delineates itself and it protects itself from the outside world, even if the Church lives amongst them and interacts with the world.

Therefore, *the new life is the divine grace and gift granted in Christ to the believers, who from the moment they have been thus blessed by God, have the possibility to live it or to make it visible to the world and the present age through their behaviour. It is the new life in Christ to those that are declared just through their belief - the Christian existence corresponding to the realm which is defined by the Personality and the fate of Christ - implicating not only the dimension of present existence but also that of the future. The actual living of this life both now and here, involves the possibility of a permanent renewal, however suggesting imperfection,*

while the newness of the concrete manifestations becomes an expression corresponding to Christ's Personality in which Christians have been integrated. For this reason, behaviourally harnessing the new life resources, granted as a divine gift in the realm of the new Christian existence, denotes the believer's opportunity for expressing and promptly experimenting, but only to a certain extent, a way that is characteristic to the future eschatological age, a way of being in accordance with Christ's Personality. The personal consecration as a process in which the believer is trained beginning with the moment of conversion, implies a new possibility and a new orientation for the believer, such that the behaviour in which his new life externalizes, to carry in the most evident way the mark of Christ's life, implying a way of being which is particular to Christ.

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