Holiness and Otherness:
From Holiness as an Ethical Concept
to Holiness as an Hypostatic Concept

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The idea of the holiness of a person is deeply rooted in biblical faith, especially in the Christian Church. In view of this, God is called and experienced as the personal and Holy Being[1] *par excellence.* Since the biblical God is the only foundation of true holiness, it follows that only He can state: "Be holy, because I am holy" (Lev. 11:44, 45; 1 Peter 1:16). Bearing in mind that man was created "in the image" of the *holy* God, it is not surprising that the Church has a well-developed sensitivity for the holiness of the *human* person. The idea of holiness, sanctified in its use because of its connection to the existence of God, Christ, and the Church, is profusely rich in its content and inferences. For this reason, for the Church, any sin committed against the sanctity of the human person simultaneously represents a sin against God Himself (regardless of the intended objective and its explanation).

What exactly would the cited biblical statement mean if we were to examine it within its original context, past the subsequent meanings of the notion of *holiness*? Is there any other association of the statement "be holy, because I am holy" apart from the formal one and what we term a person and otherness? In other words, apart from the ethical meaning (which is emphasized in biblical tradition) can the notion of holiness also contain a personalistic meaning (which is implied)? Let us examine these theological questions in order to ascertain their effect on anthropology and ecclesiology.

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1. In 1 Sam. 6:20 *God* is identified as *Holy* within the same context. Refer to footnote 7 for further comments.

I. The Biblical Concept of Otherness

1. The semitic word q d š / gadosh = kadosh or godesh / which the Seventy translated from the Old Testament into ἅγιος[2] (*holy*) is related to the Assyric word *kudduchu.* It means to cut, to separate (to exempt), to radically differentiate, to clean[3]. It follows that: a) holy is he who is separate from the rest (which definitely applies to God), b) a holy person is someone who is different and exempt from other people, and c) holy are those things which are separate from the rest, are especially reserved for the service of God, and are consecrated to God[4]. This is the etymological concept of holy. Etymology without theology, however, leaves us with an incomplete explanation. Therefore, let us see what theology can offer us with regard to this subject.

2. The biblical approach goes beyond the quoted etymological meaning of holiness (holy = *separate, different, independent*) and it also exceeds the psychological meaning of holiness for the ancient Greeks, i.e. dread, fear, being in

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2. Cf. *Ecclesia*: *A Theological Encyclopedia of the Church*, ed. Christopher O'Donnell, O. Carm, Minnesota, 1996, pp. 198-202. Also: *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, ed. Hastings, Mason and Pyper, Oxford, 2000.

3. The relationship between purity and innocence is derived from here. The subject of purity and purification is the dominant theme in Leviticus 17-26 especially with regard to the "code of holiness". Compare the study of MARY DOUGLAS, *Purity and Danger* (1966) written from an anthropological perspective, which demonstrates the different ways in which the idea of holiness serves the purpose of preserving the categorical system of separation and distinction in society. Cf. ELIADE M.: "Holiness is always expressed as the reality of a different order compared to the 'natural' realities" (The *Sacred* & The *Profane* [1957], Belgrade, 1988, p.12).

4. Wisdom 6:10: "For those who keep the holy precepts hallowed shall be found holy". God is *Holy*, therefore, according to the Bible, our holiness consists only in what is *consecrated* and *surrendered* to such a God. Hence, holy are, for example, the *bread* offered to Him, the *child* dedicated to Him, an *oath* given to Him; as is written in the Holy Scriptures: that is "*holy to God*". There are also the ἱερὰ γράμματα, βιβλία, ἁγίασμα (holy water), τὰ ἱερὰ καὶ τὰ ὅσια". The philological difference between ἱερὸς (Latin: sacrum) and ἅγιος (Latin: sanctus) has been preserved in the Slavic "sveto(st)" (holy, saint) and "svešteno(st)" or "osveštano" (sacred, sacre'). See "*The Encyclopedia of Religion*", ed. Mircea Eliade, vol.6, 1987, p. 435. According to M. KARDAMAKIS ("ἁγιότητα καὶ ἐσχατολογία", *ἁγιότητα, ἕνα λησμονημένο ὅραμα*, Athens, 2000, p. 176) their difference consists in the more personal (intimate) character of holiness (ἁγιότης) compared to the less personal and inaccessible domain of the ethical and metaphysical character of the sacred (ἱερότης). See the work of E. LEVINAS with the characteristic title: "*Du sacre' au saint*", Paris, ed. De Minuit, 1977.

awe of a higher power or its carrier[5]. Simply speaking, by offering the ontology of love, the Bible surpasses the concepts of holiness as a) the expression of ethical individualism, and b) the *mysterium fascinandum et tremendum*[6], and leads us to theology precisely when the concept of holiness is connected with absolute *otherness* (God's), i.e., with the absolute Other. It is not difficult to conclude how the Bible identified the Holy One with God, Who is not an isolated Entity but the Trinity. In His absolute transcendence in relation to the cosmos, Yahweh[7] alone is the Holy One, in His Trinitarian, perfect and unique fashion ("there is no one holy like the Lord", 1 Sam. 2:2). Hence, holiness is not an abstract notion.

3. In order to express this faith with a particular emphasis on the uniqueness of God's Holiness in the Old Testament – the prophet Isaiah who is characterized as the "prophet of the Holiness of God" occupies a special place here – God is called Holy three times: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty" (Isaiah 6:3) which in its Hebrew form of a threefold repetition[8] signifies perfect, infinitely Holy and All Holy (πανάγιος). The Church has valued this moment *liturgically* in Her Eucharistic canon (both in the East and in the Western *Sanctus*) and *canonically* (the Eucharistic reconciliation with others was the objective of the Council) about which we will talk later. The Church Fathers interpreted Isaiah's threefold *Holy* within this same perspective as triadological. The reasoning behind this lies in a hypostatic-existentialistic rather than in a narrow "dogmatic" interpretation. In view of this, holiness should not be understood as one of the qualities of the *Nature* of God but as the fundamental characteristic

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5. See KITTEL G., "*The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*", vol. 1, p.88-89.

6. The expression originates from RUDOLF OTTO (*Sveto*, "Svjetlost", Sarajevo, 1983).

7. It is interesting that biblical science has not noticed and examined the crucial connection between the name Yahweh (He Who Is) and the name *Kadosh* (the Absolute Other). The identification of *Yahweh with the Holy One*, which we encounter in 1 Sam. 6: 20 and the entire context of the Old Testament provide a solid foundation for biblical personalism. More detailed studies are found in the works of JOHN ZIZIOULAS, "Deification of the Saints as the icon of the Kingdom of God" ("Oboženje Svetih kao ikona Carstva Božjeg"), *Vidoslov* 20/2000, pp. 17-20; JEVTIĆ A., "Isus Hristos je Isti juče, danas i doveka", "Hristos – alfa i omega", Vrnjačka Banja, 2004, pp. 253-294.

8. According to Jewish tradition the threefold repetition of a number is an indication of its infinity. See ZIZIOULAS J., "Deification of the Saints..." (Oboženje Svetih), 20.

of the Triune *Persons*, unique, unrepeatable and personal Hypostases. When God, the only Holy One and the only Truth, invites[9] us to holiness according to a *life in Truth*, this invitation extends to a manner of existence that is appropriate only to Him: "Be holy, because I am holy" (Lev. 11: 44-45). This is the most perfect invitation, which nothing can surpass either in this or in the next world because it enables the acquisition of a true hypostatic existence for every participant. Christ apparently ends even His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:48) with words in the same vein: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (let us remember here that the threefold repetition of *qadosh* (holy), mentioned in footnote no. 7, means *perfection*).

4. So, the correct *theological* context of holiness is biblical, that is, it pertains to the Old and New Testament. "Be holy, because I am holy" is an invitation extended to the community as well, not only to the individual[10]. This is most significant. For, the aim of creation is the arrival of God the Logos in history – indeed, what other aim could there be? – to recapitulate not only man but also all of creation in the Person of God the Son, and thus to unite them with the only Holy One. Both man and all of creation seek none other than this Holy God, Who, as it was said to Israel, is "The Holy One, Whom you are awaiting"[11]. Otherwise, it would mean that God created the world without the aim of a *hypostatic* union with Him. The Holiness of the Father that Christ as the High Priest invokes in His prayer (John 17:11) is the foundation of His request for all the faithful to remain in communion with Him[12]. No one has ever reached perfection without a personal relationship with the *Holy One*, that is, with the Absolute Other. Hence, man's first *fall* can be explained within this context[13]. Adam's rejection of God meant a rejection of holiness, which properly understood is, of course, the constitutivity of existence – otherness, and not merely some quality. In his aspiration to become a god on his own, that is, without the

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9. The meaning of this "invitation" is worthy of more thorough research, which we cannot conduct here due to a lack of space.

10. Cf. the study of H. WHEELER ROBINSON, "Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel", Philadelphia, 1964. (In Serbian, the section: "Zajednica i pojedinac u Izrailu", *Logos*, 2003, pp.7-9.)

11. Prophet Malachi 3:1, St. Clement of Rome, *1 Cor.* 22:3.

12. Cf. PANNENBERG W., *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, Edinburgh, 1991, p. 399.

other, Adam rejected the Other as the constituent of his existence and proclaimed himself as the final explanation of his own existence. In his "fallen" existence, holiness, otherness and union cannot coincide with each other at all, as they do in the case of the Divine Triune existence.

5. Meanwhile, the central question is as follows: "Who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God?" (1 Sam. 6:20), since Adam, the first man, did not succeed in this? In other words, how can the hiatus between the uncreated, holy God and the created world be overcome? Since the biblical God is completely extraordinary, beyond the Other and Otherness, how can the ontological abyss (ἄβυσσος) between God and the world be overcome? St. Maximus the Confessor's (7th century) answer to this question is through the hypostatic union, that is, through the Hypostasis of the Son. God does not overcome the abyss through nature or through some of His energies but through the adaptation of His *tropos*, through His way of existence. Herein lies the mystery of Christ[14]. In this way God's relationship with the world is not based on an ethical, psychological, or religious dimension but on an *ontological* one. Man achieves his complete realization only through the hypostatic communion with God in Christ. Holiness stems only from Him and from the relationship with Him. Thus, he who enters into communion with God can become exceptional and unique, because God is the One Who is completely and radically unique, i.e., "completely other" (*ganz andere*).

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13. Within the context of modern scientific discussion about the first created man, it suffices for our topic to accept the thesis of Adam, the first being in creation that God personally invited to become a god in communion with Him, and to thus transcend death and corruption inherent in the nature of the world. His rejection of this invitation represents the "Fall". See the brilliant analysis of St. Maximus the Confessor: "Τούτου δὴ χάριν ἔσχατος ἐπεισάγεται τοῖς οὖσιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, οἱονεὶ σύνδεσμός τις φυσικὸς τοῖς καθόλου διὰ τῶν οἰκείων μερῶν μεσιτεύων ἄκροις, καὶ εἰς ἓν ἄγων ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὰ πολλῷ κατὰ τὴν φύσιν ἀλλήλων διεστηκότα τῷ διαστήματι, ἵνα τῆς πρὸς Θεὸν, ὡς αἴτιον, τὰ πάντα συναγούσης ἑνώσεως... εἰς τὸν Θεὸν λάβῃ τὸ πέρας τῆς διὰ πάντων κατὰ τὴν ἕνωσιν γινομένης ὑψηλῆς ἀναβάσεως..." (*Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν* 41, PG 91, 1305).

14. *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν* 5, PG 91, 1056 and 41, PG 91,1308c and 1313. According to St. Maximus λόγος φύσεως does not change nor is there any need to replace it in contrast to its τρόπος ὑπάρξεως (*Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.* 42, PG 91, 1340 BC 1341 C). This is precisely what occurs in the Incarnation of Christ. The tragedy of the Fall lies in the "mode of existence" which is contrary to the "nature of the Logos".

Now we arrive at the central question of our discussion. Does being exceptional, which *qadosh* implies, entail separation and partition? Indeed, some researchers have gone so far as to translate the words "Be holy, because I am holy" (Lev. 11:41) with "Be separate, because I am separate"[15]. Let us examine this idea, which at first glance implies a transcendental dimension and which in its final analysis identifies holiness with uniqueness. The Bible insists on the holiness of God precisely because He is special, *separate*, and therefore something *completely different* from everything else. Bishop Atanasije Jevtic[16] perceives a radical gap in the biblical notion of holiness between the classical Greco-Roman, eastern and other traditions on the one hand, and the Hebrew- Biblical tradition on the other. He asserts that Plato's idea of God as the supreme Good is the highest and best link in the chain of beings; however, it only remains a link because it is not the biblical God. Evidently, the biblical *Kadosh* (Holy) means something entirely different, in regard to cosmology as well. With this in view, we can claim that this world is *sacred* (ἅγιον in the sense of being different) even to God. This is true because God the Father observes (recognizes) the world as "His Own Will" (ἴδια θελήματα), which brings us back to Maximus the Confessor[17].

6. The answer to the question of why holiness as a *mysterium fascinandum et tremendum* (Rudolf Otto) is inadequate to express the encounter between holy God and man is first of all because of the *separation* that remains the basic characteristic of this relation. The biblical God, by contrast, paradoxically moves toward creation through eros and love - ecstasy - respecting the holiness of the world[18], i.e. its otherness, distinction, dissimilarity. Although Otto's approach is essentially profound and complex, it still remains a typically essentialistic (Western?) approach, in which holiness is recognized by its attributes (*fascinans* and *tremens*). This implies a substantial need and irrationality that

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15. DOUGLAS M., *ibid.*
16. "O svetosti i odgovornost", *Živo predanje u Crkvi*, Trebinje-V. Banja, 1998, pp. 378-80.
17. *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91, 1260c.
18. "God moves in such a way that He instills an inner relationship (σχέσιν ἐνδιάθετον) of eros and love in those who are able to receive it (τοῖς δεκτικοῖς). He moves naturally, attracting the desire of those to Him who are turned toward Him". *Περὶ διαφόρων ἀποριῶν*, PG 91, 1260c.

arouses fascination and trembling[19]. The biblical approach points to God as *Holy* because He freely reveals Himself as a loving Being and invites us to an encounter with Him, to the experience of a relation ("We love Him because He first loved us"; 1 John 4:19). His appearance to Elijah on the mountain was not manifested in lightning and thunder (which indeed would have caused fascination and trembling) but in the "tiny whispering sound" (1 Kings 20:12). The energies of God, which reflect the infinite dynamism of His Being, do not emanate "ἄνευ προαιρέσεως" according to Plotinus' concept. They are always within the realm of the Divine Persons so that the personal and loving God is always revealed in His sanctifying energies. This encounter with holy God which the Orthodox liturgical experience values has almost nothing in common with the "natural" idea of God Who arouses fascination and trembling[20]. This is further confirmed in Patristics, in the liturgical and ascetic literature. The relation with the only Holy One – Christ, is a loving relation; completely and infinitely intimate, a wholesome personal-holistic encounter[21], precisely because Christ is a personal and a relational Being *par excellence*. Therefore, the dimension of holiness, which the natural religions lack, can be termed *hypostatic*. This dimension complements that part of holiness characterized as "ecstatic", which is, man's stepping forward in order to encounter the Holy One.

So in the Church, each saint differs from others in his absolute otherness, an otherness that is unique, unreplicable and irreplaceable. Anything that violates or undermines the absolute uniqueness of a person, which emerges through relations, changes it into a thing, into a means toward an end. There is nothing holier than the person as an absolute otherness and uniqueness. Let us illustrate this through a number of historical examples.

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19. Already MIRCEA ELIADE noticed this inadequacy in Otto's approach. Cf. The *Sacred & The Profane* (1957), (in Serbian) Belgrade, 1988, 12. Levinas' approach to this problem should also be emphasized: "The presence of the face coming from beyond the world...does not overwhelm me as a numinous essence arousing fear and trembling. The Other does not only appear in his face...infinitely distant from the very relation he enters" (*Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, Pittsburgh, 1996, p. 215).

20. ST. AUGUSTINE conveys a similar experience, in *Confessions* 9, 9.

21. As in the instance of the *Little Prince*, wherein Exupéry writes: "When a mystery makes such a strong impression a man does not dare disobey". However this is the result of an astonishing and inspirational event, caused by the personal encounter of two persons.

II. The Emergence of Holiness in Historical Figures

1. All things considered, we should ask ourselves once again whether holiness is attainable only by being distinct and separate. This is a key question that has already been answered negatively in the aforementioned paragraphs; the context of the Testament (or Covenant[22]) alone excludes such a possibility. To be exact, for both theology and the Church, a holy man is he who is distinct and unique, and furthermore one who has attained *the uniqueness of a person from the anonymity of an individual.* Since however, a person does not exist for himself alone, and here is the quintessence of hagiology - the realization of his authentic self occurs through the communion of persons, that is, through *communio sanctorum.* This is the reason why Church Tradition teaches that each saint is unique and distinct, as a result of a unique and irreplacable relationship he has attained with the Unique and Irreplacable Holy One within the liturgical (common) experience of the Church. This Holy God bestows holiness, uniqueness and irreplacability upon him. Here, it is important to emphasize the context within which the call "Be holy..." (Lev. 19:1) requires one to love one's neighbor as oneself ("love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord"; Lev.19: 18).

2. Therefore, in view of the ethical and personal dimension of holiness, we can assert that the objective of every human being is not moral perfection *through* holiness but *uniqueness*, that is, an otherness, which is manifested in the communion with others. Here, one should point out that otherness and distinction, that is being different, are not one and the same thing. Distinctiveness can be expressed in terms of qualities (which everyone can have), but does not apply to otherness (because personal otherness and uniqueness exclude that)[23]. After all, the Church in the Divine Liturgy commemorates[24] *individual* saints

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22. R. KUBAT made a significant contribution to this discussion. See his doctoral thesis: "*Andjeo Gospodnji u Starom Savezu*", Belgrade, 2005.

23. This is the reason why certain theologians are in favor of the introduction of the so-called "ethical apophatism" in the realm of culture. For more detailed information, see ZIZIOULAS J., "On Being a Person: towards an Ontology of Personhood", in: *Persons, Divine and Human*, eds. Christoph Schwoebel and Colin Gunton, pp. 33-46 (T & T Clark, 1991).

24. One should keep in mind that here the most accurate meaning of holiness is by way of liturgical remembrance. Namely, ontologically a saint is remembered only *liturgically*, in a union

and not saints as a general category. They are commemorated by their respective calendar dates: every individual ascetic and martyr. Only as such, that is, as unique and irreplacable, can they serve as inexhaustible sources of inspiration to Christians. Consider, for example: Abba Sisoe's attitude toward death; Abba Anthony's sober vigilance of the mystery of God's judgments; holy Martyr Polycarp and other martyrs in their ecstatic passion during martyrdom for Christ; the challenges of St. Simeon the Fool for Christ, etc. They are all permanent and eternal examples of a sacrificial love "stronger than death". At the same time, they pose an existential challenge to man. Perhaps a maximalistic anthropology stems from their hagiography, which at first glance seems unattainable for modern man and difficult for those who are used to a leisurely lifestyle. However, this kind of anthropology causes an awakening from a "dogmatic" and probably from an ethical "slumber", too. After all, the higher the aim is, the deeper the repentance. The lives of the saints show that the search for holiness *here* and *now* turn man into a being who is unafraid of death and who leads all of creation into communion with the Holy God. The martyrs who offered themselves wholly to God serve as an example. Their being was united with God to such an extent that one can no longer speak of any *separation* between them, although *distinction* (i.e. otherness) certainly continues to exist and remains forever. The saints of the Church are those persons (the Theotokos, the Apostles, the martyrs and ascetics) who in one way or another, have overcome the anonymity of nature (λόγος φύσεως) in their own and irreplaceable manner, and have united themselves with Christ, the "only Holy One" in a personal and unique way.

3. With a concept of holiness, we paradoxically arrive at the understanding of *eschatology*, and *vice versa* as well. Namely, every saint is regarded as a future resident of Heaven, although in his lifetime he continues to bear the marks of history, including the fall, and man's infirmities. Christ, however, retains the *ultimate word*. Were it not for the vision of the *Eschaton*, that is, were we not given a foretaste of the Kingdom in the Liturgy, of that ultimate *communion with the saints*, we would never know what holiness or a holy man is. In other

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that reveals permanence (eternity, intransience) here and now, and not psychologically through the function of memory but by the remembrance of God the Father through His Son in the Holy Spirit.

words, it is only the vision and the liturgical experience of the *true*, end state of the world that provides us with the possibility of knowing something about the true world, man and God. This dimension of theology and of the Church is of paramount importance and should be of greater significance in contemporary theological thought.

4. As we resume the previous thought, we can assert that the eschatological dimension of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit[25] has a profound influence on our perception of the "saints", i.e. on the other members of the Church and on their identity. The recognition or acceptance of a person is not determined upon the foundation of his or her past but rather on the foundation of one's future image (icon). The memory of our experience, positive or negative, is stored in the mental perception of our mind, and determines our attitude toward the other person[26]. Therefore, it is only in the Church that man can remember someone as holy, independent of his past or, to be more exact, *in spite* of his past. This is in accordance with the position of eschatological ontology, which imparts to us that nothing exists or has *truly* existed if it does not exist in the Eschaton. Since the future is entirely in God's hands, our approach to other people should not be weighed down by criticism (judgment) of the other person. Every "other" person (the evangelical *neighbor*) is a *potential saint* in the Holy Spirit, even if he is and continues to be a sinner. It appears that the ancient Christians were more aware of this when they spoke: "You have seen your brother – you have seen your Lord!" Thus, the icon reveals an existential position. Just as we venerate the *eschatological image* of a saint and not merely a photograph, so too should we also perceive primarily the future, the re-established, and the resurrected image of each of our neighbors; free from passions, and we should overlook his current weaknesses and faults[27]. The iconographic tradition of the Orthodox Church teaches this, where particular emphasis is placed on the role of *light in the depiction of the saint's image*.

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25. Of the two hundred and thirty times the term "ἅγιος" (holy) is used in the New Testament, ninety refer to the Holy Spirit.

26. "The field of facial recognition is located at the lower region of the temporal lobe, in the area of the *gyrus occipitotemporalis lateralis*. The isolated lesion on both sides of this cortical area of the cerebrum causes an impairment in the recognition of familiar faces" (Ilić A. et al., *Anatomija centralnog nervnog sistema*, Belgrade, 2004, p. 148). Cf. also Kandel E. R., *In Search of Memory: The Emergence of a New Science of Mind*, Norton, 2006.

27. Cf. SKLIRIS S., "Eshatološki karakter pravoslavnog slikarstva", *Vidoslov* 15/1998, 47.

5. This leads to reflection on the significance of the body in the ontology of holiness. A saint's body is not used for some alternate purpose, nor is it rejected once the intended objective is reached. The body is ontologically fundamental to the reality of sanctity. In paraphrasing G. Florovsky, we may state that in the anthropology of *holiness, incorporeality is a phantom*, and *corporeality without holiness is a cadaver*. The eschatological character of iconography that *depicts saints in a glorified body* points to the following truth: although the body is *par excellence* the place of conflict in man's existence, it also embodies his end solution (see Orthodox icons). Death is sanctity's greatest enemy because its aim is to destroy the corporeal dimension, and to erase and abolish the "otherness", the communion and the love that follow from it. This corporeal dimension of holiness has a special place in ecclesiology. Namely, the Church is the space wherein we learn to love one other, including those whose *physical characteristics leave something to be desired.* The Church explicitly teaches that every man is unique and irreplaceable, which is why he is sacred. A number of observations should be made here. In Her eucharistic and filocalistic teachings, the Church emphasizes the value of human beauty. However, it is also true that in respecting "otherness" (i.e. differences) as sacred, the Church receives all in Her embrace, independent of physical characteristics. Therefore, the Church affirms the human body. However, the *physical* (natural) attributes are not absolute, instead they are seen through the prism of *relativism*[28] (it is not the human attributes that are holy but man's otherness). The person, and not nature, takes priority over man's existential issues.

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28. This is the ethos of saints which has been cherished by the Orthodox Tradition throughout the centuries. This explains the reason for individual female saints (Katherine, Anastasia, Pelagia, Efimia, Irene, Thecla and others) concealing their natural beauty. We can then understand also why Abba Agathon was ready to give his healthy body in exchange for the infirm body of a leper as a gift to him. It is not his physical being that he was giving but his healthy body that he was "transplanting" onto someone else. Unfortunately, the recent culture of art and science is leading us into the opposite direction through the predominance of physical traits. Man is not free when he is reduced to a being of nature, when he is not irreplaceable.

III. The Church as the Space for Holiness and Otherness

How does the theology of holiness, illustrated so far, find its realization within the Church? In its wider context, the respect for personal "otherness" is essential to Orthodoxy. Church Tradition cherishes the Eucharistic approach according to which we accept the other as other and different, apart from all other qualifications, such as sinfulness, morality, sex, age, etc. Contrary to the principle: "the others are hell" (Sartre), the saint, according to Patristic thought, always needs the *Other* and the *other*. It is precisely this type of logic which makes Orthodoxy so valuable to all those who lately are in favor of otherness and differences. Let us first have a look at how otherness is experienced in the Orthodox Church.

1. In Patristics we hear about relational and not "objective" holiness[29]. The "other" is a *conditio sine qua non* of holiness, rather than a "given fact". The other is the one who represents holiness within the context of Church communion. The Desert Fathers, who lived apart from the "world", were nevertheless equally dependent on the other[30] as their brother. There is no other principle than the one expressed by St. John the Theologian as follows: "Whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 John 4:21), and "We know we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death" (1 John 3:14). Sanctity cannot exist outside of the "other" (ἐπέκεινα τοῦ ἄλλου) because the other serves as the "terminal" or "reference" of holiness. The "other" is also the "cause" of my holiness at the same time. If existence is understood in a dynamic sense, as movement, it follows that holiness should be understood as the eternal movement from one saint to the next

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29. The idea of venerating icons in *relational* terms (σχετικὴ προσκίνησις) which was developed by theologians (Damascene, Studite, and others) is closely connected to the idea of "relational sainthood".

30. The collection of the lives and the sayings of the Desert Fathers, the *Gerontikon*, abounds in examples that show how each saint is a point of reference to another saint. Their freedom lies not within themselves but in the other, which surpasses Buber's concept of a relation wherein "I" does not exist because of "You" but only in the relationship with "You". Even Levinas could not find a solution to the problem of a reconciliation of otherness with communion because he rejects the idea of the latter and considers it as a threat to otherness. Levinas does not regard holiness as otherness.

(compare the expressions of Maximus "the state of eternal movement" and of Gregory of Nyssa "from glory to glory") who are affirmed through their mutual relationship and communion with one another. The ultimate destination of this movement of holiness is the only Holy One (ἅγιος) *par excellence,* Who affirms each individual "saint" and in Whom every individual saint finds his ontological foundation (which Maximus termed "rest"[31]). However, we must not understand this relation like Buber, since the fullness of the I – Thou relationship requires *communion* and not just a *relation.* Let us examine this closer.

2. The basic problem of any union consists in the treatment of the *individual.* The individual should not be represented as part of a holy entity in order to offer himself as a sacrifice to Moloch of the society. In ancient philosophy, the unity and totality of the human being – of which the individual was only a part – represented the highest value. Plato was clear about this when he stated: "the sum total was not created because of you but rather you were created because of it [You forget that creation is not for your benefit: you exist for the sake of the universe—Cooper 1560]"[32]. The Apostle Paul, however, stresses that a union (here he refers to the Eucharistic communion) must affirm and sanctify not only the totality and entirety but also the *otherness* of its members[33]. This is the reason why Paul calls all Christians *holy* (see Corinthians, Galatians, Thessalonians, etc.). We have already mentioned that *qadosh* (holy) refers to uniqueness or exceptionality. It is precisely in the Church that this uniqueness or otherness (διαφορά, difference) ceases to be a division (διαίρεσις), something negative, but becomes something positive, good, and at the same time indispensable, that is, a prerequisite. The personal charismas of holiness in the Church are so varied that no member can say to another one: "I don't need you" (1 Cor. 12:21). According to Maximus the Confessor, this is so because in the Church the διαφορά of a saint does not lead to διαίρεσις but to unity and com-

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31. This is Maximus' key idea in his interpretation of the 14th Oration of Gregory the Theologian. "The state of eternal movement" is the continual and uninterrupted *enjoyment in the Desired One*" which further means "participating in the *supranatural* Divine realities" (μέθεξις δὲ τῶν ὑπὲρ φύσιν θείων) MAXIMUS, *Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον* 60; PG 90, 608d.

32. PLATO, *Laws,* X, 903 c-d.

33. Within the context of the modern philosophical and sociological problems regarding otherness, Christian Tradition cherishes all the basic values of the human person of which the value of respect toward otherness or distinctiveness takes first place.

munion[34]. The diversity of the saints and their otherness are affirmed in the Eucharist. In Christianity this means that *when we respect someone's holiness, we actually respect his otherness and vice versa.* Whenever this principle is not applied, the meaning of holiness is violated; it becomes void of any value, even if all other conditions for its fullness are satisfactory or have been met. So, holiness that in any way excludes those placed in a second category, whether by race, sex, age or profession, is *opposed* to holiness. Holiness which harbors a preference for monastic-ascetics, children, black or white saints also defies holiness. The Church must include all of them in Her Eucharist because this is the only way of overcoming the differences of nature and society[35]. The Church that does not celebrate the saints in the Eucharist but merely attaches importance to the *pseudo-sentiments of holiness* [this expression is unclear] is in danger of losing Her Universality (Catholicity).

3. We have already mentioned above that the Church has valued the moment of holiness *liturgically* in Her Eucharistic canon (in the East and in the West: "ἅγιος" or "Sanctus") and *canonically*. The point here is that the purpose of Church assemblies is found in the Eucharistic *communion* (κοινωνία) as well as in the reconciliation with the Other (the only Holy One) and with the others (the "neighbors" of the Gospels). The most frequent topic of the canon with regard to receiving those who are excluded (τῶν ἀκοινωνήτων) from participation stems from this (see, for example, the fifth canon of the First Ecumenical Council). Great consideration ("...may it be examined...") is given to the subject of correct relations and of a salvific functioning within the assembly of the Church, which is the obvious reason for the summoning of regular councils ("it has been found beneficial for councils to take place in every region twice a year", from the same canon). As already mentioned, the basic meaning of the Hebrew term holiness is "to be separate", "to put aside", which implies the *notion of judgment.* In the Church, however, this judgment does not pertain to an individual but to the community. As a result, according to the canonical tradition of the

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34. *Division* (διαίρεσις) is one thing and *difference* (διαφορά) another; difference is desirable whereas division is not. This is one of Maximus' key ideas in his brilliant analysis of existence, accurately presented in the second chapter of Thunberg's study, "*Microcosm and Mediator*", Lund, 1965, pp. 51-67. Cf. ZIZIOULAS J., *Communion and Otherness*, 2006.

35. Cf. ZIZIOULAS J., *Communion and Otherness*, 2006, pp. 8.

Church (the apostolic, ecumenical and local councils of the Holy Fathers) questions related to the participation or non-participation, that is, receiving or excluding someone from communion are most frequently answered by the canons. The Eucharistic reconciliation with *others*, i.e. individuals or church communities, has been the objective of the Councils. The canon laws were instituted in order to a) safeguard the canonical unity of the communal spirit and communication in the Eucharistic Communion of Christ with the Grace of the Holy Spirit, or b) rectify and reestablish the *unity* and *communion* that has been violated while safeguarding and respecting the otherness. Therefore, the objective is to reestablish the *other* (our neighbor who has gone astray, been deceived, or has gone away from the Church) in the communion of holiness[36] (the 102nd canon of the fifth and sixth Ecumenical Council was instituted in this spirit). It is therefore the canons that pronounce judgments (exclude where necessary), and thus serve to one's salvation or to the judgment or condemnation (excommunication) of those who have independently set themselves apart[37].

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36. The sixth canon of the Third Ecumenical Council, for example, prohibits the consecration of a bishop without the designation of the place of his diocese. This is indicative of the fact that in the Church personal otherness does not exist without other persons, with whom the respective bishop is connected and from whom he extracts his identity. In contemporary practice, the Serbian local Church included, the consecration of vicar bishops, and furthermore the transfer of a bishop from one diocese to another reflects the neglect of the original understanding of the link between the bishop's otherness (and person) and the otherness of his diocese as his Bride. Here, it appears that the Orthodox Church has been affected by yet another influence of universalistic ecclesiology. This is not a judicial but rather a theological issue. A local Church (diocese) together with her members is the bishop's only bride representing the icon of the Bride of Christ with her eschatological sign.

37. The idea of judgment leads us to the following observation: "sanctification" does not have, or did not initially have, a moral meaning only, but meant rather to "to put aside" (someone or something), and even to "withdraw from the world". The canonization of a saint was also a kind of "judgment". The Church "separates" him from the community of the faithful so that he can serve others as a paradigm and as a standard of ascetic struggle. Likewise, the Church as the community of saints is "not of this world" so that it is precisely She who will *judge the world*. It is only within this context that we can understand the statement of the Apostle Paul, namely that "the saints will judge the world" (1 Cor. 6:2). John Zizioulas observes that this judgment or separation is the essential element of eschatology because at the dawning of the end times the judgment with which to judge the world will be established (Matt. 25:31). "The world will be judged according to the relationship of its communion with 'the least' (Matt. 25:40-45), which is synonymous with the Body of the Son of Man ('whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me', Matt. 25:40), a multitude, nations of saints, the Church" (ZIZIOULAS J., "L'Eucharistie: quelques aspects bibliques", *L'Eucharistie*, Paris, 1970, pp. 58-59).

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4. We have already successfully indicated in which way the church ministries (τά χαρίσματα) are also a part of the cited image of holiness. The Apostle Paul explains the Church charismas in terms of love, defined as *relational* and not sentimental or moral. Since a relation makes the personal existence dependent on others, it follows that every saint is confirmed only within the context of relations. Therefore, *each saint is different from every other saint.* For the value of a saint consists only in his relation with "others" in *communio sanctorum*, that is, in a structured, grace-filled community with a bishop at the head, like those to which the ancient ecclesiology testifies. The community is consecrated through the bishop as the head of the Eucharistic assembly[38]. The presiding bishop is not merely an "administrative power", as some erroneously understood him. He confers the grace and the sanctification of the Divine Eucharist, all the charismas included, onto all the branches of Church life.

5. A historical explanation is called for here. Namely, the term "holy", referred to this way in New Testament theology, and which became a *terminus technicus* for the early Christians, particularly for the members of the community in Jerusalem, was replaced by the expression "Christian" already during the apostolic epoch in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Initially the term "hagios" (holy) was mainly used for martyrs (whom the Christians held in very high esteem) and later, following the persecutions it was applied also to other persons who led venerable lives in asceticism[39]. Therefore, we can state with some certainty that historically, but in a period (4th – 5th century) and manner unknown to us, the Church decided to place special emphasis on individual saints. She *separated* them from the "*community of the saints*" as an example and as the "proof" for the attainment of that particular, personal, and unique relationship with Christ which the *holy martyrs* had attained before them, and which all others are invited to acquire. This notion of holiness has *essentially* prevailed up to now; from time to time greater emphasis is placed on the anthropological (individualistic) perception and less on the ecclesiological one.

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38. This is the ancient perception of the Church testified by the early Christian Fathers. See sources in Ζηζιούλα Ι., *Ἡ ἑνότης τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἐν τῇ Θείᾳ Εὐχαριστίᾳ καὶ τῷ Ἐπισκόπῳ κατὰ τοὺς τρεῖς πρώτους αἰῶνας*, Athens, 1965.

Here it is necessary to make a few remarks:

a) There is no *elitism* among saints nor are there any "pyramidal" structures, aristocracies, or exclusive "models" of holiness. There exists only one "ecclesial" aristocracy, which is affiliated with the Church of God and is completely independent of social status. With regard to the objection that there is an over-emphasis in favor of saints from specific categories, as in the example of "monastic" orders, or that there is a prevalence from within the ranks of the "clergy", we say that it is true that the "writer" who records the tradition, i.e. who is responsible for the commemorative documents of his time, writes them in keeping with his world view, interests, etc. Frankly speaking, we admit to certain "inclinations" toward specific types of saints in hagiographic literature, known by the name of "*The Lives of the Saints*"[40]. Here it becomes evident that the authors within the monastic order discover holiness for the greater part in monasticism. The hesychast finds holiness in contemplation and hesychasm. The outwardly active person finds it in activities, such as missionary work, and educated people find holiness in the teachers of the Church. However, this kind of "partiality" should not lead us to the wrong conclusion that holiness is defined according to their respective evaluation or model. On the contrary, holiness is accessible to every member of the Church for, according to the trustworthy words of the Gospel, it is given "without limit" (John 3:34) to all: to priests, peasants, soldiers and farmers[41], to all. The unreserved desire to attain holiness is sufficient.

b) It is precisely in the Church where man learns (acquires the habit) to love and to be loved, freely and without exclusion. This is a community in which, according to Maximus the Confessor, "perfect love does not divide the nature of man...but always embracing it, loves all men equally... For our God and Lord Jesus Christ showed His Love to us by suffering for all of humanity..."[42]. For this

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39. So the epithet of *holy* gradually became imparted at the end of one's life, as opposed to the original practice recorded by the Apostle Paul.

40. There is a difference in the ideal of holiness between, for example, *The Spiritual Meadow* by John Moschos and Simeon Metaphrastes' *Menologion*. See our study "La conception de la sainteté dans l'oeuvre hagiographique de Syméon le Métaphraste", *Revue des études byzantines* 66 (2008) 191-207.

41. Cf. Father Justin Popović's *Preface* in *The Lives of the Saints* for January.

42. Maximus The Confessor, Περὶ ἀγάπης I, 71; PG 90, 976bc. Also see Ἐπιστ. 2: Περὶ ἀγάπης.

reason the ascetic ideal (the sign of perfection), inspired by the above words of St. Maximus does not divide people according to their sex. As an example, there was a traveling monk who on his way met some nuns who were desert-dwellers. In order to avoid them he crossed to the other side of the road. Then the one who was the abbess called out to him and said: "Had you been a perfect monk you would not have noticed that we were women" (*Gerontikon*). With regard to modern feminism, it is important to emphasize in this context of holiness the following obvious fact: there is absolute equality between man and woman in the entire ecclesiology of the Orthodox Church. This is crystal clear particularly regarding the topic of holiness: equal honor is given to women and men alike who have devoted themselves to a venerable life or martyrdom.

c) During the course of history there have been some tendencies to limit the members of the Church to the "saints" who most frequently belonged to one "category". However, the Church resolutely rejected the views of the Novationists, Pelagians, Donatists, Lucifarians, Evstatians, Messalians, and others[43], in their defense of what is known as the *Ecclesia permixta* (Augustine), which includes all the faithful. According to St. Augustine, the authentic Church consists of sinners and saints alike[44].

d) Insofar as becoming a saint is consistent with becoming an authentic and unique person, there is a legitimate and an inalienable right to become holy (to realize the authentic Self). We have seen in what manner this is realized within the framework of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Christians have accomplished this "right" regardless of prevailing conditions, as has been documented in the early Christian text of the *Epistle to Diognetus*. In contrast to other human rights, this right can be achieved under every government and in any society, regardless of "external" conditions, precisely because it is independent of government and society[45].

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43. For more information, see MEYENDORFF J., "Αὐθεντία καὶ δομὴ στὴν Ἐκκλησία", Ἡ βυζαντινὴ κληρονομιὰ στὴν Ὀρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία, Ἀθήνα, 1990, pp. 241-314.

44. *Ecclesia: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Church*, ed. Christopher O'Donnell, O. Carm, Minnesota 1996, pp. 198-202.

45. V. PERIŠIĆ has provided an exceptional example of the connection between otherness and holiness: "The true realization of I is possible (I am not asserting that it is necessary or desirable) even in situations in which the person is deprived of his so-called human rights. I will give one example: martyrs were martyrs precisely because they were deprived of all human rights

e) It is interesting to note that the saints from the iconoclastic period were not primarily ascetic figures but were theologians and hymnographers, and above all, guardians of the icons. Thus, the aspiration of the ascetic ideal shifts toward the struggle of protecting the teachings of the Church, in this instance for the veneration of icons (Andrew of Crete, Germanus of Constantinople, John Damascene, Cosmas of Maiuma, Theophanes the Branded, Theodore the Studite, etc.). During the time of iconoclasm, the saint's path to holiness went in the "opposite direction" so to speak, especially when compared to the ascetic model of early Byzantium: "...not only are they not forsaking this world for the sake of stillness in the desert, but they remain in the capital and conduct their struggle using their pens and by means of their daily actions. In their hands, theology is becoming more than the contemplation of God with their intellect; it is becoming a weapon against the heresies..."[46].

6. What connection is there between the holiness of the Church and the holiness of an individual? Our experience of the Church reveals a mystery. Our awareness of Her truly holy nature puts us in a situation wherein we measure our existence in comparison to Hers and in this way arrive at repentance. The higher the awareness of the sanctity of the Church as the icon of the Kingdom of God, the deeper is our repentance. Orthodox ecclesiology, in emphasizing the holiness of the Church, does not and should not lead to triumphalism but rather to a profound capacity for compassion and *repentance*. The experience of holiness is the experience of the Cross. Holiness divested from the Holiness of God and the Church as its point of reference would be a "demonic" holiness, a paradoxical yet so true *contradictio in adiecto*. Authentic saints are aware that their sanctity is an icon of the Kingdom to come, and they experience the gift of holiness as a gift of God's love toward them of which they are wholly unworthy.

– even the right to life. (One can also describe it this way: the deprivation of human rights provided them with the opportunity of martyrdom). A world without human rights is truly awful however, even in such a world man can still be a true man. Moreover, *prima facie* paradoxically, a world deprived of human rights often provided man with the chances to prove to be an authentic man in his daily life with his fellowmen"(PERIĘIĆ V., "Licnost i priroda", *Raskršca*, Belgrade 1995, pp.109-110).

46. TSIRONI N., "Ἅγιοι τῆς εἰκονομαχίας", Ἁγιότητα, ἕνα λησμονημένο ὅραμα, 162. Later, after the end of iconoclasm, we observe that holiness is "evaluated" also in the field of social, political and economic struggle in the life of the empire.

Concluding Remarks

So far, we have seen from this analysis how holiness as an ethical concept arrives at holiness as a hypostatic (personalistic) concept. We wish to emphasize the following in our review of what we have attempted to say in this short presentation:

1. If we understand holiness exclusively as a category of *nature* (an attributes of God's nature, as in dogmatic textbooks), instead of becoming recognized as an *hypostatic* otherness it will appear as a *mysterium fascinandum et tremendum* (a mystery that arouses fascination and trembling), a mystery that remains forever *separate* and *out of reach* for us, precisely because it does not have an ontology of love that "drives out fear" (1 John 4:18). If, however, we understand holiness as part of a *hypostasis* (which the Church Fathers would have also concluded because they did not perceive the relation between the nature and the Person of God as conflicting), we will not experience this separation, i.e. this distance, but rather the meeting of the two Hypostases, detached *by nature* – God and man – and meeting in a union permeated by love, wherein "perfect love drives out fear": the fear implied by *natural* holiness. In this union, man's holiness is manifested as a unique and personal otherness, as a gift from the Only Holy One (the Other) and not as a trait of nature. The inquiry into holiness merely as a Divine attribute does not lead to the ontology of the person.

2. Even with the inclusion of all the former meanings of holiness, it is clear that the concept of the *holiness* of a person remains deeply rooted in biblical faith. Since God is called and is experienced as a personal and holy Being *par excellence* and since man is made in the image (according to the icon) of Holy God, it is obvious that any sin against the holiness of a person (irrelevant of its aim) simultaneously represents a sin against God Himself.

3. *Relational holiness.* Every individual manifestation of holiness of the Christian person in the entire existence and life of the Church points to the only Holy One, Jesus Christ. The iconographic principle of *relational reverence* (σχετικὴ προσκίνυσις = relational, conditional reverence, dependent on the prototype) is completely applicable to the reality of holiness. Thus, any holiness without a reference to the holiness of God and the Church would be an oxymoron, i.e. a "demonic" holiness and a *contradictio in adiecto*. The "fall" is an attempt to attain one's own holiness, with the individual's self as the point of reference, which is the reason why it leads to death. Therefore, every saint out of

humility consciously and deliberately "transfers" and directs holiness to the Prototype of holiness – Christ[47], that is, he lets it "ascend to the prototype"[48]. In short, in the experience of the Church, *holiness* represents the immediate grace-filled reality of an existential and mystagogical nature, which is experienced here and now only in part, as an "icon", but will be fully and perfectly experienced in the future timeless Kingdom of God.

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47. The example of the holy Prophet Elijah is quite indicative. Endowed with the power and grace of God, he "removes the lightning from the heavens" and hurls it onto the prophets of Baal. He halts the three-year drought, and so forth. Then a woman, Jezebel, banishes him, humiliated and powerless (compare this iconographic moment), and he is forced to hide himself from her for forty days! This is the "mystery of weakness", a so-to-speak "ontological" weakness, a crisis that is not simply psychological although profoundly human, through which the greatest saints must go through. They pass through this in full awareness and in all humility so that they may demonstrate by their own example the truth of salvation, which does not come from oneself (from man) but from the only Holy One. Similar examples of the "endurance of saints" are recorded in the Book of Revelation (14:12).

48. "Ἡ γὰρ τῆς εἰκόνος τιμὴ ἐπὶ τὸ πρωτότυπον διαβαίνει". St. Basil the Great, *Περὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος* 18,45, PG 32, 149c. See again the remarkable article of Metropolitan John Zizioulas, "Deification of the Saints as the icon of the kingdom of God".

Summary.

Biblical faith and even more so the Christian Church call and experience God as a personal and Holy Being *par excellence.* This biblical fact inspires the author to research the anthropological implications of the given theme. Man is created "in the image of the holy God". Is there any correlation, except formal, between the statement "be holy, because I am holy" and that which we call person and otherness? Could somebody who enters into communion with God become unique and special seeing that God is really the One who is fully and radically special (*ganz andere*). i.e. something "completely other"? As far as theology and the experience of the Church is concerned each man may be considered as distinct and unrepeatable, but this is only applicable to one who reaches out from the anonymity of an individual towards the uniqueness of a person. All this occurs through inter-personal communion, through *communio sanctorum.* Church tradition states that each saint is special and unrepeatable and this is owing to the special and unrepeatable relationship which he has established with the Special and the Unrepeatable Holy One within the liturgical experience of the Church. The notion of holiness in itself contains a personalistic and an ethical meaning, and these are both emphasized in biblical tradition, although the former carries more weight than the latter.