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ABSTRACT
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OBJECTIONS RAISED AGAINST DIVINE
PROVIDENCE

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ABSTRACT

The evidence and plenary manifestation of Divine Providence remains the focus of every religion. Being „*certainly the most delicate and vulnerable section of theology*”¹, its argumentation and experience represents the maximum reality of that religion, but also, its validation as a premise of its infallibility. If all the other teachings of faith can be explained and understood rationally, the problem of Divine Providence has faced over time a number of objections, which are very difficult to combat, and „*its argumentation is synonymous with argumentation and validity of religion*”².

Even if this is the essential point of any religion, its existence is fought vehemently, in many cases by the followers of that religion „*for in religious circles more than in others, God gets reproached his conscience at peace, his indifference towards the quality of his work and his refusal to correct anomalies*”³. As a paradox, the more ancient is the religion and encompasses a large number of followers, proportionally or exponentially increases the number of people questioning its authority and reality. Providence’s vulnerability weakens the authority of that religion putting in difficulty the very being of faith. More specifically, the assertion of Providence means the assertion and sovereignty of that religion. Its primacy and spread, as well as the force of persuasion exerted on the human are in direct relationship with the demonstration of its action in the world. A believer understands Faith as Providence and vice versa.

Due to a misperception of life considering himself as „sufficient” and „autonomous” in the approach to achieve our own happiness, man ignores Divinity and its fellows distancing of a life lived in communion. Ignoring „the sacrament” of other, lacking and refractory towards this noble dimension of communion with the other, „*the modern man is increasingly comprised of indifference*”⁴. Statistics show that in this civilizing century where outer space missions have become normality, *people still die of hunger and cold*. A paradox hard to believe but strongly confirmed by reality. Therefore with little effort and providing some bread crumbs and a bowl of illusions, you can become the God of this

¹ George Remete, *Dogmatica Ortodox*, Ediția a V-a, Alba Iulia, Editura Reîntregirea, 2012, p. 207.

² *Ibidem*.

³ Emil Cioran, *Demiurgul cel rău*, Ediția a II-a revizuită, Traducere de Emanoil Marcu, București, Editura Humanitas, 2010, p. 40.

⁴ Gustave Le Bon, *Psihologia mulțimilor*, Traducere de Mariana Tabacu, Prahova, Editura Antet XX Press, 2007, p. 79.

flock, because „if you give them every day bread, humans will worship you as there is nothing worse in this world than hunger and nothing more convincing and gratifying than bread”⁵.

Mankind deliberately forgets or ignores Christ message which draws attention to this danger, urging us „do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life”. (John 6, 27). Or the fidelity and worship of this treacherous devotion was long before condemned by Jesus Christ considering it foreign to Christian spirit and drawing attention to the danger that arises from the manifestation of „loyalty of interests” „I assure you that you are looking for me not because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate all the food you wanted” (John 6, 26).

Analyzing these mutations, you discover worried that the whole process of discrediting and distortion of spiritual reality intends to replace the true God with a false God or many false Gods! An man „liberated” of the soul searching agony, due to His existence, breaths relieved, becoming finally „free”. Without being rebuked by the conscience, charged with committing sin, will exclaim loudly as Kirillov – the character from the novel „Demons” by FM Dostoevsky, the following: „If there is no God, then I am God”⁶. Therefore, says Kirillov, or desecrated man: „for me there is nothing beyond the idea that there is no God”⁷, for „I know that he doesn’t exist and can’t exist”⁸.

Faced with these painful realities for the contemporary man, suddenly you discover that „God has no place in this world and the Gospel is no longer heard. Faith no longer delights anyone...Religious faith appears as an infantile state of human consciousness, being replced by technique, psychoanalysis and social solidarity”⁹. The mentality of contemporary society and its spirit believes that God looks indifferent and passive to this sad spectacle of our lives and in response to this silence „He will speak through the mouth pf the intelligent amd wise that sin and crime are the prerogatives of the hungry ones”¹⁰.First give us food and then you can put conditions. First bread and the bows: „« Feed us first and only then you can ask us what you want!...»Just those words will

⁵ F. M. Dostoievski, *Frații Karamazov*, vol. 1, Traducere de Elena Vizir, Bucure ti, Editura Adev rul Holding, 2011, p. 426.

⁶ *Idem*, *Demonii*, vol. 2, Traducere i note de Antoaneta-Liliana Olteanu, Bucure ti, Editura Adev rul Holding, 2011, p. 177.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 178.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 176.

⁹ Paul Evdokimov, *Iubirea nebun a lui Dumnezeu*, Traducere, prefaț i note de Teodor Baconski, Bucure ti, Editura Anastasia, 2009, p. 13.

¹⁰ F. M. Dostoievski, *Frații Karamazov*, vol. 1, pp. 423-424.

eventually be strung on the flag that gradually will be lifted up against you and through which people will declare, in the end, the ruin of your temple”¹¹.

In other words, God is summoned to prove his omnipotence and, why not, to satisfy humna’s womb, to soothe its objecting mouth and conscience. Only after this „hearty” and „ample” guarantee He can hope at worship from the creature. Only than He can ask for human being’s fidelity as in fact, *„what is more tragic, what contradicts more the faith in a good God and the belief in a savior of mankind than hunger? The first criterion to identify a savior to the world and for the world shouldn’t be the fact that He gives bread so that the hungry will cease“¹²?*

Certainly, our theme touches sensitive and vulnerable aspects of contemporary life which shall produce enough controversy due to the subject treated .Noting that we decided not to have style bu to treat, without households, the „sensitive” and „ godly” minds and obvious slippages knowing that: *„the truth will set us free”* (John 8, 32). And concerning style, we know form the Romanian philisopher Emil Cioran that: *„only the superficial minds address the idea delicately”¹³*. As for the speakers and witnesses of truth, even the Saviour considers this unfair exclusion from peers to *„a few, at the edge of lonely”¹⁴*, whom are struggling to establish the truth and condemn the sin becoming undesirable in the eyes of the mobm as from this persecution not even Him wasn’t forgiven, warning us decided: *„but it hates me because I testify that what it does it evil”* (Ioan 7, 7).

Thus, under the pressure of this reality, the idea of Providence is required and becomes central. However, deliberatley ignoring this reality „contemporary man tired of waiting” for the care of God, begins to take its life into its own hands with all the consequences resulting from this „expedition”, so that, finally, after a long and tragic experience to *„go back to knowing its limitsm its failure”¹⁵*. Moving away from God and the true values of faith, the man, slave of his oen limitation, despair and hellessness falls, forgetting that *„the meaning of our life is revealed only when we discover our roots deep in the Trinity and cosmic reality, in Christ”¹⁶*.

Unfortunately „experiencing” these existential conditions many of our peers *„ have*

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 424.

¹² Joseph Ratzinger, papa Benedict al XVI-lea, *Isus din Nazaret*, vol. 1, Traducere de Alexandru Mih ilescu, Bucure ti, Editura Rao, 2010, p. 43.

¹³ Emil Cioran, *Silogismele am r ciunii*, Traducere de Nicolae Bâr n , Bucure ti, Editura Humanitas, 1996, p. 8.

¹⁴ Gabriel Liiceanu, *Declarație de iubire*, Bucure ti, Editura Humanitas, 2001, p. 23.

¹⁵ Nichifor Crainic, *Nostalgia Paradisului*, Bac u, Editura Babel, 2012, p. 108.

¹⁶ Dumitru Popescu, *Omulf r r d cini*, Bucure ti, Editura Nemira, 2001, p. 21.

denied the faith” (Jer. 2, 8). They banished God in heaven and „they think ” that are free on Earth. Since „*faith is no more*” (Jer. 7, 28), has grown proportionally the courage and confidence in their own forces. Because „*it disappeared from their mouth*” (Jer. 7, 28), it has also disappeared the fear of God and, in these circumstances, committing the sin is out of the scope of divine law, for where God is no more it disappears, simultaneously, the notion of sin since, according to St. Basil the Great, „*unbelief is the mother of fornication*”¹⁷. In vain the prophet recalls this danger for they „*do not repent on their unbelief and no one says: «Oh, what have I done?» Each returns to its path*” (Jer. 8, 6), happy that they have escaped from His „suffocating” and „helpless” love. They will shout in chorus – as the convict *Boieru*, a character in the novel „*Zahei Orbul*” of Vasile Voiculescu, who was strongly convinced of the „truth” in his words –, saying undisturbed: „*Where there is no God, there are no sins*”¹⁸. In consequence this „alienation” freely consented by man ruins and visible darkness the human being..

Nevertheless due to entering freely into this race and for „*coming into being*”¹⁹, man is accustomed with run for it becomes a habit and finally normality. Therefore remains „alive” and „exists” only the one who flees. So: „I run, therefore I am”. We are tempted to believe that : „*Man exist only to the extent in which he participates in the run. Man lives only to the extent in which he flees. Life and run are one reality*”²⁰. In the century of speed man flees away from God, from others...from life, forgetting that this unexplained avoidance of naturalness of life which will bring him gradually and unconsciously, due to existential exhaustion, to the point where inevitably will lie in *His arms* asking Him ceaseless for help.

Following this needless racing this *fugitive* can not be good, just, loving other and the truth and.....does no longer believe; not because he wouldn't want to but because he doesn't have enough time. Suffice to painfully say, like the character Fiodor Pavlovici Karamazov, from the novel *Frații Karamazov*, that: „*We don't believe because we are fickle or unstable, but because of lack of time: primarily because we are overcome by all*

¹⁷ Sf. Vasile cel Mare, *Începutul cuvântului*, 46, în Colecția „PSB”, reluat în serie nouă, în anul 2007, vol. 2, *Comentariu la cartea Profetului Isaia*, Traducere, introducere și note de Alexandru Mihail, București, Editura Basilica, 2009, p. 71.

¹⁸ Vasile Voiculescu, *Zahei Orbul*, Prefață, tabel cronologic și referințe critice de Roxana Sorescu, București, Editura Art, 2010, p. 169.

¹⁹ Expresie în titlul unei lucrări ce aparține filosofului român Constantin Noica. V. Constantin Noica, *Devenirea întru ființă. Scrisori despre logica lui Hermes*, Ediția I, București, Editura Humanitas, 1998.

²⁰ Max Picard, *Fuga de Dumnezeu*, Traducere de Patricia Merfu și George Remete, Prefață de Pr. Dumitru Popescu, Postfață de Pr. Constantin Galeriu, București, Editura Anastasia, 1998, p. 13.

kind of work and secondly because God gives us little time, only twenty four hours per day, and we fail, even, to be satisfied with sleep, let alone to repent"²¹. In other words, for all slippages of mankind, there is only one guilty, namely God. However, unfortunately, for many, the truth is different, as also the „culprit”. No matter how many „existential excuses” man would invent, in order to rest and satisfy his own conscience, fails to convince. It is not credible. In fact, it can't convince himself, and in time this pretext turns into a burden that becomes unbearable for his conscience, for „*God's will is not to blame that not in all souls took root the faith, but in the will of whom didn't receive the obstacle*”²².

So God is guilty, sentenced and „punished” by the contemporary man. In fact, He is the one that prevents human being to fulfill and be happy. And becoming orphans we begin to consider „vain” and „despotic” „*as only God has the privilege to abandon..People can only turn their back on you*”²³. We are willing to say and believe that the human being is more human and closer of his neighbor than God, for man after a while of „indifference and alienation” turns his gaze again on „you”, while Divinity completely forgets its own creation. In the eyes of some, the Creator is bad and even worse than the creature, so that the goodness is no longer an attribute of God. In fact „*it wasn't capable to do better*”²⁴.

In these circumstances the idea that there is a sense in the world is utopian and the pressure of objections is likely to shatter the concept and need of Providence. Therefore, humanity forgets that as a creator of art is deeply saddened and angry of the „*disfigurement or misinterpretation of his work, so the Divine Creator is saddened by the creature which diverted from its destination causes disorder and misery in the harmony of the created universe*”²⁵. Thus, at first glance, today's reality seems to convince many that the effects of Divine Providence are not felt, so they don't exist and the doubts about it are „justified” because says the least faithful, „*who but she would be able to share with such a punctuality daily ratio defeat*”²⁶.

Therefore, the human being rushed and „worn out alive” forgets the great mission of

²¹ F. M. Dostoievski, *Frații Karamazov*, vol. 1, p. 223.

²² Sf. Grigorie de Nyssa, *Marele cuvânt catehetic sau despre învătământul religios*, 31, în Colecția „PSB”, vol. 30, partea a doua, *Scriseri exegetice, Dogmatico-polemice și morale*, Traducere și note de Pr. T. Bodogae, București, EIBMBOR, 1998, p. 329.

²³ Emil Cioran, *Despre neajunsul de a te fi născut*, Traducere de Florin Sicoie, București, Editura Humanitas, 2011, p. 42.

²⁴ *Idem*, *Demiurgul cerului*, p. 151.

²⁵ Nichifor Crainic, *Nostalgia Paradisului*, p. 25.

²⁶ Emil Cioran, *Demiurgul cerului*, p. 154.

salvation of the soul. Ignores its healing and inexplicably neglects that it is „doomed” to immortality as „ *once the Lord was incarnated and died for us, man no longer dies an eternal death*”²⁷. Precisely because we expect eternal life as we will not die for ever indicates that God exists. And because there is God, there is also human *immortality*. Only by understanding the meaning of this truth, we can say, as the character Stepan Trofimov, from the novel „Demons”, which although disturbed by the tranquility of this syllogism exclaims in peace: „ *If God exists I am immortal! Voilà ma profession de foi!*”²⁸.

So from those presented so far we distinguish the force and pressure of the objections against Divine Providence as well as the difficulty of rejecting them. Indeed this chapter remains the most delicate and difficult to argue in any religion and its approach and argument represents a rule and at the same time a desire to demonstrate the validity and authority of religion.

1. The theme and objectives of dissertation. Justification approach

This paper represents the result of a personal research aimed at explaining and arguing the existence of Divine Providence, in other words, God’s care for all creation in general and in particular for men. In our opinion this concerns a central chapter in the Christian Church Dogma, being less studied by scholars.

This approach aims to present and convince the reader, despite the existential problems with which it faces in these troubled times, that Providence is manifested fully from the beginning of creation. It hasn’t expressed itself syncopated throughout the ages and any objections thereto will be unable to suppress and discredit this manifestation of Him, as Divine Providence should be understood as fruit and as an endless proof of His love because „ *no one is a creator that in the freedom of spirit and nobody creates without love*”²⁹. However our arguments against those *Objections* and His care will not be easy.

Being created with a specific purpose it is called to perfection understanding here that „*perfection of man lies not in what it resembles with the rest of creation, but with what it distinguishes from the cosmos and resembles to His Creator*”³⁰. Certainly this call shows directly the degree of love and kinship of man with God. Therefore man was created from nothing so as a relative being it can’t achieve this „*accomplishment*” by itself no matter how hard it tries for without His help everything crumbles so that: „ *turning your face all*

²⁷ Ioan Moshu, *Limonariu sau livada duhovniceasc* , cap. 71, Alba Iulia, Editura Reîntregirea, 2014, p. 77.

²⁸ F. M. Dostoievski, *Demonii*, vol. 2, p. 229.

²⁹ Nichifor Crainic, *Nostalgia Paradisului*, p. 25.

³⁰ Vladimir Losski, *Introducere în teologia ortodox* , Traducere de Lidia și Remus Rus, Prefa de Pr. D. Gh. Popescu, București, Editura Enciclopedic , 1993, p. 169.

will be disturbed ; taking their spirit they will perish and in dust they will return” (Ps. 103, 30). However, in these circumstances, the existence and manifestation of Providence is justified the more so as this fullness of man is desired by God: „we know very well that God would not have created such a being and had not provide it with all the conditions of survival if he wouldn’t have like the continuation of this existence”³¹.

In another train of thoughts the mission of this research will not be easy, precisely because anyone with a lifetime experience will challenge and raise a lot of objections against Divine Providence, saying as the right Job, the following: „ *If I had called and He had answered me; yet would I not believe that He would hearken unto my voice. He that would break me with a tempest and multiply my wounds without cause” (Iob 9, 16-17).*

In another words it is not wrong to say that there is an „infinite of objections” for every living moment is a possible objection and that the world is more distrustful of the power and love of God. An the „reproach” and „fault” addressed to Him are numerous and increasingly more „noice” so that unfairly God walks into the world with „*a broken head*”. So, without assuming obvious responsibilities, our world begins to emit various excuses for its sins or worse to impute them to God. As proof he assigns his own vices to God and „*using the art of speech or declaring that God does not exist or if it exists he enjoys evil or remains insensible as a stone.....which is the greatest impiety and injustice*”³².

Through its topic, the present paper will become polemical and will arouse a lot of controversy from the reader, knowing very well that „*Age shoul speak, advanced years should teach wisdom ...but it is the spirit in a person, the breath of the Almighty that gives them understanding” (Iob 32, 7-8).* Following the said we remember the philosopher Emil Ciora which through his writings wanted to awaken the consciences of the readers saying: „*I for one think that a book must be really a wound, must rummage in one way or another readers’ life. When I write a book, the idea is to wake someone, to whip him...a book should shake*”³³. And somewhere else, like a will, he asks earnestly: „ *Do not forget to say that I am a marginal, a marginal who writes to awaken. Repeat it: my books aspire to cause awakening*”³⁴.

All the more the theologian is required a certain lexical construction in transmitting

³¹ Filozoful i apologetul Atenagora Atenianul, *Despre învierea morților*, XIII, în Colecția „PSB”, vol. 2, Traducere i note de Pr. T. Bodogae, Bucure ti, EIBMBOR, 1980, p. 385.

³² Sf. Iustin Martirul i Filozoful, *Apologia* I, XXVIII, pp. 43-44.

³³ *Convorbiri cu Cioran*, (volum ce reune te interviurile acordate de filozof), Bucure ti, Editura Humanitas, 2004, p. 17.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 25.

the word, taking into account as an absolute duty the specific urge of the Saviour: „*therefore go and make disciples of all nations*” (Matthew 28, 19). It is required to be a scholar and necessarily *alive*. That is to crave more than a philosopher for „the awakening of the people” so to awaken and enlighten the consciences of people, convincing them of the truth and necessity of faith for „*now it is not a mere confession of faith but to have that faith until the end*”³⁵. Or in the context of this secularized world, the following truth must be continually delivered as a categorical imperative: „*the Church’s mission is to create in each of its members the belief that **the normal state of human personality is immortality and eternity and not temporality and death and that man is a traveler which through death and temporality is moving ahead towards immortality and eternity***”³⁶. Consequently this eternal truth can’t be ignored by anyone much less by the speculative reason of philosophers. The knowledge and understanding of existence based only on the intellectual effort fails to submit or to go *beyond* the letter, remaining „*formless and blind if we don’t have the grace of knowledge that comes from Father to Son*”³⁷, because according to St. Paul it is better to be unfinished in word than in knowledge (2 Cor. 11, 6).

As objectives our research aims to identify major concerns, definition and possible relations between themselves and how they contest Divine Providence and make difficult its demonstrating. Therefore, the main objective is to combat and reject all objections by presenting counterarguments as well as affirmation of reality and work of Providence in the world hoping that the reader „*will pay more attention to the spirit and my intent than to certain vehemence of words*”³⁸.

The premise of this approach is the role that the existence and manifestation of Providence has, but also the love and protective nature of God – embodied sublime in His sacrifice for his own creation – as a certainty of our faith, in the perspective of achieving a full intimacy between man and God. In other words *faith* must remain a certainty for each of us and we must be convinced of its existence and saving power. It should not be perceived as a supposition or hypothesis but as total trust and confidence in God.

³⁵ Sf. Ignatie Teoforul, *Epistola c tre Efeseni*, XIV, 2, în Colecția „PSB”, vol. 1, Traducere, note și indici de Pr. D. Fecioru, București, EIBMBOR, 1979, p. 162.

³⁶ Sf. Iustin Popovici, *Omul și Dumnezeu-om: abisurile și culmile filosofiei*, Studiu introductiv și traducere de Ioan Ică și Ioan I. Ică jr., Prefață de Ioannis Karmiris, Postfață de Panayotis Nellis, Ediția a doua, revizuită, București / Editura Sophia; Alexandria / Editura Cartea Ortodoxă, 2010, p. 93.

³⁷ Vladimir Losski, *După chipul și asemănarea lui Dumnezeu*, Traducere de Anca Manolache, București, Humanitas, 1998, p. 13.

³⁸ Giovanni Papini, *Diavolul. Note pentru o viață de diavologie*, Traducere de Corina Anton, București, Editura Humanitas, 2013, p. 10.

Therefore our approach aims to answer two fundamental questions, namely:

1. *Why it is minimized the role of Providence in the process of salvation?*
2. *To what extent succeeds proving the existence of Providence, by combating various objections, to strenghten the faith in God and convert a higher number of people ?*

Our approach is justified primarily by the lack of bibliography in Romanian that addresses the rejection of these objections. The same phenomenon also occurs in specialized foreign literature where the number of writings dealing objections is limited. Even in the case of approach and support of Divine Providence writings are few. This leads to a misunderstanding of the subject, of the believer, which directly reflects in the degree of faith in God and his dealings with God.

Without the existence of Providence, the episode of salvation – „ *this great mystery of God's love*”³⁹ – remains questionable. Generally dogmatic treaties and specialized papers address the chapter of Divine Providence with brief descriptions, without providing a clear and comprehensive description showing the primary role of this chapter. The information presented provides a degree of understanding of the reader but not enough to acknowledge the primary role that it plays in the existence of any religion and the overwhelming importance for understanding the meaning of life and salvation of man.

Another aspect that justifies this approach is the urgent timeliness of the theme showing that without Providence no religion is complete, being deficit. The religion which doesn't strive to assert Providence is not saving, but false. It can't give a concrete answer to the troubles of society and no rescue for the contemporary man who begins to perceive life as a fatality, where everything is meaningless. Fortunately for many the God that we „scold” everyday and in which we don't believe, He believes in us. How right was Nicolae Steinhardt, the monk from Rohia, whom in a letter to his friend, Virgil Ierunca, trying to heal him from the disease of unbelief, encouraging him, said: „ *The God in which you say you don't belive in, He believes in you and he knows you as one of his*”⁴⁰.

2. *The current state of research*

The importance of the subject and its pressing timeliness leads us to show, in this subchapter, that this theme was ignored or treated superficially by almost all dogmatic theologians; it hasn't been developed and valued at its real size, the importance of Providence in the process of salvation wasn't put into value. Its meaning and importance

³⁹ Paul Evdokimov, *Iubirea nebun a lui Dumnezeu*, p. 19.

⁴⁰ Nicolae Steinhardt, *Dumnezeu în care spui c nu crezi... Scrisori c tre Virgil Ierunca (1967-1983)*, Bucure ti, Editura Humanitas, 2000, p. 197.

has been too easily overlooked and that prevented its awareness among people. As previously said, not only the Objections but Divine Providence itself are considered as something of a second hand, without being given due consideration, being treated in the background as shown in almost all Dogmatic treaties. In contrast through the present paper we attempt to show that this is the first issue in Dogmatic for it is not argued enough to be understood, no Dogmatic will have no value and no effect. However, in these conditions, we strive to show its importance and value to *human fulfillment*. Its timeliness is pressing, especially for today's man, who no longer finds any meaning to existence perceiving God as distant or indifferent, even withdrew from the world and this is only because Divine Providence is hardly noticeable or apparently absent, but in fact, poorly reasoned.

3. Delimitation of the subject

This research aims to provide relevant answers to persuade and heal those rebellions coming from the layman or even the believer. The emphasis is on management issues raised by the nature of Objections and doesn't analyze in detail the aspects of Providence and its manifestation into the world. We note that the present study, by addressing Objections, in particular and Providence, in general is limited to Christianity namely Orthodox Confession mostly and Catholic and Protestant Confession. Other religions or pseudo religions will not enter into our sphere of research.

The methodology of research proposed despite the obstacles raised by the lack of bibliography, on the subject, so far, sought to use all the latest references related to this topic addressing objections in terms of universally existential aspect. We take into account all the elements that form these Objections coming from cultural or religious background including atheist and seek to give an orthodox argument, acceptable to my thinking. That is, we seek to expose this argument through a common language so that our presentation to answer any understanding and thoughts from the cultural, spiritual or secular. To do this we consulted the literature, but the one that comes from the field of culture or science, in order to have a better understanding of this topic. We used research methods known in the international scientific research, in order to logically and professionally expose this approach, being aware that the interest in this subject exceeds the theological being useful to any conscience regardless of its training and field of activity for „*the spiritual thrill*” is lived and „researched”, to some extent, by any human being.

Thus, theology transcends concepts or various systems or philosophical categories of

human existence understanding and „ *derives from the human desire to know God. But can't be known as an object. He is not an object but the subject par excellence....There is knowledge only if there is union. For that humanity may know Him, God has united Himself with it: this is the basis of theology*”⁴¹. Although it operates with the same tools found in general language it exceeds it, escalating the border of „logic” and „normal”. Although theology „ *is expressed rationally, always seeks to go beyond concepts. Here intervenes a necessary moment of helplessness of human thought in front of the mystery that wants to make itself known. A theology which becomes a system is always dangerous. It incarcerates, in the closed sphere of thought, the reality to which the thinking must open*”⁴².

From these reasons, the scientific results estimated want to lead the reader to a better understanding of the subject in relation to previous research and the reality of life under existential aspect because affirming the reality of Providence, we fully assert both the existence and concrete Presence of God in the creation

4. Novelty research

Theologians have given little attention to Providence and all the more to Objections; more specifically they made a short list of three concrete actions of manifestation of Providence in the world, namely: *conservation, cooperation and governance*, with a brief analysis of them. The same thing happens in the case of *Clasic Objections*. We believe that this way of approaching the subject in matter is insufficient because of its importance in the dogmatic and, even more, for a better referral and awareness of God's presence in creation and in caring for us.

In conclusion we believe that in this chapter of Christian dogmatic Divine Providence has received less attention for certain reasons, such as:

a) the Holy Fathers thought it wasn't important to develop a theme that imposes itself and of which they were fully aware; God's care for man and all creation was for them unreservedly and improperly to any logical objections. From our point of view it is difficult to accept that this issue was *overlooked*, as Divine Providence is the basis of dogmatic, *the heart of every religion*.

b) in relation to modern theologians they directed their research to other aspects of spiritual life, maybe precisely for the reason that you are more persuasive when you tackle

⁴¹ Marc-Antoine Costa de Beauregard, Dumitru St niloae, *Mica dogmatic vorbit : dialoguri la Cernica*, Ediția a III-a, Traducere de Maria-Cornelia Ic , Sibiu, Editura Deisis, 2007, p. 161.

⁴² Vladimir Losski, *Introducere în teologia ortodox* , *op. cit.*, p. 15.

„tangible” topics.

As they can be checked, up to a point, they become convincing and credible for human reason, so cautious in matters of faith. Yet, Divine Providence requires and deserves our attention, it is worth approaching with all confidence precisely through its sovereignty and absolute.

c) the approach so far is a real deficiency in theological research especially because this chapter of Dogmatic addresses not only the initiated one but „threatens”, as an imperative the human conscience everywhere.

The novelty of the proposed research consists, first, in providing counterarguments against those who support *Objections*. Secondly, we will submit to reader’s attention recent objections which together with the classical argument make it difficult to prove God’s care for His own work. From this point of view, the present study aims to provide a broader image on this topic by analyzing and identifying appropriate responses which will show a weak foundation and argumentation of all Objections, both the classical and recent ones, by providing relevant answers and at the same time convincing. In other words to succeed in convincing that Divine Providence has always existed and that its action will continue until the end of time, provides today the guarantee of human salvation, more elusive than ever.

Therefore we are not wrong to say that *the existence of Providence is identical with existence of God*. Understanding this absolute truth, we will strive to affirm that the necessity of Faith in Him and the truth of the existence of Divine Providence, in order to be considered truly witnesses of Christian faith, contradicting, in this way, the philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev who being skeptical said sententiously: „*ancient people dared to talk about religion. We do not dare*”⁴³.

5. Thesis structure

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part one, THE NOTION OF PROVIDENCE IN GREEK AND ROMAN THINKING AND IN CHRISTIAN THOUGHT, contains three chapters, and the second part, OBJECTION AGAINST PROVIDENCE, is divided in three chapters.

Chapter I, in Antiquity, analyzes from a philosophical and theological perspective the evolution and significance of the concept of Providence during Antiquity

⁴³ Nikolai Berdyaev, *Sensul Creației. Încercare de îndrept țire a omului*, Traducere de Anca Oroveanu, Prefață , cronologie și bibliografie de Andrei Pleșu, București, Editura Humanitas, 1992, p. 31.

and early Christian era.

In this chapter we approach, at a time, in subsections, the role and importance of Providence in Greek and Roman philosophy, as the foundation and source of terminology for the Holy Fathers and ecclesiastical writers of the early Christian Church „for a Christian metaphysical reconstruction”⁴⁴. We will present the etymology and meaning of the term *Providentia* in ancient Greek and Roman literature, treating further the notion of „*Providence*” in Greek language to the following authors: *Platon, Plotin* și *Proclus*, continuing with the parallel notion of „*Providentia*” Latin language authors: *Cicero* și *Seneca*.

We emphasize that the choice and research of the writings of these authors have been made from scientific reasons: they pay increased attention to the subject approached by us in this work. We consider this first chapter as important and necessary, for a better understanding of the term *Providentia*, as well as for the knowledge of the meaning had in that period, which is different than the one acquired later in Christianity. This chapter includes the following subsections: a) *The meaning and value of the notion Providence, in Greek and Roman philosophy*; b) „*Providentia*”: *etymology and meaning*; c) *Providence for Greek authors*; d) „*Providentia*” *for Latin authors*.

Chapter II, Providence in Holy Scripture, treats the indissoluble link between Creation and Providence, discrete interdependence, however highlighted sufficient enough to convince that this indestructible relation as a sign of good will and divine stewardship work, over time, has not been sufficiently argued. This link marks the intimacy and mysterious guidance between Creator and creature for its perfection. The dynamic relationship formed between the act of creation and providential one proceeds from a common denominator: God. There is a visible contingency between Creation and Providence, precisely as through the act of creation it is showed clearly God’s care for people, the creation being a testimony and evidence for the assertion of Providence. This link, although seems perfectly justified, is not stated in some theologies, for example, in the Protestant one, where the free expression of Providence because predestination.

For man Creation must be the overwhelming proof of God’s care, being called upon to co-participate in the act of creation through „*be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth and*

⁴⁴ Gheorghe VI duțescu, *Filosofia primelor secole creștine*, Ediția a II-a, revizuit și completat, Târgu-Mureș Editura Ardealul, 2012, p. 170. Cf. Evangelos Moutsopoulos, *L’idée, l’excellence du citoyen dans la tradition philosophique*, în *The Nation of Citizenship in Greek Philosophy*, edited by E. Moutsopoulos, M. Protopapas-Marneli, Athens, p. 30.

subdue it“ (Fac. 1, 28). In other words his status has dual function: owner and administrator, being responsible for the smooth running of Creation as „*man is not only intellectual logos, but also economic logos of the world, the lord of creation. He has the right and duty to work in the world, for his own existence, to help the neighbor, to carry out the common work of humanity*”⁴⁵, so that God wanting to highlight his importance and place in creation „*through natural laws, ordered to all to fear man. So man was the face of supreme glory and the icon of divine power on earth*”⁴⁶. Only by living with such a thought man will acknowledge and fairly estimate the value of sublime paradox of creation and Divine Providence. This chapter contains the following subsections: a) *Creation and Providence*; b) *On the right despair of the righteous: the book of Job*; c) *When God takes care of the world – and sacrifices His Son*; d) *Freedom and Providence*.

Chapter III, Christian theology on Providence, submits the term of Providence and its significance to Christian thought, from early church and reaching nowadays. This chapter, through three subsections, present and highlights the place and size of Divine Providence in literature.

From the beginning it must be emphasized that *the existence or being identifies itself with Providence and are stated only through it*. Divine Providence is the direct manifestation of God, who out of love, through creation brought everything to life. This shows the unconditional openness and total interest of God for human person, as a fruit of love and care. Thus, **Creation requires Providence’s reality, precisely because Providence is contained, as an intrinsic part in the work of Creation**. This reasoning shows that Creation alone is not sufficient for man to be saved. The mere act of Creation doesn’t imply the guarantee of salvation. To acquire it an active participation is urgently needed, primarily through a freely undertaken collaboration and secondly through God’s care. This action is beneficial because it solves most of the impediments arose in *becoming ontological*. More specifically, the perfection of the human being can become a reality only after the cooperation and free union and necessarily intentional of man with God, for this existential fulfillment, „*implies synergy between conscious creature and God*”⁴⁷.

Moreover, God harnesses in a mysterious way, difficult to translate by human logic, all available resources and means, known only by Him to support the human. Without His

⁴⁵ Serghei Bulgakov, *Ortodoxia*, Traducere de Nicolae Grosu, Bucure ti, Editura Paideia, 1994, p. 171.

⁴⁶ Sf. Chiril al Alexandriei, *Glafire, Despre Adam*, 2, în Colecția „PSB”, vol. 39, *Scrieri, Partea II*, Traducere, introducere și note de Pr. D. St. niloae, EIBMBOR, Bucure ti, 1992, p. 11.

⁴⁷ George Remete, *Providența și libertate în viaa creștinului*, în „Credința Ortodoxă”, Nr. 1 Aprilie – Iunie, 1996, Alba Iulia, p. 15.

interest and „sympathy” towards us, man can't exceed his limits just because of this relative condition that results from the status of being. This chapter contains the following subsections: a) *Providence for the Holy Fathers and Eastern ecclesiastical writers*; b) *Providence in Western Christian conception*; c) *Providence in contemporary theological thought*.

The second part of the thesis, **OBJECTIONS AGAINST PROVIDENCE**, starts with **Chapter I, Original sin and early Objections against Divine Providence**, with the exposure of those *Objections* and, in return, with the presentation of counterarguments.

The disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, open the door to sin, in the world, and thus the entire historical condition „changes” and „suffers”. At that time the history of human salvation first registers a *rupture* between Creation and Providence, so that „*the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now*” (Rom. 8, 22). Viewed from this perspective, sin represents an attack to Providence, a sabotage, because sinners have „*collapsed that You built*” (Ps. 10, 3), and they changed „*all that your hand and counsel beforehand ordained to be*” (Gen. 4, 28), „*after foreknowledge of God*” (Gen. 2, 23).

But, also, after the fall of man God works and wants all His children to return to Him and be saved from sin, and we find this evidence in the writings of Old Testament: „*Tell them: As surely as I live, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they return from their ways and live*” (Ezek. 33, 11). Moreover, this work of caring for us culminated with the Incarnation of His Son so that „*by taking our nature, healing our disobedience and making us the example of obedience, apart from which is not possible to gain salvation*”⁴⁸, He has sacrificed Himself for us. God's love for man is so great that He „*didn't even spare His own Son to save it and deify it*”⁴⁹, for St. Ap and Evangelist John says: „*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life*” (Ioan 3, 16).

Looking back man didn't understand that this act of Incarnation of Christ represents *salvation*, videlicet man's *redemption* from the clutches of death and his release from sin. By this act, God „**commits the biggest news of all, the only new thing under the sun, which shows God's infinite power. For what can be greater than God becoming man**”⁵⁰?

⁴⁸ Sf. Ioan Damaschin, *Dogmatica*, Traducere, introduceere în note de Pr. D. Fecioru, București, EIBMBOR, 2005, p. 115.

⁴⁹ Serghei Bulgakov, *Ortodoxia*, p. 111.

⁵⁰ Sf. Ioan Damaschin, *Dogmatica*, pp. 114-115.

Acest capitol este structurat în felul următor: a) *Adam's disobedience or „leaving the order” of the righteous child, consequence of freedom*; b) *Man's willing and God's willing*; c) *The condition of the prodigal son or restoration of man by returning to heavenly Father*.

Chapter II, Objections against Providence. Attempt to answer, wants, by compiling an inventory of these objections, to portray their nature and consequences for human life as well as to provide some counter arguments. Wishing to present them as objectively as possible but also to facilitate their understanding, we structured them, for analysis, on two levels: *classical Objections and recent Objections*.

As their revenge, the greater the force and amplitude of Classical Objections the mission of counter argument becomes proportionally difficult. The degree of manifestation of Objections against Divine Providence is notable and pressing so that it is very difficult to be countered. Over time mankind has *systematized* several objections that make difficult the action and, even, proof of Divine Providence. Therefore the task of combating these Objections requires long effort and intuition to understand their destructive force but also a certain tact in the strategy of their suppression. The Objections are diverse and the human mind *has striven* „to give birth” to a wide range of them, to satisfy various categories of rebellious, falling not infrequently in this trap of „great minds” who because of their training became credible voices, with a notable influence in promoting these unjust and atheistic beliefs. Thus, history has caught, in her tabs, numerous objections and for a better understanding of this „phenomenon” we have tried to make a small inventory, structured as follows:

A. Classical Objections:

a) *The perfection of the Creator and the imperfection of the creature*. By this objection it is believed that God, the Absolute Being, doesn't descend to the world, remaining indifferent to it, just because his „status” doesn't allow this „humiliation” so that it ignores the world and doesn't deal with its existing imperfections.

b) *Fatalism*. This philosophical belief considers that Providence doesn't exist because all existences follow a preset plan of a relentless force and the whole course of events, in history, is determined by a fixed destiny. Even beings have a default route, so their fate is decided beforehand by God.

c) *Deism*. It is a philosophical theory from XVII – XVIII centuries, which recognizes the existence of God, but totally denies His involvement in *human life* and in the world.

Doesn't admit the existence of Providence for the following reasons: God's care would violate the freedom of man and if man would sin it would be absolved of any blame. Therefore, if God directly influences man this means that it cancels his freedom.

d) *The disproportion between merit and reward*. This „belief” considers that there is no justice in the world so the idea of *divine justice* is utopian and with no support in existential reality

e) *Atheism*. Is a „materialist doctrine” which totally denies any form of Divinity categorically rejecting the belief in supernatural miracles and, even, life after death. It denies the existence of any deity and combats any faith in the supernatural. It is against all forms of religion and, more so, the existence and manifestation of Providence.

f) *The problem of Evil*. This reality, simple and very visible, seeping and found everywhere, is the most important of all objections. Many of our people argue that this objection is „sufficient” and indeed „plentiful” to abolish the reality of Divine Providence and, even, the existence of God.

B. Recent Objections:

a) The descendants of Cain: „*Am I my brother's keeper?*” (Gen. 4, 9); b) „*Homo homini lupus*” or „*Law of the jungle*”; c) *Illness and temptations –nonsense and sense of suffering*; d) e) *The silence and divine indifference*; f) g) *The burden of „being” and „brunt” of consciousness*.

The impressive number of reproaches addressed to Deity, exemplified through these objections, require great difficulty in developing suitable and relevant answers. Under the pressure of reality the theologian is called to an open dialogue with our neighbor. Furthermore he ought and should analyze and formulate logical answers, of existential nature, to overcome the impasse. Therefore it is imperative to accomplish this goal and it must appeal to all rational arguments, accepted by human logic and human consciousness. Or, facing these immediate *problems*, the theologian, *should dare*, through its mission to *decipher* the mystery of creation and seek satisfactory answers for the minds of the unbelieving as according to nun Hildegard von Bingen XII century: „*if there is no question in man, there is no response in the Holy Spirit*”⁵¹.

Chapter III, represents, because of its theme, *the major Objection* which brings to difficulty, up to suppression, the notion of providence, due to the extent manifested. Called **Evil Scandal**, it treats the three types of evil encountered in the concrete reality of life:

⁵¹ Hildegard von Bingen *apud* Andrei Pleșu, *Despre Îngerii*, București, Editura Humanitas, 2003, p. 70.

physical, metaphysical and moral evil. If other Objections can be easier „undermined” the manifestation and content of evil become a great challenge for any thinker interested in the „non – being” of evil which „exists” significantly and with extreme sensuality.

Nowdays the reality of evil and suffering, cataloged as fatality and nonsens, are so present in the world that the man is willing, after a minimal thought, to believe that only these exist: that evil and suffering are sovereign and the good and happiness are found in an insignificant amount, which can't influence our evolution. Even if this can easily be proved, however, this phenomenon should not be taken as a supreme postulate. On the contrary, the reality of evil, should not *metamorphose* into a total and full compelling reason to depart from God affirming, in despair, as the crazy: „*There is no God*” (Ps. 13, 1).

Consequently, all the Objections raised against Providence may be concentrated in a single formula: obvious and dominant reality of evil, for evil in the world is sufficient to abolish the reality of Divine Providence. Therefore it remains the most delicate chapter, but, in the same time, the most vulnerable of Dogmatic. While some uncertainties can elucidate the logical argumentation, Objection against the Providence of God are very difficult to fought, because they are based in shared experiences known and checked personally by all people.

Another aspect approached in this chapter is the one concerning the existence and malefic influence of the Devil. Based on the testimony of the Holy Scripture, he would be at the origin of sin, and those who commit sins are under direct influence of him, as it says and teaches us St. John the Evangelist, while also justifying the Incarnation of our Saviour: „ *the one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy devil's work*” (1 John 3, 8). Moreover, for those who still doubt the veracity of these words, we bring, for enlightenment, the authoritative words of the Saviour, which describe Satan's evil nature, for says God „ *He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language for he is a liar and the father of lies*” (John 8, 44). So because of pride, the devil loses the privilege of „intimacy” with God and is expelled. Just because of this crime, for the Saviour said to His disciples „ *I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven*” (Luke. 10, 18). Unfortunately, this passion was „cultivated” by the human being as well and even doubled by the disastrous effects of the disobedience of our forefathers, as they *were forced*, as Satan, to leave their *sublime intimacy* with their Creator.

For this reason, the devil is the enemy of the whole creation, resisting invariably to Divinity, trying to tempt man, leading him to commit a lot of reprehensible acts that endanger the salvation of the celebrant. Therefore, it is considered that the „ *beginning of sin is pride*” (Sir. 10, 13), and „ *everyone who commits sin is sin and wickedness and iniquity*” (1 John 3, 4). Therefore, St. Ap. Paul warns man, urging him to permanently investigate: „*he may become conceited and fall under the same judgement as the devil*” (1 Tim. 3, 6) and to heed all temptations and negative influences that it stretches.

Another subsection, *Death – sovereign means to suppress the sin* deals with the existence and „mystery” of death in human life. The sin of disobedience of our forefathers and committing evil condemn the human being to death for „ *teh wages of sin is death*” (Rom. 6, 23), and „ *you will return to the earth from which you were taken*” (Gen. 3, 19). Through this „tool” God ends the manifestation of Evil and disorder brought by him, into being, eliminating him from creation and releasing the being from the burden and destructive force of sin. So, the emergence and manifestation of death plays a cathartic role liberating the being from evil and, inevitably, from the return to nothingness.

The last subsection, *Theodicy*, is another point of our research which deals with *Divine justice*, showing that God is not the author of evil and the fact that it exists and manifest itself in the world, doesn;t cancel Divine goodness, nor indicates any form of Divine „*indifference*” or „*helplessness*” to the reality of evil.

Theodicy is a philosophical and religious doctrine which strives to prove that the reality and undeniable manifestation of evil and injustice, in the world, doesn’t contradict nor denies the divine goodness. This believes that the world is a perfect creation of God and evil is of an entirely different origin. Starting from this premise, evil is not the product of God, nor is uncontrollable by Divine Being so a successful theodicy can be called the one that „ *solves the problem of evil for a theological system and demonstrates that God is almighty, all loving and righteous despite the existence of evil*”⁵².

Therefore, Chapter III has the following content:

- a) *Physical, metaphysical and moral Evil;*
- b) *Man’s unbelief and world’s agony;*
- c) *Evil in God’s service;*
- d) *Death – sovereign means to suppress sin;*

⁵² John Samuel Feinberg, *Teodiceea*, în „Dicționar evanghelic de teologie”, coord. Walter A. Elwell, Traducere de Livius Percy, Oradea, Editura Cartea Creștină, 2012, p. 1163.

e) *Theodicy*.

The thesis concludes with a brief formulation of important concepts, from the presentation of different arguments that have been the subject of research in our exposing (chapter **Conclusions**). These summarized beliefs are closely followed by indicating specific bibliography of the subject, providing an overview of the subject of Divine Providence and Objections against it, and, not least, to make available, to those interested, a scientific support for a solid thoroughgoing study which becomes increasingly more present because of the contemporary human condition.

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