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**“THE ONTOLOGY OF HUMAN PERSONHOOD IS ITS
DIVINE IMAGE”, THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF ST. JUSTIN’S
POPOVICH**

*Man is not just a biological or spiritual being, but creature in relation to God
and in the procedure of theosis.*

Human being is the creature of “time”. Man was created from non being². “He is created by God the Logos, and his being in essence and his being in essence has logical character, in order to long for God in his nature. This is something that Popovich has adopted from the theology of Maximus the confessor that the image of God in man is connected to the mind and reason (λόγος). If a person is aware of the logosness (логосност) of his being, he constantly strives for God, continually longs for divine properties”³. It is important to be underlined that Popovich refers to Logos as a creator of man, although man was created by the Triune God, in order to show that the words of God come from the Eternal Word--the Logos, who is the Word of life and bestows Life. By this way the serbian saint explains that the creation of man became according to the image of God to the image of the incarnate Logos. Popovich thinks the love as an important characteristic of the “essence of both God and human being is

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² G. N. Petrovich, *Eucharistic joy in Justin Popovich's dogmatics*, Phd thesis, (Rome 2015), p. 14, reference 12, in https://www.academia.edu/37214678/EUCHARISTIC_JOY_IN_JUSTIN_POPOVICH'S_DOGMATICS_PhD_thesis_Rome_2015.docx

³ J. Popović, *Dogmatika pravoslavne crkve*, vol. II, (Kraljevo 1980, p. 731), in Petrovich, *Eucharistic joy*, p. 124.

love, and then the image of God in human being is nothing else than love, while the likeness of God in human being is reflected inhuman endless possibilities to attain the likeness of infinite divine love”⁴.

He agrees with this theological view of the creation of man the man has the freedom to choose if he is going to communicate with Godman or not. If he overcomes the sin and defeats his evil himself, he would be able to be united with God through Christ and he will build himself into a theandric being. He will conquer the theosis⁵. The man is made of material (ὕλη) and spirit. His hunger and thirsty to be near God creates for him the situation to try to gain the immortality, eternity, impeccability and imperishability⁶. This teaching of Popovich for the creation of man and his final goal for theosis, reminds us of the beatitudes of Christ at the Sermon on the Mount to help man reach the Kingdom of Heaven, to be united with God’s energeiai (attitudes): “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied”⁷. First of all, “hunger and thirst” after justice speak of deep need and driving passion. There is a strong and continuous desire of progress in Christ’s teaching, church fathers’ theology that with the grace of Holy Spirit⁸ leads to the moral perfection, the reward of which will be the absolute fulfillment of the desire, the continuous growth in holiness.

It is important to be underlined that theosis for Popovich referred mainly to the union with the Godman, with incarnate Logos. There is a little reference of man’s likeness to or union with Triune God. According to our opinion, although the serbian saint speaks more about Christ than the Triune God, it would be mistake to be thought that he seems to be influenced by the liberal theology⁹

⁴ Justin Popović, “Problem linosti i poznanja po učenju Svetog Makarija Egipatskog” (The Problem of Personhood and Knowledge According to St. Macarius of Egypt), (Beograd: Naslednici oca Justina i Manastir Čelije kod Valjeva 1999, p. 95), reference 18 in Vl. Cvetković, “New Wine and Old Wineskins: St Justin Popović on Theological Terminology”, p. 141-156, esp. p. 146 at I. Tulcan, P. Bouteneff, M. Stavrou, *Dogma and Terminology in the Orthodox Tradition Today*, (Sibiu: Astra Museum, 2015).

⁵ “There is no human work which could save the humankind from death and devil. Even all human works, if would have had that purpose merging into one enormous work could not do anything. Salvation from sin, death and devil immensely surpasses all human powers and works; it is in everything entirely and perfectly work of all-goodness, all-love and all-power of Christ. And since is like that, people have no right to praise with their work, whether individually or collectively, because it does not make sense, nor culture, civilization, science, techniques’, philosophy or art. Yes, these do not make sense since they are as mosquito powerless and horribly helpless before the dreadful reality of death”, Justin Popović, *Dogmatika pravoslavne crkve*, vol. III, (Zadužbina „Sveti Jovan Zlatousti“ Ave Justina Čeljijskog, 2004), p. 88, in Petrovich, *Eucharistic joy*, p. 12, reference 12.

⁶ Petrovich, *Eucharistic joy*, p. 14.

⁷ Mat. 5:4

⁸ According to Orthodox theology that Popovich follows, the theosis is the ultimate purpose of human life. It can be achievable only through a synergy (or cooperation) between human activity and God’s uncreated energies (or operations), G. Kapsanis, *Theosis: The True Purpose of Human Life* (pdf) (4th ed.). (Mount Athos, Greece: Holy Monastery of St. Gregorios, 2006), <http://orthodoxinfo.com/general/theosis-english.pdf>, [accessed 15 May 2019].

⁹ “Liberal theology rejected the Trinity along with other dogmas it believed to have been imposed on the simple religion of Jesus”, R. Ward, ““Theology” The One and Triune

He doesn't want to take God as the starting point for his theological reflection of Bible¹⁰, but the human being: and the perfect human being is the Godman, theanthropos, Christ. For Popovich, the fullness of deification, of theosis is in Christification, because the latter includes the introduction of man into the eternal loving union of the three divine persons of God. Of course, it should be explained that with the deification, the theosis, Popovich doesn't refer to the eschatological goal of man but to a situation that starts from this life and completes in the kingdom of God, the final destiny in the life of the Holy Trinity.

The Christology as a base for the real anthropology

“All the truths of Orthodoxy emerge from one truth and converge on one truth, infinite and eternal. That truth is the God-man Christ”¹¹. Orthodox anthropology is founded on a Christology revealed by Trinitarian theology. Christ is the Godman, the Incarnate Divine Word, the Logos, who enters into the world, according to John's gospel¹². In Christ's face there is the concept of the eternal God (in the sense that he is timeless or atemporal)¹³ and of man's representation of the time (finite nature)¹⁴. He is the Savior of the world. He established His Church on His Divine Human person. The Godman is the base not only for His Church, but of the real theological anthropology¹⁵. God became total Man, while remaining total God, “so that as God He could give human nature the Divine power that would lead man to the most intimate Divine-human unity with God”¹⁶.

The goal of human being is to succeed the theosis¹⁷, as we referred above. This presupposes that man will become free from his passions and he will strug-

God and the life of his people”, 27 January 2013, <https://rowlandward.net/the-one-and-triune-god-and-the-life-of-his-people/>

¹⁰ Vl. Cvetković, “The Gospel according to Saint Justin the New: Justin Popovich on Scripture”, in M. Baker and M. Mourachian (eds), *What is the Bible? The Patristic Doctrine of Scripture*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016, 137-166), p. 139.

¹¹ J. Popovich, “The God-man the foundation of the truth of Orthodoxy”, <http://www.atlantasrbs.com/learnmore/library/God-Man-Justin.html>, [accessed 15 May 2019]

¹² Jn 1,17.

¹³ “from everlasting to everlasting, you are God”. Ps. 90:2

¹⁴ J. Popovich, *Man and God- Man*, (Athens: Astir editions, 1974), p. 18.

¹⁵ Popovich, *Man and God- Man*, p. 27.

¹⁶ Hieromonk Nektary (Radovanović), “Through the Pages of the Theological Works of Archimandrite Justin (Popović)”, 14 June 2013, <http://www.pravmir.com/through-the-pages-of-the-theological-works-of-archimandrite-justin-popovich/> [accessed 25 May 2019]

¹⁷ “The purpose of godlike beings known as humans is one: to become gradually perfect as God the Father, to become a god by grace, to attain theosis, deification, Christification, Trinitification. According to the Holy Fathers, „God became man, that man may become a god”, J. Popovich, “The God-Man Evolution”, <https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2011/06/st-justin-popovich-orthodoxy-and-theory.html> [accessed 25 May 2019]. Popovich, *Man and God-Man*, p. 20, ref. 2: The patristic terms *theosis* and *deification* are replaced by the terms *Christification*, *Logofication*, *Theanthrification* and *Trinitification*. By these latter terms Popovich declares the christological and triadological aspect of the mystery of theosis.

gle against them, in order to define his own human identity in a Christocentric approach¹⁸. As St Justin underlines, by declaring the God-Man, the Church also accepts man in his authentic and God-created unity. For without the God-Man, there can be no true man¹⁹. By this way, the combination of anthropology with orthodox theology has as result the real theanthropology²⁰. “Only the God-man is the universal solution to the enigma called man. Without the God-man and outside of the God-man, man is always - consciously or not - transformed into something sub-human, a human effigy, a superman, a devil-man”²¹. For this reason, Popovich explains that after the incarnation of Logos, it is undoubted that only with the “logosnost”, the logopoiisis, the adoption of man and nature by Godman, the man can be in paradise again²².

Popovich is completely opposite to the fact that the real anthropology should have in the center the man and not Christ²³. By this way, Popovich follows the theology of the Church Fathers and contrasts with the humanism that puts man as a center his salvation and was supported in the context of communism and atheism²⁴. For this reason, Popovich used to say: “*In Christianity truth is not a philosophical concept nor is it a theory, a teaching, or a system, but rather, it is the living theanthropic hypostasis the historical Jesus Christ*”²⁵. *The real anthropological meaning of deification is Christification.*

Vladimir Cvetkovic explains that for Popovich “*the infinity of faith and love is grounded in the infinity of God incarnate in Christ. The gospel, which is the life and work of Christ, the God-man, is endless and infinite on each side*”²⁶. Moreover, Popovich insists on the theology about the person of Godman, because he thinks that the modern theology has misunderstood and misinterpreted the nature of Godman, based on the total or partly lack of man’s communion with Christ: “Arianism has not been yet laid to its grave. Today it is more modern and more wide-spread than it has ever been... Everywhere Lord Christ is being degraded to a common man... Kant’s religion in the realm of pure mind is nothing else but the new edition of the old Arianism. Apply Kant’s criterion on Christ—what do you think you will get? You will get Christa man, Christa wise man, but never Christ the Godman. Apply Bergson’s criterion on Christ

¹⁸ Petrovich, *Eucharistic joy*, p. 10.

¹⁹ Hieromonk Nektary (Radovanović), “Through the Pages of the Theological Works of Archimandrite Justin (Popović)”.

²⁰ Petrovich, *Eucharistic joy*, p. 10.

²¹ Popovich, “The God-Man Evolution”

²² Popovich, *Man and God- Man*, p. 32.

²³ Petrovich, *Eucharistic joy*, p. 13.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ *John 14:6. Serbian Orthodox Church, “40th Anniversary since the Blessed Repose in the Lord of St. Justin (1979-2019)”, 7th April 2019, http://www.spc.rs/eng/st_justin_Popovich_celije*

²⁶ Cvetković, “The Gospel according to Saint Justin the New: Justin Popovich on Scripture”, p. 155. Justin Popović, *Tumačenje Svetog Jevandolja po Jovanu [Commentaries on the Gospel of Saint John]*, 2nd ed. (Belgrade, Valjevo: Celije Monastery, 1989, 2001), p. 233.

and you will get something just a bit more than a common man. Thus, apply one criterion, apply another one, apply all criteria all criteria of philosophies according to man will reduce the Godman to man”²⁷.

God enabled humankind to become perfect being by the incarnation of Logos. Popovich uses the term “eternal Spirit” instead of Logos in order to express the nature of the World before the incarnation: “God, the eternal Spirit, has become man, uniting blood and body, and has shown that he is the real man, the perfect man only in unity with God”²⁸. Despite of the underlining the nature of the Word as God before the incarnation, this phase can be misunderstood as a teaching of the heresy of monarchianism. Of course, Popovich explains this phrase in the next sentence and we can support that he wrote this characterization for Logos “eternal Spirit” based on the homoousion of the three Persons of the God, as it is underlined in John’s gospel: “God is Spirit, and His worshipers must worship Him in spirit and in truth”²⁹.

Also, it is obvious that Popovich follows the intimate relationship between Logos and pneuma in the Johannine text³⁰. “As these words appear in the text, the two notions of logos and pneuma constitute the two sides of the same coin, where the logos stands for the cognitive side and the pneuma for the purely material one”³¹. The Logos is pneuma (spirit) in His nature before the incarnation and remains total pneuma according to his divine nature after the incarnation in which He became total man and remained total God.

Generally, Popovich argues that the Christology is the base for the real anthropology. By following the dogmatic theology of the Church fathers, he teaches that the incarnate Word has escaped from Himself and created Himself a human being, always alike to us without sin, and so as the God-Man saved once and for all man from His inclination to non existence, because of death. The exiled man form paradise because of the original sin, the first Adam, is reborn in the face of the birth of the new Adam. Godman becomes the bridge that unites man with God, the eternity with the time³².

The incarnation of the Word reveals not only the truth about the Triune God but also the full truth about the world and the true, authentic, and complete human being is revealed. “The Mystery of Truth is not in beings, ideas or symbols; it is in one Man, the divine-human Christ, Who said, «I am the Truth».”³³ The immediate consequence of this is the patristic teaching for the man, which is necessarily founded on the glorious face of Christ. Godman is the “arche-

²⁷ Justin Popovich, *Filosofske Urvine*, (Beograd 2010). p. 184 in Petrovich, *Eucharistic joy*, p. 39. Popovich, *Man and God-Man*, p. 134.

²⁸ Popović, *Dogmatika pravoslavne crkve*, vol. III, p. 395 in in Petrovich, *Eucharistic joy*, p. 86.

²⁹ Jn 4:24.

³⁰ T. Engberg-Pedersen, *John and Philosophy : A New Reading of the Fourth Gospel*, (Oxford University Press, Year: 2017), p. 72.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² Popovich, *Man and God-Man*, p. 23.

³³ J. Popović, *Philosophie Orthodoxe de la Viritt. Dogmatique de l’Eglise Orthodoxe* vol. 1, transl. Jean-Louis Palierne, Collection La Lumiere du Thabor, (L’Age d’Homme, 1992), p. 45-49, esp. p. 47.

type”, the “pattern” and the “underlining” of the true man. True knowledge of God, coming from what the birth of Christ tells us and leads to true knowledge of man³⁴. Therefore the truth of the authentic man’s nature was revealed and became profane in the person of Christ Himself, of theanthropos. Popovich declares that the teaching concerning the human nature, the man is founded on the theandric prosopon of Christ. In Christ, man is restored to his participation in the divine nature via a divine Person’s assuming human nature. Christ died for our sins, to free us from them and redeem us from the slavery that sin introduced into mankind’s life³⁵.

Popovich uses the word theandric person that means a hypostatic union of Godhead and manhood in one person. This explains that Godhead and manhood took place dynamically because there was only one individual subject presiding over the both, the person of Christ³⁶. In the incarnation of Logos, Christ managed to reunite reciprocally the man as microcosmos to the macrocosmos, the universe as a whole³⁷.

*The Eucharist is the culmination of the theanthropic realism*³⁸

The sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is very important central event in the life of the Church. Through it the faithful becomes partakers of the Body and Blood of Christ. “partakers of the divine nature (theias koinonoi physeos)”³⁹. A person does not become a member of Christ merely in a manner of speaking; he becomes it in reality. The Eucharist is connected with the doxological prayer in Popovich’s theology. Both are the center of the entire economy of the salvation. They don’t only refer to the Triune God but they are the only way for the “eternal communion with Christ unto all ages”⁴⁰. These both elements of the Church and of Christian theology lead the believer from the immortal eternal truth to the unity, the communion with the one and all perfect Godman, the incarnate Logos⁴¹. Therefore, in the Church the person of the God-Man Christ is the only path guiding man though his mortality -after his exile from paradise- and temporality into the real immortality and eternity beyond place and time.

The communion with Christ is the goal of the Christian life, because through the sacrament of Holy Eucharist the believer is united organically with

³⁴ B. Tsigos, “The importance of the incarnation for man”, <https://www.pemptousia.gr/2017/12/i-simasia-tis-enanthropisis-gia-ton-anthropo/>, 27 December 2017, [accessed 2 May 2019].

³⁵ J. Popovich, *Man and Godman*, transl. from serbian, (publ. Astir, Papadimitrioum Athens 1974), p 17.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 27.

³⁸ Popović, *Dogmatika pravoslavne crkve*, vol. III, p. 567, in Petrovich, *Eucharistic joy*, p. 193.

³⁹ 2 Pet. 1:4

⁴⁰ Popovich, *Dogmatika pravoslavne crkve*, vol. III, p. 813, in Petrovich, *Eucharistic joy*, p. 65.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 66.

two parts of the Church, Christ and with all the Christian⁴². Popovich explains that by this way the man is adopted by Christ and succeeds the deification, the human theosis. So the sacrament of Eucharist becomes important as the mean by which divine life is communicated to the believer.

In the Eucharist, the result of the connection of the believer with the Godman creates happiness and euphoria to the man. In this important mystery that the Church has been founded, the human food is not just the body and blood of Christ, but the Godman as the person. He is the bread of life that gives eternal life to whoever feeds on this bread⁴³. He is the bread which comes down from the heaven⁴⁴. This is essential evangelic and theanthropic realism. By eating the body and the blood of Godman through the Holy Eucharist, christians will become members of Christ's body⁴⁵.

To sum up, for Popovich, the Holy Eucharist is Jesus Christ, the Godman as the fullness of knowing and Eternal Truth, Triune God.

Conclusions

Justin Popovich underlines the importance of the Godman as archetype in creation of man, in later anthropology of the patristic theology and in Eucharist which is the core reality for the Church, the body of Godman of Christ. In his writings, the serbian saint uses more the term Godman instead of Christ, perhaps he does so in order to teach by this way that the incarnate Logos is perfect man and perfect God and to avoid people to adopt any of the heresies which have to do with Christ as only human being. This idea ruled in the Western Christian Ecumenism which affirms humanity at the expense of god-humanity, as panheresy and creates the form to forge Christian Church, Christian theol-

⁴² J. Popovich, *The Inward mission of Our Church in Orthodox faith and life in Christ*, tran. by A. Gerostergios (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2005), p. 23-24. in M. L. Budde, *Beyond the Borders of Baptism: Catholicity, Allegiances, and Lived Identities*, p. 151.

⁴³ Jn. 6: 58. "I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from Heaven; that if any man eat of it, he may not die. I am the living bread which came down from Heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give, is My flesh, for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying: How can this man give us His flesh to eat? Then Jesus said to them: Amen, amen I say unto you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise Him up in the last day.

For My flesh is meat indeed: and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me. This is the bread that came down from Heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this bread, shall live forever. These things he said, teaching in the synagogue, in Capharnaum." Jn 6:48-60.

⁴⁴ Jn. 6:50.

⁴⁵ Eph. 5:30

ogy and panhuman unity through a dialogue of love, regardless the dogmatic differences based only on a humanist project instead of the teaching for the real Godman⁴⁶.

Popovich argues that the logosnost- logosity enables man to feel and to live in the incarnate Son who reveals the Triune God in Himself and in the Economy. Because every word of God contains the eternal Word of God--the Logos-it has the power to give birth and regenerate men. And when a man is born of the Word, he is born of the Truth, he has a life full of logoness. He emphasizes very often the personality of the God-man Christ because the European culture had tuned to idolatry, recognizing Christ not as the incarnate Logos but as perfect man whose characteristic is love. By this emphasis on Godman, Popovic tries to refute the teaching of a Neo-arianism that is not undermined by the new humanistic ecumenism theology of Europeans but it has begun to be backed up by many Christian theologians of the West. The Godman is removed and in his place there is the man, the European man.

Moreover, for Popovic the sacrament of holy Eucharist is the foundation of the Church, because it unites Godman with man, man with man, expands to the whole nature and through the union with the Godman, the believer is united with the attributes of Triune God. It is the mystery that creates joy in man, because it keeps him alive member in the body of Christ, the Church. By this way, the Godman manages to expand Himself through all ages and eternity.

Finally, to sum up, Popovic's theology follows systematically the Church Fathers' teaching as Athanasius' of Alexandria, John's Chrysostomos, John's Damascene and especially of the last great Father, St. Gregory Palamas, as Amfilohije (Radovic) the metropolitan notes⁴⁷.

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“ОНТОЛОГИЈА ЉУДСКЕ СОПСТВЕНОСТИ ЈЕ ЊЕНА БОЖАНСКА СЛИКА”,
АНТРОПОЛОГИЈА СВЕТОГ ЈУСТИНА ПОПОВИЋА

Јустин Поповић (1894-1979) је српски светитељ 10. века. Био је утицајан богослов, писац и надарени говорник. Исповедао је веру у Бога и јединство са Богом, као и чињенице да без Богочовека нема правог човека. У божанској слици, човеку су дате божанске моћи за достизањем вечне савршености. У центру Поповићеве антропологије је јединство са Богочовеком, што дефинише и људски идентитет.

⁴⁶ B. Lubardić, “Revolt against the Modern World’: Theology and the Political in the Thought of Justin Popovic”, K. Stoeckl, In. Gabriel, Ar. Papanikolaou (eds), *Political Theologies in Orthodox Christianity: Common Challenges – Divergent*, (London – Oxford – New York: T&T Clark, 2017), pp. 207-226, esp. p. 214-215. Cf. Vl. Cvetkovic, “St. Justin the New (Popović) on the Church of Christ”, in *the Body of the Living Church: The Patristic Doctrine of the Church*, ed. Nicholas Marinides and Seraphim Danckaert (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press).

⁴⁷ Amfilohije (Radović), “Eulogy in Memory of the Blessed Fr. Justin”, 15 January 2019, <http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/eulogy.aspx>.

Епископ Атанасије (Јефтић) подржава такав став и истиче да Отац Јустин паралелно са новозаветним антропоцентризмом или Христоцентризмом, указује на Богохуманизам тако да читава хришћанска философија и православна богословска мисао бивају уједињење у антропологији. За Светог Јустина, сваки хришћанин у Телу Христовом је продужетак Христовог оваплоћења и део Икономије спасења.

