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## Ontology and Ethics

**Abstract:** Ethics as a term, in the Orthodox tradition, was something unknown. It is almost not at all found in the Fathers of the Church, and all up until recently it was not taught in schools either. In this paper we shall first try to clarify terminology. What do we mean when we talk about the ontology, and what when talking about ethics? In what follows we shall also explore the relationship between them within the Orthodox theology. Do ethics and ontology always dwell in harmony? Finally, we shall check to see how we can reach an ontological understanding of ethics in the light of the Gospel and Orthodox traditions.

**Key words:** Ontology, ethics, ethos, Church, salvation.

### 1. Preface

This theme sounds theoretical. However it bares serious consequences related to the Church life and the life of every human being.

Ethics has definitely gained the most important place in our life but also in the life of the Church. Taught in schools, theology faculties, it presents for all Christians something equal to the Dogmatics, if not even more important than that. Departure of the Dogmatics is more and more tolerated in society but in the Church as well. Nevertheless, violation of the ethical guidelines is inadmissible.

It is interesting that, all up until the recent times, ethics as a term, in the Orthodox tradition, was something unknown. It is almost not at all found in the Fathers of the Church, and all up until recently it was not taught in schools either. It is a kind of Western product, like so many other things, that has enthroned in our Church. It is tragic, however, that we cannot monitor the volatility and instability that characterize the ethics of the West because of conservatism that characterizes our Church. This creates a continuous and progressive gap between our Church and society, which is, by its nature, forced to adapt to the ethical changes that are taking place in contemporary Western

societies. Examples of this are numerous: divorce, premarital and extramarital relationships, homosexuality, euthanasia, etc. Where will this situation take us to? On what criteria will our Church take a stance on any of these changes in ethics?

Variability of ethics testifies that in itself it cannot justify its existence, nor claim an absolute authority and importance. The importance of ethics and authority, for those who believe in God, i.e. members of the Church, springs up from the will of God expressed in the Scripture, Sacred Tradition and the Church's life. However, here huge problems are caused. Who can authoritatively interpret the will of God?

In Roman Catholicism the thing is simple. Only the Church, which is ultimately expressed through the Pope, correctly interprets the will of God and thus is binding on the faithful. For Protestants the Bible is the only interpreter of God's will, which, however, also needs to be interpreted. So the Holy Scripture leaves special interpreters of the Bible, which creates a great diversity of opinions regarding exactly what Scripture means in relation to specific ethical issues. The conservative, literal interpreters of the Scripture (the so-called "fundamentalists") are radically different from the so-called "liberals", who explore what the Bible wanted to say beyond what is written, and set the text of the Bible now in its historical context, by questioning its meaning. Much of what is said in the Scripture depends on the cultural influence of former epochs, and thus does not have the importance and authority for each epoch.

In the Orthodox Church, things are more complicated, especially in the recent times. Who is it that can authoritatively interpret the will of God concerning the ethical issues? Today, in Orthodoxy, there are these three tendencies to answer this question.

a) The "Fundamentalist" tendency reminiscent of the extreme Protestant conservatism. The literal interpretation of Scripture reveals God's will. The parts of the Scriptures are summed up, and cited as it were, in order to support the responses in relation to ethical issues. At the same, "fundamentalist" way, are added the quotes from the works of the Church Fathers, or as an interpretation of the Bible, or as additions to these, literally interpreted, in the form of a sacred canon. This tendency, nowadays, tends to become the ruling orthodoxy.

b) The "Juridical" tendency, reminiscent of the Roman Catholic Church, wants the institution of the Church, such as bishops, or individually (which is the less common case), or, to have the authority on ethical issues. This tendency is present in Greece today, in particular through the creation of a "councilar committees" that deal with ethical issues and communicate their findings to the public through official proclamations and councilar decisions, as "official position" of the Church in relation to ethical issues. Although this position in the Vatican is absolutely popular, the Orthodox Church is still in its infancy. Still no "official" pronouncements of the Orthodox Church in relation to

ethical issues, although the pressure in this direction is very strong. It is like as if something inside the very cell of Orthodox opposes this “juridical” tendency.

c) The “Charismatic” tendencies, in accordance with which the authoritative interpretation of God’s will bind to certain “spiritual” people, who with their gift of discernment and insight, decide what is ethically right, either by principle or on a case by case basis. It is this tendency quite widespread in the Orthodox Church, and it seeks to supplant and replace the last two listed above.

Parallel coexistence of these three trends currently shows no problems. However, it should be considered that difficulties will certainly arise when these two do not completely agree on all issues, because many believers will be forced to choose between what the official Church tells them and what they are advised by their spiritual leaders.

The complexity of such a dominant status in Orthodoxy testifies that, in the Orthodox tradition, ethics in itself is a problematic notion. We are talking here about something that is imposed on us from outside, and therefore is not a natural element of our Church. Our Orthodox tradition has never expressed an absolute interest, nor in turn has it given the advantage to what man does, but rather went further, taking an interest in what man is all about. In the present this has always been a fundamental difference between Western and Orthodox approaches to man. That is why this difference makes a very important subject that occupies us all in this symposium: “What is the relationship between ethics and ontology”?

In this humble paper we shall first try to clarify terminology. What do we mean when we talk about the ontology, and what when talking about ethics? In what follows we shall also explore the relationship between them within the Orthodox theology. Do ethics and ontology always dwell in harmony? Finally, we shall check to see how we can reach an ontological understanding of ethics in the light of the Gospel and Orthodox traditions.

## **2. The Notion of Ontology**

Ontology is a word about a being, as evidenced by the term, which is not used in philosophy until the seventeenth century, when it was first mentioned by Goclenius (*Philosophicum Lexikon*, 1613). In the more developed form it was used by Clauberg (*Metaphysica de Ente*, 1656), and was finally imposed in the eighteenth century by Christian Wolff (*Philosophia prima, sive Ontologia*, 1729). Since then, Western philosophers cannot avoid dealing with this term. They either change its original meaning (Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, Haussler, etc.), or remove it from its traditional places, i.e. from metaphysics (Levinas), since the ontology has a central place in philosophy.

Here we do not deal in detail with the history of ontology. We will keep to the term granted by its founder Aristotle, although he did not use this

expression. Ontology is thus the study of “being as a being”, and about the existence and eternal existence. It is the science of what Aristotle called the “essence”, giving a dual meaning to this notion: first essence which means a concrete being and the other essence meaning a general and catholic being (e.g., Socrates = the first essence, human being = the second essence).

Ontological question in the old Hellenic philosophy has always contained the problem of confrontation between the existence, i.e. emergence and disappearance. Heraclites’ observation that “everything flows” and nothing is permanent, that is to say unchanging (“no one can jump twice into the same river”) created by the old Greeks existential uncertainty. If everything is changing, then what is true? How can we say that one being is this and that but not something else? How can we give the names to the beings, to identify them, not to muddle, and yet not to doubt their veracity? The problem of ontology, therefore, is not theoretical or minor, unimportant. It refers to the problem of the truth of being, which reliably means that people can agree on what is true and what is false, what is one’s own belief and what is solid and unquestionable truth. Ontology provides security (the truth), which transience and volatility put in question.

What is it, then, compact and immutable in every being, which allows us to see it as true, despite its volatility? Plato suggests that the ideas of these beings are solid and unchanging, regardless of the fact that things and beings are constantly changing (they come to life and die), as it is evident in our general experience. For example, a tree can rot and die, but the idea of the tree remains, which allows us to speak the truth about the tree. There is no truth without immortal ideas, and everything is just an opinion. Other ancient philosophers located the immutability of being in another place: Tales in the water, Anaximan in the air, the Pythagoreans in numbers and so on. However, all of them had one thing in common... To find a firm truth of being we should seek the beginning from which the beings derived. True and constant is only that which existed at the beginning. The first cause is the truth, because from there begins the movement, attrition and volatility. Ontology of the ancient Hellenes was “protological”, i.e. ontology of the first cause. We come to the truth only when returning back.

Ontological problem was inherited by the Fathers of the Church, because they were Greeks, namely the followers of the same culture, the same education. They had the same consciousness, formed under the influence of the Hellenic philosophy. Consequently, they were interested in the problem of truth in relation to the decay and volatility of being. Since everything is changing and dying, what is it then that is true and unchanging?

Some of the Christian philosophers, like Origin, influenced by the ancient Hellenic philosophy, adopted Plato’s “protological” ontology. The truth of being is in the beginning, from which they fell away and invited to return to.

Nothing material, corruptible and perishable is not true (e.g. body). Only the souls are true because they are the only eternal. There have always been and always will be.

However, the mainstream patristic theology did not accept this ontology. There are two key elements upon which the ontology of the Fathers is based.

a) The truth of being is not in their beginning, but on their end. The path to such ontology was first opened by St. Irenaeus of Lyons, underlining that man was not created perfect from the start, but as a little child, who would in time have used his freedom to be developed in the eschaton. So the truth of beings is not in the beginning, but in the end, not in what they were, but in what they will be.

b) Seeing that the truth of beings is placed at the end, time and volatility of beings that frightened the ancient Greeks so much, became the elements of ontology for the Christians. Only through time and through this corruptible body, beings can reach their true existence. While, therefore, Platonism sought ontology out of time and the body, the Fathers saw the ontological assumptions of the truth of being in time and the body. Without the time and the body there are no true material beings.

There are two reasons that forced the Fathers of the Church to change thus the ancient Hellenic ontology. First, Christ is the truth of being. This means that, as St. Maximus the Confessor points out, all creation, that is to say, all the beings truly exist only within (in the relationship with) the Mystery of Christ, which is rounded (ends) in the eschaton. The Mystery of Christ, however, is impossible without the time and body, within which the freedom of the Holy Spirit is manifested. Consequently, Christology, in its pneumatological sense, obliged the Fathers to relocate the ontology from the beginning to the end, and to incorporate it in time, history and body, the three elements that the ancient Hellenic thought could include in its ontology.

We will record, therefore, the characteristics of the Patristic ontology in the context of our topic, because it will be needed when analyzing the relation between ontology and ethics. Under the ontology we mean exploration of the truth of being, which is common to Hellenic philosophy and the patristic thought, but not out of time, history and the material world, but within these, and yet not at the beginning of beings, but on their end.

### **3. The Meaning of Ethics**

The ethics differ from ontology in that it is not interested in the truth of beings, of beingness and existence of beings, but rather in what those things do and how they behave (conduct), based on parameters that are built upon logical principles. While thus the ontology is concerned for all the beings and

their truths, ethics will be limited to the man and to what he does. The basic characteristics of ethics in relation to the ontology are the following:

a) The existence and practice are identified (exist = doing). Since the first centuries of Christianity, this has been characteristic of the philosophy and theology of the West (Tertullian), culminating in scholastic theology of the Middle Ages, where, as Gilson proved, existence was identified with doing, to the extent that God, who is the par excellence being, was seen as *actus purus*. Western thought has made a practice from ontology, i.e. it made practice as the last element of being, the truth of being, including absolutization of ethics.

b) Behavior is based on logic. The Moral is only what agrees with the logic. If we accept that logical is only what is identified with good ideas and the like (Plato), in so far morally is what is ideal (idealistic). Man ought to behave in accordance with certain prototypes that do not arise from experience, but are inflicted on him from the outside. If, however, what is logical is at the same time useful (brings enjoyment, etc.), which is domesticated in the West, then it is moral all that serve these objectives. Thus, ethics becomes prey (victim) of logic (a practice that is logical).

c) Human logic imposes on nature. As strange as it may seem, ethics can never respect nature. When we assert that something is moral because it is “natural” or “physiological”, what we mean is not what nature really is, but what would be logical to think so. In that way unnatural disorder and chaos (in nature) are considered, but in reality, especially in our days, as confirmed by the natural science, nothing is more natural than chaos, turmoil and unpredictability of nature. Similar examples from sexual ethics and social life (marriage, family, etc.) could be pointed out. Invocation of natural ethics is nothing more than the imposition of the human logic on nature. A crying and tragic example is the environmental problem. On the basis of the correct logic it is considered natural that nature serves man. The consequences of this are well known. Even today, when we develop an ecological ethics, the main concern is how will logical (rational) human behavior be organized with the aim of obtaining greater benefits for man and not for the respect of the same nature. Ethics is by its definition anthropocentric and rational, and therefore can never be ontological.

Therefore the ethics is in the contrary to the just described ontology of the Fathers. We have seen that eschatological ontology is of the Holy Fathers. Ethics is depleted in behavior and doing. It does not care for the decay and death. It does not have the “eternal being” as a goal, but only “well-being”, and with an emphasis on “good” rather than “being.” It is enough that you are a good person, and it does not matter that you will die. Ontology aims to conquer death while ethics to defeat evil, as if death is not the worst evil, “the last enemy”, as St. Paul called it. Ethics in this way throws dust in the eyes of man, so he

could not see that he is mortal, and that ethics ultimately offers him nothing to solve the problem of death.

Ethics, therefore, comes into conflict with the patristic ontology in respect to the evaluation of the body. Underestimation of death is inevitably accompanied by underestimating the body, which is the primary carrier of death. While theology, due to its ontology, is obliged to teach about the resurrection of the body in the last days, ethics is not interested in that sort of thing. It is satisfied by the immortality of the soul, in its idealistic, platonic form, along with social and individual happiness in its rational (logical), hedonistic form. None of our ethics compels us to believe in the resurrection of the body. On the other hand, ontology that does not take the body as the ontological element of the being, which, in some way, does not teach the eternal existence of the body, cannot be logically consistent. Ontology without the victory over death is meaningless, because it is a false “existence” of a being without “eternal existence”. However, if the being has a body as its ontological characteristics, as in the patristic theology, then “eternal existence” must assume the resurrection, and not just the resurrection of the dead, but the resurrection of the body.

#### **4. The Consequences of Conflict Between Ontology and Ethics**

We said at the beginning that, at first glance, our topic is theoretical. It is time to show that it is not. Here are a few examples to show that ethics and ontology have a different approach, and differently understand the Christian life in the crucial existential questions.

##### **4.1. The Problem of Sin**

What is a sin? For ethics sin is a problem of human behavior, disrespect of the code of moral principles which are, either God-given, or agreed upon by the community, i.e. society (democracy). For ontology the consequence of sin is death, “in it (in death) we have all sinned”. For ethics we commit sin because we transgress the law, while for the ontology we sin because we are mortal.

The consequences of different approaches to sin are enormous. Ethical approach to sin builds confidence, or simply hope that the evil can be won by human effort, which gives rise to the appearance of different types of messianism, and we have some survivors in our epoch. Ontological approach acknowledges that evil will take various forms until death that gives birth to sin is defeated.

Another terrible consequence is that for ethical understanding of sin the division of sinners onto “better” and “worse” people is acceptable. The pharisaic ethics, from well known biblical story, as well as civic ethics of our society, both belong to this category. We imprison “bad” people with ease, while deceiving others we assign ourselves the label of a “good” man. This is quite natural, because moral behavior, i.e. what is good and what is evil, is measured

by human logic, or even by some will of God, always interpreted by human logic. However, such a thing is impossible in the ontological approach to sin. Human logic does not determine what is good and what is evil, but the truth of being. It is true that all creatures are subject to decay and death, which means that we are all sinners (“in it — in the death — all have sinned”).

It sounds very strange today that sin springs from death, that is to say the ontology, but not from human behavior. However, it is known that none of the passions would have affected us if there was not subconscious fear of death: neither love for pleasure, nor love for money, nor hatred, nor animosity toward each other. All these and other similar passions hide discomfort, and are an attempt to self-affirmation in relation to the death that jeopardizes us. Sin has ontological rather than ethical roots.

If this is understood, then distinction between “good” and “bad” people disappears. We are left with the monastic virtues of ontological rather than ethical, that is to say false, self-condemnation. We are left with the virtues of humility, and above all, love for sinners, that is love for our enemies, not out of obligation (the moral duty), but because of ontological affinity. When you love your neighbor as yourself, you do it as mortal as you are, because ontologically there is nothing truer of our shared mortality.

Sin is getting thus the ontological meaning of mismatch. This is evident in many instances, but particularly in the case of reproduction. Why did the Fathers (Gregory of Nyssa, Maxim the Confessor, etc.) connect sin with sexual activity? Many continue to oppose this view, arguing that it grew out of the monastic extremes. On the basis of moral criteria they ask: “Is sex evil? Are marriage and human reproduction a sin”? But fathers do not think ethically. None of this, ethically, is subject to condemnation, in the sense that it should cause remorse and penalty. However, the criteria are ontological. They are associated with what we call “mismatch”. Man and animals also, aim to overcome death through reproduction, which is the survival of a particular being. Instead, he achieves only survival of the species, and even that he does not know for how long. Specific being who was born is mortal since its conception. From ontological point of view procreation is a sin: “In sin did my mother bore me” (cf. the interpretation of St Maxim). Identification of sin with morality, leads to either Puritanism or the unlimited freedom and liberalism. Ontological approach leads to a feeling of our natural mismatch and creates in us two types of convictions. First, no one is without sin, “even if lives for only one day.” Second, the nature has the ontological problem and we cannot base our hope for salvation on it.

#### **4.2. The Problem of Salvation**

Moral gives hope to transformation of people through their logical behavior. Ontology, however, does not give such hope. No matter how good we have



become, if we die evil will continue to exist. It is necessary to defeat death, as evil would be defeated. This cannot provide our mortal nature. It demands a new birth, other than biological, that's precisely what Christ offers by His Body. In Christ we die during baptism, being born again to new life. This is our only hope of salvation, not a virtue, or moral life, asceticism or so. Without Christ and the Church there is no salvation. One reason is the sole cause of this: salvation is ontological rather than moral endeavor. Salvation is a victory over death.

Once this is understood, the ethics gives way to the ontology. The Church does not save by what she does (preaching, religious activities, humanitarian programs, ethical pronouncements, etc.), but by what she is. What is the Church? The Church is the network of relationships which abolish death. Church is a way of existence that is not ethics, in terms of the system of principles by which people act, but rather a communion of persons modeled on the Holy Trinity. Here, the difference between ethics and ontology is more than obvious.

Within the context of ethics, we identify persons based on their personal traits (good, bad, etc.). In the ontology of personness, properties do not specify a person. This comes out from the theology of the Trinity, where the persons do not differ on the basis of their moral or natural features, which are common to all the Persons of the Holy Trinity (e.g. omnipotence, goodness, omniscience, etc.). If this is applied to human persons in the Church, then ethics, which always differ people based on their properties (good, bad, brilliant, wise, etc.), is repealed. The Church repeals the natural and ethical properties, and consequently the ethics itself: "God chose the crazy ones to this world to confound the wise...". The Church is not based on the natural and moral gifts of its faithful, but on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which can complement the natural, but not ethical shortcomings. Salvation, offered by the Church, does not lie in the moral improvement of people, as it is often claimed. The Church has in her bosom so many people with moral shortcomings, as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians: "If you bite and devour each other, watch out not to exterminate each other".

In this context, the question of holiness is asked. It is thought that the sanctity is identified with moral perfection. Even the holiness of God is presented in textbooks of Dogmatics as a moral perfection (e.g. Andrucos, Trembelas etc.). However, it disagrees not only with what the Apostle Paul wrote in his letters, calling believers "saints", despite what he says about them, as we can see in the example of the Galatians, but also with the entire history of our Church. Thus the Byzantine emperors, such as Constantine the Great, Saint Irena of Athens and so on, we recognize as saints, despite the fact that they did things incompatible with the principles of morality. St Irena blinded her son; the Holy Prophet Elijah slew five hundred priests of god Baal, etc. Based on today's moral criteria, many of the saints of our Church would have been

excluded. The Church consecrates us not on our moral improvement, but on the basis of repentance, i.e. confirmation that our sinfulness is an ontological reality. This explains the justification of publicans and condemnation of the morally perfect Pharisees.

### 5. For an Ontological Ethics

After all, it is clear that in our Orthodox tradition ontology and ethics do not match. Ontology is interested in the “eternal existence”, seeing the sin as a consequence, or as an expression of disruption of community between creation and God, and slavery to death. Ethics believes in logical arrangement of human behavior, in order to limit, as much as possible, the painful evil consequences to human life. It does not care about death, nor is it trying to liberate us from it. However, the question is: does this mean that the ontology does not affect human behavior? Would it be possible to talk about an ontological ethics?

The conclusion will be clear if we remember that the Bible, the works of the Holy Fathers of the Church, the sacred canons, etc., rich in commandments and recommendations related to human behavior. Church is more than interested in human behavior, which, after all, among us Orthodox, resulted in the so-called “Christian ethics”. How can we reconcile the interest of the Church about the behavior of her members with the conflict between ethics and ontology, which we have described? What kind of behavior does ontology offer in the Church? Based on what we said we could formulate the following conclusions (thinking):

1. One should distinguish ethics from ethos (custom). Ethics is, as we have described, a set of principles and regulatory behavior, which is processed and defined by human logic, or by itself, or as an interpretation of a transcendent cause (God or the moral imperative of Kant, or any cause acceptable by human logic). Contrary to this, ethos does not pass through human logic, i.e. is not conditioned by it, but gets into the shape through symbols, which a community communicates without logical justification. For example, when I put the sign of the cross on myself, I express a habit, or ethos, which transmits a code of conduct, that is to say relations, through the symbols which cannot be logically justified — I do not know why I put the sign of the cross! However, they reflect my community with a municipality that has designated one symbol, which helps the members to create a mutual community. This is called ethos (habit), because we are identified in this symbol from the childhood, we did not learn it by logic, but by imitating and repeating a behavior that is regarded as a general behavior of all members of the Church, handed down from generation to generation. The same is with kissing the priest’s hand, coming to the church, the liturgical symbols and so on. Nowhere here does logic mediate, except if it is not mediated by those who want to make us “conscious

Christians" (!). Therefore, it is about a conduct, i.e. relationship, which is not preceded by any ethical "must".

Among simple faithful of our Church it has always been considered "ethics" of this sort. He went to church, simply because he was learned to do so and he is used to it. He did not think about to kill his neighbor, because since his childhood he learned to live with him, to play together and so on. In his head he has no moral code, nor ethics. Behavior, attitude toward each other, are resulting from his being, as understood by the Apostle Paul who wrote that Christians should not lie one another, not to fornicate, etc., because through baptism they died and resurrected to a new life, and because they are "one body and limbs of one another", not because it was against some sort of ethical principles. There is no, therefore, a system of moral values that dictate specific behavior, but an ontology, which is identified with the specific mode of existence. Without this ontology, there is no ethics.

2. There are no generally applicable ethical principles above personality. None ethical value can logically justify the sacrifice or humility of a specific person. The existence of a single person prevails over any ethics. This is stated by all in the time of the death of a loved person. Their disadvantages used to irritate us during their life. But at that moment, one would say: "If only they came back to life, even their shortcomings would not interest me". The existence of a person we love is more important than their behavior. Ontology can abolish ethics when it comes to love.

3. Ethical properties do not determine the existence, i.e. the truth of man. This is a very serious issue that reveals how ethics can be dangerous when it takes the place of ontology. We used to say that someone is a thief because he stole something. Can one sole act determine the being (selfness) of a man? If the one who stole steals no more, or will not steal again in the future, can his being be determined based on one offense? In our society, in which ethics governs, there is, so called "criminal record." If someone is convicted of any crimes, they are stigmatized forever. Ethics, therefore, becomes ontology. In the Church, things are not like that. No deed, no matter how sinful, has ontological significance for man. The forgiveness of sins, granted by the Church affirms that the truth (being) of a man is not determined on the basis of the deeds he does, otherwise he should be forever characterized as a sinner, by the sinful act he did. When God says, "I will not reprimand your iniquities any more" shows that sin can be erased from the memory of God, i.e. from the sinner's being and hypostasis, as what God remembers that exists, and what He does not remember ("I know you not") has no hypostasis.

4. Only eschaton gives a true being. The ancient Greek tragedy shows that man is dependent on his past. All the accidents that come to him are the consequences of a cause in the past. The Gospel shows quite the opposite. When the disciples asked the Lord whether the blind from the birth had sinned

himself, or his parents had, so that he was born blind, the Lord moves categorically cause of blindness in the future from the past: "Neither he sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him". While an ethical act, from an ethical perspective, depends on the past, from an ontological perspective the true meaning of the same judges and reveals in relation to the future.

Ontological essence of ethics is in seeing every person as a future saint. He should not be identified with his work. Ethics should not be allowed to determine our ontological relationship with each other. In this way, the ethics from justice becomes love. Justice inflicts us to give everyone what they deserve — they are entitled to it. The one who worked for two hours should be paid more than the one who worked for just one hour. Otherwise, an injustice occurs. That is justice, that is ethic... The Gospel changes this in the famous story about the workers in the vineyard. The only ethics that the Gospel knows about is "love the sinner, or your enemy". This is one illogical ethics and immoral morality. It frees us from the bondage of practice, for it does not allow ethical practices to inhibit our freedom and love. If it limits our freedom and love, forcing us to identify others on the basis of ethical quality, not on the basis that they exist, then ethics cannot even bring in itself neither love for the sinners nor: "Love your enemies, too", nor to understand the story about the unfair paid workers, nor "The Sermon on the Mount."

## 6. Conclusion

Ethics is acceptable only if it obeys the ontology, when stems from the principle that the highest value is not good (Plato), or happiness, but existence. The ethics that respects the existence makes us to independently of the ethical properties, want eternal existence for the one we love. The ethics, in which all the virtues and values are seen as sleigh-bells, in relation to the existence of our beloved fellows. Ethics that is willing to sacrifice for love. This is the only ethics that could be reconciled with the ontology.

The Gospel and the Church exist in order to free man from the bondage of decay and death. Our civilization has turned its face against this, looking how it will, with the help of ethics, make human life even much happier and easier. However, man was created for immortality, and the ethics by itself cannot save him. Especially the Church needs to take care of this, not to forget her ontological predestination. Ethics will always pose a threat to the Church and for man in general.

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## Онтологија и Етика

Све до новијег доба етика је, као термин, у нашем православном предању, нешто непознато. Скоро уопште се не среће код отаца Цркве, а све до новијег времена није се предавала у школама. Променљивост етике сведочи да сама по себи не може оправдати своје постојање, нити претендовати на апсолутни ауторитет и важност. У овој студији покушаћемо најпре да разјаснимо терминологију. Шта подразумевамо под тим кад говоримо о онтологији, а шта кад говоримо о етици? У наставку ћемо истражити и какав је однос између њих у оквиру православне теологије. Да ли се етика и онтологија увек налазе у хармоничном односу? На крају, покушаћемо да видимо на који начин бисмо могли доћи до једног онтолошког схватања етике, у светлу јеванђеља и православног предања.

**Key words:** Онтологија, етика, етос, Црква, спасење.

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