

Fear as a Learning Tool in *Ecclesiastes*: A Dialogue in the Light of Orthodox Patristic Theology

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In the Old Testament narratives, fear as a concept constitutes a fundamental normative principle and characterizes all human beings regardless of their racial or ethnic origins. The Bible contains numerous instances of psychological and emotional reactions associated with fear. J. Pedersen argues that the function of fear, and especially the fear of God in the Old Testament, is deeply rooted in the psyche of the Jewish people¹. Indeed, the Israeli people collectively detect the divine presence in situations and phenomena that transcend human logic, possessed by feelings of awe and fear². The Creator/God and the sense of His glory transcend the individual human existence³. The awe and fear of His presence is perceived and incorporated into the Israel's collective experience of Israel, as it is described in the events of the Exodus and the Theophany at Sinai⁴. Fear mixed with terror arises when natural phenomena occur (storms, earthquakes, etc.), which remind Israel of

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1. J. Pedersen, *Israel, Its Life and Culture III-IV*, Oxford University Press, London 1940, p. 623 ff.

2. *Deut.* 6, 13: «κύριον τὸν θεόν σου φοβηθήσῃ καὶ αὐτῷ λατρεύσεις».

3. Cf. A. J. O. Van Der Wal, "Qohelet 12,1a: A Relatively Unique Statement in Israel's Wisdom Tradition", in: A. Schoors (ed.), *Qohelet in the Context of Wisdom*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 1998, pp. 413-418, here p. 418.

4. *Ex.* 20, 18 ff. Israel's fear resides in God's glory, and Moses's fear in the Burning Bush (*Ex.* 3, 6) while Jacob's fear resides in his night vision (*Gen.* 18, 17). Among others, see cf. W. C. Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids 1978, p. 170.

the impending divine wrath⁵. It is also associated with the consequences of human choices in relation to Yahweh, such as in the deluge, where all living creatures are destroyed and only Noah's ark⁶ is saved, or in Sodoma and Gomorrah, which are destroyed by fire and brimstone⁷. The fear expressed in worship is linked to the respect for the presence of Yahweh and constitutes the natural reaction of the people to theophanies, such as the fear of Gideon⁸ and Isaiah⁹.

God does not experience mental, psychological, or emotional changes – a condition characterizing the post-Fall humans¹⁰. Furthermore, He does not behave vindictively or in a hostile fashion towards humans¹¹, and He does not wish to terrify them; in fact, He sometimes reassures them with the characteristic phrase: «μὴ φοβοῦ» (“do not be afraid”)¹². The feeling of fear in the authentic expression of faith is balanced by trust in God. From this perspective, the fear of the Lord can also be understood as a gift from God, according to the prophet Jeremiah: «καὶ τὸν φόβον μου δώσω εἰς τὴν καρδίαν αὐτῶν πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀποστῆναι αὐτοὺς ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ» (“I will put my fear in their hearts so that they will not turn away from me”)¹³. It follows, then, that piety and respect –the fear of God– motivates the soul: the devout person may form a personal relationship with the Creator/God.

These interpretative approaches converge with R. Otto's views and are consistent with his notion of *Mysterium tremendum* and his strong

5. *Is.* 2, 10; 2, 19; *Sol.* 5, 2. The feeling of fear and terror is linked with the coming of the Day of the Lord. Cf. *Matth.* 28, 4, where the terror of the guard is recorded at the tomb of the risen Jesus.

6. *Gen.* 7, 6.

7. *Gen.* 19, 24-28.

8. *Kr.* 6, 22 ff.

9. *Is.* 6, 5.

10. Pseudo-Maximos the Confessor, *Κεφάλαια διάφορα θεολογικά τε καὶ οἰκονομικά καὶ περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας* [*Κεφάλαια 16-500*], PG 90, 1185-1392, here Ἐκατοντάς Πρώτη, ξς', PG 90, 1205A: «Ἡδονὴ καὶ λύπη, ἐπιθυμία καὶ φόβος, καὶ τὰ τούτοις ἐπόμενα, τῇ φύσει τῶν ἀνθρώπων προηγουμένως οὐ συνεκτίσθη· ἐπεὶ καὶ εἰς τὸν ὄρον ἂν συνετέλουν τῆς φύσεως».

11. See G. Mantzaridis, *Μέθεξις Θεοῦ*, Orthodoxos Kypseli Publications, Thessaloniki 1979, p. 54.

12. *Kr.* 6, 23; *Deut.*, 10, 12.

13. *Hier.* 39, 40.

assertion that the presence of *numen* in individuals is the foundation of religion throughout history and the world¹⁴. Fear as a concept “אִרִי” is characterized by a dynamic set of associations that incorporate a multitude of different meanings¹⁵. Most scholars agree that the fear of God can simply refer to the terror of the divine. Noteworthy is T. Longman’s view on this matter; he somewhat differs by introducing a distinction between what he calls *positive fear* – fear is associated with awe and worship–, and *negative fear* – the *genuine fear* or *terror*¹⁶. An article written by Z. Schwáb is important for a deeper understanding of the fear of the Lord and wisdom; in it, the author studies in depth the *Proverbs* to see whether the fear of the Lord is the source of wisdom or *vice versa*. The biblical researcher concludes that, despite the variety of opinions, there is scientific consensus that the fear of the Lord is the prerequisite for wisdom¹⁷.

14. The term *Mysterium tremendum* is defined as the feeling of the terrifying, the mysterious, and the overwhelming, which causes us to feel insignificant, submissive, humble, and creative, while the term *Mysterium fascinans* is defined as the feeling of excitement and comfort that leads to spiritual fulfillment and happiness. According to Rudolf Otto, *tremendum* and *mysterium* constitute conscious experiences. For a thorough understanding of how Rudolf perceives the notion of fear, see, among others, E. Ellis, “Reconsidering the Fear of God in *Job* 37: 14-24 and *Qohelet* 3: 1-17 in the light of Rudolf Otto’s *Das Heilige*”, *OTE* 28, 1 (2015), pp. 53-69 or his unpublished PhD, which is available at the University of Stellenbosch Theological School: E. Ellis, “*The Fear of God*” in *Job 37:14-24 and Qohelet 3:1-17 in the Light of Rudolf Otto’s Das Heilige*, M. Div. Diss., University of Stellenbosch, 2013.

15. S 3372; *BDB* 431a; *HALOT* 2, 432b; *TDOT* 6, 290-315; *TWOT* 907; *NIDOTTE* 3707.

16. T. Longman, “Fear of the Lord”, in: T. Longman & P. E. Enns (eds.), *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove 2008, pp. 201-205, here p. 201.

17. According to Z. Schwáb, we can divide the different scholars who deal with the relationship between wisdom and fear into three categories: a) those who emphasize that the fear of God precedes wisdom; their main positions are summarized by Gerhard von Rad; b) those who argue that the fear of God precedes wisdom, but at the same time emphasize that wisdom leads to an increase in fear, and, therefore, fear is not only the wisdom’s presupposition but also its result, with M. Fox as its main proponent; c) those who argue that fear does not refer to something that precedes wisdom in time and it is clearly distinct from it; therefore, the fear of the Lord is understood as the source of wisdom [Z. Schwáb, “Is Fear of the Lord the Source of Wisdom or Vice Versa?”, *VT* 63, 4 (2013), pp. 652-662, here pp. 653-654].

As R. Whybray observes, the Ecclesiastes refers to the fear of God only in four passages: a) in 5, 6, where the final imperative “*fear God*” refers to the warnings containing in the previous verses about issues such as breaking the oaths made to God, which can lead to punishment; b) in 8, 12-13, which, despite its vagueness, is an assurance that those who fear God will be accepted by Him, while the impious will be rejected by Him because they have no fear of Him; c) in the passage 7, 15-18, which, although similarly ambiguous, it also concludes by reassuring that those who fear God will “escape” or –possibly– will “succeed” in escaping from the unpleasant situations that are coming, because they had followed Qoheleth’s warning by opposing certain forms of foolish or evil behavior that could eventually have led to destruction; d) in 3, 14, where Ecclesiastes observes that, since God’s actions, unlike human ones, are reliable and not subject to change, this should inspire the corresponding awe and due respect. From this set of excerpts, only verse 5, 6 specifies God’s reactions to human behavior. The important thing here is that this particular passage does not support the view that Yahweh is a harsh, distant, or indifferent God, and does not go beyond the belief expressed in the wisdom literature and elsewhere in the Old Testament¹⁸, that Yahweh will reject the impious¹⁹.

As it has already been mentioned at the beginning of the book, Qoheleth attempts to seek the profit for human existence in the cycle of time that has been set forth for each and every person²⁰. He sparingly uses his references to the fear of God²¹. He utilizes the motif of fear four times²² and at the end of his research in *Eccl.* 12, 13-14, in order to summarize his didactic-theological proposal in his epilogue²³: Despite

18. Cf. *Prov.* 15, 25.

19. R. N. Whybray, “Qoheleth as a Theologian”, in: A. Schoors (ed.), *Qohelet in the Context of Wisdom*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 1998, pp. 239-265, here p. 265.

20. *Eccl.* 9. C. L. Seow, *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction, and Commentary*, [The Anchor Yale Bible 18C], Doubleday, New York 1997, pp. 21-33.

21. H.-P. Müller, „Wie sprach Qohälät von Gott?“, *VT* 18, 4 (1968), pp. 507-521.

22. *Eccl.* 3, 14· 5:6· 7, 15-18· 8, 12-13.

23. A. Bornapé, “‘Fear God and Keep his Commandments’: The Character of Man and the Judgment of God in the Epilogue of Ecclesiastes”, *DaLo* 17, 2 (2018), pp. 37-59, here p. 37; K. Dell, “A wise man Reflecting on Wisdom”, *TynBul* 71, 1 (2020), pp. 137-152.

the futility that pervades human life and the apparent lack of order in the world, humanity should live with the knowledge of man's position in relation to Yahweh – a situation that Ecclesiastes directly links to the fear of God²⁴. M. Sneed agrees with this position and argues that the fear of God must be interpreted in the light of the relationship between God and man²⁵. Although the relationship between God and man is not a meeting of peers, due to the ontological difference between the Uncreated and the created, the individual who feels the fear of God and submits to His will can exercise the free choice of refusing to commit an unlawful act²⁶, revealing that “the morals produced by the fear of God is the morals of love and not of bondage”²⁷.

The *intervention strategies* running through the Old Testament are mainly linked to feelings of fear, loss, punishment, or gain²⁸. In the Bible, we can categorize the different functions of the means of intervention. It is sometimes implied that human actions have corresponding consequences; at some other times, it seems that Yahweh's intervention is attributed to reward or punishment. In rare cases, it is implied that the divine role is similar to that of a mediator, comparing it to that of a midwife, who assists in the birth of a baby²⁹. The teaching of Ecclesiastes

here p. 151.

24. J. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes: A Commentary*, [OTL], The Westminster Press, Philadelphia 1987, p. 97. Cf. C. L. Seow, *op.cit.*, pp. 21-33.

25. M. Sneed, “(Dis)closure in Qohelet: Qohelet Deconstructed”, *JSOT* 27, 1 (2002), pp. 115-126, here p. 121.

26. Basil the Great, *Ἡθικοί λόγοι εἰκοσιτέσσαρες, ἐκλεχθέντες διὰ Συμεὼν τοῦ Μαγίστρου καὶ Λογοθέτου ἐκ πασῶν τῶν πραγματειῶν τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Βασιλείου, Περὶ ἐλεημοσύνης, Λόγος Δ΄*, PG 32, 1153-1168, here 5, PG 32, 1164B: «Οὐ γὰρ ἐν ᾧ μὴ δύνασαι, παρέξεις τὴν ἀπόδειξιν τῆς πρὸς Θεὸν ὑποταγῆς καὶ τοῦ φόβου· ἀλλ’ ἐν τῷ παραβῆναι δυνάμενος, οὐ παραβαίνεις». See also, Clement of Alexandria, *Στρωματεῖς Β΄*, VII, 32-33, pp. 1-4, 59¹⁻¹⁸-60¹⁻¹⁰ (PG 8, 968A-C).

27. A. Nikolaidis, *Θρησκεία καὶ φόβος. Ὁ φόβος τῆς θρησκείας καὶ ἡ θρησκεία τῆς τρομοκρατίας*, Grigoris Publications, Athens 2003, p. 160.

28. Ath. Glaros, *Θεῖα Παιδαγωγία: Παιδαγωγικὰ στοιχεῖα στὸ Μεγάλο Κανόνα τοῦ Ἄνδρέα Κρήτης*, [Ψυχολογία, Παιδαγωγική, Ποιμαντική ἀρ. 10], Akritas Publications, Athens 2000, p. 354: “The abundant negative examples aim to the understanding of the fear of loss...”.

29. J. Crenshaw, *Qoheleth. The Ironic Wink*, University of South Carolina, [Studies on personalities of the Old Testament], The University of South Carolina Columbia Press 2013, p. 99.

seems to almost exclusively project onto a cloud of mystery³⁰ the lower and middle motives, which are the fear of punishment³¹ and reward³²; at the same time, the motives with the function of pain and automatically with the fear that leads to the realization of human limits. This is a common pedagogical position in the ancient Near Eastern literature, which considers that pain can lead to prudence and wisdom³³. Under this perspective, for Ecclesiastes, the earth is a place of sorrow and trials; it is in this field that man, having been trained through good deeds³⁴, becomes richer, always remembering that all the events of his life are part of God's pedagogy for his salvation³⁵.

The *Book of Ecclesiastes* emphasizes human life's "gray zone" to highlight the pain's educational value³⁶. Furthermore, in 1, 18 he comes to a conclusion: "For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief" (= «ὅτι ἐν πλήθει σοφίας πλήθος γνώσεως καὶ ὁ προστιθεὶς γνῶσιν προσθήσει ἄλγημα»). This often-repeated phrase sums up what has already been said. Qoheleth, however, does not use as expected. In the initial phase of his investigative journey, pain and

30. *Eccl.* 8, 6; 12, 13-14.

31. Commenting on R. Otto's comparison between the passages *Job* 37, 14-24 and *Eccl.* 3, 1-17, E. Ellis advocates the position that the meaning and significance of the fear of God is not simply a matter of fear or mystery, but rather a matter of fear *and* mystery. (E. Ellis, "Reconsidering the Fear of God in *Job* 37:14-24 and *Qohelet* 3:1-17 in the Light of Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige*", *op.cit.*, p. 67).

32. *Eccl.* 3, 22; 5, 18; 11, 6.

33. C. L. Seow, *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentar*, *op.cit.*, p. 149.

34. *Eccl.* 12, 13.

35. John Chrysostom, *Ἑπόμνημα εἰς τὸν ἅγιον Ματθαῖον τὸν Εὐαγγελιστήν*, Ὁμιλία Α΄-Β΄, PG 57, 13-472 (PG 58, 471-794), here ΑΓ΄, ε, PG 57, 214: «τὸ δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ συμφέροντι παιδεύειν, Θεοῦ [...]. Ὅν γὰρ ἀγαπᾷ Κύριος, παιδεύει, φησὶν. Ὅστε ὅταν εὐημερίας ἀπολαύωμεν ἐν πονηρίᾳ ζῶντες, τότε μάλιστα ἀλγῶμεν. Αἰεὶ μὲν γὰρ ἀμαρτάνοντας δεδοικέναι χρὴ μάλιστα δέ, ὅταν μηδὲν πάσχωμεν δεινόν». Cf. *Prov.* 3, 12: «ὄν γὰρ ἀγαπᾷ κύριος παιδεύει μαστιγοῖ δὲ πάντα υἱὸν ὃν παραδέχεται» Ἰώβ 5, 17: «μακάριος δὲ ἄνθρωπος ὃν ἤλεγξεν ὁ κύριος νουθέτημα δὲ παντοκράτορος μὴ ἀπαναίνου» Ἀπ. 3, 19: «ἐγὼ ὅσους ἐὰν φιλῶ ἐλέγχω καὶ παιδεύω ζήλευε οὖν καὶ μετανόησον».

36. *Eccl.* 7, 2-3. Archim. Ioel Giannakopoulos, *Ἡ Παλαιὰ Διαθήκη κατὰ τοὺς Ο΄. Κείμενον-Ερμηνευτικὴ παράφρασις-Σχόλια-Προβλήματα-Χάρται*, vol. 25, Ἐκκλησιαστής, Orthodoxou Christianikis Adelfotitas "Lydia" Publications, Thessaloniki 1986, p. 215.

adversity as well as human wisdom have the same outcome. This is exactly what one is ultimately benefited from in the process of acquiring human knowledge and wisdom to the greatest degree: The more one knows, the more painful the call of life becomes³⁷. However, after careful consideration, he concludes that wisdom according to God is the fruit of the fear of God, since He constitutes the beginning, the means, and the end of a virtuous life³⁸. C. Shank puts forward an Ecclesiastes who dictates the position that knowledge derives from a “reflective action” of the fear of God, permeating the concept of *vanitas vanitatum omnia vanitas* with deeper, spiritual dimensions to live and work “under the sun” («ὕπὸ τὸν ἥλιον») ³⁹. Despite the fact that the commandments offer a perspective of dialogue in an ethical world under the sun, they simultaneously confirm the element of fear before God⁴⁰. Within the context of this contradiction, we should understand⁴¹ that the Ecclesiastes places his fear connected with the God’s almightiness in his daily life; in this way, He realizes God’s constant presence⁴².

37. C. L. Seow, *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentar*, op.cit.

38. A. Nikolaidis, *Θρησκεία καὶ φόβος. Ὁ φόβος τῆς θρησκείας καὶ ἡ θρησκεία τῆς τρομοκρατίας*, op.cit., p. 161.

39. C. H. Shank, “Qoheleth’s World and Life View as Seen in His Recurring Phrases”, *WTJ* 37 (1974), pp. 57-73, here p. 68.

40. T. Krüger, *Qoheleth: A Commentary*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis 2004, p. 213.

41. A. Caneday, “Qoheleth: Enigmatic pessimist or Godly Sage”, *GTJ* 7, 1 (1986), pp. 21-56, here p. 53. According to Green, we should reject any attempt to resolve the paradoxical nature of the book by suggesting that the evils and injustices about which the preacher complains, are nothing else than an “obvious anomaly” [W. Green, “The Scope and Plan of the Book of Ecclesiastes”, *BRPR* 29 (1857), pp. 419-440, here p. 424].

42. *Eccl.* 3, 14: «ἔγνω ὅτι πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς αὐτὰ ἔσται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἐπ’ αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν προσθεῖναι καὶ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀφελεῖν καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐποίησεν ἵνα φοβηθῶσιν ἀπὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ». Cf. Maximos the Confessor, *Ἑρμηνεία κατὰ παράφρασιν τοῦ Ἐκκλησιαστοῦ*, III, 14, *CCSG* 11, pp. 25⁸¹-26⁸²⁻⁹³: «Ἦτοι, κατέλαβον ὅτι ἅπαντα τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ποιήματα, καὶ οὐ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἐν παντὶ ἔσσονται τῷ παρόντι αἰῶνι ὡς ἔχουσι φύσεως, τὰ μὲν ταῖς ἐξ ἀλλήλων διαδοχαῖς τὴν διαμονὴν ἔχοντα, τὰ δὲ τὰ αὐτὰ μένοντα ἐφ’ οἷς οὐ δυνάμεθά τι, κἂν πολλὰ πονῶμεν, προσθεῖναι τελείοις οὖσιν, οὔτ’ ἀπ’ αὐτῶν ἀφελεῖν μὴ κεκτημένων τι περιττόν. Ταῦτα δ’ οὕτως ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός, ὥστε κατανοήσαντας ἡμᾶς τὸ ἀήττητον τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, δι’ ἧς τὰ πάντα γεγονάσι τε καὶ διαμένουσιν, ἥτις ὁ μονογενὴς υἱὸς καὶ λόγος τούτου ἐστίν, ὃς καὶ χαρακτήρ ὑπάρχει αὐτοῦ, φόβον ἐκ τούτου λαβεῖν καὶ μήτι ὑπὲρ τὸν λόγον ἢ παρὰ τὸν λόγον σπεύδειν ποιεῖν, ἵνα μὴ πρὸς τῷ μηδὲν κερδᾶναι καὶ τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ πεισώμεθα ἔκπτωσιν»; Pseudo-John Chrysostom, *Ἑρμηνεία εἰς τὸν*

According to Orthodox Christian pedagogical thought, human concerns stem from inherited psychological and physical weaknesses. Adam and Eve's disobedience and unrepentance led to sin and death, "from which selfishness arises; the threat of this automatically causes fear and anxiety"⁴³. In 3, 1-17 of the *Ecclesiastes*, the underlying determinism does not simply imply the universal causal and deterministic connection of phenomena in human societies in the traditional Jewish sense or the possibility of acquiring knowledge and wisdom⁴⁴. In Qoheleth, there is appropriate time for everything: the virtuous and the shameful, the just and the unjust, the wise and the foolish – the principles of causality and justice are unable to function⁴⁵. It is precisely because everything is explicitly subject to God's sovereignty that everyone without exception is stripped bare under the sun, "so that people will fear him" («ἵνα φοβηθῶσιν ἀπὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ») ⁴⁶. Thus, in *Ecclesiastes*, in conjunction with fear, a reverse world is constructed: The fear of God is not the beginning of knowledge⁴⁷, it is the end of it⁴⁸, incomplete human knowledge,

Ἐκκλησιαστήν, III, 14, CCSG 4, p. 75⁸¹⁻⁸⁴: «οὐχ ἵνα παρασαλευθῶσιν μόνον, ἀλλ' ἵνα αὐτὸν καὶ θαυμάζωσιν· εἰκὸς οὖν τὰ πρὸς ὑπόθεσιν θεογνωσίας γεγενημένα, μεγάλα τινὰ καὶ θαυμαστά».

43. J. Romanides, *Τὸ Προπατορικὸν Ἄμάρτημα*, Domos Publications, Athens ²1989, p. 112.

44. N. Samet, based on Qoheleth's determinism, focuses on characteristics that connect *Ecclesiastes* with the ancient times, not only through linguistic comparisons, but also approaching it philosophically and using relevant concepts related to a) the typical Greek cosmology (*Eccl.* 1, 4-11) and b) anthropology (*Eccl.* 3, 17-21). [N. Samet, "How Deterministic is Qohelet? A New Reading of the Appendix to the Catalogue of Times", *ZAW* 131, 4 (2019), pp. 577-591].

45. See E. Ellis, "Reconsidering the Fear of God in *Job* 37:14-24 and *Qohelet* 3:1-17 in the Light of Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige*", op.cit., p. 64.

46. *Eccl.* 3, 14.

47. *Prov.* 1, 7. Within the context of scientific dialogue, M. Fox cites *Prov.* 15, 33 to uphold the priority of the fear of the Lord in the world in relation to wisdom (M. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, [The Anchor Yale Commentary 18a], Yale University Press, New Haven & London 2000, p. 68). S. Weeks differs slightly, by asserting that fear of the Lord is the first manifestation of wisdom, but it is simultaneously a prerequisite for wisdom and, under certain conditions, it is identical with it (S. Weeks, *Instruction & Imagery in Proverbs 1-9*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007, p. 121).

48. O. Kaiser aptly points out that the fear of God, while constituting the beginning of wisdom, in *Ecclesiastes* signifies its end (O. Kaiser, *Ideologie und Glaube. Eine Gefährdung des christlichen Glaubens am alttestamentlichen Beispiel aufgezeigt*, Radius, Stuttgart ²1990,

complete loss of control and inability to understanding and interpreting events causes the fear of God. This explains why Qoheleth, through his experience and enlightened by the Holy Spirit⁴⁹, urges people to follow the golden mean⁵⁰, the “middle way” («τὴν μέσην ὁδόν») ⁵¹ of virtue⁵². The commandment for someone not to be overly wise⁵³ is interpreted as a safeguard against the failure and inadequacy of prudence to give a comprehensive answer to everyone without exception: Do not devote yourself entirely to the pursuit of wisdom as if it were a panacea in your life, but do not reject it either, because you will end up becoming foolish⁵⁴. The individual must stand “in the middle”, that is, in the

p. 133).

49. Gregory of Acragas, *Ἐξήγησις εἰς τὸν Ἐκκλησιαστήν*, PG 98, 741-1181, here ΣΤ', PG 98, 1021B.

50. *Eccl.* 7, 15-18. Due to Aristotelian or Stoic influences, the scholars who distinguish the principle of the golden mean between virtue and vice date the book to the Hellenistic period (R. Gordis, *Koheleth, The man and his Word*, Schocken Books, New York ³1968, pp. 178, 276). Of course, Aristotle, based on the theory of moderation, argues that the essence of virtue lies in the middle between the extremes of excess and deficiency (Aristotle *Ἠθικὰ Νικομάχεια* 1106b: «ἡ δ' ἀρετὴ περὶ πάθη καὶ πράξεις ἐστίν, ἐν οἷς ἢ μὲν ὑπερβολὴ ἀμαρτάνεται καὶ ἢ ἔλλειψις [ψέγεται], τὸ δὲ μέσον ἐπαινείται καὶ κατορθοῦται ταῦτα δ' ἄμφω τῆς ἀρετῆς. μεσότης τις ἄρα ἐστὶν ἡ ἀρετὴ, στοχαστικὴ γε οὕσα τοῦ μέσου»). However, virtue, as an action, as an excellent deed, is not moderation but extremity (Aristotle *Ἠθικὰ Νικομάχεια* 1107a: «διὸ κατὰ μὲν τὴν οὐσίαν καὶ τὸν λόγον τὸν τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι λέγοντα μεσότης ἐστὶν ἡ ἀρετὴ, κατὰ δὲ τὸ ἄριστον καὶ τὸ εὖ ἀκρότης»).

51. See Pseudo-Basil, *Ἀσκητικαὶ διατάξεις πρὸς τοὺς ἐν Κοινοβίῳ καὶ κατὰ μόνας ἀσκούντας, ἐν κεφαλαίοις λδ'*, PG 31, 1321-1428, here Δ', 2, PG 31, 1349B: «τὴν μέσην ὄντως καὶ βασιλικὴν ὁδὸν πορευόμενον, ἐπὶ θάτερα μηδαμῶς ἀποκλίνειν μήτε τὴν ἄνεσιν ἀσπαζόμενον, μήτε τῇ ὑπερβολῇ τῆς ἐγκρατείας ἀχρειοῦντα τὸ σῶμα». Gregory the Theologian, *Λόγος ΜΒ'*. *Συντακτῆριος εἰς τὴν τῶν ῥν' ἐπισκόπων παρουσίαν*, PG 36, 457-492, here ιζ', PG 36, 476C: «Αὐτοὶ δὲ τὴν μέσην βαδίζοντες καὶ βασιλικὴν, ἐν ᾧ καὶ τὸ τῶν ἀρετῶν ἔστηκεν, ὡς δοκεῖ τοῖς ταῦτα δεινοῖς, πιστεύομεν εἰς Πατέρα, καὶ Υἱόν, καὶ Πνεῦμα ἅγιον, ὁμοουσίᾳ τε καὶ ὁμόδοξᾳ».

52. Gregory of Neocaesarea, *Μετάφρασις εἰς τὸν Ἐκκλησιαστήν τοῦ Σολομῶντος*, PG 10, 988-1017, here ιβ', PG 10, 1017B: «Ὡ ἄνθρωποι, ἰδοὺ διαρρήδην ὑμῖν καὶ συντόμως προαγορεύω, φοβεῖσθαι μὲν Θεὸν τὸν πάντων δεσπότην τε ὁμοῦ καὶ ἐπόπτην, τηρεῖν δὲ αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ παραγγέλματα».

53. *Eccl.* 7, 16.

54. W. Brindle, “Righteousness and Wickedness in Ecclesiastes 7:15-18”, *AUSS* 23, 3 (1985), pp. 243-257, here p. 248.

middle ground⁵⁵, which leads to the fear of God⁵⁶. It is about the «*τοῦ ἀγνοῦ καὶ ἀγνοποιοῦ φόβου τοῦ Θεοῦ*»⁵⁷, which acts protectively: by escaping sin⁵⁸ the faithful activate the virtue of self-restraint⁵⁹ and avoid the extremes and dangers that they might entail⁶⁰. Olympiodoros, commenting on *Ecclesiastes*, notes that the pious person who fears God, «*πᾶσαν πρᾶξιν κατὰ ἀρετὴν διεξερχόμενος, καὶ ταῖς προκοπαῖς τελειούμενος, καὶ πάντα διεκδύνων πειρασμόν*»⁶¹. In other words, the love of God acts pedagogically for the foolish; His pedagogical “wrath”⁶²

55. G. R. Castellino, having analyzed the Hebrew formulations, comes to a similar conclusion, namely that 7, 16 refers to the passage of both the righteous and the wise onto the right path. He then argues that verse (7, 18) urges the reader not to fall into the path of avoidance and foolishness, so that they may grasp true wisdom, which is achieved through the fear of God [G. R. Castellino, “Qohelet and His Wisdom”, *CBQ* 30, 1 (1968), pp. 15-28, here p. 24].

56. *Eccl.* 7, 18: «*ὅτι φοβούμενος τὸν θεὸν ἐξελεύσεται τὰ πάντα*». See Didymus the Blind, *Εἰς τὸν Ἐκκλησιαστήν*, 218, PTA 16, p. 68¹⁹⁻²¹: «*οὐκ ἔστιν ὑστέρημα τοῖς φοβουμένοις αὐτόν, “αὐτός” δὲ ἔστιν ὁ θεός. λέγει γάρ: “κύριον αὐτὸν ἀγιάσετε καὶ αὐτός ἐστὶν σου φόβος”. ὡς γίνεται τοῦ θέλοντος κατὰ Χριστὸν σοφίαν σοφ[ία] ὁ Χριστὸς καὶ δικαιοσύνη τοῦ δικαίου κατὰ Χριστόν, οὕτω γίνεται καὶ φόβος*».

57. Olympiodoros the Deacon, *Υπομνήματα εἰς τὸν Ἐκκλησιαστήν*, PG 93, 477-628, here ζ, PG 93, 569A.

58. M. Sneed, “A Note on Qoh 8, 12b-13”, *Bib* 84, 3 (2003), pp. 412-416, here p. 414.

59. Cyril of Alexandria, *Ὁμιλῖαι ἑορταστικαί*, PG 77, 401-981, here 14, PG 77, 825C-D: «*ὁ τῶν ὄλων Θεὸς καὶ Κύριος ἀναιτιχίζει τῷ νόμῳ καὶ ὄπλον αὐτῷ χαρίζεται τὴν ἐγκράτειαν*».

60. *Eccl.* 7, 18. See Maximos the Confessor, *Ἑρμηνεῖα κατὰ παράφρασιν τοῦ Ἐκκλησιαστοῦ*, VII, 15-20, CCSG 11, p. 54¹³⁵⁻¹³⁶: «*... ὁ τὸν φόβον ἔχων τοῦ θεοῦ πᾶσαν κακίαν ἐκφεύξεται, ὑπάρχουσαν κατ’ ἔλλειψιν ἀρετῆς καὶ ὑπερβολῆς*». Cf. *Psalms* 36, 23-24: «*παρὰ κυρίου τὰ διαβήματα ἀνθρώπου κατευθύνεται καὶ τὴν ὁδὸν αὐτοῦ θελήσει ὅταν πῆσῃ οὐ καταραχθήσεται ὅτι κύριος ἀντιστηρίζει χεῖρα αὐτοῦ*».

61. Olympiodoros the Deacon, *op.cit.*, ζ, PG 93, 569A-B.

62. For Origen, the great theologian and commentator, God’s wrath demonstrates His educational care for man and does not constitute God’s passion, a state that man attributes to Him according to the state of his sinfulness [Origen, *Κατὰ Κέλσου*, IV, 72, SC 136, pp. 360¹⁻³-362¹⁻¹⁸ (PG 11, 1141A-C)]. Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Ἐκ τῶν Προφητικῶν ἐκλογαί*, PG 9, 697-728, here θ, PG 9, 701C: «*Ὁ Θεὸς καὶ τὸν φόβον τῆ ἀγαθότητι συνέμιξεν δι’ ἀγαθότητα*».

functions in the present life in an educational⁶³ and auxiliary⁶⁴, manner, given the fact that God does not wish to punish any human being; each and every one of us chooses to accept or reject God's presence so that His presence is paradise, and His absence is hell⁶⁵.

According to the Science of Physical Education, "conditions of tolerable stress are ideal for learning and remembering"⁶⁶. To support his teaching, Ecclesiastes combines the learning environment of tolerable stress with the principle of repetition and the motif of futility, thus preserving God-given progress in long-term memory⁶⁷. He finally concludes his research by defining the futility of human busyness⁶⁸. When the enjoyment of human life is fueled by dreams and plans reinforced by imagination, while God –the cornerstone of all happiness and joy⁶⁹– and our fellow human beings are excluded from it, then life becomes futilely verbose. The antidote to the unhealthy conditions of verbosity and chatter, which are manifested themselves even during worship, is the holy fear of God⁷⁰: «Ὡσπερ γὰρ τὰ πολλὰ ἐνύπνια μάταια, οὕτω καὶ τὰ πολλὰ ῥήματα. Φόβος δὲ Θεοῦ, ἀνθρώπων σωτήριος, σπάνιος δέ»⁷¹. This fear acts protectively for the fallen human nature⁷², those who keep and obey the

63. God's wrath is «ἡ τῶν παιδαγωγουμένων επίπονος αἴσθησις» (Pseudo-Maximos the Confessor, *Κεφάλαια διάφορα θεολογικά τε καὶ οἰκονομικά καὶ περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας* [chapt. 16- 500], PG 90, 1185-1392, here Ἐκατοντάς Τρίτη, θ', PG 90, 1261D).

64. *Is.* 8, 20: «νόμον γὰρ εἰς βοήθειαν ἔδωκεν».

65. John Damascene, *Κατὰ Μανιχαίων διάλογος*, PG 95, 1505-1584, here μδ', PG 94, 1545D-1548A.

66. Maria Katsou-Zafrana, *Ἐγκέφαλος καὶ Ἐκπαίδευση*, Kyriakidis Bros Publications, Thessaloniki 2005, p. 94.

67. Maximos the Confessor, *Ἐρμηνεία κατὰ παράφρασιν τοῦ Ἐκκλησιαστοῦ*, I, 9-11, CCSG 11, p. 8¹⁰⁵⁻¹⁰⁷: «Ἐμποιήσει γὰρ ἡ ἐσχάτη κατάστασις τῆ τῶν ἀνθρώπων φύσει τῆς μνήμης τῶν ταύτη ἐπιγενομένων μετὰ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς εὐκληρίαν κακῶν ἀφανισμόν παντελῆ».

68. P. Bratsiotis, *Ὁ Ἐκκλησιαστής. Εἰσαγωγή-Κείμενον Ὁ-Μετάφρασις ἐκ τοῦ Ἐβρ.-Σχόλια*, ed. N. P. Bratsiotis, Athens 1989, p. 140.

69. E. W. Hengstenberg, *Commentary of Ecclesiastes, with other treatises*, transl. from the German by B. W. Simon, Smith, English & Co., Philadelphia 1890, p. 245.

70. *Eccl.* 5, 6: «ὅτι ἐν πλήθει ἐνυπνίων καὶ ματαϊότητες καὶ λόγοι πολλοὶ ὅτι σὺν τὸν θεὸν φοβοῦ».

71. See Gregory of Neocaesarea, *Μετάφρασις εἰς τὸν Ἐκκλησιαστήν τοῦ Σολομῶντος*, PG 10, 988-1017, here ε', PG 10, 1001A.

72. Among other things, the lack of fear contributed to the irrational behavior of humans,

divine commandments will not experience just punishment, precisely because they know the love of God's justice⁷³. According to St. Gregory of Neocaesarea, this action constitutes an act of life, distinguishing the prudent and wise: «Βέλτιον δέ, καὶ λυσιτελέστερον ἐμμένοντα ταῖς ἱεραῖς ἐντολαῖς, λόγων τῶν πονηρῶν ἐκτὸς καθεστάναι. Σοφὸς γὰρ ἀνὴρ ἐπίσταται καὶ προγινώσκει τὴν εἰς καιρὸν κρίσιν, ὅτι δικαία ἔσται»⁷⁴.

D. Martin argues that Bible should not exclusively used as a source for establishing dogmatic teaching, but as confirmation of the Holy Spirit in man's journey toward his salvation⁷⁵. In this light, A. Caneday wonders whether *Ecclesiastes* could be viewed from an Orthodox perspective: If Qoheleth did not believe in the resurrection and Yahweh's future judgment, then why would he advise people to behave obediently, fearing God⁷⁶; We therefore believe that the passage *Eccl.* 12.13 is the clearest reference that Qoheleth believes that the fear of God is the key to his investigative journey: he strongly recommends obedience to God's commandments⁷⁷. This is a unique religious proposition that requires a delicate balance between two distinct concepts: on the one hand, observance of the commandments; on the other one,

which led to their downfall (Pseudo-Maximos the Confessor, *Κεφάλαια διάφορα θεολογικά τε καὶ οἰκονομικά καὶ περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας* [Ch. 16- 500], PG 90, 1185-1392, here *Ἐκατοντάς Πρώτη*, ξς', PG 90, 1205B: «τὸν δὲ φόβον, τῆς μελλούσης ἐπὶ πλημμελήμασι τιμωρίας προσφυλακτικὴν ἐπιμέλειαν». Cf. Basil the Great, *Εἰς τὴν ἀρχὴν τῶν Παροιμιῶν*, PG 31, 385-421, here 9, PG 31, 405C: «καὶ ἡ μὲν ἡδονὴ συνηγορεῖ τῇ πορνείᾳ, ὁ δὲ φόβος τοῦ Θεοῦ τῇ σωφροσύνῃ συνίσταται.»).

73. *Eccl.* 8, 5: «ὁ φυλάσσω ἐντολὴν οὐ γινώσεται ῥῆμα πονηρὸν καὶ καιρὸν κρίσεως γινώσκει καρδίᾳ σοφοῦ».

74. Gregory of Neocaesarea, *Μετάφρασις εἰς τὸν Ἐκκλησιαστὴν τοῦ Σολομῶντος*, PG 10, 988-1017, here η', PG 10, 1008B.

75. D. E. Martin, *Pedagogy of the Bible*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville-London 2008, p. 70.

76. L. Wilson, "The Book of Job and the Fear of God", *TynBul* 46, 1 (1995), pp. 59-79, here p. 63.

77. Most biblical scholars agree that the major part of the book represents the words of the narrator Qoheleth, while the last part and possibly certain verses represent the words of a more conservative or traditional redactor. We tend to agree with H. Bosman's view: it is not clear that verses 12 and 13 are a later conservative addition [H. Bosman, "Being Wise betwixt Order and Mystery: Keeping the Commandments and Fearing the Lord", *Scriptura* 111, 1 (2012), pp. 433-439, here pp. 437-438].

the redefined term of wisdom according to God, which is linked to the fear of God⁷⁸. The last verse in the *Book of Ecclesiastes*: «τέλος λόγου τὸ πᾶν ἀκούεται τὸν θεὸν φοβοῦ καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ φύλασσε ὅτι τοῦτο πᾶς ὁ ἄνθρωπος» (“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind”)⁷⁹ signifies the most important conceptual dionym in *Ecclesiastes* and in the Bible⁸⁰, which can also be considered the heart of biblical wisdom, in the light of the coming judgment⁸¹. The phrase «τέλος λόγου» expresses the result of Qoheleth’s lifelong trial⁸², which leads to a double suggestion: «τὸν θεὸν φοβοῦ καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ φύλασσε ὅτι τοῦτο πᾶς ὁ ἄνθρωπος»⁸³. Thus, the highest goal that sums up humanity’s quest and the only solution to the inadequacy of human existence is fearing God and obeying to His will⁸⁴ – a state that leads to the moderate enjoyment of life⁸⁵. Despite the extreme skepticism that runs throughout

78. H. Bosman, op.cit., p. 438. Cf. Shemu’el ben Me’ir (Rashbam) & Ś. Yafet, *The Commentary of R. Samuel Ben Meir Rashbam on Qoheleth*, Sara Japhet - B. R. Salters (ed. & transl.), [Publications of the Perry Foundation for Biblical Research in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem], Magnes Press, The Hebrew University – E. J. Brill, Jerusalem & Leiden 1985, p. 67: The sphere of divine justice, divine wisdom, and the reward for good deeds remain inaccessible. According to Rashbam, human life should be based on traditional values and principles, as they defined in Qoheleth: Believe in Yahweh, fear Him, keep His commandments. Avoid sin, enjoy the beautiful moments of your life, accept unpleasant situations, and repent.

79. *Eccl.* 12, 13.

80. A. Bornapé, “‘Fear God and Keep his Commandments’: The Character of Man and the Judgment of God in the Epilogue of Ecclesiastes”, p. 57.

81. T. Longman, “The ‘Fear of God’ in the Book of Ecclesiastes”, *BBR* 25, 1 (2015), pp. 13-21, here p. 20.

82. Olympiodoros the Deacon, *Υπομνήματα εἰς τὸν Ἐκκλησιαστήν*, PG 93, 477-628, here ιβ’, PG 93, 625D: «Ἐγὼ δέ σοι, φησί, κεφαλαιώδη καὶ ἐπιτομωτάτην σωτηρίας ὁδὸν ὑποδείκνυμι: Τὸν Θεὸν φοβοῦ, καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ φύλασσε: φόβον οὐ τὸν εἰσαγωγικὸν καὶ ἐμπαθῆ διὰ τὰς κολάσεις, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἀγνὸν καὶ ἀγνωποιόν, τὸν διὰ τὴν στοργὴν τοῦ προστάξαντος πατρὸς ὀφειλόμενον».

83. *Eccl.* 12, 13.

84. A. Bornapé, op.cit., p. 58.

85. A. Chastoupis, «Τὸ βιβλίον τοῦ Ἐκκλησιαστοῦ», *Θεολογία/Theologia* 57, 2 (1986), pp. 300-328, here p. 308. See also, Ellen F. Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*, [Westminster Bible Companion], Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville-Kentucky 2000, p. 161.

the book, Ecclesiastes encourages, praises, and confirms the result of his examination: the value of human life is inextricably linked to the fear and acceptance of God⁸⁶. The negation of this fundamental principle leads to the resounding failure of human existence. Furthermore, for someone to be aware of his failures is part of God's plan; the fear that follows is the only emotional state that, according to Qoheleth, awakens human existence from the sin's gloomy sleep⁸⁷. By exposing his deepest self to the eyes of God and men, the wise Ecclesiastes, having stripped of vanity, teaches that «μᾶλλον γὰρ τοῦ φόβου πολλάκις ἢ αἰδῶς πρὸς τὴν ἀποφυγὴν τῶν ἀτόπων ἐπαιδαγωγῆσεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ αἰσχύνῃ ἢ ἐπακολουθοῦσα τοῖς ἐλέγχοις τοῦ πλημμελήματος ἱκανὴ δι' ἑαυτῆς σωφρονίσει τὸν ἁμαρτάνοντα πρὸς τὸ μὴ πάλιν ἐν τοῖς ὁμοίοις γενέσθαι»⁸⁸.

In short, the *Book of Ecclesiastes* suggests a way to return to the path of Eden toward eternity⁸⁹: Instead of using God's gifts simply as a means to distance ourselves from Him, fearing Him dictates how we should enjoy them. The fear of God fulfills its function⁹⁰ when it is inextricably linked to the observance of the commandments. The enjoyment of good things is acknowledged in Ecclesiastes as a gift from God, and this enjoyment is undoubtedly connected with fearing Him⁹¹. Every experience grounded in Yahweh and fearing Him leads to unfathomable joy⁹². The fear of God invoked by him presupposes the concept of discipline⁹³; thus, the conditions for self-knowledge – “the fruit of the true knowledge of

86. A. Caneday, “Qoheleth: Enigmatic pessimist or Godly Sage”, op.cit., p. 49.

87. See M. Fox, “The Meaning of Hebel for Qohelet”, *JBL* 105, 3 (1986), pp. 409-427, here p. 427.

88. Gregory of Nyssa, *Εἰς τὸν Ἐκκλησιαστήν*, Γ', GNO V, pp. 315²⁰-316¹ (PG 44, 649D).

89. See John Chrysostom, *Υπόμνημα εἰς τὴν πρὸς Τιμόθεον Α' ἐπιστολήν*, ΙΕ', δ', PG 62, 584: «Ποθήσωμεν, παρακαλῶ, γνησίως τὸν Θεόν, μὴ φόβῳ γεέννης, ἀλλ' ἐπιθυμίᾳ βασιλείας».

90. *Eccl.* 12, 13. See Maximos the Confessor, *Ἑρμηνεία κατὰ παράφρασιν τοῦ Ἐκκλησιαστοῦ*, VIII, 9-13, CCSG 11, p. 61⁸⁵⁻⁸⁶: «Οὐ καλὸν δ' ἔσται τῷ ἁμαρτωλῷ τὸ μὴ κερτῆσθαι τὸν τοιοῦτον φόβον».

91. *Eccl.* 3, 14. R. N. Whybray, “Qoheleth as a Theologian”, op.cit., p. 262.

92. Adrian Hinkle, *Pedagogical Theory of Wisdom Literature: An Application of Educational Theory to Biblical Texts*, Wipf and Stock, Eugene, Oregon 2017, p. 100.

93. B. Douet, *Πειθαρχία καὶ τιμωρίες στὸ σχολεῖο*, transl. L. Theodorakopoulos, Synchroni Ekpaideusi Publications, Athens 1992, pp. 33-34.

God⁹⁴ – are formed. At the same time, the fear in question is the root of a loving relationship in the sense of accepting His righteous⁹⁵ paternal philanthropy⁹⁶ and greatness⁹⁷, which unify the fragmented human nature, ontologically completes each and every individual as a person, and offers the prospect of eternity. Knowing the futility of earthly things leads to the fear of God. Since all things are futile, man, who is subject to futility, must do everything in his power to enter into a living relationship with the One –the true absolute Being –, and through communion with Him, to participate in a true eternal relationship⁹⁸. This ontological dimension enables man to interpret himself and the world in the light of creation, which God will lead in time to fulfilling the purpose He has perennially prepared⁹⁹. Qoheleth uses the phrase: «εἶπεν ὁ Ἐκκλησιαστής»¹⁰⁰, to remind us that we have not yet heard His voice addressing us directly¹⁰¹. It is a “deferred Christian cry”¹⁰², eagerly seeking the One who will announce to all human beings, both pious

94. A. Nikolaidis, *Θρησκεία καὶ φόβος. Ὁ φόβος τῆς θρησκείας καὶ ἡ θρησκεία τῆς τρομοκρατίας*, *op.cit.*, p. 109.

95. *Eccl.* 12, 14. Cf. Olympiodoros the Deacon, *ὑπομνήματα εἰς τὸν Ἐκκλησιαστήν*, PG 93, 477-628, here β', PG 93, 628B-C: «Ταῦτα οὖν ἐγνωκότες, τὸν Θεὸν φοβηθῶμεν, καὶ τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ τηρήσωμεν κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτῶν δύναμιν».

96. See Olympiodoros the Deacon, *op.cit.*, PG 93, 628C: «Τὸ γὰρ ὅλον ἡμῶν τῆς σωτηρίας ἐν οἰκτιρμοῖς κεῖται, καὶ τῆ τοῦ κριτοῦ φιλανθρωπία». Cf. John Chrysostom, *Ἑρμηνεία εἰς τὴν πρὸς Ῥωμαίους ἐπιστολὴν, ὁμιλία ΑΒ'*, PG 60, 391-682, here Ζ', α-β, PG 60, 443-444.

97. Olympiodoros the Deacon, *op.cit.*, PG 93, 626D: «Ἐγὼ δέ σοι, φησί, κεφαλαιώδη καὶ ἐπιτομωτάτην σωτηρίας ὁδὸν ὑποδείκνυμι: Τὸν Θεὸν φοβοῦ, καὶ τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ φύλασσε φόβον οὐ τὸν εἰσαγωγικὸν καὶ ἐμπαθῆ διὰ τὰς κολάσεις, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἀγνὸν καὶ ἀγνοποιόν, τὸν διὰ τὴν στοργὴν τοῦ προστάξαντος πατρὸς ὀφειλόμενον».

98. E. W. Hengstenberg, *Commentary of Ecclesiastes, with other treatises*, *op.cit.*, p. 257.

99. Cf. Chr. Androutsos, *Δογματικὴ τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Ἀνατολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, Astir Publications, Athens ⁴1992, p. 105: "... that God created the world motivated by goodness, or, which is the same, the world was created so that, sharing in goodness, it might be both a herald and celebrator of God's other perfections – especially that of divine goodness".

100. *Eccl.* 1, 2.

101. M. Carasik, "Qoheleth's Twists and Turns", *JSOT* 28, 2 (2003), pp. 192-209, here p. 208.

102. P. Enns, "Ecclesiastes according to the Gospel: Christian Thoughts on Qoheleth's Theology", *S&I* 2, 1 (2008), pp. 25-38, here p. 38.

and impious, what will follow in the world to come¹⁰³. This precondition constitutes an integral part of man's judgment by God¹⁰⁴, and of the understanding of futility as a post-Fall state, which is most definitively resolved with the coming of the Messiah-Christ and His return at the Last Judgment¹⁰⁵.

Conclusions – Discussion

The *Book of Ecclesiastes*, as a work of wisdom literature of the Old Testament, establishes the fear of God as the fundamental basis of wisdom and life attitude¹⁰⁶ despite its similarities with the wisdom literature of the Ancient Near East, it is not ethically oriented. When reading the *Ecclesiastes*, we should not forget that Qoheleth is neither an atheist nor an aGnostic, and should be prepared to enjoy the tension caused by the subject matter in combination with the unpredictable changes and repeated overlaps¹⁰⁷. Ecclesiastes is a researcher who has examined the nature of wisdom along with the functioning of the social space; at the same time, he comprehensively experimented with the manifestations of short-lived human action to ascertain the value, the meaning of life, and the destiny of the soul¹⁰⁸. In his research, he extensively used the methodological tools and principles of human

103. *Eccl.* 6, 12: «τίς ἀπαγγελεῖ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τί ἔσται ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ ὑπὸ τὸν ἥλιον» and *Eccl.* 8, 7: «ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν γινώσκων τί τὸ ἐσόμενον ὅτι καθὼς ἔσται τίς ἀναγγελεῖ αὐτῷ». See Katharine Dell, *Interpreting Ecclesiastes: Readers Old and New*, A. C. Hagedorn – N. MacDonald – S. Weeks (eds.), [Critical Studies in the Hebrew Bible 3], Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Indiana 201-3, p. 41. Cf. G. Athas, *Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, T. Longman III & S. McKnight (eds.), [The Story of God Bible Commentary], Zondervan Academic, Grand Rapids 2020, p. 39.

104. M. Sneed, "A Note on Qoh 8, 12b-13", *op.cit.*, p. 415.

105. C. H. Shank, "Qoheleth's World and Life View as Seen in His Recurring Phrases", *op.cit.*, pp. 72-73.

106. C. H. Shank, *op.cit.*, p. 65. We believe that F. Delitzsch is right when he argues that the book's most essential element is the fear of God (F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes*, transl. M. G. Easton, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1950, p. 630).

107. Katharine Dell & Tova Forti, "Enjoying the Tension: Reading Qoh 2:25 in the Context of Qoh 2:24-26", *VT* 69, 3 (2019), pp. 481-489, here p. 489.

108. S. H. Blank, "Wisdom", *IDB* 4 (1962), pp. 852-861, here p. 858.

wisdom, as well as antithetical expressions¹⁰⁹, ambiguities, and riddles, creating conflicting feelings of hope and awe¹¹⁰. As a wise teacher, Qoheleth deliberately and repeatedly chooses to use the personal pronoun אֲנִי to highlight his self, in order to strengthen his arguments and positions as a narrator-king¹¹¹. In addition to that, even though he often identifies with traditional Jewish thought, he does not hesitate to revise established views and perceptions¹¹². In contrast to dogmatic and commonplace theological discourse, which overlooks God and does not save man, he argued that the appropriate choice as a way of life is to retreat into silence. Guided by his experience, he launches a fierce attack on sterile theology, according to which one begins to talk about God and ends up by taking His place¹¹³. He questions and comes into conflict with the Jewish teachings on the just retribution of deeds and the ability of the wise to provide satisfying solutions to the imminent and inescapable event of death¹¹⁴. Indeed, a deeper look at the text of the *Ecclesiastes* allows us to realize that, in the biblical text, all the traditional dichotomies of his era are deconstructed¹¹⁵. The righteous and the wicked, the good

109. R. Gordis, *Koheleth. The man and his Word*, *op.cit.*, p. 174: Ecclesiastes' antithetical expressions facilitate a deliberate dialogue.

110. Contradictions and polar oppositions are used as techniques by Ecclesiastes to lead the educated person to the knowledge of God (A. Caneday, "Qoheleth: Enigmatic pessimist or Godly Sage", *op.cit.*, pp. 39-41). See Andrian Hinkle, *Pedagogical Theory of Wisdom Literature: An Application of Educational Theory to Biblical Texts*, *op.cit.*, p. 110: The polar structure used in Ecclesiastes is a literary feature that adds intensity and characterizes Hebrew thought, reflecting the paradoxical nature of humanity in the world.

111. J. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes: A Commentary*, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

112. C. L. Seow, *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction...*, *op.cit.*, p. 69.

113. Cf. F. Raurell, «Dimensione etico-pedagogica della provocazione nel 'Qohelet'», *Laur.* 33, 2/3 (1992), pp. 375-402, here pp. 392-400.

114. Qoheleth's experiential method brings him into conflict with traditional perceptions and leads to what J. Loader calls patterns of tension, which arise from the synthesis of contradictory elements. This tendency runs throughout the entire book and is so evident that it could be considered the most prominent literary feature of the text (J. A. Loader, *Polar Structures in the Book of Qohelet*, [BZAW 152], Walter de Gruyter, Berlin – New York 1979, pp. 1-3, 29-116).

115. It is noteworthy that the *Ecclesiastes* was included in the Biblical Canon, exclusively because it had been attributed to Solomon, but also as a validation of the critical spirit that permeates much of the Hebrew Bible (J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*,

and the bad, those who are pure according to the law and those who are impure, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not, the good and the sinners, those who do not swear and those who swear, all are sharing the same fate¹¹⁶. Despite his “unorthodox” theology¹¹⁷, Qoheleth does not stray from the God of his ancestors; he maintains his role as a true son of Israel¹¹⁸, precisely because he places Him at the epicenter of his reflection, at the center of life. Yahweh can control and punish man if he violates the pact, but man, due to this true relationship that is offered to him, can also ask for clarification about the punishment that has been imposed to him¹¹⁹. The logic of fear of God is not a functional choice, but a realization that God exists beyond human limits and capabilities¹²⁰. Nevertheless, although God saves Qoheleth from the abyss of absolute skepticism, the gap between God and man remains unchanged, even when man, as a human being, turns to his Creator out of fear¹²¹. This pre-Christian dialectic leads Ecclesiastes to realize the unbridgeable difference between the created and the Uncreated, which permanently signifies the Divine essence’s incomprehensibility¹²². Thus, for Qoheleth,

Fortress, Minneapolis 2004, p. 526).

116. *Eccl.* 9, 2.

117. R. N. Whybray, “Qoheleth as a Theologian”, *op.cit.*, p. 245.

118. A. Lauha, *Kohelet*, [BKAT 19], Neukirchener Verlag, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1978, p. 17.

119. *Gen.* 18, 25.

120. T. Frydrych, *Living under the Sun: Examination of Proverbs and Qoheleth*, [VTSup 90], Brill, Leiden-Boston-Köln 2002, p. 110.

121. L. M. Muntingh, “Fear of Yahweh and Fear of the Gods according to the Books of Qohelet and Isaiah”, *OTWSA* 23, 1 (1980), pp. 143-158, here p. 145. See also, A. J. O. Van Der Wal, “Qohelet 12, 1a: A Relatively Unique Statement in Israel’s Wisdom Tradition”, *op.cit.*, p. 418.

122. See, for example, Maximus the Confessor, *Σχόλια εἰς τὸ Περὶ θεῶν ὀνομάτων τοῦ ἁγίου Διονυσίου Ἀεροπαγίτου*, PG 4, 186-416, here B’, 221C: «Τὸ κατ’ οὐσίαν μὲν ἢ θεότης οὐ μετέχεται, οὔτε νοεῖται μεθεκτὴ δέ ἐστιν, ἐν τῷ ἕξ αὐτῆς εἶναι τὰ πάντα, καὶ ὑπ’ αὐτῆς συνέχεσθαι εἰς τὸ εἶναι». Human beings partially participate in the divine actions; they encounter God dialectically, and through His loving power, they find themselves in a free relationship of persons, deified by grace. As far participation and the distinction between divine essence and divine actions are concerned, see, among others fruits of the rich patristic tradition, the following: Basil the Great, *Ἐπιστολὴ 234*, [Ἀμφιλοχίῳ ἐπισκόπῳ]. *Τῷ αὐτῷ πρὸς ἄλλο ἐρώτημα*, 1, vol. III, p. 42²⁷⁻³¹: «Ἄλλ’ αἱ μὲν ἐνεργεῖαι ποικίλαι, ἢ δὲ οὐσία ἀπλή. Ἡμεῖς δὲ ἐκ μὲν τῶν ἐνεργειῶν γνωρίζειν λέγομεν τὸν Θεὸν ἡμῶν, τῇ δὲ οὐσίᾳ αὐτῇ προσεγγίζειν οὐχ ὑπισχνούμεθα. Αἱ μὲν

eternity is not self-negated at the level of the created; it is located in the uncreated realm of God, where it exists in its entirety¹²³. Therefore, he presents the only answer arising from his laborious research in his theological legacy: The fear of God and obedience to His commandments summarize the culmination of every individual's agonizing search for the true meaning of life¹²⁴. He warns that, if earthly life is disconnected from Yahweh, it offers no benefit: life becomes autonomous and is therefore destroyed¹²⁵.

M. Margalit argues that being alone is a valuable opportunity for anyone who uses their time to engage in introspection, learning, and communicating with their inner world¹²⁶. This position acquires a new meaning in the *Book of Ecclesiastes* and, by extension, in Christian pedagogy: The whole process is not limited to self-purification; the personal God exonerates and redeems the suffering person from the painful consequences of fear and loneliness experienced due to the existential void caused by His absence¹²⁷. This anxiety acts constructively¹²⁸; combined with faith, it nourishes the individual so

γὰρ ἐνέργειαι αὐτοῦ πρὸς ἡμᾶς καταβαίνουσιν ἢ δὲ οὐσία αὐτοῦ μένει ἀπρόσιτος» (PG 32, 869A-B); Gregory Palamas, *Περὶ θείων ἐνεργειῶν καὶ τῆς κατ' αὐτὰς μεθέξεως, Συγγράμματα*, P. Christou (ed.), vol. B', Kyromanos Publications, Thessaloniki 21994, pp. 96-136. Cf. Io. Romanides, *Τὸ Προπατορικὸν Ἀμάρτημα*, *op.cit.*, p. 105: "... the divine essence always remains inconceivable and aloof".

123. A. Chastoupis, *Οὐσία τῆς θρησκείας θεωρουμένη ἀξιολογικῶς ἐπὶ τῇ βάσει μαρτυριῶν ἐκ τῶν ἱερῶν κειμένων*, Athens 21977, p. 184: "Given all this, religion is rightly defined as a personal encounter between man and the holy [...]. It does not originate from a pre-scientific logical attempt to explain the natural phenomena, or from human imagination, or from anywhere else, but only from the genuine experience of some divine reality, on which human existence must base its faith and entrust its hope, if it wants to attain salvation". Cf. N. Tatakis, *Θέματα χριστιανικῆς καὶ βυζαντινῆς φιλοσοφίας*, Ek tou typografeiou tis Apostolikis Diakonias tis Ekklesias tis Hellados, Athens 1952, p. 82 ff.

124. A. Bornapé, "'Fear God and Keep his Commandments': The Character of Man and the Judgment of God in the Epilogue of Ecclesiastes", *op.cit.*, p. 58.

125. Gregory the Theologian, *Ἔπη Ἱστορικά. Τμήμα Α', ΟΓ', Παρακλητικόν*, PG 37, 1421.

126. Malka Margalit, *Loneliness among Children with Special Needs. Theory, Research, Coping and Intervention*, Springer-Verlag, New York 1994, p. 9.

127. N. Nisiotis, *Παραδόσεις Ψυχολογίας τῆς Θρησκείας*, Athens n.d., p. 87.

128. S. Kierkegaard, *Ἡ ἔννοια τῆς ἀγωνίας*, transl. (Greek) G. Tzavaras, Dodoni

that he or she may find rest in the embrace of Divine Providence¹²⁹. St. Paul asks, «ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, ἵνα ἡ χάρις πλεονάσῃ»¹³⁰, and he answers in the negative; he emphasizes that there is always a choice of psychological response for the positive utilization of experiencing sin¹³¹.

After having carefully studied the book, we could say that Qoheleth, as a struggling mortal man, seems to imperfectly approach the fear of God. In the post-Christian era, the latter does not function unilaterally and by exercising control, but is integrated into the soteriological perspective of the unique relationship between God and man¹³². In the *Book of Ecclesiastes*, only when fear –inextricably linked in theological thought to human existence–, operates under the prism of God-given wisdom, the basis on which *the strategies of intervention* are founded is created. The teaching of the Church emphasizes that where there is sin, there is also guilt; thus, it teaches us that sin and guilt “are the two sides of the same coin – the transgression of God’s will”¹³³. The fear of God eliminates sin¹³⁴; as a result, it protects man’s unstable relationship with God¹³⁵. In other

Publications, Athens 1971, p. 53: “agony is the reality of freedom”.

129. S. Kierkegaard, *op.cit.*, p. 191.

130. *Rom.* 6, 1.

131. Io. Kornarakis, *Ποιμαντική Ψυχολογία. Πανεπιστημιακαὶ παραδόσεις*, Omega-D. Kyriakidis Publications, Thessaloniki n.d., p. 48.

132. This fear prevents man from perfecting himself in love because: «ἡ τελεία ἀγάπη ἔξω βάλλει τὸν φόβον, ὅτι ὁ φόβος κόλασιν ἔχει, ὁ δὲ φοβούμενος οὐ τετελειώται ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ» (1 *John* 4, 18). Cf. Palladios of Hellenopolis, *Ἀποφθέγματα πατέρων*, III, 17, SC 387, p. 158¹⁻⁴: «Ὡσπερ λύχνος ἐν σκοτεινῷ κοιτῶνι φωτίζει, οὕτως καὶ ὁ φόβος τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὅταν ἔλθῃ εἰς καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου, φωτίζει αὐτόν, καὶ διδάσκει πάσας τὰς ἀρετὰς καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ Θεοῦ».

133. Io. Kornarakis, *Ποιμαντική Ψυχολογία. Πανεπιστημιακαὶ παραδόσεις, op.cit.*, p. 48.

134. *Ecc.* 8, 12-13. See Maximos the Confessor, *Ἑρμηνεία κατὰ παράφρασιν τοῦ Ἐκκλησιαστοῦ*, VIII, 9-13, CCSG 11, p. 61⁸²⁻⁸⁵: «Διότι αὐτὸς ἀκριβῶς ἐπίσταμαι ὅτι ὑπάρξει καλὸν τοῖς κεκτημένοις τὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ φόβον, ἵνα φοβῶνται τὴν ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τοῖς κακῶς βεβιωμένοις αἰσχύνῃν καὶ μηδ’ ὀπωσοῦν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ συγκατατίθωνται». Cf. *Hier.* 10, 24: «παίδευσον ἡμᾶς κύριε πλὴν ἐν κρίσει καὶ μὴ ἐν θυμῷ ἵνα μὴ ὀλίγους ἡμᾶς ποιήσῃς»; John Chrysostom, *Ἰπόμνημα εἰς τὴν πρὸς Θεσσαλονικεῖς ἐπιστολὴν πρώτην εἰς ὁμιλίαν ΙΑ’*, PG 62, 391-467, here Θ’, α’, PG 62, 447: «Εἰ γὰρ, καὶ φόβου ἐπιχειμένου, πολλοὶ χωρὶς φωτίσματος ἀπῆλθον, καὶ οὐδὲ οὗτος αὐτοὺς ὁ φόβος ἐπαίδευσεν ζῶντας ἐπιμελεῖσθαι τῶν τῷ Θεῷ δοκούντων εἰ καὶ οὗτος ἀνήρητο ὁ φόβος, τίς ἂν ἐγένετό ποτε σώφρων; τίς δὲ ἐπιεικής; Οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεὶς».

135. Similar views, that fear of God saves man from the snares of sin, are also expressed

words, the relationship between God and man transforms the subject by setting the conditions for a healthy management of fear¹³⁶, leading man to the revaluation of his initial choices. Fear, as the basis of genuine faith, is not negated by the law of love¹³⁷. By repositioning their conscience in the new circumstances¹³⁸, each and every one can be led to the saving path of repentance¹³⁹ and to the potentially loving relationship of fallen man¹⁴⁰ on the path to deification¹⁴¹. Therefore, the fear of God, beyond the veil of the law, the commandments, and the prohibitions in the field of Christian pedagogy, constitutes the basis of the loving relationship between God and man that leads to salvation¹⁴². The *Ecclesiastes* suggests this path to potential readers-students, attempting to explore with them the Supreme Causal Principle, Yahweh, the personal God of his fathers¹⁴³. He develops a dialogue under the imminent existential fact of death – irrevocable for all human beings–, and records the futility of reality like a heart monitor¹⁴⁴. The exclusive love for God must be the sole purpose

in the Book of *Job* (15, 20). See W. Zimmerli, *Θεολογία Παλαιᾶς Διαθήκης: Ἐπίτομη Θεολογία τῆς Παλαιᾶς Διαθήκης*, transl. V. Stogiannos, [Βασικὲς Ἁγιογραφικὲς Μελέτες 4], Kentro Vivlikon Erevnon Artos Zois, Athens ³1981, pp. 204-205.

136. The fear of God “is not sterile, but productive” (A. Nikolaidis, *Θρησκεία καὶ φόβος. Ὁ φόβος τῆς θρησκείας καὶ ἡ θρησκεία τῆς τρομοκρατίας*, *op.cit.*, p. 102).

137. E. Papadimitriou & N. Vasileiadis, *Ἡ Παλαιὰ Διαθήκη. Κείμενον-Σύντομος ἐρμηνεία-Ἐκτενεῖς σχολιασμοί-Πατερικαὶ γνώμαι-Πρακτικὰ διδάγματα*, vol. 1-20, Adelfotis Theologon “O Sotir” Publications, Athens ³2003, here vol. 12, *Ἐκκλησιαστής*, p. 126: “The root and basis of the true religiosity is the fear of God”.

138. Mark the Hermit, *Περὶ τῶν οἰομένων ἐξ ἔργων δικαιοῦσθαι*, PG 65, 929-965, here B', ροβ', PG 65, 957A: «Ὁ καλῶς μαθὼν τὸν νόμον, φοβεῖται τὸν νομοθέτην καὶ ἐλπίζων ἐπ' αὐτῷ, ἐκκλίνει ἀπὸ παντὸς κακοῦ».

139. See A. Nikolaidis, *op.cit.*, p. 100. See also, Io. Kornarakis, *Ψυχολογία καὶ πνευματικὴ ζωή... ἀπὸ τὸ ραδιόφωνο*, Thessaloniki ³1986, pp. 41-47. See also, Ath. Glaros, *Θεία Παιδαγωγία: Παιδαγωγικὰ στοιχεῖα στὸ Μεγάλο Κανόνα τοῦ Ἀνδρέα Κρήτης*, *op.cit.*, p. 91.

140. *Sol.* 6, 17: «ἀρχὴ γὰρ αὐτῆς ἡ ἀληθεστάτη παιδείας ἐπιθυμία φροντὶς δὲ παιδείας ἀγάπη».

141. *Sol.* 6, 18: «ἀγάπη δὲ τήρησις νόμων αὐτῆς προσοχὴ δὲ νόμων βεβαίωσις ἀφθαρσίας».

142. According to John Chrysostom, the essence of human existence consists of the fear of God (S. Tsitsigos, *Ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κατὰ τὸν ἱερό Χρυσόστομο*, Apostoliki Diakonia of the Church of Greece Publications, Athens 2000, p. 291).

143. *Ex.* 3, 6.

144. The fear of God controls the eyes and hands, for the unlawful acts to be avoided

and result of the function of fear; the latter one should not be a goal in itself¹⁴⁵. This choice makes use of God's gifts: Life combined with the commandments that make it meaningful gives human existence meaning and content¹⁴⁶. When actions are linked to free human choice¹⁴⁷, then even incurable pathological conditions can become a motivation for real change¹⁴⁸. Qoheleth most definitely links fear with the immortality of the human soul, hinting at the Last Judgment¹⁴⁹. While verses 12, 1-7 offer us the opportunity to view death as a linear decline from illness to biological death and burial¹⁵⁰, they also reveal that humankind is incapable of understanding the way God works in both the present and future¹⁵¹. Human fulfillment is impossible without "liberation from the fear of death and ontological recognition"¹⁵²; therefore, for Qoheleth, any word beyond the name of God-Yahweh is superfluous. In this sense, the acceptance of the futility of things is distinguished for its cathartic features; it liberates through God's grace and constitutes an integral part of the redemption manifested in time in *Ecclesiastes'* universe.

(See Basil the Great, *Εἰς τὴν ἀρχὴν τῶν Παροιμιῶν*, PG 31, 385-421, here 4, PG 31, 393C).

145. See E. Fromm, *Ψυχανάλυση καὶ Θρησκεία*, transl. (Greek) Aimilia Markidi, ed. Kika D. Christofidou, Boukoumanis Publications, Athens ²1974, p. 60: "... Man was created in the image of God; this signifies the fundamental similarity between God and man. The basis of mystical experience is neither fear nor submission, but love and the assertion of one's own powers".

146. T. A. Perry, *The Book of Ecclesiastes (Qohelet) and the Path to Joyous Living*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2015, p. 155.

147. See Clement of Alexandria, *Στρωματεῖς Δ'*, XII, 88, 5, p. 200¹⁵⁻¹⁸: «οὐκέτι οὖν ὁ πόνος καὶ ὁ φόβος, ὡς αὐτοὶ λέγουσιν, ἐπισυμβαίνει τοῖς πράγμασιν ὡς ὁ ἰὸς τῷ σιδήρῳ, ἀλλ' ἐκ βουλήσεως ἰδίας προσέρχεται τῇ ψυχῇ» (PG 8, 1296C).

148. Cf. V. Cillespie, *The Dynamics of Religious Conversion Identity and Transformation*, Religious Education Press, Birmingham, Alabama 1991, p. 235.

149. See *Eccl.* 3, 20; *Gen.* 3, 19; cf. *Psalms* 103, 29. Gregory of Neocaesarea, *Μετάφρασις εἰς τὸν Ἐκκλησιαστήν τοῦ Σολομῶντος*, PG 10, 988-1017, here ιβ', PG 10, 1017A: «Ἀνθρώπων δὲ ἐπὶ γῆς κειμένων μία σωτηρία, εἰ ἐπιγνοῖεν αὐτῶν αἱ ψυχαί, καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀναπαῖεν ὑφ' οὗ οὐ καὶ γεγέννηται».

150. G. Savran, "Qohelet 12:1-7 – Intimations of Mortality", *JANES* 33 (2018), pp. 145-186, here p. 186.

151. W. Brindle, "Righteousness and Wickedness in Ecclesiastes 7:15-18", op.cit., p. 251.

152. G. Mantzaridis, *Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθική*, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki ²1983, p. 44.