

God's Existence and the Possibility of Knowing Him

Samuel Bâlc, PhD

Theological Baptist Institute Bucharest
samybâlc@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: The real knowledge of God is essential to human life. You cannot get to know God except when you value the work and the Word of God. The fact that some people promote so aggressively unbelief in the existence of God does not mean that He does not exist. It must be remembered that every man has the opportunity to know God. This knowledge of God and communion with Him depends on the choice of each individual. The Bible says that God exists from eternity to eternity (Ps 90: 2), in other words, God has neither beginning nor end. Even if we cannot fully understand certain things about God, that does not mean we cannot know God. This article highlights the reality of God's existence and the fact that man can know God in a personal way.

KEY WORDS: God, existence, knowledge, man, faith

Human religious concerns testify about the desire to know God. The question that arises is the following: If God exists, can I know Him? Pascal spoke of God as a *Deus Absconditus* (a hidden God), but he also claimed that this hidden God revealed Himself and that is why he may be known. To know Him means having eternal life and to grow in His knowledge means having abundant blessings.

Although knowing God has in its content mysterious and unobserved truths, it is objective and sure because it comes from God, and it is possible to reach its understanding through faith and its use through living. However, Lossky (1973, 3) said: „There will always be an irrational residue that escapes analysis and cannot be expressed in concepts; is the unknown depth of things that constitute their true, ineffable essence”. Thus, when it comes to knowing God, epistemology is totally inadequate due to the radical lack of correspondence between the human mind and the reality it wishes to achieve. (The epistemological method allows a limited knowledge of some of the properties of objects that can be observed.)

The alternative proposed by Lossky for the knowledge of God is found in gnoseology. „Gnoseology is not the result of human effort, it is a divine gift received through a revealing encounter. In this revealing encounter, God affirms that he is at the same time immanent and transcendent, and in the dialectic of transcendence and immanence, God is cognizable and incognoscible at the same time” (Lossky 1978, 31). However, what can be known about God, information that man is then called upon to transmit further is not the result of rational efforts but the follow-up of God’s self-revelation. Regarding this, Charles C. Ryrie (1993, 25). said: „God’s knowledge can be characterized by its source, content, progression, and purpose”.

Knowing God fully is both objective and personal. Knowing truths about a person without knowing it personally is limited, just as a personal knowledge lacking the facts is incomplete. God revealed many truths about Himself, the truths needed to develop a personal relationship with Him. If this knowledge were limited to objective truths and would not have been supplemented by a personal relationship with Him, it would have no eternal consequences. As in a relationship between men, the relationship God-man cannot begin without the knowledge of minimal truths about the Divine

Person; the personal relationship, then generates the desire to know more truths about the Divine Person, which leads to a deepening of the relationship and so on (Ryrie 1993, 26).

Knowing God differs from any other knowledge in that man possesses it only to the extent that God discovers it. If God did not initiate this revelation of Himself, there would be no possibility for man to know Him. The human being must first subordinate to the God he wants to know, unlike other fields of knowledge where man usually places himself above the object under study (Ryrie 1993, 27).

In Romans 1:19, the apostle Paul emphasized that “what is known about God is revealed to them” and adds that this is because “God has been revealed to them”. However, there are also people about whom Scripture says they are without wisdom by denying the existence of God. (The madman says in his heart “There is no God”. Psalm 14: 1; 53: 1). This denial of God’s existence is but a consequence of sin.

Heraclit makes Logos the intelligible support of existence, being that “thing” that determines the course of all things (Guthrie 1999, 281-284). For Greek rationalism to know is to know with the cause. Even defining God means defining a cause beyond which there is no other cause (Eco 1996, 45). The essence of philosophy, at this stage, was to define the conditions of the intelligible, „to put the absolute in front of conscience and to establish it as a term in relation to our being, without thereby falling out of condition” (Vlăduțescu 1987, 15). A distinction is thus established between what is (being) and what it thinks (thinking). Knowledge is realized through *dynamism*, translated in the sense of *soul capacity, faculty or skill* (Mureșan 2000, 50-51).

Although God reveals himself as wisdom, love, and kindness, his nature remains unknown in its depths, which is why our concepts must always be formulated so that they are not blocked within

the limits of their narrow sense. (These intelligent attributes of God, characteristic of positive theology, are analyzed by Dionysius Pseudo-Areopagite in *The Divine Names*, in *The Complete Works*, p. 52).

As Lossky (1978, 33) notes:

Surely God is wise, but not in the banal sense of the merchant or philosopher. His unlimited wisdom is not an internal necessity of his nature. The name, the highest name, even love, expresses, but does not exhaust the divine essence. They represent the attributes through which the divinity communicates itself, without its secret source, its nature ever exhausting or being objectively subject to our detailed analysis. Our purified concepts allow us to come closer to God; the divine name allows us, in a sense, even to penetrate into Him. But we can never encompass His essence; it would mean that He is determined by its attributes; but He is not determined by anything and that is why he is personal.

The opportunity of knowing God is open to man, even necessary for his existence. Being the incarnate and revealed truth to the world, God is both a source of any possible knowledge and a guarantor and generator of knowing the truth.

It should be noted at the same time that knowing God is not the same as having God. As Gregory of Nyssa (1857-1912): „Human health is a great good for human life. But happiness lies not in knowing what health is, but in living healthy. [...] The Lord does not delight those who know God, but those who have God”.

Without knowing God there can be no self-knowledge. But the man never comes to a clear knowledge of himself if he has not first looked at the face of God and has not come down from his contemplation to self-seeking. From here it can be concluded that man is never touched and affected sufficiently by the knowledge of his humble state than when he compares himself with the majesty of God.

According to Patristic writings, there is a natural knowledge of God, which starts from creation to its Creator and a supernatural knowledge that proceeds from God to men. The two ways of knowing God are closely related, supporting and complementing each other.

For Barth (1957, 121), to know God means to enter into a relationship with Him in a salvific experience. Barth is skeptical about man's ability to know God beyond revelation in Christ. This would mean that man could know the existence, the being of God, without knowing anything about the grace and mercy of God. This would prejudice the unity of God because He would separate His being from the fullness of His work (1957, 93). If a man could acquire a certain knowledge of God besides his revelation that is in Jesus Christ, he would at least contribute little to his salvation, to his spiritual situation before God. In this case, the "faith only" principle would be compromised.

According to Barth (1937, 49), revelation is always and exclusively the revelation of God in Jesus Christ: the Word became flesh. The possibility of knowing God apart from the graceful revelation in Christ would thus eliminate the need for Christ. Knowing about God is so in order to know God. In this case, the information must lead to the relationship.

As to the personal knowledge of God, Jesus said in Mathew 11:27: „No one knows the Son altogether, except the Father; so no one knows the Father except the Son, and the one who the Son wants to reveal Him". This way of knowing God cannot be gained through human effort and wisdom, as the apostle Paul points out to the Corinthians (1Corinthians 1:21): „The world, with its wisdom, did not know it God is in the wisdom of God". Because God is infinite, and we are limited, we can never understand God fully, so one can say that man can know God, but he can never comprehend it in

an exhaustive way (Psalm 139:6,17; 145:3). This aspect also has a positive application, Wayne Grudem (2004, 177) said: „This means that we will never be able to know” too much “about God, because we will never exhaust the things that we can learn about Him, and we will never get tired in the joy of discovering more and more of the greatness and splendor of His works”.

„Self-existence or absolute independence as a supreme being means that God is not determined by anything outside in thought, will, power, wisdom” (Wenger 1954, 59). God’s existence does not, therefore, end. It is not interrupted or limited to the sequence of events. Brekhof (1978, 60) defines God’s eternal existence as: „That perfection by which God rises above all the temporal boundaries and sequence of events and exerts his existence in an indivisible present”.

„The endless existence of God means that He did not appear at any given moment, nor was He caused to appear, He is self-existent, without any limit” (Ryrie 1993, 37). An encouraging implication of God’s eternal existence is that God has not ceased and will never cease to exist, and therefore His providential control is assured for eternity.

Do not forget that divine revelation is not only about knowing God, but also about experiencing man in accordance with what God has made known to him. The knowledge of God thus, becomes a major element of human spirituality and perfection. Since man cannot understand God through his own efforts, God has revealed Himself through a „revelation dressed in human language and in the human categories of thought and action” (Ramm 1961, 36-37). Regarding this, Vladimir Lossky (1998, 104) said: „Rationally, schematically, we know God from knowing his attributes; more specifically He is revealed through His work in the world”. But without the existence of human beings, the created world would be meaningless.

Although man is a finite being, he has the opportunity to enter into communion with the infinite Being of God. If God had not revealed to man, there would have been no possibility for man to know God. Acquisition of knowledge involves complex cognitive processes: perception, communication, association and reasoning, while knowledge is also related to the awareness of human beings (Cavell 2002, 238–266).

Recognition of God's existence and personal knowledge of God is based on faith. God can be known by faith in the Word of Scripture. At the same time, believers can get to more and more know God by walking with Him. God's knowledge grows in the believer's life commensurately to his fellowship with God. Full knowledge will be when believers will see him face to face.

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