

## The Image of God in the Second Epistle of Peter

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Because the Second Epistle of Peter is the main subject of the reflection presented here, it is worth prefacing this article by noting that the author of the epistle under study is not necessarily the first bishop of Rome. It is very likely that it was written by the “leader of the second or even third generations of Christians,” “an educated Judeo-Christian and Hellenist” who refers to the authority of St. Peter the Apostle both in the title of the text and in its fragments (see: 2 Peter 1:1; 1:12–21; 3:1) who puts the apostolic authority of St. Peter with that of St. Paul on equal footing (see: 2 Peter 3:15–16). Furthermore, he is not the same as the author of the First Epistle of Peter, as there are clear differences between these two texts. Meanwhile, the textual dependence of the Second Epistle of Peter becomes clear in its relation to the Epistle of St. Jude. The author of 2 Peter is active “in the age when gnosis was not yet fully developed [...], when the three Johannine epistles and the fourth Gospel were written.”<sup>1</sup> Thus in all likelihood we are dealing with the pseudepigrapha, which should be dated to much later than 64 or 67 AD (these two dates are alternatively considered to be the dates of the death of St. Peter), and even to 110 or 120, and whose de facto author “already knows St. Paul’s epistles (3:14–16) and unambiguously speaks on the subject of Biblical inspiration” (see: 2 Peter 1:20–21).<sup>2</sup>

The theology of this text has been perceived in different ways with regards to the topics contained within it. This can be the result of a distinct method

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- 1 H. Langkammer, *Nowy Testament o Kościele*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo św. Antoniego 1995, p. 153; J. Gnilka, *Teologia Nowego Testamentu*, tłum. W. Szymona, Kraków: Wydawnictwo M 2002, p. 569; F. Gryglewicz, *Teologia Dziejów Apostolskich, listów katolickich i pism św. Jana Ewangelisty*, Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL 1986, p. 42–43 (Teologia Nowego Testamentu, 3).
  - 2 Cf. H. Langkammer, *Historia czasów Starego i Nowego Testamentu*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo św. Antoniego 1995, p. 69; H. Langkammer, *Bóg jako Ojciec w świetle Nowego Testamentu*, Radom: Radomskie Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne Ave 1999, p. 212 (Biblioteka Radomskiego Instytutu Teologicznego, 2); H. Langkammer, *Nowy Testament o Kościele*, op. cit., p. 153; F. Gryglewicz, *Teologia Dziejów Apostolskich, listów katolickich i pism św. Jana Ewangelisty*, op. cit., p. 36.

previously used by various authors, but not directly revealed in the exegesis of the inspired text. While some claim that the theology “of the youngest text of the New Testament [...] focuses around the apostolic authority and defense of the faith,”<sup>3</sup> others immediately present the thesis that “faith is not the main subject of the epistles that are of interest to us (2 Peter and Jude) [...], but they have a prominent place as a point of departure for all the other themes.”<sup>4</sup> After discussing the “concept of faith” (1a) and “the subject matter of faith” (1b) contained in the Second Epistle of Peter, the latter group presents “Christian life” (2) and “eschatological problems” (3) as the essential subject of the text.<sup>5</sup> As it were, despite these declarations, we find many very acute observations regarding the theology of the Second Epistle of Peter in the last of the texts cited here dealing with the topic of faith, to which we will refer again.

In our reflections on theological topics that are found in the deutero-canonical book of the New Testament (which emerged relatively late and thus probably was counted among the inspired texts late), we will assume that the “image of God” in which we can find the fundament of all inspired books will be the main point of all thematic references. We will also try to present the remaining topics dealt with in the Second Epistle of Peter from this perspective, presenting them as derivative or representative of the basic perspective.

## 1. An Outline of the Contents in the Text’s Thematic Arrangement

Before we do this, however, we will try to encompass the text in a certain formal structure in accordance with the contents of it. In doing so, we do not seek to determine the literary genre with which we are dealing, if it is an epistolary form or rather a transcribed homily, although we do not plan to downplay this matter (taking into consideration the better appropriateness of the content of the latter option despite the fact that the text clearly has the appearance of a letter – see: 2 Peter 1:1–2; 3:1a). We also are not interested in a strict formal division of the literary structure, but in the mere arrangement of thematic blocks and how they are carried out in writing at the subjective

3 Cf. H. Langkammer, *Bóg jako Ojciec w świetle Nowego Testamentu*, op. cit., p. 212.

4 F. Gryglewicz, *Teologia Dziejów Apostolskich, listów katolickich i pism św. Jana Ewangelisty*, op. cit., p. 34.

5 Cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Teologia Dziejów Apostolskich, listów katolickich i pism św. Jana Ewangelisty*, op. cit., p. 34–43.

level. In this regard, the following outline of the text appears clear: (1) indicating the pseudonymic authority and the potential audience (2 Peter 1:1–2); (2) sketching out the basic problem (2 Peter 1:3–11); (3) the author's demonstration of the qualifications necessary to speak out on the previously outlined topics (2 Peter 1:12–21); (4) presenting the negative sides and circumstances of the problem (2 Peter 2); (5) presenting the positive directions of the search for a solution to the difficulties (2 Peter 3:1–10); and (6) reaching practical conclusions related to the audience's having adopted the necessary approach and undertaken the appropriate steps (2 Peter 3:11–18). We should immediately note that the outline proposed here is of an arbitrary nature and has been applied to make it easier to present the contents of the epistle.

In the presentation of the authority initiating the epistle, we read: "Symeon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of equal value to ours [i.e., that of the apostles] through the righteousness of our God and savior Jesus Christ." Here, grace (χάρις) within the inextricable context of peace (εἰρήνη) plays a central role. The direct referencing of grace and previous reference to it in the aspect of faith (πίστις) is something like the culmination and at the same time destination of the author's introductory remarks (see: 2 Peter 1:1–2).

The boundary between this statement and the immediate transition to outlining the basic problem (2 Peter 1:3–11) is completely blurred. It is difficult to treat it as intentional on the part of the author of the homily (or epistle) because of the use of the adverb ὡς in the function of a comparative conjunction at the beginning of the new verse (2 Peter 1:3).<sup>6</sup> Thus we can say that the main topic of the Second Epistle of Peter is presented strictly in relation to the introductory remarks and it is introduced by them as "anchored" in grace (χάρις). Thus we should not be surprised by the conception of Gryglewicz, who in his research on the topic of the theology of this epistle has considered faith (which is a grace) to be the "point of departure for all remaining topics."<sup>7</sup>

It seems, however, that the essential concept of the last inspired book of the Old and New Testaments on which it is constructed as if on a content-related axis is not so much grace (χάρις) itself, but rather praise (δόξα), and along with it virtue ([καὶ] ἀρετή), which in the case of praise is also a component

6 R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu* (Prymasowska Seria Biblijna), Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Vocatio 2006<sup>4</sup>, nr 5458, p. 669–671.

7 F. Gryglewicz, *Teologia Dziejów Apostolskich, listów katolickich i pism św. Jana Ewangelisty*, op. cit., p. 34.

(just as faith is a component of grace).<sup>8</sup> Praise and the perfection (ἀρετή here is in reference to God) of the One Who calls us (τοῦ καλέσαντος ἡμᾶς) are tools (*dativus*: δόξη και ἀρετῆ) with the help of which we have been summoned (see: 2 Peter 1:3), both the apostles and all who have received the faith (λαχοῦσιν πίστιν) equal to the dignity (ισότιμον) of the one of the apostles (see: 2 Peter 1:1). Therefore, through the fact of summoning (κλήσις) the inspired author refers to what was said at the beginning with the participle presenting God's attitude "has bestowed on us (καλέσαντος ἡμᾶς)" (2 Peter 1:3) in the fragment enunciating the essential topic of the epistle:<sup>9</sup> "Therefore, brothers, be all the more eager to make your call and election firm, for, in doing so, you will never stumble. For, in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you" (διὸ μᾶλλον, ἀδελφοί, σπουδάσατε βεβαίαν ὑμῶν τὴν κλήσιν καὶ ἐκλογὴν ποιεῖσθαι· ταῦτα γὰρ ποιοῦντες οὐ μὴ πταισῆτέ ποτε. οὕτως γὰρ πλουσίως ἐπιχορηγηθήσεται ὑμῖν ἡ εἰσόδος εἰς τὴν αἰώνιον βασιλείαν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) (2 Peter 1:10–11).

Within the leitmotif presented in such a way, we have its approximation. First, the essential aim of the vocation, whose genesis is praise through grace, in this case primarily the grace of faith, is presented. This aim is "so that through them you may come to share in the divine (ἵνα διὰ τούτων γένησθε θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως)" nature (2 Peter 1:4b). As if trying to say this in one breath, in the same sentence the author presents it as the defeat of the other side of reality that is opposed to realizing this aim: "after escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire" (ἀποφυγόντες τῆς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ φθορᾶς) (2 Peter 1:4c). Next, the monologue becomes a sequence of human traits of an internal disposition that are to be expected in order to achieve the previously described aim: zeal, faith, virtue, knowledge, restraint, patience (perseverance), devotion, fraternal friendship, and love (see: 2 Peter 1:5–7), which all together "increase in abundance" (πλεονάζω), not leaving people passive and fruitless in recognizing Our Lord Jesus Christ (οὐκ ἀργοὺς οὐδὲ ἀκάρπους καθίστησιν εἰς τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐπίγνωσιν – 2 Peter 1:8). This is complemented by a contrary thought about the lack of these traits, which leads one to be blind (τυφλός),

8 Cf. R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu*, op. cit., nr 1389, p. 143; nr 697, p. 72.

9 Cf. R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu*, op. cit., nr 2810, p. 340; nr 2553, p. 313–314.

shortsighted (μυωπάζω), and forgetful (λήθη) of the cleansing of past sins (2 Peter 1:9). The entire main thought of this epistle is closed in this state of affairs, through the previously referenced verses included in the context of vocation (καλέω) (2 Peter 1:3 and 2 Peter 1:10–11). Here, it would be worth adding that in the entire first fragment of the text (2 Peter 1:1–11) the style of the author's statement that unifies him with the apostles and expresses solidarity with his audiences is very clear. When it is foreshadowed in this way, its first sentence already equates the faith of both groups (2 Peter 1:1).

There is a clear change in tone in 2 Peter 1:12, when the author for a moment stops using the first person plural and moves to the first person singular, in this way somewhat making his internal dialogue with his audience credible. It contains three clear phases: (1) the author's clear placing of himself in the role of the Apostle Peter (2 Peter 1:12–15); (2) the return to solidarity (first personal plural) with the apostles (presumably James and John) in referencing the Transfiguration (2 Peter 1:16–19a); and (3) the parenthesis addressed to the epistle's audience (2 Peter 1:19b–21). The purpose of all of this seems to put the author not only in the role of the apostle, but also in that of three of those who most closely followed Jesus or even St. Peter himself, and also the prophet, a more full witness, because he is also a participant of the event and vision (the only one of its kind) who thus participates in knowledge of the Almighty (see: Numbers 24:16) or identified by holding the strongest prophetic words (καὶ ἔχομεν βεβαιότερον τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον – see: 2 Peter 1:19a) that can be said only by people from God (ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἄνθρωποι) carried by the Holy Spirit (ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι) (see: 2 Peter 1:21). This prophetic aspect will also appear in a negative form in the next fragment of the epistle (see: 2 Peter 2:1), also through directly summoning Balaam (see: 2 Peter 2:15). Meanwhile, in the second phase outlined here is at its very center devoted to the author presenting his qualifications to pass judgments on the previously described subject matter (2 Peter 1:12–21). At the beginning of verse 17, the concept of “glory” (δόξα) appears once more, this time in the context of respect, the honor (τιμὴ) that Our Lord Jesus Christ receives from God the Father (see: 2 Peter 1:16–17).

The next fragment of the Second Epistle of Peter, which encompasses the entire second chapter, contrasts with all that had taken place before and assumes a more real tone that expresses distance on the level of grammar from the subject, nearly without pause describing the object of his statement in the third person singular or plural. This serves to present the entire reality from which

the author distances himself and decidedly cautions his audience against. This is reality perceived from the mundane perspective, from the closed human perspective, a reality “oppressed by the licentious conduct of unprincipled people” (τῶν ἀθέσμων ἐν ἀσελγείᾳ ἀναστροφῆς) similar to what had taken place before the flood in Noah’s time or during the time of Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah (see: 2 Peter 2:7). The inspired author describes those who behave in such a way and previously had perceived reality as such in the following way in 2 Peter 2: (1) first he calls them “false prophets (ψευδοπροφήται)” (2 Peter 2:1), or those who do not listen to the Word of God, but instead to various earthly goods; (2) at the end he refers to them as those who “promise them freedom, though they themselves are slaves of corruption (ἐλευθερίαν αὐτοῖς ἐπαγγελλόμενοι, αὐτοὶ δοῦλοι ὑπάρχοντες τῆς φθορᾶς),” adding that: “a person is a slave of whatever overcomes him” (ὃ γὰρ τις ἤττηται, τοῦτῳ δεδούλωται) (2 Peter 2:19); (3) while at the very center of this fragment of the epistle he calls them “bold and arrogant” (τολμηταὶ – αὐθάδεις), “not afraid to revile glorious beings” (δόξας οὐ τρέμουσιν βλασφημοῦντες)” (2 Peter 2:10b). This time, the word “glorious” (δόξα) is in the plural form and appears to be applied in an objective way, in relation to Persons that can be described as such. Let us comment on this in the following way: in the flood of objective evil – that in the past and present, as well as that which is possible in the future – with which we deal throughout the second chapter of the epistle, in the very center of the monologue there appears once again, as if unyieldingly, “glory” – personal, intact, and increased. The conclusion of this fragment (2 Peter 2), which presents the negative aspects and circumstances that are obstacles to man’s participation in the glory of God’s nature, is the inspired author’s synthesis of the previously described situation, which is described in three verses: “For if they, having escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of (our) Lord and savior Jesus Christ, again become entangled and overcome by them, their last condition is worse than their first. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment handed down to them. What is expressed in the true proverb has happened to them, ‘The dog returns to its own vomit,’ and ‘A bathed sow returns to wallowing in the mire’” (εἰ γὰρ ἀποφυγόντες τὰ μιάσματα τοῦ κόσμου ἐν ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ κυρίου [ἡμῶν] καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦτοις δὲ πάλιν ἐμπλακέντες ἠττῶνται, γέγονεν αὐτοῖς τὰ ἔσχατα χεῖρονα τῶν πρώτων. κρεῖττον γὰρ ἦν αὐτοῖς μὴ ἐπεγνωκέναι τὴν ὁδὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἢ ἐπιγνοῦσιν ὑποστρέψαι ἐκ τῆς παραδοθείσης

αὐτοῖς ἀγίας ἐντολῆς, συμβέβηκεν αὐτοῖς τὸ τῆς ἀληθοῦς παροιμίας· κύων ἐπιστρέψας ἐπὶ τὸ ἴδιον ἐξέραμα, καὶ ὅς λουσαμένη εἰς κυλισμὸν βορβόρου) (2 Peter 2:20–22).

At the beginning of the third chapter, there is once more a radical change in the tone of the monologue. The author once again places himself in the role of the apostle Peter and makes it clear to the potential readers of his epistle that they do not live in the “reality” he had just described. The personal nature of the author’s reference to his audience reappears (2 Peter 3:1–2). The perspective of presenting reality likewise completely changes: it changes from the mundane (natural) to the eternal (supernatural), from “purely human” to Divine. From the beginning, there has been a reflection on the very understanding of the concept of “eternity,” which (1) from the human perspective marked by scoffing (ἐμπαυμονή) (described in the previous chapter – see: 2 Peter 3:3) is not the same from the very beginning of creation remaining (persisting), presumably, the future similar infinity of time (πάντα οὕτως διαμένει ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως – 2 Peter 3:4c); (2) meanwhile from the perspective of the Lord (παρὰ κυρίῳ) it is the enduring present that cannot be measured by time and in which “one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day” (μία ἡμέρα [...] ὡς χίλια ἔτη καὶ χίλια ἔτη ὡς ἡμέρα μία) (see: 2 Peter 3:8b). At the same time, the voluntary aspect of encounter (or non-encounter) with everything is revealed within the context of parousia: “They deliberately ignore the fact that the heavens existed of old and earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God” (λανθάνει γὰρ αὐτοὺς τοῦτο θέλοντας) (2 Peter 3:5). Ultimately, there is open talk of the day of the Lord (ἡμέρα κυρίου) in the aspect of being finished (“like a thief” [ὡς κλέπτῃς]) – 2 Peter 3:10), which can refer solely to the temporal perspective on reality. Thus the only positive direction of the search for glory (δόξα), let us add, the Lord’s glory (δόξα κυρίου), is the desire to accept God’s perspective of eternity and in this way the desire to know everything that ultimately means the perspective of faith in the person.

The last verses (2 Peter 3:11–18), which are supposed to be the drawing of practical conclusions regarding the necessary attitude and appropriate behavior by the audience in the above-described context of the entire epistle, particularly the one directly preceding the fragment referenced by us, enter into its message in a somewhat natural way. The contents contained within them deal with the author’s recommendations to his audience: (1) the sacred state of behavior and devotion (δεῖ ὑπάρχειν [ὑμᾶς] ἐν ἀγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς καὶ

εὐσεβείας – 2 Peter 3:11) and (2) the state of awaiting and rushing the coming of the day of the Lord (προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας – 2 Peter 3:12a), albeit in the peace (ἐν εἰρήνῃ) that was discussed at the beginning of the epistle in relation to grace (χάρις) (see: 2 Peter 1:2) in order to be found spotless and flawless (ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀμώμητοι αὐτῷ εὐρεθῆναι – 2 Peter 3:14) by Him (the Lord). Near the end, there is a caution against conceding to temptation despite one's proper decision (see: 2 Peter 3:17). Also here (2 Peter 3:11–18) the topic of eternity, not only from God's perspective, returns in two ways: (1) through referencing His (the Lord's) promise of “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (καινοὺς δὲ οὐρανοὺς καὶ γῆν καινὴν κατὰ τὸ ἐπάγγελμα αὐτοῦ προσδοκῶμεν, ἐν οἷς δικαιοσύνη κατοικεῖ) (2 Peter 3:13) as well as (2) the concluding recommendation: “But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory now and to the day of eternity. Amen” (αὐξάνετε δὲ ἐν χάριτι καὶ γνώσει τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα καὶ νῦν καὶ εἰς ἡμέραν αἰῶνος. [ἀμήν])” (2 Peter 3:18). In the last sentence of the book, glory (δόξα) in reference to the Lord in the person of Jesus Christ once again plays a leading role and in one statement converges with eternity (αἰών), and previously with grace (χάρις) and encounter (γνώσις), which in this case is understood in the aspect of faith (πίστις) as it is in reference to the person of Jesus Christ.

## 2. The Main Theological Themes in the Second Epistle of Peter

The entire arrangement of the Second Epistle of St. Paul shows us two essential matters: (1) the constant presence of the topic of God in the aspect of His glory and (2) the ultimate Christocentrism of all references. The word “glory” (δόξα) appears in this text five times, always in key places: (1) at the beginning (2 Peter 1:3) in the sentence initiating the epistle (2 Peter 1:1–4); (2) at the end (2 Peter 3:18), in the culmination of the last thought (2 Peter 3:17–18); (3) in the very center of the entire text of the epistle (2 Peter 2:10), which at the same time is the center of the fourth fragment distinguished by me (2 Peter 2); and (4) twice in the center of the fragment that makes the authority of the author credible (2 Peter 1:12–21) in the testimony to the Transfiguration (2 Peter 1:17). It is difficult to reject the impression that the entire composition of the epistle is built on this concept placed like pillars in strategic



places. In the central point of the text (2 Peter 2:10), the plural form was multiplied and referred personally to “the Lord God” (θεός-κύριος) (see: 2 Peter 2:4–9), which is attested to by the introduction regarding the description of actions that can be used only in reference to objects: “revile” and “reviling judgment” (βλασφημοῦντες) in opposition to “contempt for lordship” (κυριότητος καταφρονοῦντας – one could presumably accept: “His lordship”) and “surrounded by” (παρά κυρίου) “angels, despite their superior strength and power” (ἄγγελοι ἰσχυῖ καὶ δυνάμει μείζονες ὄντες) (2 Peter 2:10–11). The second and third appearance of “glory” (δόξα) inside the thematic construction of the epistle is strictly tied to the Transfiguration (2 Peter 1:17) and contains the following contexts: (1) directly agential – “of God the Father” (θεοῦ πατρός); (2) directly intentional – “His Son” (ὁ υἱός μου) and tied to them directly through the “voice” (φωνή) that “was brought” (ἐνεχθείσης) or also through a “prophetic word” (προφητικὸν λόγον); (3) directly revelatory – “through the Great Glory” (ὑπὸ τῆς μεγαλοπρεποῦς δόξης) of the “Holy Spirit” (πνεύματος ἁγίου) (see: 2 Peter 1:17–21). All these three Persons are very close to each other, encompassed in one place and tied together by the reality of glory, emphatically and unambiguously demanding to be treated as a single concept, especially since several verses later (2 Peter 2:10) – in the concept of “glory” intensified by the plural form but merged together by one concept – we find It in the concepts of God (θεός) and the Lord (κύριος). Nothing responds to this expectation better than the expression “Holy Trinity,” which is not directly used in the entire Bible, but is fundamental in the Christian understanding of God built on the entirety of revelation. In the Second Epistle of Peter, there is the revelational basis for one of the fundamental dogmas of the faith, and a verse of 2 Peter 1:17 can also be one of the bases of revelation concerning life inside the Holy Trinity, where there is talk of “my [God’s] Son, my beloved” (ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός μου – an expression referring to Jesus Christ; see: 2 Peter 1:17), Who “received honor and glory from God the Father” (λαβὼν [...] παρὰ θεοῦ πατρός τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν), while He receives the voice through “majestic glory” (ὑπὸ τῆς μεγαλοπρεποῦς δόξης). The One who brings the voice is the Holy Spirit. The plural form (*accusativus*) of “Glory” (δόξας) in the verse 2 Peter 2:10 not only indicates the three Persons of God, but also the unity of these three Persons in nature, which impinges on the common individual concept for them all (of “glory”). Whatever we can say about the glory of the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit in this situation, we have to state the same about the remaining two Persons. This statement is furthermore supported by the

use of the word “glory” (δόξα) in the two remaining external (at the beginning and end) appearances in the book that we are analyzing. However, before we can move forward and expand on this theme, we must devote some attention to the above-mentioned Christocentrism of the references in the text.

It is difficult to agree with Gryglewicz that “The authors of the epistles [2 Peter and Jude] had difficulty in giving titles to God: «Lord» (κύριος) and «Savior» (σωτήρ), but above all the very name «God».”<sup>10</sup> If that were the case, certainly other terms allowing us to express the contents of revelation could be found in the inspired word. Meanwhile, in accordance with what Gryglewicz writes, these uses of “God,” “Lord,” and “Savior” “attest to highly developed theological thought of early Christianity” and “that the epistles under discussion were written in late antiquity.”<sup>11</sup> The title “Lord” (κύριος) was given to Jesus from the very beginning, or from the time when He walked the earth in human form, above all by those who were moved by the grace of faith, which has been immortalized in all four Gospels. That the Septuagint uses that same title to God the Father is not surprising in light of what has been said above on the topic of glory in the context of the Holy Trinity, which the Second Epistle of Peter deals with. Although we are dealing with a text composed in late antiquity, its author knows all the books of Sacred Scripture well (see: 2 Peter 1: 13–14, 17–21; 2: 4–8, 15–16, 22; 3: 1, 5–8, 13, 15–16) in light of the development of theological thought of the era when this text was written. We can also fully understand the fact that it not so much enriches the titles referring to Jesus “in a way unknown in the other books of the New Testament” as it builds theology that is deeper in its expression, or an image of God through properly connected titles.<sup>12</sup>

In a dictionary,<sup>13</sup> we can read that the Greek conjunction καί not only links individual expressions or sentences in a simple, translatable way like the conjunctions “and” or “as well as,” but furthermore it is capable of: (1) “linking a part to a whole,” such as “archpriests and the entire Sanhedrin;” (2) connecting two expressions in one conception; (3) being placed in the text “to

10 F. Gryglewicz, *Teologia Dziejów Apostolskich, listów katolickich i pism św. Jana Ewangelisty*, op. cit., p. 36.

11 F. Gryglewicz, *Teologia Dziejów Apostolskich, listów katolickich i pism św. Jana Ewangelisty*, op. cit., p. 37.

12 Cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Teologia Dziejów Apostolskich, listów katolickich i pism św. Jana Ewangelisty*, op. cit., p. 36–37.

13 Zob. R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu*, op. cit., nr 2522, p. 308–310.

emphasize a certain fact, to express amazement: ‘thus,’ ‘yet,’ ‘however,’ ‘but,’ and ‘although;’” (4) being found “before an expression or sentence explaining or developing a previous thought: ‘that is,’ ‘therefore,’ ‘and this,’ and ‘and that is;’” (5) being applied “with someone’s surname or the second part of the name of something; and (6) being used as an adverb such as: ‘likewise,’ ‘even,’ ‘just,’ or ‘exactly.’” Meanwhile, as Gryglewicz has also noted, with one exception at the beginning of the epistle, the name “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς) inextricably tied<sup>14</sup> to the title “Christ” (Χριστός) always (2 Peter 1:1) appears not so much with the titles added to it as in an appropriate theological context. Thus this context consists of such expressions, used in different grammatical forms, as:

- 1) before the name Jesus Christ (Ἰησοῦς Χριστός):
  - a) “our Lord” (κύριος ἡμῶν) (2 Peter 1:8, 14, 16);
  - b) “our Lord and Savior” (κύριος ἡμῶν καὶ σωτήρ) (2 Peter 1:11; 3:18);
  - c) “Lord and Savior” (κύριος ἡμῶν καὶ σωτήρ) (2 Peter 2:20);
  - d) “our God and Savior” (θεός ἡμῶν καὶ σωτήρ) (2 Peter 1:1);
- 2) after the name “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς) without “Christ” (Χριστός) – merely “our Lord” (κύριος ἡμῶν); but at the same time before the name – just „God” (θεός) (2 Peter 1:2);
- 3) without using the name “Jesus Christ” (Ἰησοῦς Χριστός):
  - a) just “Lord” (κύριος) (2 Peter 2:9, 11; 3:8, 9);
  - a) “our Lord” (κύριος ἡμῶν) (2 Peter 3:15);
  - c) “the Lord and Savior” (κύριος καὶ σωτήρ) (2 Peter 3:2),
  - d) just “God” (θεός) (2 Peter 1:21; 2:4).

Furthermore, there are various expressions that:

- 1) refer to Jesus Christ in the aspect: “God,” “Lord,” and “Savior”:
  - a) “the Word of God” (θεοῦ λόγος) (2 Peter 3:5),
  - b) “the day of God” (θεοῦ ἡμέρα) (2 Peter 3:12),
  - c) “the day of the Lord” (ἡμέρα κυρίου) (2 Peter 3:10),
  - d) “and consider the patience of our Lord as salvation” (καὶ τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν μακροθυμίαν σωτηρίαν ἠγεῖσθε) (2 Peter 3:15);
- 2) directly indicate Jesus Christ’s Divinity:
  - a) “His divine power” (τῆς θείας δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ) (2 Peter 1:3),
  - b) “divine nature” (θείας [...] φύσεως) (2 Peter 1:4).

<sup>14</sup> We will say more on the topic of Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν (“Jesus, our Lord; 2 Peter 1:2) later in this reflection.

Only in one case, the one that is the most structurally complex, is „Christ” (Χριστός) not attached to the name “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς). In this place, it is just “Jesus our Lord” (κύριος ἡμῶν) (2 Peter 1:2). Here, we are dealing with connecting Jesus’ name through καί with just the word “God” (θεός) placed before this name. The problem of interpreting this context rests in the right interpretation of the conjunction καί. In principle, in light of what we previously discovered on the topic of the revelation of the Holy Trinity in the context of glory in the epistle, each of the above-mentioned possibilities would to some degree be appropriate. Analogously, the concept of “Jesus” is “part” of the “Triune God,” just as “archpriests,” for example, become part of “the entire Sanhedrin,” which would legitimize using καί as “connecting a part to a whole.” It is also appropriate to understand it as connecting two expressions: “God and Jesus” (θεοῦ καὶ Ἰησοῦ) in one concept is immediately then revealed: “our Lord” (κυρίου ἡμῶν). The following interpretations can bring to the fore another semantic advantage of καί in the expression τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν : (1) one that emphasizes: “of God, and thus of Jesus, our Lord” or “of God, and therefore of Jesus, our Lord;” (2) and one that explains and expands: “of God, this is Jesus, our Lord,” “God, therefore: Jesus, our Lord,” or “God, and that is: Jesus, our Lord.” In all these interpretations, the essential thing is that the name “Jesus” has been placed between the concept of “God” and the synonymous expression “our Lord” and the connected conjunction καί, which causes this name to be incorporated or even absorbed into the concepts surrounding it. In this way, “God” or “Our Lord” become something like the last names of “Jesus” (or vice versa), which can be expressed with the help of the adverb function of the conjunction καί as: “God or, to be exact, Jesus, our Lord,” as well as “God, or to be precise, Jesus, our Lord.” In no case should one use here an interpretation that separates the two concepts of „God” (θεός) and “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς), as: (1) this would contradict the essence of the conjunction and (2) it would create a collective subject, which is contradicted by the morphology of the expressions directly neighboring it and the syntax of the sentence containing these concepts. Thus in the introduction – in the second verse of the epistle under discussion – we not only have the blatantly accentuated truth about the fact that God is our Lord – which is repeated many times in the Old Testament – but also the truth that our Lord is Jesus and He is God. Meanwhile, the image of God not only can, but also should be identified with the image of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, everything that will be later said about God should be related to Jesus and *vice versa*.

The validity of this perspective is confirmed by all the above-quoted expressions and phrases that are also present in the Second Epistle of Peter that are directly or indirectly related to the name “Jesus Christ” (Ἰησοῦς Χριστός). Frequently, they are tied to the terms: “God” and “our God” (θεός – θεός ἡμῶν); “Lord” and “our Lord” (κύριος – κύριος ἡμῶν); and the concepts of “Savior” and “salvation” (σωτήρ – σωτηρία – see: 2 Peter 1:1, 11; 3:18; 2:20). Meanwhile, the very word “God” (θεός) without any indications that it is in reference to other concepts appears in the text. Apart from the verse 2 Peter 1:2, it solely appears in the context of the Trinity: (1) “but rather human beings moved by the Holy Spirit spoke under the influence of God (ἀλλά ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἀνθρώποι)” (2 Peter 1:21); (2) the term “God” (θεός) in the verse 2 Peter 2:4 after a long monologue on salvation history (2 Peter 2:4–8), which is repeated as “Lord” (κύριος) in the verse 2 Peter 2:9, and the final time at the end of the verse 2 Peter 2:10 the plural form of the word “glory” (δόξα) is described, which has already been discussed in the context of the Holy Trinity revealed in the epistle. The word “Lord” (κύριος) mentioned here also without any direct references apart from the distant (verse-wise) context of “God” is passed on like a “baton” in the further course of the epistle and appears in the next verse (2 Peter 2:11), maintaining the same Trinitarian meaning with regards to angels. Furthermore, the verses 2 Peter 3:8–9 reveal another, broader reference from the perspective of eternity (which has also been discussed above). There is no doubt as to whom the phrases are addressed to: the “Lord and savior” (κύριος καὶ σωτήρ) (2 Peter 3:2) and simply “our Lord” (κύριος ἡμῶν) (2 Peter 3:15) through the use of the historical context and that of parousia with regards to them. Meanwhile, the concepts contextually linked to them: c) “the day of the Lord” (ἡμέρα κυρίου) (2 Peter 3:10) and “the day of God” (θεοῦ ἡμέρα) (2 Peter 3:12) leave no doubts as to who this Lord and God whose coming we are awaiting on His day is. Furthermore, if we also note the “word of God” (θεοῦ λόγος) through which everything happened (2 Peter 3:5) (see: (John 1:1–18) as well as “His divine power” and “divine nature” (2 Peter 1:3–4), then there is revealed a fully Christocentric image of God painted in the Second Epistle of Peter. This image is not chaotically presented, but instead it is presented consistently in the development of concepts, from verse to verse and chapter to chapter, from the beginning up through the very end.

The first time the name “Jesus Christ” (Ἰησοῦς Χριστός) appears is at the beginning of 2 Peter 1:1 in the *genetivus* to which the author’s pseudonym

“Simon Peter” (Συμεὼν Πέτρος) is previously referenced, presenting him as a “slave and messenger, apostle” (δοῦλος καὶ ἀπόστολος) of the former. Its mere situation and the grammatical form that is used suggest the unique stature accorded to the Lord by the author. Thinking analogously to the Hebrew language, Jesus’ name has been presented in an independent state (*status absolutus*) while everything else preceding that name in the text is in a compound state (*status constructus*), completely dependent on that name. The next reference to this person of God so clearly placed at the center of our attention from the very beginning can be found one more time at the end of the same verse (2 Peter 1:1) in a slightly more developed form: “the savior Jesus Christ” (σωτήρ Ἰησοῦς Χριστός) connected to another expression, “our God” (θεὸς ἡμῶν), by the conjunction καὶ in the context of the author and his audience receiving “faith” (πίστις) (see: Romans 10:10) “with the help of and thanks to righteousness” (ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ). The word “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνη) requires an objective modifier. Without a doubt, it is “our God” (θεὸς ἡμῶν) but also “Jesus Christ the savior” (σωτήρ Ἰησοῦς Χριστός). Here, the conjunction καὶ has a slightly different function than in the previously analyzed expressed τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν (2 Peter 1:2), because it connects two expressions, the first of which becomes independent first through the possessive pronoun “our” (ἡμῶν) and only later is connected to the next one so that a collective modifier referring to the word “justice” (δικαιοσύνη) can be formed. Thus in the second revelation of His Person Jesus Christ appears above all as the Savior Who participates in our God’s justice. This leads to the question of why we should separate the One we already know about from our previous inquiries that is unity in the Holy Trinity with the One Who describes Himself as “our God” (θεὸς ἡμῶν). There appears to be but one meaningful response: in order to very clearly ascribe the title “Savior” to Him (Christ) and above Him among the persons of God. Discovering Jesus as “God” (θεός) and “our Lord” (κύριος ἡμῶν) is the next step that takes place in the next verse (2 Peter 1:2) within the very same sentence, in the context of grace, and the peace in it, which can be multiplied thanks to the “knowledge” (ἐπίγνωσις) of this truth. However, this is not the end of this sentence, or even of the initiated revelation. In the next verse, which is a continuation of the same thought, we have an equation of the gift of “His divine power” (θείας δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ) in the form of “life and devotion” (ζωὴν καὶ εὐσέβειαν) once again received through the means of “knowledge” (ἐπίγνωσις) of the one who called us by his own glory and power” (see: 2 Peter 1:3) from the very beginning. The inspired

author makes all that has been said so far (2 Peter 1:1–3) the genesis of the next verse, which is within the same sentence, presenting the aim not only of this statement, but of the entire epistle: “so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature” (ἵνα [...] γένησθε θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως)” (2 Peter 1:4b), at the same time recalling circumstances: (1) those created by God, Who currently gives us the greatest things, those worthy of praise (τὰ τίμια καὶ μέγιστα ἡμῖν ἐπαγγέλματα δεδωρόηται) (2 Peter 1:4a) and (2) those create by us, humans, that are necessary to escape from the lust for corruption and depravity in this world (ἀποφυγόντες τῆς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ φθορᾶς – 2 Peter 1:4c). The remaining fragment is dedicated to addressing the latter group of circumstances (2 Peter 1:11). This fragment outlines the basic topic of the epistle, which displays a certain dichotomy (2 Peter 1:5–8; 1:9–11), concluding in each of the fragments of the subsection with the name Jesus Christ in the further development of revealing its construction. After the author discovers Jesus as “God” (θεός) and “our Lord” (κυρίου ἡμῶν) for the third time (2 Peter 1:2) and next strengthens this with talk of “His divine power” (2 Peter 1:3) and shows us the perspective of “com[ing] to share in the divine nature” (γένησθε θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως)” (2 Peter 1:4), he next confirms this “knowledge” (ἐπίγνωσις) united by the expression “our Lord Jesus Christ” (κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός) (2 Peter 1:8) and ultimately adds to this the previously used title “savior” (σωτήρ) (see: 2 Peter 1:1) to ultimately form the full phrase “our Lord and savior Jesus Christ” (κύριος ἡμῶν καὶ σωτήρ Ἰησοῦς Χριστός) (2 Peter 1:11). In this way, once the text’s outlining of the main subject ends, the process of revealing the One Who is at the center of the author’s attention and is presented to the audience as the one who can deal with all problems, as the “savior” (σωτήρ). This is attested by the fact that verses 2 Peter 1:1–11 contain many nouns such as: “faith” (πίστις) (2 Peter 1:1, 5), “knowledge” (γνώσις) (2 Peter 1:5, 6), and ἐπίγνωσις (“knowledge”) (2 Peter 1:2, 3, 8). In total, it appears seven times when at the same time γνώσις (2 Peter 3:18) and ἐπίγνωσις (2 Peter 2:20) appear, while at the same time πίστις is no longer used in the text. We can say that the fundamental process of accepting faith, knowing it, accepting or acknowledging in it<sup>15</sup> the main theological topic of the epistle along with the

15 Among others, F. Gryglewicz notes the problem of the development of the concept of “faith” in the terms πίστις, γνώσις, and ἐπίγνωσις, albeit in a slightly different approach to the subject - cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Teologia Dziejów Apostolskich, listów katolickich i pism św. Jana Ewangelisty*, op. cit., p. 34–35.

verse 2 Peter 1:11 has been closed and there will be only two references to it – in both cases at the end of new thematic blocks related to this topic – in close relation to expressions containing Jesus Christ’s name, specifically: (1) in 2 Peter 2:20: “through the knowledge of (our) Lord and savior Jesus Christ” (ἐν ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ κυρίου [ἡμῶν] καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) and in the last verse of epistle, in 2 Peter 3:18: to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ” (ἐν χάριτι καὶ γνώσει τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). Wherever “knowledge” is significant in the epistle, there is always a full description of what has been discovered with regards to the name of the second Person of the Holy Trinity.

Jesus Christ’s name is inscribed twice in the form: “our Lord Jesus Christ” (κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός) (2 Peter 1:14, 16). Both times this phrase appears, its purpose is that of revelation and knowledge from the perspective of the description of the experience of the Transfiguration which, as we have said before, places the image of Jesus Himself within the context of the Holy Trinity: (1) in the verse 2 Peter 1:14, our Lord Jesus “has shown” (ἐδήλωσέν)<sup>16</sup> the author His quick movement from the earthly life to eternity, and (2) in the verse 2 Peter 1:16, the “power” (δύναμις) of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which has already been mentioned in 2 Peter 1:3, is “made known” (γνωρίζω).<sup>17</sup> In this situation, it is difficult to not interpret “our Lord” (κύριος ἡμῶν) itself in 2 Peter 3:15 as referring to Jesus, especially since it is within the context of “salvation” (σωτηρία). This was similar in the case of the verse 2 Peter 3:2, where “our Lord and savior” (κυρίου καὶ σωτῆρος), without the pronoun “our” (ἡμῶν), clearly refers to the same Person.

Taking into account the entirety of this search for Christocentric references so far, it should be emphasized that the image of Jesus Christ in the Second Epistle of Peter is, indeed, the image of God. Meanwhile, all that is said about God or about the Lord in this text also concerns Jesus Christ due to the strong Trinitarian context that is present and can be applied to the entire text, also to Jesus Christ. Returning to the topic of “glory,” which has been discussed previously although it has been set aside to give room for all these observations, we need to move back to the first sentence of the epistle containing the first four verses and there look for an answer to the question of what is glory,

16 R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu*, op. cit., nr 1206, p. 124: δηλώω – “make clear,” “make evident,” “reveal,” “expose,” “show.”

17 R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu*, op. cit., nr 1100, p. 113: γνωρίζω – “make known,” “inform,” “intimate,” “reveal,” “let become known.”



as the verses 2 Peter 1:1–4 are the cognitive quintessence of the entire text, as they show faith as in a seed. A verse of 2 Peter 1:5, which develops this thought, expanding it to other verses (see: 2 Peter 1:5–8), coming from “faith” (πίστις) as the environment that is most appropriate for the process of the spiritual development of the person, referring back to it, to the content of the previous sentence, which comes from it and constructs its meaning, thus truly showing its reality. In the spiritual reality of faith, when we become participants in God’s nature, Jesus’ divine, life-giving power that makes us capable of internally accepting God (πρὸς ζωὴν καὶ εὐσέβειαν δεδωρημένης) through (διὰ) our response in the form of the Person-Subject (ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ) this act that for a long time (forever) summons us with its own glory and perfection (καλέσαντος ἡμᾶς ἰδίᾳ δόξῃ καὶ ἀρετῇ). Thus in the verse 2 Peter 1:3 we have a presentation of the subjective relationship between God and man in which the “tool” of God’s power is glory and perfection. Both these traits, which are forms of accomplishing something, must go outside the Subject and appear to other subjects there. As they are material objects (although we speak of them in a subjective way), we do not perceive them outside ourselves, but they directly act within us, objects to which God always has access. In this situation, glory (δόξα) and at the same time perfection or virtue (ἀρετή) turn out to be the subjective way of revealing “outside (in some ways)” the Subject in the second subject. The human response to this can be service and mission to give witness (see: 2 Peter 1:5) to Jesus Christ in virtue (δοῦλος καὶ ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῖς – 2 Peter 1:1) as our Lord and our God (τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν – 2 Peter 1:2), and at the same time the savior (σωτήρ Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ – 2 Peter 1:1), giving grace revealed in the peace that grows within us (σωτήρος Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ – 2 Peter 1:2). This is the reality of faith, which is the relationship in which God wants to commune with us in His righteousness (πίστιν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν – 2 Peter 1:1), which is present from the beginning of the Second Epistle of Peter in the context of glory, making up the first fundament of the thematic construction of this epistle. The last of these fundaments is found at the very end of the text (2 Peter 3:18), giving the entire pronouncement stability (certainty). It speaks as if it were the echo of all the contents from the very beginning in its synthesis in order to clearly emphasize what in the image of God is essential to us: (1) growing in grace (αὐξάνετε δὲ ἐν χάριτι); (2) knowing our Lord and savior Jesus Christ (καὶ γνώσει τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτήρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ); (3) giving Him and only Him glory (αὐτῷ ἢ δόξα); and (4) the eternal dimension of all this (καὶ νῦν καὶ εἰς ἡμέραν αἰῶνος).

All other contents of the epistle derive from that image, thus complementing such an image of God formed by presenting to us His activity, of which different aspects are revealed and which is contrasted with the human response. Consequently, the fragments of the text in which God's power is felt come to the fore. It is "spread" between time and eternity (see: from 2 Peter 2 to 2 Peter 3); between what has already happened and what is still going on (2 Peter 1:12–18 – the Transfiguration) and what is announced that must happen (2 Peter 1:19–21; 3:1–3, 7–13 – parousia); and between physical space-time and the spiritual reality in the realm of faith or lack of it at the subjective level (which is juxtaposed throughout the text). As Gryglewicz writes, citing the verse 2 Peter 1:16: "The power and greatness of these words express Jesus Christ's divine nature, and his 'coming' is not so much a reference to the incarnation, which is a reference to His, suggesting parousia, when Christ reveals His divine power. We can add by quoting Langkammer: "God, Who reveals His beloved Son in all His 'power and glory' at the mount of Transfiguration, at the same time pours out that love of God to us, making us God's children, through the Son of God. That is the meaning of the Son's revelation to us, allowing us to know 'God and Jesus, our Lord,' from which 'praise and glory' flow (1:2). [...] Referring to the promise and to God's creative word in general, to God's voice from heaven, attests to a certain simultaneously theological and Christological orientation that is mostly based on the power of the word, which is at the same time revelation. The eschatological effectiveness of this power of the word, or God's revelation in Christ and through Christ the Lord, the Son of God and savior, mostly consists of our participation in God's nature here on earth."<sup>18</sup>

The God who is the eternal (2 Peter 3:8)<sup>19</sup> Creator and whose attributes include omnipotence (2 Peter 1:3; 3:5–7, 10, 12–13)<sup>20</sup> speaks, acts, and passes on His revelation in His word, also imparting inspiration (2 Peter 1:20–21; 3:5–7, 15–16)<sup>21</sup> does not take into consideration the human measure of time and is patient (2 Peter 3:8–9, 15), and His patience is of a salvific nature, with

18 H. Langkammer, *Teologia Nowego Testamentu*, cz. 1. *Ewangelie – Dzieje Apostolskie – Listy katolickie – Apokalipsa. Jezus Chrystus wczoraj – dziś – na wieki*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Wrocławskiej Księgarni Archidiecezjalnej 1985, p. 271.

19 Cf. J. Gnilka, *Teologia Nowego Testamentu*, op. cit., p. 572.

20 Cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Teologia Dziejów Apostolskich, listów katolickich i pism św. Jana Ewangelisty*, op. cit., p. 36, 41.

21 Cf. J. Gnilka, *Teologia Nowego Testamentu*, op. cit., p. 574; F. Gryglewicz, *Teologia Dziejów Apostolskich, listów katolickich i pism św. Jana Ewangelisty*, op. cit., p. 36.

the aim of converting everyone (2 Peter 3:8–9, 15)<sup>22</sup>: “the blasphemers who belong to the community also have the opportunity to be saved” (which is a novelty of 2 Peter).<sup>23</sup> “The source of a strong fundament of faith, of ‘life and devotion,’ is found in ‘God’s power,’ which the faithful receive (1:3–4). Thus ‘grace,’ ‘God’s power,’ and Jesus Christ the Savior are at work (1:1).”<sup>24</sup> God summons people to serve him; gives them everything that is necessary for life and openness in Him in full engagement (2 Peter 1:3, 10);<sup>25</sup> and expects only saintly behavior and conduct (ἀγία ἀναστροφή) so that he can find us unblemished and irreproachable (ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀμόμητοι) during such openness to Him (2 Peter 3:11, 14).<sup>26</sup> At the same time, he promises us greater intimacy with Him and realizes this promise (2 Peter 1:3–4).<sup>27</sup> At the time of judgment, He will punish only those whose conduct is contrary to His laws (2 Peter 2:3, 9, 13, 17); the teachings of Jesus Christ passed on by the apostles are as binding as the Ten Commandments (2 Peter 2:21; 3:2), saving the faithful (2 Peter 2:4–9), who remain faithful to Christ and will enter “into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ” (εἰς τὴν αἰώνιον βασιλείαν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) (2 Peter 1:11).<sup>28</sup> In heaven, God is in glory, surrounded by throngs of angels (2 Peter 1:3, 17–18; 2:9–11), among whom the fallen will also be given a just punishment (2 Peter 2:4).<sup>29</sup> In the entire Second Epistle of Peter, “there is some tension between ‘now’ and ‘the future.’” The faithful have received ‘grace and peace,’ but they are reprimanded by the author to act in such a way that at the time of judgment the Lord will ‘find them without blemish and stain, in peace.’”<sup>30</sup> In addition to the above-mentioned novelty with respect to the possibility that everyone

22 Cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Teologia Dziejów Apostolskich, listów katolickich i pism św. Jana Ewangelisty*, op. cit., p. 42.

23 H. Langkammer, *Nowy Testament o Kościele*, op. cit., p. 156.

24 H. Langkammer, *Nowy Testament o Kościele*, op. cit., p. 154.

25 Cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Teologia Dziejów Apostolskich, listów katolickich i pism św. Jana Ewangelisty*, op. cit., p. 36.

26 Cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Teologia Dziejów Apostolskich, listów katolickich i pism św. Jana Ewangelisty*, op. cit., p. 40–41.

27 Cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Teologia Dziejów Apostolskich, listów katolickich i pism św. Jana Ewangelisty*, op. cit., p. 36.

28 Cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Teologia Dziejów Apostolskich, listów katolickich i pism św. Jana Ewangelisty*, op. cit., p. 36, 37, 40, 42.

29 Cf. F. Gryglewicz, *Teologia Dziejów Apostolskich, listów katolickich i pism św. Jana Ewangelisty*, op. cit., p. 36.

30 H. Langkammer, *Nowy Testament o Kościele*, op. cit., p. 154.

will be saved, the epistle “for the first time emphasizes the eschatological meaning of the written Word of God, at the same time pointing to the necessity of a Christian life. It is also for the first time revealed that divine revelation is contained in the written Word of God, in Sacred Scripture.”<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, in the Transfiguration God as the Father is not only signalized in the context of speech: “This is my beloved Son,” as is the case with all the synoptic Gospels (see: Matthew 17:1–9; Mark 9:2–10; Luke 9:28–36), but in the verse 2 Peter 1:17 we have an original introduction to “the voice,” in which its author is clearly presented as God the Father (θεός πατήρ).<sup>32</sup>

### 3. The Theological Perspective and Essential Message of the Book

In the Second Epistle of Peter, God above all invites every believer to collaborate with Him at the level of one’s vocation, to which God calls the faithful at a personal and individual level. The key to discerning this vocation is based on encountering (through experience) God’s glory and perfection within one’s interior. The turning point is the decision in faith of accepting God’s perfection as one’s path through virtue. Virtue cannot be blind or greedy, or else at some point it becomes weak. Thus it must develop into encounter (in the way that faith understands it), lack of attachment to anything, and, finally, persistence, which together makes us open to receiving the graces of the One whose glory we have discovered in ourselves and whose perfection we have chosen as our path. From this point, the way to friendship and selfless love is simple.

We cannot permit ourselves to get off this path, as the effects could be lamentable. In order to achieve this purpose, it is worth accepting this eternal perspective in perceiving this world, always awaiting the coming of the Lord. Strength does not come from us, but it is constantly subjectively given to us from the One whose life and capacity of turning towards Him continues to move within is in an irreversible way. A guarantee that our decision in faith will be irreversible is active and strong engagement in pursuing one’s vocation, or constantly striving in our service and mission towards greater glory of the One whom we discover within ourselves.

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31 H. Langkammer, *Teologia Nowego Testamentu*, op. cit., cz. 1, p. 272.

32 Cf. H. Langkammer, *Bóg jako Ojciec w świetle Nowego Testamentu*, op. cit., p. 213.

The initiator and unequalled model of our subjective reference is the Triune God in His relation to us as that of a father to a son. We can take part in Him, in His divine nature when he invites us to his holy mount in order to transform us with His glory and give us access to His knowledge. However, this cannot happen through our will, but through our growing in grace, constantly being objectively open to the One to whom “be glory now and to the day of eternity,” “our Lord and savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

## Abstract

### The Image of God in the Second Epistle of Peter

An analysis of this text reveals the two essential issues dealt with in the epistle: (1) the constant presence of the theme of God considered from the viewpoint of His glory and (2) an ultimate Christocentrism of all the references to the image of God. The word “glory” (δόξα) appears five times, always in key places of the inspired text under study. The epistle exposes the theology of faith from the aspects of knowledge and calling, so as to successively reveal the mystery of Jesus Christ being the Divine Person – in the context of the Divine Trinity – and, furthermore, to disclose His subsequent Christological titles leading to a complete revelation in the expression: “Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ” (κύριος ἡμῶν καὶ σωτὴρ Ἰησοῦς Χριστός). At the same time, the epistle describes the main practical goal, i.e. “partaking of the divine nature” (cf. 2 Peter 1:4) through “God and Jesus, our Lord” (θεός καὶ Ἰησοῦς κύριος ἡμῶν), and the method of reaching this goal; it also warns against going a different way by contrasting the two dimensions of reality: the earthly and the eternal.

**Keywords:** vocation; Divine Trinity; eternity; faith; glory; grace; image of God; Jesus Christ; knowledge; Kyrios; perfection; recognition; Savior; virtue

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