

HUMAN DIGNITY AS REVEALED IN SAINT
PETER'S FIRST EVANGELISTIC MISSION
AMONG NON-JEWISH POPULATION.
AN EASTERN-EUROPEAN APPROACH
ON ACTS 10:1–11:18

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Abstract: Although Christian theologians have often reflected on the theme of the image of God in the human being over the centuries, the history of Christianity is marked by episodes and incidents that have proven that human dignity that derives from the image of God is not an easy concept to assimilate. The inter-denominational tensions in Romania in the first two decades after the Revolution, the interethnic tensions in certain areas of the country, the ethnocentric prejudices and the acute problem of migration from the Middle East are just a few recent or current indicators that the universal Church of Christ is still in need of biblical and theological reflection on the subject of human dignity. In this article, I intend to bring to the reader's attention one of the most relevant New Testament episodes for the aforementioned subject. It's the episode of the conversion to the Christian faith of the first group of non-Jews – the Roman centurion Cornelius and his family – through the evangelistic undertaking of the apostle Peter, reported in the Acts of the Apostles 10:1–11:18. Through my reflection on this passage I will seek first to interpret it in a way that is relevant for the East-European context, and then to distill some of its major theological ideas regarding human dignity.

Keywords: Acts of the Apostles, Cornelius (centurion), human dignity, image of God, New Testament, Saint Peter

Although Christian theologians have often reflected on the theme of the image of God in the human being over the centuries, the history of

Christianity is marked by episodes and incidents that have proven that human dignity that derives from the image of God is not an easy concept to assimilate. The inter-denominational tensions in Romania in the first two decades after the Revolution¹, the interethnic tensions in certain areas of the country, the ethnocentric prejudices and the acute problem of migration from the Middle East are just a few recent or current indicators that the universal Church of Christ is still in need of biblical and theological reflection on the subject of human dignity.

In this article, I intend to bring to the reader's attention one of the most relevant New Testament episodes for the aforementioned subject. It's the episode of the conversion to the Christian faith of the first group of non-Jews – the Roman centurion Cornelius and his family – through the evangelistic undertaking of the apostle Peter, reported in the Acts of the Apostles 10:1–11:18. The relevance of the episode on the matter of human dignity is given, on the one hand, by the belief of the early church – entirely Jewish at the time – that only the Jews had access to the grace of God, because Israel was the only chosen people of God. Other nations were seen as inferior before God. On the other hand, God intervenes to reform this vision and to include the first non-Jewish individuals into his people through an apostle of the Jews – Saint Peter. Through my reflection on this passage I will seek, first, to interpret it in a way that is relevant for the East-European context, and then to distill some of its major theological ideas regarding human dignity.

1. Cornelius' conversion (Acts 10:1-48)

Up to this point, the apostle Peter had not yet been ready for engaging in pioneer missionary work, like Philip the evangelist, for example (see Acts 8). For that he would need a considerable blow to his theology and self-understanding occasioned by the Cornelius episode (10:1–11:18). This probably epitomizes the hesitation which the church in Jerusalem had in the face of the possibility that God's salvation would break through the boundaries of Jewish religion. But it also might suggest that Saint Peter himself was inducted by the Holy Spirit in a broadening process.

1 For an extensive historical approach on the tensions between Christian denominations during the two World Wars, see Ciprian Balaban, *Istoria Bisericii Pentecostale din România (1922-1989)*. *Instituție și harismă*, Oradea, Scriptum, 2016, pp. 27-70.

The importance of this narrative is seen in the amount of space the biblical author gave to it. The passage in 10:1–11:18 is the longest single narrative in all of Acts of the Apostles. The importance of this event is seen also in the fact that it is recorded three times—it is told in detail in chapter 10, retold in chapter 11, and touched on again in 15:6–9. Chapter 10 marks a high point in the church’s expanding mission by bringing within sight the mission to the ends of the Roman Empire. Jesus’ programmatic command in 1:8 continues to be fulfilled, as the apostolic witness moves to the Gentile world. The story of Cornelius can be divided into four main scenes: Cornelius in Caesarea (10:1–8); Peter in Joppa (10:9–23); the meeting of Peter and Cornelius in Caesarea (10:24–48); the church in Jerusalem dealing with the Gentile question (11:1–18).

The first scene of this story begins with an introduction of Cornelius. He was *a centurion of the Italian Cohort* of the Roman Army, stationed in Caesarea (Acts 10:1). Being mentioned by name suggests that he was known to most of Luke’s Christian readers. As a centurion, he was in command of 100 soldiers. Some scholars say it is also possible that Cornelius was retired from service and settled in Caesarea, as the presence of his rather large household might indicate.² Unlike Lydda and Joppa, which were cities mainly inhabited by Jews, Caesarea was a Hellenistic-style city with a dominant population of Gentiles.³ New Testament stories about centurions like Cornelius and the one well respected by the Jewish community, whom Jesus met in Capernaum (Luke 7:1–7), may be evidence of the success of the gospel among Roman military. Cornelius is depicted as *a devout man who feared God with all his household* (Acts 10:2), meaning that he was a Gentile attracted to Judaism for its monotheism and high moral standards, worshiping God, but not a convert to Judaism. He is used to performing two of the three basic practices of Jewish piety – prayer and almsgiving –, which prepared his heart for receiving the gospel of Christ.

While he is engaged in one of the three traditional Jewish times of prayer, the afternoon hour of 3 p.m.,⁴ *he had a vision in which he clearly*

2 John B. Polhill, *Acts* (New American Commentary), Nashville, TN, Broadman Press, 1992, n. 69, pp. 251–252; James D.G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Epworth Commentaries), Peterborough, Epworth, 1996, p. 135.

3 Polhill, *Acts*, p. 252.

4 Gerhard A. Krodel, *Acts* (Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament), Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishing House, 1986, p. 189.

saw an angel of God (Acts 10:3). Cornelius stared at him in terror (10:4), which is the natural reaction of human beings to the supernatural. But there was no cause for fear. The angel came to assure him that devout worship did not go unnoticed before God. It is worth noting that the angel told Cornelius to *send men to Joppa for a certain Simon who is called Peter* (10:5-6) rather than having given himself the good news about Jesus. Peter, too, had a part to play.

Unlike the peoples of the West, whose reflexes of free initiative were formed by the capitalist economy, the people behind the iron curtain of Communism were accustomed to a paternalistic and providential state. Private property was banned, all public institutions and services were nationalized, and the state was to make the equitable distribution of goods to the population. Thus, people were used to expect to receive everything from superior and impersonal institutions. Communism inhibited initiative and free trade.⁵ These inertial reflexes are felt until today, when communities expect the state to have all the initiatives and plans for the development of the society. There are rural communities that do not mobilize even in the face of the dangers implied by natural disasters. When things are not going well, as everyone wanted, many voices are blaming God for failures and disasters. But the truth revealed by God in the Scriptures is that God wants to help the human community, but people must also acknowledge and assume the roles entrusted to them.

Cornelius chose his most trustworthy attendants to go to Joppa and bring Peter: two servants and a military orderly who shared his faith. These were men to whom he could give an account of the revelation he had received and who would be able to explain the situation truthfully to Peter (Acts 10:7-8).

Meanwhile in Joppa, Peter went up on the roof to pray (Acts 10:9). Housetops were flat and one could find privacy there. Away from the temple, devout Jews would observe a pattern of praying three times a day (Ps 55:17; Dan 6:10): the third, the sixth, and the ninth hours for prayer.⁶ Peter, while on the roof praying at noon, became hungry and *fell into a trance* (Acts 10:10). To his amazement the heavens open and

5 For an extensive approach on the effects of Communism on the sense of ownership and antreprenorial initiative in Romanian society, see Cătălin Augustin Stoica, *România continuă. Schimbare și adaptare în comunism și postcomunism*, București, Humanitas, 2018.

6 David J. Williams, *Acts* (New International Biblical Commentary), Peabody, MA, Hendrickson, 1990, p. 189.

a bundle was let down containing the three categories of living creatures recognized in the Old Testament (Gen 6:20; cf. Rom. 1:23). The large sheet being lowered to the ground by its four corners has been viewed by some commentators as a symbolic allusion to the ends of the earth, and ultimately to the worldwide mission (Acts 10:11-12).⁷ Most mysterious of all is the Lord's command for Peter to get up, *kill and eat* (10:13). Even in a trance Peter proves himself scrupulously obedient to Jewish food laws as he openly says "*By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean.*" (10:14). But the second divine command explains the significance of the first: "*What God has made clean, you must not call profane*" (10:15). The message was so important that it was given *three times*, before the thing was suddenly taken up to heaven (10:16). Food laws and interaction with Gentiles are inextricably related in the Bible. In Leviticus 20:24b-26 the laws of clean and unclean are linked precisely to Israel's separation from the rest of the nations. But the point that God was making through Peter's vision was that he declared the unclean to be clean. In Mark, Jesus' teaching on clean/unclean was immediately followed by a miraculous intervention for a Gentile woman (Mark 7:24-30), just as Peter's vision regarding clean and unclean foods was followed by preaching Christ to a Gentile.

It's no wonder that *Peter was greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision that he had seen* (Acts 10:17), but just then the men sent by Cornelius arrived at the house (10:18-19). The Holy Spirit tells Peter about the three men at his gate, commands him to go down, and even to *go with them without hesitation; for I have sent them* (10:20). Cornelius had been guided by an angel; Peter had a vision. Now it was the Holy Spirit. All this is meant to emphasize God's control over the situation. So *Peter went down to the men and said: "I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?"* (10:21). But now Peter already had a hint that they were a piece in the puzzle of his vision. The three men spoke of Cornelius's devout character and heavenly vision, as they recount the story from the beginning (10:22). That Peter was beginning to understand is indicated by the fact that he invites these Gentiles in to be his guests overnight. He is not yet acting beyond what a law-abiding

⁷ Polhill, *Acts*, p. 254. Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts* (Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament), Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2008, p. 145.

Jew might be observing.⁸ But he would have no control over the situation when he would find himself in the house of a Gentile like Cornelius. Even so, *the next day he got up and went with them, and some of the believers from Joppa accompanied him* (10:23). This was the dawn of a fellowship with Gentiles he used to consider unclean in the past.

Cornelius was almost certain that Peter would come to Caesarea, and he was ready and waiting for him with his relatives and close friends (10:24). His first act on meeting Peter was to kneel before him as a sign of reverence (10:25-26), but Peter would not accept the worship that belonged only to God (cf. Acts 14:14-18; Luke 4:8; 8:41; Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9). A sound perception of human dignity involves neither deifying anyone nor accepting to be deified. Unfortunately, in the Romanian political context there are too many political figures that step up on the public arena pretending to be providential leaders. This might be because they know too well that there always are people willing to approve their arrogant claims. The explanation of this fact could be identified in a specifically Eastern perception of political power as divinely legitimated. Events such as the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity, the Edict of Milan (313 AD) – which gave Christianity a legal status –, and making Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire by Emperor Theodosius in 380 AD generated the perception that the imperial power was a terrestrial image of the divine reign. The political vision of the Christian East was that of a harmony between spiritual power and political power, known as the “symphony” perspective.⁹ In Eastern Christendom, because of the continuation of a tradition that sanctified the political power, the church was always reduced to the position of serving that power. This explains the fact that in most Orthodox countries the opposition to Communism was a timid one and manifested only individually.

First, Peter let everyone know how unacceptable it was for a Jew to associate or even visit in the home of a person of another race. God, however, had shown him that he should not call another person unclean (Acts 10:28-29). Actually, Peter's vision had only related to unclean

8 D. G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary), Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2009, p. 332.

9 Jean-Claude Eslin, *Dumnezeu și puterea. Teologie și politică în Occident*, București, Anastasia, 2001, pp. 99-110.

foods. But from what Peter says it emerges that he interpreted his vision and he gave it a new application. Cornelius replied by outlining the events facts already known to the reader. It is a faithful recapitulation of 10:3-8 with some insignificant differences in wording between the two accounts, for the sake of variety. The value of this repetition is its underlying that all this is of God and therefore right. Cornelius concludes by saying that he followed the heavenly command and they are all together now and ready to hear *all that the Lord commanded* him to tell them (10:30-33).

Peter begins the fourth of his messages in Acts with a remarkable confession: *"I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him"* (Acts 10:34-35). And in this unequivocal sentence we find some of the biblical foundations of human dignity. God shows no partiality. That means that God created all men equal and they have equal chances to be saved and restored by God through Jesus Christ. If anyone is acceptable to him through Christ, then human individuals should find each other acceptable too.

No longer was God only for the Jews, and no longer was Jesus only a Jewish Messiah. Here comes a new theology of remnant Christians from all nations of the world. There is an interesting interplay in the verse between the narrow nature of the gospel's beginnings and its unlimited scope. God sent a message to his people, *the people of Israel*. But its content was peace through Christ, who is *Lord of all* (Acts 10:36). If he is truly Lord of all, then the gospel is for all peoples, not just the people of Israel.

Peter wants to show that Jesus ministry was accredited by God *after the baptism that John announced* (Acts 10:37). He begins with *how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power*, and ends with *for God was with him* (10:38). In between Peter sums up Jesus' healing and exorcising activity: *He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil*. The statement that Jesus of Nazareth was *anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and power* is reminiscent of the words of Isaiah 61:1-2: *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me ..."*

As in Acts 5:30, Jesus' crucifixion is described as *hanging him on a tree*. What is being pointed out in the expression *they put him to death* is not the guilt of the Jews, but rather God's reversal of the human unjust treatment of Jesus: *They put him to death ... but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear* (10:39-40). The apostles are witnesses of

all these things and especially chosen to bear testimony of them to the people (10:39). The fact that they had eaten and had drunk with him should refute any rumor that Jesus had appeared in some spiritual form (10:41). In the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus lies another foundation of human dignity. Human beings are extremely valuable in God's eyes because of the colossal price that has been paid for their salvation from the dominion of decay – the blood of God's Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore, the destiny intended by God for such valuable individuals is not nothingness or destruction, but final and total restoration through a resurrection similar to that of Jesus. Everyone is a candidate for that resurrection, which is why everyone is precious to God. People should look at each other as if they are going to spend an eternity together.

This risen Lord sent Peter and the other Apostles to testify that Jesus is God's appointed *judge of the living and the dead* (Acts 10:42). Peter is not interested in when final judgment will happen, but that will happen. That coming judgment is the context in which to understand and receive the offer of salvation through Christ (e.g., Joel 2:30-32, cited in 2:19-21). It seems that judgment is an essential part of the evangelistic message. The criterion both of judgment and of salvation is indicated in the next verse: *everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name* (Acts 10:43); those who do not will remain in their sins and will face Christ's judgment.

In Eastern Europe, before the fall of the Communist regimes the nomenclature owned the entire political capital. Most of the time, the recruitment of the political elite was done by counter-selection and not by meritocratic criteria. In Romania, this led to the emergence of some inefficient and corrupt figures in the political elite. After the disintegration of the Romanian Communist Party, the former political and economic elites managed either to stay in power, or to convert their old political capital into economic capital. Of course, each country in the former Soviet bloc presents slightly different situations, depending on the evolution of the political regime. In Romania, since 1990, some members of the neo-Communist elite became the group of interests with the greatest access to decisions and which claimed most of the resources.¹⁰ Thus, immediately after the Romanian Revolution in December 1989,

10 For detailed depictions of Communist and post-Communist Romanian elites, see Stelian Tănase, *Revoluția ca eșec. Elite și societate*, București, Humanitas, 2006, pp. 61-74 și Cătălin Augustin Stoica, *România continuă*, pp. 80-139.

there were politicians who were nicknamed “the Almighty”. The holders of power had impunity in face of the justice system and through them, their political clientele too. The biblical narrative about Cornelius shows us that Jesus Christ is “Lord of all” and all men, no matter how powerful they are, are accountable to God and need God’s forgiveness for their sin. The post-Communist elites must understand that whatever positions and privileges they have at hand, there is a Supreme Judge who will hold all the powerful of the world accountable. Even though at present somebody enjoys impunity in face of human justice, the institution of the supreme court of Christ is imminent. The most urgent need is to receive forgiveness, through sincere repentance before God and complete trust in Christ. Now, there is one big question to be asked: Is the Romanian church ready to utter God’s message about judgment and salvation to the elites of the society? Will it withdraw within its walls? Will it become subservient to them?

Peter was still preaching when a holy anomaly occurred: *the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word* (Acts 10:44). Peter’s last declaration that *everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name* generated genuine faith in the hearts of the audience. The sending of the Holy Spirit is the answer to faith (cf. 11:17; 15:8) and faith comes through hearing the word (Rom. 10:17). This event has often been called “the Pentecost of the Gentiles”. *Many of the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles* (Acts 10:45), because they believed that the church’s mission should focus on “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 10:6). Only on the coming day of the Lord the Gentiles will be brought by God to Mount Zion (cf. Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1-3). They knew this was a genuine experience with the Holy Spirit, *for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God* (Acts 10:46). The most essential component of human dignity is the image of God that it has been engraved on it (Gen. 1:26-27). Believers or unbelievers, all human individuals bear the image of their Creator. But due to human sin, the divine beauty of this image has been mutilated and forgotten. But God sent his Son to be born, crucified raised from the dead and glorified so that humankind would have the chance of restoration through faith in Christ and the renewal worked by the Holy Spirit. So God’s Spirit is that particular divine Person who operates the inner transformation of

the believer towards the ontological and moral ideal of the image of God. The image of God in people is restored by the Holy Spirit in the mystical body of Christ.

Only an indisputable demonstration of divine power could overrule all the objections of the conservative community in Jerusalem. Peter then drew the conclusion that, since the Gentiles had been baptized with the Holy Spirit, it followed that they were eligible to be baptized with water (Acts 10:47). Consequently, the apostle gave instructions for the converts to *be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ* (10:48a). As noted in Acts 2:38, water baptism is closely connected in Acts with the bestowal of the Spirit, though the gift sometimes precedes and sometimes follows baptism (cf. 8:12, 14–17; 9:17–18; 10:44–48; 19:5–6). Anyway, baptism remains the decisive means of calling upon the name of Jesus with repentance and faith and integrating in the community of God's people.

Some of the most astonishing movements of the Holy Spirit that Evangelical denominations experience in Eastern Europe are the spiritual awakenings among Roma/gipsy population. Romania has the largest Roma population in central and Eastern Europe and, arguably, the largest number of Roma Christians, with the fastest growth rate. There are many individual Roma Christians in the Romanian Pentecostal churches, individual Roma churches within the existing Pentecostal denomination, and many independent churches. The most renowned place in Romania is Toflea (a village known for much violence and Mafia gangs), where a particular Christian movement among the Gypsies began in the early 1990s. From the testimonies of radical transformation of the lives of the first Roma converts, a large number of Roma followed—there was, for example, a single baptismal service in 2002 in which over six hundred Gypsies were baptized—and now some 90 percent of the village are Christians and attend the local Pentecostal church, which numbers well over five thousand members. Many of these new converts spread through Romania and Western Europe, founding tens of Roma local churches that are continually growing.

The new fellowship in the church between Jews and Gentiles was fortified through a brief stay by Peter with Cornelius and the new believers (Acts 10:48b). For Peter accepting to remain with the Gentiles was the practical implementation of the spiritual experience narrated in 10:44-47. The problem with Jewish food laws will not be dealt with

until chapter 15, but here is grounded the acknowledgment of equality between Jewish and Gentile believers. If God has accepted the Gentiles without circumcision, the question is now whether the Jewish church will follow this path.

2. Saint Peter answers Jerusalem leadership (Acts 11:1-18)

The apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God (Acts 11:1). So Peter faced a serious problem when he returned. *It was the circumcised believers (11:2)* which questioned Peter about what had happened and they *criticized him* for having gone to uncircumcised people and eaten with them. Most likely, they held that any Gentile who became a Christian would have to do so by converting to Judaism, and the procedure for this included circumcision.¹¹ This was quite normal, considering that at that point Christianity was still seen as a movement within Judaism. But if their view had been adopted, there never would have been a real Gentile mission.

In post-Communist Romania there have been sporadic tensions between the Orthodox Church, on one side, and the Protestant and Evangelical denominations, on the other side. The Orthodox Church accused the protestant part of proselytism, while the Protestants aggressively accused Orthodoxy of religious formalism. Though committed believers must speak out against heresy and cultic error, attacks against fellow Christians on minor matters are out of place and out of character. People whose views do not agree with ours should be left to God, lest we discover they were right and we were wrong and find ourselves fighting against God.

Peter's eating with the Gentiles showed his endorsement of them as Christians, while they were still *uncircumcised*. But Peter's answer pointed out the real issue – God accepted the Gentiles (Acts 11:3-12). *Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step (11:4).* His report contains only slight differences from the earlier one. The most significant difference is the number of Christians that accompanied him from Joppa: they were six (11:12). The apostle brought those six men to Jerusalem as witnesses of what had happened in Cornelius' home. He narrated his own vision

11 Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries), Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 1980, p. 207.

in 11:5-10, which is a detailed reiteration of 10:9-16. The main point of his report to Jerusalem was that there are no unclean people before God, which is why the Gentiles are being accepted by God.

There was no need for Peter to summarize the gospel he preached before the Jerusalem church, so he moved to the part where the Spirit came on the Gentiles (Acts 11:13-16). He even specified that the Spirit fell upon them *just as it had upon us at the beginning* (11:15). The comparison is meant to show that the same promise of Jesus concerning the baptism with the Spirit (11:13) had been fulfilled with the apostles at the Pentecost, and with the Gentiles in Cornelius' house. Peter concludes his speech with a very logical question: *Who was I that I could hinder God?* (11:17). For him, opposition to the Gentile's baptism would be opposition to God.

When the circumcision group *heard this, they were silenced* (Acts 11:18), because the experience that Peter and Cornelius shared was definitive proof that it was God's intention to include the Gentiles in his people. Probably they still had some reservations (cf. 21:14; 15:1, 5), but the proof of divine guidance and acceptance was overwhelming. All they could do was praising God, for he had given *even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life*.

Conclusions. Theological ideas on human dignity from Acts 10:1–11:18

In conclusion, we shall formulate some simple statements about human dignity as they emerge from our overview of this biblical event. (1) As it was with the Jews then, today disregard for human dignity sometimes comes from a false sentiment of election. Religious or not, people may consider themselves part of a privileged group, while other groups (confessions, branches, streams, professions) are under the sign of divine or social disapproval. Like Jews in biblical times, we are always prone to the danger of self-sufficiency and sense of superiority. (2) The divine revelation deposited today in the Holy Scriptures is needed in order to overcome prejudices regarding human dignity. Understanding God's perspective on the human being is possible when the Holy Spirit illuminates the human mind to understand the biblical truth. (3) A sound perception of human dignity involves neither deifying anyone nor accepting to

be deified. There is no such thing as a providential savior, there's no other Messiah than God's son, Jesus Christ. (4) God shows no partiality. That means that God created all men equal and they have equal chances to be saved and restored by God through Jesus Christ. If anyone is acceptable to him through Christ, then human individuals should find each other acceptable too. (5) Human beings are extremely valuable in God's eyes because of the colossal price that has been paid for their salvation – the blood of God's only Son. Through his resurrection he defeated death once and for all and he shares the power of his resurrection with all those who believe in him. Everyone is a candidate for the final resurrection, which is why people should look at each other as if they are going to spend an eternity together. (6) But the most essential component of human dignity is the image of God in which humankind has been created. Even though the beauty of this image has been compromised by sin, God sent his Spirit to restore this beauty in those who are new creations in Christ. So the Holy Spirit is the one enhancing the image of God and raising awareness regarding human dignity. This process will culminate with the renewal of all Creation in the Kingdom of God, when Christ will return to reign. This is what the biblical revelation calls „eternal life”.

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