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EXISTENTIALIST THINKING**

Existential theology as a phenomenon of the post-existentialist period is represented, first of all, by the works of New World thinkers Howard Alexander Slaatte and Merold Westphal. H. Slaatte's existential eschatology in cultivating the Kierkegaard's methodology of understanding and interpreting reality is aimed at further development of the "dialectics of faith" as the basis for improving the further existence of people in the modern world on the basis of Christian humanism and the warning against the blurring of the distinction between immanent and transcendent in Christianity.

Existential-phenomenological and existential-hermeneutical analysis by M. Westphal [1] of divine promise is methodologically based on the "phenomenology of perception" by M. Merleau-Ponty and the religious phenomenological hermeneutics by P. Ricœur, "hermeneutic phenomenology" – on "radical hermeneutics" ("hermeneutics of suspicion" and "hermeneutics of finality") by S. Kierkegaard and F. Nietzsche, the project "overcoming onto-theology" – on the critique of the metaphysical tradition of M. Heidegger, the perception of God – on the Augustinian attitude toward God [2].

In the development of methodological means for the interpretation and study of the phenomena of religiousness in our time, the search and development of philosophical hermeneutics for the church of M. Westphal against the backdrop of a rethinking of the Gadamer hermeneutic project (in the context of the views of F. Schleiermacher, W. Dilthey, M. Heidegger, P. Ricœur), conceptual provisions of Eric Donald Hirsch, Jr. and Nicholas Wolterstorff, ideological controversy between liberalism (represented by John Rawls and his work "Theory of Justice") and communitarianism (in the person of Alasdair MacIntyre and his works "After

virtue”), builds his own original version of existential hermeneutics, the basis of which is the no less original concept of “existential ethics”.

The formula “Word and Spirit” is one of the cornerstones of the Westphal’s theological concept, according to which the constant reformation and transformation of the church in history and tradition should be based on the principles of existential dialogic ethics (founders of the Westphal considers Kierkegaard and Levinas). In deducing, following S. Kierkegaard, E. Levinas and E. MacIntyre, morality from the inner self of the human being, and not from social roles and practices, M. Westphal postulates priority and the universality of existential ethics in the field of “moral subjectivity”.

Gadamer’s “fusion of horizons” M. Westphal interprets through the prism of the kierkegaardian-lewinasian existential ethics, in particular, in the context of the concept of “otherness”, “I – Thou relationship”. From the Gadamer’s Triad – understanding, interpretation, and application (which, in the opinion of the German thinker, constitute one single process) – the very last concept for the existential theology of the Westphalian is the most important. After all, “application”, in his opinion, is especially important for Christians who interpret the Bible, because “their vocation is to embody the Holy Scriptures. If the Christian community does not seek to embody the biblical interpretation, the Bible loses its meaning as historical holiness” [3].

References:

1. Westphal M. *God, Guilt, and Death: An Existential Phenomenology of Religion* (Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy). – Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984 – 305 p.
2. Westphal M. *Overcoming onto-theology: toward a postmodern Christian faith*. – New York: Fordham University Press, 2001. – 306 p.
3. Westphal M. *Whose community? Which interpretation?: philosophical hermeneutics for the church*. – Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009. – 160 p.