

THE PRAYER “GOD OF THE SPIRITS...” - SHORT TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Although it seems a “common prayer”, devoid of any feature, given its repeated presence in the Funeral Ordinances, the prayer “God of the Spirits...” has a certain value, being considered one of the representative prayers for the dead; We would therefore like to dwell in this short article on some of its textual forms, which, in our opinion, are decisive in particular as regards the origin.

Keywords: hymnography; liturgical manuscripts; prayers for the dead; funeral practices; the Funeral Ordinance;

1. THE PRAYER “GOD OF THE SPIRITS...” - TEXT

Before analyzing¹ the significant textual forms² of the prayer “*God of the Spirits...*”, we believe it is necessary and useful to reproduce the text in its entirety, as it appears in the *Psalter* from 1818:

“God of the Spirits (Revelation 22:6)³, and of all flesh (Numbers 16:22; 27:16), you didst thrust death, and thou didst break the devil (cf. Hebrews 2:14)⁴, and you gave life to your world (cf. 2 Maccabees 3:35; John 6:33⁵), You God rest (cf. Matthew 11:28)⁶ the soul of thy servant, who is deceased, in a lighted place, in a place with sward, in a resting place (Genesis 8:9; Numbers 10:33, etc.), from where the pain, sorrow, and sighing fled (cf. Isaiah 35:10; 51:11). All the error he did with the word, or with the thing, or with the thought, as a God good and people lover (cf. Exodus 34:6; Luke 18:19⁷) forget, that he is not a man to be alive and not to be wrong (2 Chronicles 6:36)⁸; that You alone are without sin, Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your word the Truth (Psalms 118:142; John 17:17)⁹”.

¹ See also N. Preda, *Rânduiala rugăciunii ce se face după ieșirea sufletului din trup, conform Psaltirii de la 1818 (Kishinev): noțiuni de liturgică (The Ordinance of the Prayer to be Made after the Soul left the Body, according to the Psalter from 1818 (Kishinev): Notions of Liturgy)*, Bucharest, Basilica Publishing, 2015, pp. 208-266.

² To observe other textual particularities of this prayer in the manuscript tradition (sec. X-XII), see Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Η νεκρώσιμη ακολουθία κατά τούς χειρογράφους κώδικες 10ου-12ου αιώνας*. Τόμος Β'. Εισαγωγικά, Κωδικολογικά και Παλαιογραφικά Κείμενα, Ἱερά Μονή Προφήτου Ἡλίου Θήρας, Ἐκδόσεις Θεσβίτης, 2005, pp. 40-41, the footnotes.

³ Biblical references do not appear in the original text, but they are meant to facilitate textual analysis.

⁴ Cf. S. Parenti and E. Velkovska, *L' Eucologio Barberini gr. 336*. Seconda edizione riveduta con traduzione in lingua italiana, *Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae. Subsidia* 80, Roma, Centro Liturgico Vicenziano-Edizioni Liturgiche, 2000, p. 235 and Δ. Β. Τζέρπος, *Ἡ Ἀκολουθία τοῦ Νεκρωσίμου Εὐχελαίου κατά τὰ χειρόγραφα Εὐχολόγια τοῦ ἰδ' -ἰς' αἰ.*, Ἀθήνα, Ἴδρυμα Βυζαντινῆς Μουσικολογίας. <<Λατρευσιολογήματα 1>>, 2000, p. 244.

⁵ Ἀθηναγόρας (Μητροπολίτης), “Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων”, in *Ἐκκλησιαστικός Φάρος* 36 (1937), p. 189.

⁶ Ἀθηναγόρας (Μητροπολίτης), “Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων”, p. 189.

⁷ Ἀθηναγόρας (Μητροπολίτης), “Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων”, p. 190.

⁸ Ἀθηναγόρας (Μητροπολίτης), “Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων”, p. 189.

⁹ Cf. *Psalter*, Kishinev, In the Exarchate Printing of Bessarabia, 1818, p. 305r.

2. THE PRAYER “GOD OF THE SPIRITS...” – TEXT ANALYSIS

On textual analysis we would like to recall that it will only sum up the examination of some of the forms and expressions which, in our opinion, require special attention. So, in order to give some sort of systematic account of these aspects, we will begin in the order in which they can be found in the content of the prayer.

3. THE EXPRESSION: “GOD OF THE SPIRITS AND OF ALL FLESH”

A first aspect related to the text of this prayer (and we refer here to the incipit¹⁰) is that in the manuscripts (see E. Velkovska, *Appendix*)¹¹ we already find more prayers for the dead which start the same (*God of the Spirits and of All Flesh...*):

- a) “Ο θεός τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός, ὁ τῶν ὀρωμένων καὶ τῶν ἀοράτων ποιητής...”¹²;
- b) “Ο Θεός τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός, τῶν ὀρωμένων καὶ τῶν ἀοράτων, ὁ κατὰ τὴν ἀπόρρητόν Σου...”¹³;
- c) “Ο θεός τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός, ὁ Κύριος τῶν κυριευόντων...”¹⁴;
- d) “Ο Θεός τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός, ὁ μεταφέρων ἀπὸ τῶν Σῶν καὶ τὰ Σά, ὁ εἰπὼν πᾶσαι¹⁵ ...”¹⁶;
- e) “Ο Θεός τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός, ὁ μεταφέρων ἀπὸ τῶν σῶν εἰς τὰ σά, ζωῆς καὶ θάνατον...”¹⁷.

¹⁰ The word “incipit” also mentions the first words with which a text begins, in the present case, a prayer.

¹¹ See E. Velkovska, “Funeral Rites according to the Byzantine Liturgical Sources”, in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001), pp. 46-51.

¹² *Grottaferrata G. β. X* [*Euchologion*, the 10th century]: 81r-81v, cf. E. Velkovska, “Funeral Rites...”, p. 49 and Th. Christodoulou, *L’ ufficio funebre nei manoscritti greci dei secoli X-XII*, Excerpta ex Dissertatione ad Doctoratum, Romae, Pontificium Institutum Orientale - Facultas Scientiarum Ecclesiasticarum Orientalis, 1996, p. 62; Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία κατὰ τοὺς χειρογράφους κώδικες 10ου-12ου αἰῶνος*. Τόμος Α'. Γενικὴ Εἰσαγωγή, Κατάλογοι, Πίνακες, Ἱερὰ Μονὴ Προφήτου Ἡλίου Θήρας, Ἐκδόσεις Θεσβίτης, 2005, p. 651; *Grottaferrata G. β. X*: [81α]: Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός, ὁ τῶν ὀρωμένων καὶ τῶν ἀοράτων ποιητής..., cf. Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. II)..., p. 51; *Vat. gr.* 1836 [*Σχηματολόγιον*, sec. XI-XII]: [121β]: Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης] σαρκός· ὁ τῶν ὀρωμένων καὶ] ἀοράτων ποιητής..., cf. Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. II)..., p. 427; see more on this prayer in Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. I)..., pp. 193-194.

¹³ As it appears from the article of Metropolitan Athenagoras [cf. Ἀθηναγόρας (Μητροπολίτης), “Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων”, pp. 185-186], this incipit is not really of a prayer in a codex, but an ancient burial inscription in Egypt; the prayer seems to be an abbreviation of the one in the manuscripts cited before (*Grottaferrata G. β. X*: [81α] and *Vat. gr.* 1836: [121β]).

¹⁴ *Grottaferrata G. β. X*: 82r, cf. E. Velkovska, “Funeral Rites...”, p. 50 and Th. Christodoulou, *L’ ufficio funebre...*, p. 64; *Grottaferrata G. β. X*: [82α]: Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός, ὁ Κύριος] τῶν κυριευόντων..., cf. Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. II)..., p. 54; *Messin. Bibl. Univ. S. Salvat. gr.* 153 [*Σχηματολόγιον*, the 11th century]: [92β]: Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός, ὁ Κύριος] τῶν κυριευόντων..., cf. Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. II)..., p. 292; see more on this prayer in Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. I)..., pp. 194-195.

¹⁵ *Vat. gr.* 1970 [*Euchologion*, the 12th century]: 38v: Ὁ θεὸς τῶν πνευματων καὶ πάσης σαρκός· ὁ μεταφέρων ἀπὸ τῶν σῶν εἰς τὰ σά· ὁ εἰπὼν πᾶσαι..., cf. H. W. Codrington, *The Liturgy of Saint Peter*, Liturgiegeschichtliche Quellen und Forschungen, Heft 30, Münster in Westfalen, Verlag der Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1936, p. 144; *Vat. gr.* 1970: [38β]: Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός ὁ με] ταφέρων ἀπὸ τῶν σῶν εἰς τὰ σά, ὁ εἰπὼν] πᾶσαι..., cf. Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. I)..., p. 349.

¹⁶ It is a prayer of the pulpit for the dead within “*The Liturgy of Saint Apostle Peter*”, cf. H. W. Codrington, *The Liturgy of Saint Peter...*, pp. 144-145.

¹⁷ Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. I)..., p. 651; *Messin. Bibl. Univ. S. Salvat. gr.* 153: [140β]: Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός, ὁ] μεταφέρων ἀπὸ τῶν σῶν εἰς τὰ σά, ζωῆς] καὶ

The meaning and age of this incipit (“*God of the Spirits and of All Flesh*”) are reported by V. Bruni also in another context, more precisely when referring to one of the oldest Roman (rite) prayer of intercession¹⁸ (the 5th-6th centuries)¹⁹, that is “*Deprecatio Gelasii*”:

“L’expression Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός richiama alla mente la XIV intenzione²⁰ della celebre preghiera intercessoria romana di tipo orientale che porta il nome di *Deprecatio Gelasii*. In essa si prega per il riposo dei trapassati il <<Dominum spirituum et universae carnis iudicem>>”²¹.

About the authenticity of this incipit (starting formula) G. Munarini also reminds, who refers to Jean Tabet’s²² study:

“A questo proposito, rammento che il p. J. Tabet ha ben messo in evidenza l’importanza della formula iniziale assai arcaica, che si trova in soli due passi della Scrittura (Numeri 16, 22 e Numeri 27, 16)”²³.

In fact, this introductory formula is actually a biblical expression taken from *The Book of Numbers* (chapter 16, verse 22 and chapter 27, verse 16), being well-known to the Jews, since it is found in the ritual of the feast *Iom Kipur*²⁴.

The authenticity and age of the expression “*God of the Spirits and of All Flesh*” are confirmed, on the other hand, by its presence in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, more precisely at St. Clement of Rome²⁵ († 97), in *Epistle I to the Corinthians*²⁶.

θάνατον..., cf. Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. II)..., p. 302; see more on this prayer in Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. I)..., pp. 206-207.

¹⁸ “E. Bishop, faisait observer que l’invocation pour les *sacerdotes qui HUIC ecclesiae praefuerunt CATHOLICAE* (n° XIV) désigne, dans un style de chancellerie qui trahit la période allant de 466 à 540, l’Église romaine. Ailleurs il déclare sans ambages que <<quiconque a fait une étude sérieuse des styles liturgiques Romain, Gallican, Espagnol, Irlandais, ne peut aboutir qu’à la conclusion que la litanie (= la *Deprecatio Gelasii*) est d’origine romaine>>”, D. B. Capelle, “Le *Kyrie* de la Messe et le Pape Gélase”, in *Revue Bénédictine* 46 (1934), p. 140.

¹⁹ “Reconnaissant que la *Deprecatio* est romaine et qu’elle remonte au V-VI^e siècle, ils ne voient pas pourquoi on refuserait de croire au titre qu’elle porte, et qui l’attribue au pape Gélase (492-496)”, D. B. Capelle, “Le *Kyrie* de la Messe et le Pape Gélase”, p. 140; “Secondo il Capelle, che ne ha pubblicato il testo critico, la composizione di questa supplica litanica risale al sec. V-VI”, V. Bruni, *I funerali di un sacerdote nel rito bizantino, secondo gli Eucologi manoscritti di lingua greca*, Pubblicazioni dello Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Collectio Minor n. 14, Jerusalem, Franciscan Printing Press, 1972, pp. 155-156, note 264.

²⁰ “*Deprecatio Gelasii* (...) XIV. Pro refrigerio fidélium animárum, praecique sanctorum dómini sacerdótum, qui huic ecclesiae praefuerunt cathólicae Dominum spirituum et universae carnis iúdicem deprecámur [Ky. el.]”, D. B. Capelle, “Le *Kyrie* de la Messe et le Pape Gélase”, pp. 136-138.

²¹ *I funerali di un sacerdote...*, pp. 154-155, note 264.

²² “Il s’agit là d’une formule assez archaïque. Celle-ci se rencontre uniquement dans deux passages de l’Écriture: - <<Ils tombèrent (Moïse et Aaron) la face contre terre et s’écrièrent: O Dieu, Dieu des esprits qui animent toute chair, vas-tu t’irriter contre toute la communauté quand un seul pêche?>> (Nb 16, 22). - <<Moïse parla ainsi à Yahvé: Que Yahvé, Dieu des esprits qui animent toute chair, établisse sur cette communauté un homme...>> (Nb 27, 16)”, *L’office des morts*. Notes à l’usage privé des auditeurs. Année académique 1984-1985, Kaslik, Liban, Université Saint-Esprit. Institut de Liturgie, 1984, pp. 65-66.

²³ “I funerali secondo la tradizione liturgica bizantina - Le esequie dei laici”, in *Oriente Cristiano* 32 (1992) n° 2-3, p. 12.

²⁴ “La formule paraît également dans la liturgie juive de *Kippur*”, Jean Tabet, O.L.M., *L’office des morts...*, p. 66; “La formula, conosciuta anche dagli Israeliti e usata nella solennità del *Kippur*”, G. Munarini, “I funerali secondo la tradizione liturgica bizantina...”, p. 12; Father Themistoelias Hristodoulou calls it prayer and not an introductory formula (incipit): “Αὐτὸς ὁ τύπος εὐχῆς εἶναι γνωστὸς καὶ στοὺς Ἑβραίους καὶ χρησιμοποιεῖται στὴν ἐπίσημη γιορτὴ τῶν *Kippur*”, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. I)..., p. 188.

²⁵ “ΚΕΦΑΛΑΙΟΝ ΝΗ΄. Ὁ παντεπόπτης Θεος, [καὶ] Δεσπότης τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ Κύριος [πά]σης σαρκός...”, St. Clement of Rome, *Ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς Κορινθίους Α΄*. PG 1, p. 328; “LIX. (...) μόνον εὐεργέτην πνευμάτων καὶ θεὸν πάσης σαρκός...” and “LXIV. Λοιπὸν ὁ παντεπόπτης θεὸς καὶ δεσπότης τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ κύριος πάσης

About the theological meaning of this ancient biblical expression we would like to recall just one aspect that J. Tabet points out, namely its penitential character from the liturgical context of the first centuries:

“La formule exprime d’abord la transcendance de Dieu qui gouverne le sort des hommes sous le régime du péché et de la grâce; son contexte liturgique primitif, celui de Kippur, y mêle une note pénitentielle; en effet, c’est dans la prière d’intercession pour les coupables qu’elle paraît dans l’épître de Clément”²⁷.

3.1. THE FORM OF THE WORD “SPIRITS”

The Form of the Word “*Spirits*” from the expression “*God of the Spirits...*”, capitalized in the original text²⁸, but also in other texts²⁹, is the first to draw our attention. As mentioned above, the formula “*God of the Spirits and of All Flesh...*” is of scriptural origin and appears only in two verses of the *Book of Numbers* (16, 22³⁰ and 27, 16³¹). The first part of the expression also appears in the *Revelation* (22, 6)³², but in another form: “*The God of the spirits of the prophets*” or even: “*God of spirits and prophets*”³³.

Although, at first sight, we are tempted to put everything at the expense of a simple happening, such as, for example, the freedom of writing or a mistake, in reality, we think it is in this context a theological way of seeing and understanding some nuances, which also give beauty and weight to liturgical texts.

Therefore, the form of the word “*Spirits*”, capitalized, refers, undoubtedly, to the venerable Heavenly Powers [*Seraphim, Cherubim*³⁴, *Thrones (Angels); Dominions, Powers, Principalities; Virtues, Archangels, Angels*], beings named and recorded, all the time, in the theological and liturgical texts in capital letters.

3.2. THE ADDITION OF THE WORD “Αἰδιος” (“ETERNAL”)

σαρκός...”, Κλήμης ὁ Ρώμης, *Πρὸς Κορινθίους Α΄*, in *Βιβλιοθήκη Ἑλλήνων Πατέρων καὶ Ἐκκλησιαστικῶν Συγγραφέων* 1 (1), Ἀθήνα, Ἐκδοσις τῆς Ἀποστολικῆς Διακονίας τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος, 1955, pp. 37 and 38.

²⁶ “La formule (...); elle est aussi attestée dès la fin du premier siècle dans l’épître de St. Clément aux Corinthiens: LIX, 3: <<Ouvrant les yeux (...) Unique bienfaiteur des esprits/ Et Dieu de toute chair...>>”, Jean Tabet, O.L.M., *L’office des morts...*, p. 66; “La formula (...), in contesto cristiano è attestata pure nella Lettera di San Clemente ai Corinti”, G. Munarini, “I funerali secondo la tradizione liturgica bizantina...”, p. 12; see also G. Munarini, “I funerali secondo la tradizione liturgica bizantina...”, p. 12, note 34; Father Themistoclis Hristodoulou let it be understood that the text of the prayer itself, and not just the introductory formula (the incipit), would be found at St. Clement of Rome: “Τὸ κείμενο αὐτῆς τῆς εὐχῆς βρῖσκεται ξεκάθαρα καὶ στὴν ἐπιστολὴ τοῦ ἁγίου Κλήμεντος πρὸς Κορινθίους”, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. I)..., p. 188; see also Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. I)..., p. 188, note 391.

²⁷ *L’office des morts...*, p. 67; see also G. Munarini, “I funerali secondo la tradizione liturgica bizantina...”, pp. 12-13.

²⁸ “Spirits”, *Psalter*, Kishinev, 1818, p. 305r and *Psalter*, Kishinev, 1857, p. 46r.

²⁹ “Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν Πνευμάτων...”, Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. I)..., p. 187; “Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν Πνευμάτων...”, J. Goar, *Ἐυχολόγιον sive Rituale Graecorum complectens ritus et ordines Divinae Liturgiae, officiorum, sacramentorum, consecrationum, benedictionum, funeum, orationum etc.*, Venetiis, Ex Typographia Bartholomaei Javarina, 1730², pp. 424, 431, 445, 446 etc.

³⁰ “Θεὸς θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός...”, *LXX [Ἡ Παλαιὰ Διαθήκη κατὰ τοὺς Ο΄ (Septuaginta)]*, Ἀθήνα, Ἑλληνικὴ Βιβλικὴ Ἐταιρία, (s. a), p. 244.

³¹ “κύριος ὁ θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός...”, *LXX*, p. 266.

³² “καὶ ὁ κύριος ὁ θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων τῶν προφητῶν...”, *Greek-English New Testament*. Greek text Novum Testamentum Graece, in the tradition of Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, edited by Barbara and Kurt Aland [et al.]. Eleventh corrected edition, Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2008, p. 679.

³³ “καὶ ὁ κύριος ὁ θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ τῶν προφητῶν”, *Greek-English New Testament*, p. 679, note 6.

³⁴ “Cherubim”, *Psalter*, Kishinev, 1818, p. 315r and *Psalter*, Kishinev, 1857, p. 55r.

Another particularity related to this introductory formula is the addition of the word “αἰδιος” (“eternal”), recorded only twice in codex *Vat. gr.* 1836³⁵: “Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκὸς αἰδίου...”³⁶.

Beyond the theological connotation of this expression, we want to point out that it is not alien to the liturgical tradition, being also mentioned in a prayer in *The Ordinance of Making “Cross” Brothers*: “Δέσποτα Κύριε ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, ὁ ποιήσας τὸν ἄνθρωπον κατ’ εἰκόνα σὴν καὶ ὁμοίωσιν, καὶ δούς αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν πάσης σαρκὸς αἰδίου”³⁷...³⁸. On the other hand, we consider that this is a profoundly theological one, and it is worthwhile for those interested to check whether it belongs to the Fathers of the Church in the first centuries, given its presence in manuscripts written relatively late (the 11th-16th centuries).

Even more, it manages to capture a theological truth of overwhelming importance: “the eternity of the body”, that is “the body has a beginning, but it does not have an end”. This is, moreover, a confirmation of what the Church has always confessed (see “*Prayers of forgiveness*”, cf. *Euchologion*, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 2006, p. 233), that the body is not destroyed by death, but it “is decomposed in what it was made of”³⁹.

4. THE EXPRESSION: “YOU DIDST THRUST DEATH, AND THOU DIDST BREAK THE DEVIL”

Another expression that we are directly interested in is: “*You didst thrust death, and thou didst break the devil...*”⁴⁰. On the depth of this speak both the many biblical references (2 Timothy 1:10; 1 Corinthians 15:26 and Hebrews 2:14)⁴¹, and some primary forms which we will analyze further on.

If everything is clear about the biblical references, we can not say the same when we speak of the primary forms of this phrase. In our opinion, the diversity of these forms is perfectly perceived by specialists who notice that the current text of the prayer “*God of the Spirits and of All Flesh...*” has undergone considerable alteration:

³⁵ *Vat. gr.* 1836: [78β]: Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκὸς] αἰδίου... and [79α]: Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκὸς αἰδίου]..., cf. Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. II)..., p. 407.

³⁶ Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. I)..., p. 650.

³⁷ *Costant.* 182 [*Euchologion*, the 15th century]: καὶ δούς αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν ζωῆς αἰδίου..., cf. Α. Дмитриевский, *Описание литургических рукописей, хранящихся в библиотеках Православного Востока*. Томъ II. *Εὐχολόγια*, Κίεβ, Типографія Императорскаго Университета Св. Владимира, 1901, p. 466.

³⁸ It should be noted that the study on the Internet does not indicate unfortunately the number of the cited manuscript, but the mere mention: “ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΑ ΕΙΣ ΑΔΕΛΦΟΠΟΙΗΣΙΝ / Ἅγιον Ὅρος, μονή Παντελεήμονος, φύλλα 60-62”, cf. <http://athriskos.gr/web/05/10/2012/1922/> (page visited on 18.12.2012). In our opinion, the recorded manuscript should be the codex *Panteleimon* 780, the only one that corresponds to the previous clues: “л. 60. Ακολουθία εἰς ἀδελφοποίησιν”, Α. Дмитриевский, *Описание литургических рукописей...*, p. 831; *Panteleimon* 780 [*Euchologion*, the 16th century], cf. ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΑ ΕΙΣ ΑΔΕΛΦΟΠΟΙΗΣΙΝ, cf. <http://athriskos.gr/web/05/10/2012/1922/> (page visited on 18.12.2012).

³⁹ “And his body release it from what it was made of...”, *Euchologion*, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 2006, p. 234; “and the body be given to the one nature made by You...”, *Euchologion*, Bucharest, 2006, p. 236.

⁴⁰ “ὁ τὸν θάνατον καταπατήσας, τὸν δὲ διάβολον καταργήσας”, J. Goar, *Εὐχολόγιον sive Rituale Graecorum...*, p. 424.

⁴¹ “<<Καταργήσαντες μὲν τὸν θάνατον, φωτίσαντες δὲ ζωὴν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν>>. Β. Τιμοθ. Α, 10; <<Καταργεῖται ὁ θάνατος>> Α. Κορινθ. ΙΕ, 26; <<Καταργήση τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου, τοῦτ’ ἔστι τὸν διάβολον>> Ἐβρ. Β, 14.”, Αθηναγόρας (Μητροπολίτης), “Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων”, p. 189; see also S. Parenti and E. Velkovska, *L’ Eucologio...*, p. 235 and Δ. Β. Τζέρπος, *Ἡ Ακολουθία τοῦ Νεκρωσίμου...*, p. 244.

“DUMONT (p. 588)⁴² ricorda che la redazione moderna ha alterato più volte l’antico testo che è linguisticamente più puro. Secondo lui, per es., l’espressione τὸν θάνατον καταργήσας che si ritrova in san Paolo (*II Timothy 1:10*), è da preferirsi a τὸν θάνατον καταπατήσας^{43,44}”.

Starting from A. Dumont’s remark, we could distinguish at least three forms of this expression: that of the old funeral inscriptions (which, as we shall see, gives an extra peculiarity); that of manuscript tradition and the last one (we could name it of the printed books of worship).

What remains unclear is how it came to the present form, which, although it does not have a direct scriptural theme (as have the first two), will manage to impose itself in practice.

a) The first form of the old funeral inscriptions is: “ὁ τὸν θάνατον καταργήσας καὶ τὸν Ἄδην καταπατήσας”⁴⁵.

Regarding this “primary form”, we distinguish two particularities, namely: the correct rendering of Scriptural expression from *2 Timothy 1:10* (“καταργήσαντος μὲν τὸν θάνατον”)⁴⁶, as well as mentioning of the word “hell” instead of “devil”, feature also signaled by V. Bruni:

“In questo⁴⁷ e in tutti gli altri eucologi si ha sempre la parola διάβολον (linea 7), contrariamente a quanto avviene in tutte le lapidi funerarie che hanno regolarmente la parola Ἄδην”⁴⁸.

b) The second form of the manuscripts is: “ὁ τὸν θάνατον καταργήσας καὶ τὸν διάβολον καταπατήσας”^{49, 50}.

One of the few liturgists who signals the difference between the text of the manuscripts and those of the printed editions is J. Duncan⁵¹. Father Themistoclis Hristodoulou also records two new forms (one inverted and one shortened) of this expression, which appear in two manuscripts from Italy: *Messin. Bibl. Univ. S. Salvat. gr.*

⁴² “La rédaction moderne a, plusieurs fois, altéré le texte tel qu’il était fixé à l’époque de notre épitaphe; la rédaction ancienne est plus pure, plus grecque que celle de la prière actuelle”, “Fragment de l’office funèbre de l’Église grecque sur une inscription d’Égypte”, in Th. Homolle, *Mélanges d’archéologie et d’épigraphie*, Paris, Ernest Thorin, 1892, p. 588.

⁴³ “Τὸν θάνατον καταργήσας, par exemple, est préférable à l’expression τὸν θάνατον καταπατήσας, et se retrouve dans saint Paul, à *Timothée*, II, I, 10”, A. Dumont, “Fragment de l’office funèbre de l’Église grecque...”, p. 588, note 1.

⁴⁴ V. Bruni, *I funerali di un sacerdote...*, p. 153, note 264.

⁴⁵ Cf. “*Variantes données par l’inscription*”, A. Dumont, “Fragment de l’office funèbre de l’Église grecque...”, p. 587; “ὁ τὸν θάνατον καταργήσας καὶ τὸν Ἄδην καταπατήσας”, cf. “*Variantes du texte restitué de l’inscription*”, H. Leclercq, “Ame”, in *Dictionnaire d’Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie*, t. I, première partie: A-Amende, Paris VI, Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1924, p. 1536; see other forms in H. Leclercq, “Ame”, pp. 1529 and 1531.

⁴⁶ *Greek-English New Testament...*, p. 551.

⁴⁷ It is codex *Barberini gr.* 336.

⁴⁸ *I funerali di un sacerdote...*, p. 153, note 263.

⁴⁹ *Barberini gr.* 336 [*Euchologion*, the 8th century]: 248r, cf. S. Parenti and E. Velkovska, *L’Eucologio...*, p. 235; see also M. Arranz, *L’Eucologio Costantinopolitano agli inizi del secolo XI. Hagiasmatarion & Archieratikon (Rituelle & Pontificale) con l’aggiunta del Leiturgikon (Messale)*, Roma, Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1996, p. 309 and J. Duncan, *Coislin 213. Euchologe de la Grande Eglise*, Dissertatio ad Lauream, Romae, Pontificium Institutum Orientale, 1983, p. 136; see Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. II)..., p. 41, note 222, all the manuscripts in which this form compares.

⁵⁰ *Panteleim.* 305 [*Euchologion*, the 16th century]: 81v: ὁ τὸν θάνατον καταργήσας τὸν δὲ διάβολον καταπατήσας, cf. Δ. Β. Τζέρπος, *Ἡ Ἀκολουθία τοῦ Νεκρώσιμου...*, p. 244; “ὁ τὸν θάνατον καταργήσας, καὶ τὸν διάβολον καταπατήσας”, Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. I)..., p. 650; *Cypr. gr. Γ.β.* XI [*Euchologion*, the 12th century]: [ὁ τὸν] θάνατον καταργήσας καὶ τὸν διάβολον πατήσας, cf. Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. II)..., p. 41, note 222.

⁵¹ *Coislin 213...*, p. 136, note 1.

153⁵² and *Grottaferrata* Γ. β. X⁵³. About abridged form, rendered in codex *Grottaferrata* Γ. β. X, which at the same time certifies the oldest compact structure of the *Funeral Ordinances*, we can say that, beyond being the most faithful form of the Scriptural expression from *2 Timothy* 1:10 (“καταργήσαντος μὲν τὸν θάνατον”), also confirms the truth of A. Baumstark’s statement, according to which the abbreviated structures (forms) are the primary ones (ancient, authentic)⁵⁴.

c) The third form, the current one, is: “ὁ τὸν θάνατον καταπατήσας, τὸν δὲ διάβολον καταργήσας”⁵⁵.

The peculiarity of this last form lies in the fact that it reverses the primary meaning of the Scriptural expression in *2 Timothy* 1:10, replacing it with the one in *Hebrews* 2:14 (“καταργήση τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου, τοῦτ’ ἔστιν τὸν διάβολον”)⁵⁶. Unfortunately, the specialists do not remember anything about how these changes took place and how they came to the present form, already rendered by a twelfth-century Sinai codex (*Sinai* 963)⁵⁷. In our opinion, this last form, which appears not at all by chance also in the manuscript *Sinai* 963, could be one of the features of the “imprint” which the “Sinaitic” liturgical tradition would leave to this prayer.

5. THE EXPRESSION: “AND YOU GAVE LIFE TO YOUR WORLD”

Another feature worth highlighting is the form of the verb (“δωρησάμενος”) from the expression: “and You gave life to Your world”⁵⁸, which also has an indirect basis in the Holy Scripture (cf. *2 Maccabees* 3:35; *John* 6:33).

This form would be imposed relatively late, along with the printed editions of the cult books, but as we shall see, it can be found even in some manuscripts dated in the eleventh century. According to V. Bruni, the form “δωρησάμενος” would not appear in manuscripts earlier than the 12th century, being very likely a particularity of savait origin: “Quanto alla parola δωρησάμενος (linea 9) ricordiamo che appare già al sec. XII nel cod. *Paris* C362⁵⁹ (f. 160v), il cui contenuto è legato alla Laura di san Saba”⁶⁰. Returning to the forms of this verb, it must be first remembered that the primary texts containing the prayer “*God of the Spirits and of All Flesh...*”, that is, those of old burial inscriptions, are the first to produce a unique form, distinct from the present one, and then, for a long time, recorded by the manuscript tradition: “καὶ ζωὴν τῷ κόσμῳ χαρισάμενος”⁶¹. If the primary texts of the funeral

⁵² *Messin. Bibl. Univ. S. Salvat. gr.* 153: ὁ τὸν διάβολον καταργήσας καὶ τὸν θάνατον, cf. Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. II)..., p. 40, nota 221; see also Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. II)..., p. 299.

⁵³ *Grottaferrata* Γ. β. X: ὁ τὸν θάνατον καταργήσας, cf. Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. II)..., p. 40 and E. Velkovska, “Funeral Rites...”, p. 46.

⁵⁴ “L’évolution même de la simplicité primitive vers la richesse”, *Liturgie comparée*, Chevetogne, 1953³, p. 26.

⁵⁵ J. Goar, *Εὐχολόγιον sive Rituale Graecorum...*, p. 424.

⁵⁶ *Greek-English New Testament...*, p. 565.

⁵⁷ *Sinai* 963 [*Euchologion*, the 12th century]: [ὁ τὸν] θάνατον πατήσας καὶ τὸν διάβολον καταργήσας, cf. Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. II)..., p. 41, note 222.

⁵⁸ “καὶ ζωὴν τῷ κόσμῳ σου δωρησάμενος”, J. Goar, *Εὐχολόγιον sive Rituale Graecorum...*, 424.

⁵⁹ “Rituale, et euchologium lauræ S. Sabæ”, H. Omont, *Inventaire sommaire des manuscrits grecs de la Bibliothèque nationale*, Troisième partie: *Ancien fonds grec*, codd. 2542-3117. *Coislin. Supplément grec. Autres bibliothèques de Paris. Départements*, Paris, Librairie Alphonse Picard, 1888, p. 189.

⁶⁰ *I funerali di un sacerdote...*, pp. 153-154, note 264.

⁶¹ A. Dumont, “Fragment de l’office funèbre de l’Église grecque...”, p. 584 and H. Leclercq, “Ame”, pp. 1531, 1532; “τῷ κόσμῳ χαρισάμενος”, cf. “*Variantes données par l’inscription*”, A. Dumont, “Fragment de l’office

inscriptions and the current ones of the printed worship books carry a single form of the verb (that is “*χαρισάμενος*” and respectively “*δωρησάμενος*”), the same can not be said about the manuscript tradition, which uses them both. The first of the manuscripts that record the primary form (“*χαρισάμενος*”) is, undoubtedly, *Barberini gr.* 336 (the 8th century)⁶². Here are some other manuscripts that reproduce the same form: *Coisl.* 213⁶³ and *Grottaferrata gr. G. b.* 1⁶⁴. Regarding the presence of the current form in the manuscript (“*δωρησάμενος*”), we would like to say that Father Themistoclis Hristodoulou remembers two manuscripts from Italy, which already indicates it in the eleventh century: *Vat. gr.* 1836⁶⁵ and *Barb. gr.* 431⁶⁶. It is very likely that the number of manuscripts in which the current form is indicated (“*δωρησάμενος*”) is much higher, so specialists should also focus on these issues.

We would conclude the brief analysis of the verb form (“*χαρισάμενος*” respectively “*δωρησάμενος*”), stating that a strict delimitation in the manuscript tradition of the use of the two forms would be, on the one hand, difficult to signal, and, on the other hand, difficult to explain, since we encounter manuscripts that record the current form beginning with the eleventh century and even in the sixteenth century⁶⁷.

6. THE EXPRESSION: “IN ABRAHAM’S, ISAAC’S AND JACOB’S BOSOMS”

One of the fundamental additions in the prayer “*God of the Spirits and of All Flesh...*” is the expression: “*in Abraham’s, Isaac’s and Jacob’s bosoms*”⁶⁸, which is unfortunately missing from the present form of the prayer, and which has direct and indirect grounds in the Holy Scripture (*Luke* 16:22-23⁶⁹; cf. *Matthew* 8:11⁷⁰; *Luke* 13:28⁷¹; *4 Maccabees* 13:17⁷²).

funèbre de l’Église grecque...”, p. 587; “*τῷ κόσμῳ Χαρισάμενος*”, cf. “*Variantes du texte restitué de l’inscription*”, H. Leclercq, “*Ame*”, p. 1536.

⁶² *Barberini gr.* 336: 248r: καὶ ζῶν τῷ κόσμῳ χαρισάμενος, cf. S. Parenti and E. Velkovska, *L’ Eucologio...*, p. 235.

⁶³ *Coisl.* 213 [*Euchologion*, a. 1027]: 89r: καὶ ζῶν τῷ κόσμῳ χαρισάμενος, cf. J. Duncan, *Coisl. 213...*, p. 136; see also M. Arranz, *L’Eucologio Costantinopolitano...*, p. 310, note 1 atop.

⁶⁴ *Grottaferrata gr. G. b.* 1 [*Euchologion*, the 11th century]: 115v: καὶ ζῶν τῷ κόσμῳ σου χαρισάμενος, cf. M. Arranz, *L’Eucologio Costantinopolitano...*, p. 309.

⁶⁵ *Vat. gr.* 1836: [78β] and [79α]: δωρησάμενος, cf. Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. II)..., p. 41, note 224.

⁶⁶ *Barb. gr.* 431 [*Euchologion*, the 11th-12th centuries]: [132α]: δωρησάμενος, cf. Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Ἡ νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. II)..., p. 41, note 224.

⁶⁷ *Panteleim.* 305: 81v: καὶ ζῶν τῷ κόσμῳ σου δωρησάμενος, cf. Δ. Β. Τζέρπος, *Ἡ Ἀκολουθία τοῦ Νεκρωσίμου...*, p. 244.

⁶⁸ “*ἐν κόλποις Ἀβραὰμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ*”, A. Dumont, “*Fragment de l’office funèbre de l’Église grecque...*”, p. 584.

⁶⁹ “*εἰς τὸν κόλπον Ἀβραὰμ: (...) ὁρᾷ Ἀβραὰμ ἀπὸ μακρόθεν καὶ Λάζαρον ἐν τοῖς κόλποις αὐτοῦ*”, *Greek-English New Testament...*, p. 215; see also S. Parenti and E. Velkovska, *L’ Eucologio...*, p. 236, note e, etc., B. Botte, “*Les plus anciennes formules de prière pour les morts*”, in *La maladie et la mort du chrétien dans la Liturgie*, Conférences Saint-Serge XXI^e semaine d’études liturgiques, Paris, 1^{er}-4 juillet 1974, *Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae. Subsidia* 1, Roma, Centro Liturgico Vicenziano-Edizioni Liturgiche, 1975, p. 93 and Δ. Β. Τζέρπος, *Ἡ Ἀκολουθία τοῦ Νεκρωσίμου...*, p. 243, note 3, etc.; “*<<Κόλπους Ἀβραὰμ>> Λουκ. ΙΣΤ, 23*”, Ἀθηναγόρας (Μητροπολίτης), “*Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων*”, p. 189; “*Saint Luc, Ἐν., XVI, 22*”, A. Dumont, “*Fragment de l’office funèbre de l’Église grecque...*”, p. 588, note 2; “*LE SEIN D’ABRAHAM.– L’image du sein d’Abraham, comme celle du rafraîchissement, vient de la parabole de Lazare et du mauvais riche: après sa mort, Lazare est transporté dans le sein d’Abraham (Luke 16:22-23). L’expression est iconnue de l’Ancien Testament*”, B. Botte, “*Les plus anciennes formules...*”, p. 93.

⁷⁰ “*ὅτι πολλοὶ ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν καὶ δυσμῶν ἤξουσιν καὶ ἀνακλιθήσονται μετὰ Ἀβραὰμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν*”, *Greek-English New Testament...*, p. 18; see also B. Botte, “*Les plus anciennes*

About this expression, the specialists have written a lot, since it is, on the one hand, the only one that portrays the real difference between the various texts (funerary inscriptions, manuscripts, printed texts), and, on the other, because it is able to give us even data about the origin of this prayer. A detailed analysis of this expression we also made in a study⁷³ and in an article⁷⁴, which is why we will not insist on it here.

7. THE EXPRESSION: “YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS IS RIGHTEOUS FOR EVER, AND YOUR WORD THE TRUTH”

The expression “*Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your word the Truth*”⁷⁵, which concludes the prayer “*God of the Spirits...*”, and which is directly grounded in the Holy Scripture (*Psalms* 118:142; *John* 17:17), is the one that actually pushed us to analyze this prayer. But what caught our attention in particular was the form of the word “*Word*” (cf. *Psalter*, Kishinev, In the Exarchate Printing of Bessarabia, 1818, p. 305r and *Psalter*, Kishinev, 1857, p. 46r), used in the first editions of the *Psalter* printed in Kishinev (1818 and 1857), with capital letters; a form that sadly does not appear in any place in the Holy Scripture. Moreover, in many editions of the Holy Scriptures does not appear this word, but another one (“*law*”). Although there might be many “speculations” about this form, we are of the opinion that only a precise textual analysis is able to bring to light its real significance, which is why we will continue to refer to matters strictly related to the text and to the context in which its meaning is stated.

First of all, we want to say the verse: “*Your word the Truth*”, from *The Gospel after John*, chapter 17, verse 17⁷⁶, previously specified, is not signaled by the studies mentioned as biblical reference, in the context in which these works recall and analyze, more or less, the prayer “*God of the Spirits...*”. The only one pointing to this reference is Metropolitan Athenagoras, who gives it exactly as it appears in the editions of the *Psalter* printed in Kishinev (1818 and 1857), that is, in capital: “<<Ο Λόγος ὁ Σὸς ἀλήθειά ἐστι>> Ἰωάν. ΙΖ. 17.”⁷⁷. On the other hand, the omission of biblical reference from *John* 17:17 by the specialists does not seem to be at all accidental, since textual logic clearly shows that it is an integral verse (142) from *Psalms* 118, written, is right, in an unprecedented form, recorded for the first time in a fourth-century manuscript, that is “*codex S*”⁷⁸ or “*Codex Sinaiticus*”⁷⁹.

formules...”, p. 93, S. Parenti and E. Velkovska, *L' Eucologio...*, p. 236, note f, etc. and Δ. Β. Τζέρπος, *Η Ακολουθία τοῦ Νεκρωσίου...*, p. 243, note 3, etc.

⁷¹ “ὅταν ὀνησθε Ἀβραάμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ καὶ πάντας τοὺς προφήτας ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ”, *Greek-English New Testament...*, p. 207; see also S. Parenti and E. Velkovska, *L' Eucologio...*, p. 236, note f, etc.

⁷² “οὕτω γὰρ θανόντας ἡμᾶς Ἀβρααμ καὶ Ἰσαακ καὶ Ἰακωβ ὑποδέχονται καὶ πάντες οἱ πατέρες ἐπαινέσουσιν”, *LXX*, p. 1176; see also B. Botte, “Les plus anciennes formules...”, p. 93.

⁷³ See N. Preda, *Rânduiala rugăciunii ce se face după ieșirea sufletului din trup (The Ordinance of the Prayer to be Made after the Soul left the Body)*, pp. 234-259.

⁷⁴ See N. Preda, “The prayer <<The God of the spirits...>> (an expression that disappeared from liturgical structures: <<in Abraham’s, Isaac’s and Jacob’s bosoms>>”, in *International Journal of Theology, Philosophy and Science*, Vol. 1, No. 1/2017, Târgoviște, Valahia University Press, pp. 36-44.

⁷⁵ “ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου δικαιοσύνη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, καὶ ὁ λόγος σου ἀλήθεια”, J. Goar, *Εὐχολόγιον sive Rituale Graecorum...*, p. 424; “ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου, δικαιοσύνη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, καὶ ὁ νόμος σου, ἀλήθεια”, *Εὐχολόγιον τὸ Μέγα*, σπουδὴ καὶ ἐπιστάσια Σπυρίδωνος Ζέρβου, Ἀθήναι, Ἐκδοτικός οἶκος Ἀστήρ, 1992, p. 395.

⁷⁶ “ὁ λόγος ὁ σὸς ἀλήθειά ἐστιν”, *Greek-English New Testament...*, p. 306.

⁷⁷ “Ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων”, p. 190.

⁷⁸ Cf. *LXX*, p. XXIII and A. Rahlfs, *Psalmi cum Odis*, in *Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum Graecum*, vol. X, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979, p. 11.

⁷⁹ *Codex Sinaiticus*: 122v: Η ΔΙΚΑΙΟCΥΝΗ CΟΥ ΔΙΚΑΙΟCΥΝΗ ΕΙC ΤΟΝ ΑΙΩΝΑ ΚΑΙ Ο ΛΟΓΟC CΟΥ ΑΛΗΘΙΑ, cf. *Codex Sinaiticus*, <http://codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx?>

It is very interesting to see how this form (that from “Codex Sinaiticus”) will still be imposed early in the liturgical tradition, proof being, on the one hand, the texts of the prayer “*God of the Spirits...*” from the funeral inscriptions⁸⁰, and, on the other hand, those texts written by the vast majority of manuscripts⁸¹, some of them decisive for the study of the evolution of Orthodox Byzantine worship.

In our opinion, the form “*Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your word the Truth*” would be imposed first of all because it would be able to best express the truths of faith that the Church began to formulate and propose even in the cult ordinances. However, we encounter old texts of the prayer “*God of the Spirits...*”, this time giving the other form: “*Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your law the Truth*”⁸². If things seem to be somewhat clear about the primary forms of the expression “*Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your word the Truth*”, in the sense that they represent a unitary form, not the same can be said about the printed texts, where we seem to have a variety of forms⁸³ whose occurrence can only be explained to a small extent.

The fact is that we are confronted with a phenomenon that would not be overlooked even by specialists, who note that the current text of the prayer “*God of the Spirits...*” has been altered and no longer corresponds to the primary form, which was much cleaner (neat): “*La rédaction moderne a, plusieurs fois, altéré le texte tel qu’il était fixé à l’époque de notre épitaphe*⁸⁴; *la rédaction ancienne est plus pure, plus grecque que celle de la prière actuelle*”⁸⁵. A satisfactory explanation for this phenomenon is hard to propose, which is why we will try to limit ourselves only to point out certain elements which, we think, can bring more clarity. A first form we have noted in our books of worship is that of *Euchologion*, where the expression “*Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your word the Truth*”⁸⁶ from the prayer “*God of the Spirits...*” corresponds to that in Psalm 118 (“*Blessed are the undefiled in the way...*”) from the *Funeral Ordinances for the Laity*⁸⁷. Unfortunately, the concordance between the two texts will appear in the *Euchologion* relatively late, only in the

[dir=next&folioNo=3&lid=en&quireNo=6&side=r&zoomSlider=3](#) (page visited on 18.03.2013); see also *LXX* (vol. II), p. 139, note 142, and A. Rahlfs, *Psalmi cum Odis...*, p. 300, note 142.

⁸⁰ “καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη καὶ ὁ λόγος σου ἡ ἀλήθεια”, cf. “*Variantes données par l’inscription*”, in A. Dumont, “*Fragment de l’office funèbre de l’Église grecque...*”, pp. 587-588; “καὶ δικαιοσύνη σου δικαιοσύνη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, καὶ ὁ λόγος σου ἡ ἀλήθεια”, cf. “*Lapide di Daninos*”, in V. Bruni, *I funerali di un sacerdote...*, pp. 152 and 154.

⁸¹ “καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου δικαιοσύνη <εἰ>] εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, καὶ ὁ λόγος σου ἀλήθεια”, Θ. Στ. Χριστοδούλου, *Η νεκρώσιμη ἀκολουθία* (vol. II)..., 41.

⁸² “*iustitia est testimonium tuum in aeternum et vera est lex tua*”, I. Guidi, “*Due antiche preghiere nel Rituale abissino dei Defonti*”, in *Oriens Christianus*, n. s. 1 (1911), p. 23; to be noted that I. Guidi gives also the Greek text of the prayer “*God of the Spirits...*”, using the edition of a *Euchologion* which he does not indicate, but which contains the form from “codex S”: “ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου δικαιοσύνη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ ὁ λόγος σου ἀλήθεια”, cf. “*Due antiche preghiere...*”, pp. 22-23.

⁸³ “ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου, δικαιοσύνη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, καὶ ὁ νόμος σου, ἀλήθεια”, *Εὐχολόγιον τὸ Μέγα*, Ἀθῆναι, 1992, p. 395; “ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου δικαιοσύνη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ ὁ νόμος σου ἀλήθεια”, cf. “*Grand Euchologe*, Venise, 1869, p. 394”, in A. Dumont, “*Fragment de l’office funèbre de l’Église grecque...*”, pp. 587-588.

⁸⁴ “*Si tratta di una lapide, che Daninos Pascià raccolse in un bazar del Cairo nell’anno 1870 e che sembra provenire ugualmente della Nubia. Centro di interesse e di discussione tra gli specialisti è la datazione, i cui estremi oscillano tra il 344 e il 1243*”, V. Bruni, *I funerali di un sacerdote...*, p. 150.

⁸⁵ A. Dumont, “*Fragment de l’office funèbre de l’Église grecque...*”, p. 588; “*DUMONT (p. 588) ricorda che la redazione moderna ha alterato più volte l’antico testo che è linguisticamente più puro*”, V. Bruni, *I funerali di un sacerdote...*, p. 153, note 264.

⁸⁶ *Euchologion*, Bucharest, 2006, p. 205.

⁸⁷ *Euchologion*, Bucharest, 2006, p. 216: “*Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your word the Truth*”.

1965 edition⁸⁸. Until the 1965 edition, most of the *Euchologies* present an unique form in the prayer “*God of the Spirits...*”⁸⁹ and another one in Psalm 118 from the *Funeral Ordinances for the Laity*⁹⁰. Nuances of this expression are also found in Greek-language cult books. So if in old *Euchologies* we find an unique form in the prayer “*God of the Spirits...*”⁹¹, in Psalm 118 from *Funeral Ordinances for the Laity* we find the “ordinary” one from the *Psalter*⁹². There is, however, one exception recorded by one of the printed editions of the *Euchologion* in Greek, found even today in use, which also mentions an unique form in the prayer “*God of the Spirits...*”⁹³, which appears also in Psalm 118, namely “*Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your law the Truth*”⁹⁴. A second form that drew our attention is that of the verse 142, from Psalm 118, reproduced in *Horologion*, in *The Midnight Office for Weekdays*: “*Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your law the Truth*”⁹⁵. But it happened that we noticed the form of the verse 142, from Psalm 118, in an older edition of the *Horologion*⁹⁶, where, to our surprise, we found another form: “*Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your word the Truth*”⁹⁷. This form was to be introduced into the *Horologion* only in the edition from 1973⁹⁸; in the other editions (“the first”⁹⁹ and the fourth¹⁰⁰) was to be reintroduced the “ordinary” from the *Psalter*¹⁰¹.

An original form of the verse 142, from Psalm 118, reproduced also in the *Horologion*, in *The Daily Midnight Prayer*, is the one in the edition from 1945, which also

⁸⁸ *Euchologion including sermons, ordinances and prayers that the priest performs in different circumstances in the life of Christians*, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1965, pp. 171 and 182.

⁸⁹ “Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your word the Truth”, *Rich Euchologion*, Bucharest, In Eliad’s Typography, 1832, p. 158.

⁹⁰ “Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your law the Truth”, *Rich Euchologion...*, p. 170; this form of Psalm 118, verse 142, is the same with that in the *Psalter*.

⁹¹ “ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου δικαιοσύνη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, καὶ ὁ λόγος σου ἀλήθεια”, *Εὐχολόγιον τὸ Μέγα*, Ἐνετίησιν, Παρὰ Νικολάω Γλυκεῖ τῷ ἐξ Ἰωαννίων, 1806, p. 440.

⁹² “Ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου, δικαιοσύνη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, καὶ ὁ νόμος σου ἀλήθεια”, *Εὐχολόγιον τὸ Μέγα*, Ἐνετίησιν, 1806, p. 451.

⁹³ “ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου, δικαιοσύνη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, καὶ ὁ νόμος σου, ἀλήθεια”, *Εὐχολόγιον τὸ Μέγα*, Ἀθῆναι, 1992, p. 395.

⁹⁴ “Ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου, δικαιοσύνη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, καὶ ὁ νόμος σου ἀλήθεια”, *Εὐχολόγιον τὸ Μέγα*, Ἀθῆναι, 1992, p. 405.

⁹⁵ *Horologion*, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 2001, pp. 22 and 30; this form coincides with that in the current Bible (the synodal text).

⁹⁶ *Horologion*, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1979³.

⁹⁷ *Horologion*, Bucharest, 1979³, p. 23.

⁹⁸ “Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your word the Truth”, *Horologion*, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1973², p. 23.

⁹⁹ “Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your law the Truth”, *Horologion*, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1970, p. 23.

¹⁰⁰ “Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your law the Truth”, *Horologion*, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1984⁴, p. 24.

¹⁰¹ “Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your law the Truth”, *Psalter of the Prophet and Emperor David*, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1971³, p. 199; “Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your law the Truth”, *Psalter of the Prophet and Emperor David*, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1975⁴, p. 194.

appears in the *Little Horologion*¹⁰²: “Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your law the Pure Truth”¹⁰³.

It should be noted, however, that these forms are not arbitrary, but they are found in one of the editions of the Holy Scripture, thus:

- a) “Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your word the Truth”¹⁰⁴;
- b) “Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your law the Truth”¹⁰⁵;
- c) “Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your law the Pure Truth”¹⁰⁶.

In our opinion, all this variety of forms indicated in the precedent “betrays” a particular affinity of the editors of the cult books to the biblical texts that we encounter in the cult. On the other hand, we would like to draw attention to a statement made by Fr. Prof. Ene Braniște in *General Liturgy*: “... in the new version of the *Horologion* from 1970, reproduced exactly in 1973”¹⁰⁷, which is not entirely true, since there are differences in text between the two editions of the *Horologion*, as we have seen above. Inaccuracies of this kind appear, we believe, because of the lack of textual liturgical studies. So research on the text should be a priority for today’s liturgists, given that we have a great deal of material to which, unfortunately, no one has turned.

A final analysis, which has helped us bring extra light into all this issue, takes into account the form of the verse 142, from Psalm 118, from the *Psalters* which we have used in drafting the text “*The Ordinance of the Prayer to be Made after the Soul left the Body*”¹⁰⁸. Here are these forms:

- a) “Your righteousness is righteous for ever/ and Your law the Truth”¹⁰⁹;
- b) “Your righteousness is righteous for ever/ and Your law the Truth”¹¹⁰;
- c) “Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your law/ the Truth”¹¹¹.

So none of these *Psalters* contains the form given in the prayer “*God of the Spirits...*”.

¹⁰² “Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your law the pure Truth”, *Little Horologion*, Bucharest, Printing House of Church Books, 1939¹⁰, p. 14.

¹⁰³ *Horologion*, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1945, pp. 11 and 17.

¹⁰⁴ *The Bible that is the Divine Scripture of the Old and New Testaments*, Bucharest, “King Carol II” Foundation for Literature and Art, 1938, p. 617 and *New Testament*, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1930, p. 96.

¹⁰⁵ *The Bible or the Holy Scripture*, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1975, p. 626 and *The Bible or the Divine Scripture*, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1982, p. 626; “Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your law the Truth”, *The Bible or the Divine Scripture*, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1968, p. 626; “Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your law the Truth”, *The Bible, that is God's Scripture of the Old and New Laws*, Bucharest, Printing House of Church Books, 1914, p. 758.

¹⁰⁶ *The Holy Scripture*, Bucharest, Printing House of Church Books, 1936, p. 658 and *The New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Psalms*, Bucharest, Printing House of Church Books, 1937, p. 103.

¹⁰⁷ *General Liturgy with notions of Church Art, Architecture and Christian Painting*, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1993², p. 656.

¹⁰⁸ We have already mentioned this study in the previous notes.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *Psalter*, Kishinev, 1818, p. 217r, lines 9-10; “Your righteousness is righteous for ever, and Your law the Truth”, *Psalter*, Iași, 1818, p. 156r, lines 13-15.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *Psalter*, Kishinev, 1857, p. 201r, lines 3-4.

¹¹¹ Cf. *Psalter*, Kishinev, 1907, p. 363, lines 5-6.

CONCLUSION

Due to its seniority in particular, but also to the fact that it still exists in all the ordinances from the funeral, the prayer “*God of the Spirits...*” is considered by experts as one of the oldest Christian prayers for the dead.

Concerning the various textual forms of the prayer “*God of the Spirits...*”, which appear in the books of worship and which have a direct theme in the Holy Scripture, we would like to underline an essential point, that is, that the introduction of a synodal “preferential” text of the Holy Scriptures into the books of worship is not always a success, since this fact confers uniformity on liturgical texts, but, on the other hand, impoverishes the variety of shapes and shades that essentially define the Byzantine cult. Moreover, we consider the statement of Father Robert Taft, one of the liturgists who studied closely the Byzantine liturgical phenomenon, on the improper name of “*Biblical Psalter*” (cf. “Mount Athos: A Late Chapter in the History of the <<Byzantine Rite>>”, in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 42 (1988), p. 181) is more than eloquent.

About the textual forms of the prayer “*God of the Spirits...*” one could write a lot more, since we are confronted with a phenomenon that will not be overlooked even by specialists, who note that the current text of the prayer “*God of the Spirits...*” has been altered and no longer corresponds to the primary form, which was much cleaner (neat), but, as we have said, our analysis only addresses some aspects that might be taken into account, we would say, when determining the origin of this prayer, but not only.

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