

TESTIMONIES OF THE HOLY FATHERS DURING THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES ON DEATH AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

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ABSTRACT

Confronted with mystery of death, human behaviour reacted socially with mourning rituals, which do not attempt to remove death, but rather to achieve a realistic acceptance of it and to promote getting over the shock, looking for the meaning both of death and of the life which goes on. Thus, there is community conscience of being part of the living and of the dead; the relationship with those who are no longer with us continues after death and there is a feeling of their presence and actions. Therefore, the dead are still alive. The Proskomedie and the Holy Liturgy, the Saturdays of Souls in Orthodox spirituality, as well as the Sunday of All Saints both with the Orthodox, and with the Catholics, transform fear of death into a celebration of the sacrament of death and of the hope for eternal life. The Christian proposition regarding the victory over the reign of death comes out of the Easter experience, when the God of life, and loving life, unites mankind to the point of vanquishing the reign of their mutual enemy, but exceeding it by Christ's resurrection, who becomes an archetype for the entire humanity. The faith in resurrection bestows meaning upon this great Sacrament of life: namely that death is not destruction, disappearance, but meeting again.

Keywords: death; resurrection; body; faith; doctrine;

INTRODUCTION

Death¹ means the end of life – according to most dictionaries. Man is, indeed, the only living being capable of being aware of his end in this world, questioning this finality. Death is not simply a chronological event, the end of life, but it is, we might say, through self-awareness, an anticipated experience. Man is perfectly aware that there will come a day when his earthly life will come to an end, and this awareness is the most certain thing of his existence. Man is very much aware that such a moment² awaits him sooner or later, and it is

¹ “What is death? – Father Stăniloae wonders – Nobody can provide a satisfying answer to this mighty question. For such an answer, one should experience it not only from the outside, as a phenomenon happening to others, but from within it as well.” cf. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Iisus Hristos sau restaurarea omului [Jesus Christ or the Restoration of Man]*, Basilica, Bucharest, 2013, p. 377.

² Pr. Theodore PAPANICOLAOU, *Viziunea morții în lumina Sf. Părinți ai Bisericii [The Vision of Death in the Light of the Holy Fathers of the Church]*, Doxologia, Iași, 2016, p. 13.

therefore impossible for him not to think of death. *Memento mori* – is thus part of everyday life³. In reality, no human being can experience their own death, but only with regard to the death of another person can they be provided with a moment of insightful consideration of this fact. The awareness of death occurs precisely when one loses someone and, thus, can no longer communicate with that person. Therefore, this event makes communication impossible, being an irrevocable action⁴. The itinerary of human existence is consequently called to conform to this moment which, for the human being, is a moment of profound consideration. In fact, in ‘dying,’ man discovers the full meaning of his existence. Experiencing one's own self necessarily includes death, which constitutes the ultimate, definitive and irreversible meaning where one's own self makes a choice. From this perspective, we can say that the experience of death constitutes the total meaning of man's determining action: every decision is an anticipation of death. This event is not simply a natural, biological or chronological fact, but it emphasizes the quality of the human being. In other words, in order to live well, man must be very aware of the moment of death, in the sense that he cannot live as if he would never die⁵. In his pondering on death, man irrevocably decides both his present and his future, discovering his own nature, through which he has assessed the various choices that have led to his historical evolution⁶. Thus, we can state that death is “the possibility of the impossibility of existence⁷,” insofar as it is a freedom event that ultimately encapsulates the meaning of any other choice.

Death distinguishes man from all other living things through autobiography: human death is the death of a *SELF*. From this, one can also infer the unnatural character of death, in that man, in his self-awareness, when speaking of death, shifts from experiencing fear of death to having faith in the continuity of life; from a sense of guilt to a desire to make amends; from rebellion to understanding⁸. “In theological terms,” Father Stăniloae⁹ says, “death, being the only transition from here to God, shows the transcendence of God and of our full life embracing Him as its fulfillment. We also have something from God in our life here, an *earnest*, as the Holy Fathers say”.

The contact with death by experiencing the death of another and pondering on this universal moment challenges man to explain this great mystery by means of faith: is death only the biological, natural, chronological end of man or is it a more complex event? The Christian choice in understanding death relies on not only understanding what is natural, biological and temporal, both in death and in life, but above all connecting these two mysteries to the divine transcendence.

³ Maurizio CHIODI, *Etica de la Vita [Life Ethics]*, Milan, Edizioni Glossa, 2006, p. 185.

⁴ Pr. Ioan C. TEȘU, „Taina morții în spiritualitatea ortodoxă” [“The Sacrament of Death in Orthodox Spirituality”], in: *Teologie și viața [Theology and Life]*, 5-8 (2010), pp. 5-33, p. 6.

⁵ Maurice BLONDEL, *L'azione [The Action]*, (coord. it. Romeo Crippa), La Scuola, Brescia, 1970, 158.

⁶ Antonio DONGHI, „Il morire ogii” [“Dying Today”], in: Gian Maria COMOLLI e Italo MONTICELII (coord), *Manuale di pastorale sanitaria [Handbook of Pastoral Care]*, Camilliane, Turin, 199, pp. 177-187, p. 177.

⁷ Martin HEIDEGGER, *Essere e tempo [Being and Time]*, Longanesi & C, Milano, ¹¹1976, p. 370: “We perceive death existentially as the possibility, already clarified, as the impossibility of existence, i.e. the purest and simplest nullity of Being. Death is not for the Being something separate that comes to be brought to its ‘end,’ but the Being is, as a care, the ‘ground’ of death”.

⁸ Mario BIZZOTTO, „Naturale e non-naturale nella morte” [“Natural and Unnatural in Death”], in *Camillianum*, 19 (1999), pp. 13-36, p. 35.

⁹ Pr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă [Dogmatic Orthodox Theology]*, vol. III, Ed. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, Bucharest, ³2003, p. 226.

“Death is the supreme test by which people who have faith are distinguished from those who have not. Death borne in faith is thus an homage, the greatest homage, to God. Death as a sacrifice has this characteristic to the highest extent. One's own death as a sacrifice means relinquishing the life here, the life based on natural and visible hopes, for the love of God. We turn this life here into a gift for God, because God asks us to do so, wanting us to show in this relinquishing the extent of our faith in Him. God does not ask us for our life here in order to add it to His own, to literally give it to Him, but He asks us for the ultimate act of faith in Him¹⁰”.

Pondering on the event of death is always related to God: from this point of view, it has a theological value¹¹, as does human experience: one can die with faith or within faith. Moreover, death becomes the radical moment in which man realizes the value of faith, which is a syncretic act of placing oneself at the disposal of God and of entrusting oneself to Him. One dies only for what one believes in. The Christian doctrine is that where death acquires its positive meaning, in that Christ's death brings communion with God in an eternal dialogue¹². Therefore, the shadowy veil shrouding the mystery of death in the Old Testament is cast aside by the certainty of faith in Christ, that death has been conquered and that through His loving life man breathes the indwelling of salvation. The real borderline between death and life, according to Christianity, is not drawn by biological death, but lies between “being with Him who is life” and isolation for the one who refuses this “being with Him.”

The early Church had this grasp on Christ's death-life-resurrection, even though, during the early days of its existence, there was no systematic or well-defined teaching. What is characteristic, however, of the early writings, especially of the post-apostolic fathers, is the highly biblical, especially Old Testament nature¹³. The first document where reference is made to the death or the state of man after death can be found in Clement of Rome's Epistle to the Corinthians. In chapter fourteen of his epistle, St Clement calls Christ the “leaven” of the dead¹⁴, referring to the Pauline text of 1 Cor 15:20; 23, while also using the Gospel image of the grain of wheat which, in order to produce fruit, must first go through earth germination (cf. Jn 12:24). Clement of Rome is apparently the first Christian writer to use, from Greek literature¹⁵, the image of the phoenix as an analogy for the resurrection of the body at the end of time, an image later adopted by some Christian writers¹⁶. His

¹⁰ D. STĂNILOAE, *Iisus Hristos... [Jesus Christ...]*, p. 378-379.

¹¹ M. CHIUDI, *Etica de la Vita... [Life Ethics]*, p. 187.

¹² D. STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă [Dogmatic Orthodox Theology]*, III, p. 228.

¹³ Alexandru LEPĂDATU, „Învățătura Părinților Bisericești despre învierea morților în primele trei veacuri” [“Teachings of the Church Fathers on the resurrection of the dead in the first three centuries”], in: *Glasul Bisericii [Voice of the Church]*, 1-6 (2018), pp. 135-150, p. 138; cf. Claudio Morenschini, „La Bibbia e l'apologetica Latina” [“The Bible and Latin Apologetics”], in: Enrico NORELLI (coord.), *La Bibbia nell'antichità Christiana. Da Gesu a Origene [The Bible in Christian Antiquity. From Jesus to Origen]*, vol. 1, Dehoniane, Bologna, 1993, pp. 329-359, p. 329.

¹⁴ S. CLEMENTIS I, PONTIFICIS ROMANI, *Epistola I ad Corinthios*, in: *PG* 01, 199-328, col. 259B: „Consideremus, dilecti, quemadmodum Dominus continue nobis ostendat resurrectionem quae futura est; cuius primitias fecit Dominum Jesum Christum, suscitans eum e mortuis.”

¹⁵ Ancient writers write about the phoenix: HERODOT, *Istorie [Histories]*, vol. I, translated by Adelina Piat Kowski and Felicia Vanț Ștef, Ed. Științifică, Bucharest, 1961, p. 164; PLINUS THE ELDER, *Naturalis Historia*, vol. I, book X, 3-5, translated by Ioana Costa and Tudor Dinu, Polirom, Bucharest, 2001, p. 143-144.

¹⁶ Cf. QUINTUS SEPTIMIUS FLORENTIS TERTULLIANUS PRESBYTER CARTHAGINENSIS, *De resurrectione carnis*, in: *PL* 02, 837-934, Caput XIII, 857C: „Siquidem animalis est res, et vitae obnoxia, et morti: illum dico alitem

conclusion is that of divine omnipotence, that just as God shows us His omnipotence by means of the Phoenix bird, so will He keep His promise about the resurrection of bodies at the end of time, even if the Holy Father limits this resurrection to the chosen: “Will we not think it a wonderful and great thing if the Creator of all things raises again those who have confessed their holy and good faith, when by the example of this bird the greatness of His promises is shown”¹⁷. The same conviction that death is defeated by resurrection is found in the so-called Second Epistle of St. Clement of Rome to the Christians in Corinth. Here, the Holy Father emphasizes once again the idea that the body of man after death will rise again at the end of time:

*“And let none of you say that this body is neither judged, nor resurrected. Consider within whom you have been saved, and within whom you have received your sight, and if you live in this body, then we ought to treasure this body as a temple of God. For, as you have been called in the body, still in a body shall you come. Christ the Lord is the One who saved us and He was first of all Spirit, then He became flesh and thus called to us: so, we shall also receive a reward in this body”*¹⁸.

The suggestion that judgement succeeds resurrection undoubtedly implies that the resurrection takes place for all the dead. Therefore, first of all, at least two things must be pointed out about what St. Clement says, namely: first, in this text, reference is for the first time made to the understanding that the resurrection of bodies is demonstrated by the salvation of the body in baptism (“consider within whom you were saved and within whom you received your sight”) and by the embodiment of Christ; secondly, a practical consistency is glimpsed, namely, for resurrection it is necessary that this earthly body be preserved as the Temple of God, thus justifying chastity and asceticism for the Christian life: “Therefore I say to you, keep your bodies clean and your seal without blemish, so that you may receive eternal life.”¹⁹

In the same sense, the Epistle of Barnabas expresses the belief that the resurrection of Christ is the divine promise for our resurrection. We can also find here the conviction that the purpose of Christ's coming into the world was precisely the fulfilment of the promise made to our forefathers, the crushing of death, the foundation of the Church and the resurrection of the dead for judgment: “And He, in order to deliver us from death, had to show us the resurrection from death, and for this it was necessary that he should appear in the flesh, and fulfill the promise made to our forefathers; preparing for Himself a new nation,

Orientis peculiarem de singularitate famosum, de posteritate monstruosum; qui semetipsum lubenter funerans renovat, natali fine decedens atque succedens; iterum phoenix, ut iam nemo: iterum ipse, qui non iam; alius idem”; Cf. ORIGENIS, *Contra Celsum, Liber Quartus*, in: PG 01, 1027-1180, 1178C: „Postea quasi pietatis animalium patrocinium suscepisset, de phoenice Arabiae alite refert, iluum post multos annos in Aegyptum transmigrare, eo ferre defuncti patris corpus globo aeyrtheo tanquam sepulcro inclusum, illudque ibi collocare ubi Solis templum est”.

¹⁷ S. CLEMENTIS I, PONTIFICIS ROMANI, *Epistola I ad Corinthios*, 266B: „An magnum igitur et admirabile esse arbitramur si omnium rerum opifex resurgere illos faciat, qui sancte et bonae fidei confidentia ipsi servierunt; ubi etiam per volucrem nobis ostendit promissionis suae magnificentiam”.

¹⁸ S. CLEMENTIS I, PONTIFICIS ROMANI, *Epistola II ad Corinthios*, in: PG 01, 329-348, col. 342C: „Et nemo vestrum dicat, quod haec caro non iudicatur, neque resurgit. Agnoscite in quo servati estis, in quo visum recepistis; nisi dum in hac carne vivitis. Nos ergo decet, carnem sicut templum Dei custodire. Quemadmodum enim in carne vocati estis, ita in carne venetis. Unus Christus Dominus qui nos servavit, cum primus esset spiritus, caro factus est, atque sic vocavit nos: ita etiam nos in hac carne mercedem recipiemus”.

¹⁹ S. CLEMENTIS I, PONTIFICIS ROMANI, *Epistola II ad Corinthios*, col. 342C: „Hoc ergo dicit: Servate carnem castam, et sigillum immaculatum, ut recipiatis vitam aeternam”.

while He lived on earth, in order to show that He Himself would judge as one who had performed resurrection.”²⁰

Following the same conviction of Clement of Rome and Barnabas, it can be confirmed that for the other Apostolic Fathers, the Resurrection of Christ is the foundation of the resurrection of the dead and of the Last Judgment. This can be seen, for example, in St. Ignatius of Antioch, who links the hope in the resurrection of the body with the necessity of faith in the Resurrection of Christ: “Who also truly rose from the dead, being raised by His own Father, and in the same way, like Him, believing in Him, His Father, we will be risen within Jesus Christ, without whom we have no true life”²¹. Moreover, in his Letter to the Philippians, St. Polycarp of Smyrna points out that anyone who denies this faith must be duly reprimanded and considered an instrument of the Antichrist: “For whoever does not confess that Jesus Christ came in the flesh is the Antichrist; and whoever does not confess martyrdom on the cross is of the devil; and whoever brings the words of the Lord unto his own desires, and has said that there is neither resurrection, nor judgment, is Satan's firstborn.”²²

Along this line of expressing faith in the Resurrection of Christ as the foundation of the resurrection of the body, the early Church formulated its various *confessions of faith* where, in contrast to the biblical understanding – *anastasis nekron* (resurrection from the grave) – another understanding emerges, namely: *anastasis sarkos* (resurrection of the body), as found in the early baptismal confessions of faith. With the exception of a few, most of the ancient confessions of faith up to the formulation of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol, probably inspired by the Apostolic Symbol²³, have the phrase “resurrection of the body (carnis resurrectionem) in their articles.” Both in the confessions of faith inspired by the early Church, where the Apostolic Symbol is expressed, and in those expressed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol, “resurrection of the dead” has the same meaning, namely that the Second Coming of Christ will be preceded by a general resurrection of the

²⁰ S. BARNABAS APOSTOLUS, *Epistola Chatolica*, in PG 02, 727-778, col. 735A: „Ille autem, ut vacuum faceret mortem, et de mortuis resurrectionem ostenderet, quia in carne oportebat eum apparere, sustinuit, ut promissum parentibus dederet; it ibse sibi populum novum parans, dum in terris degit ostenderet, quod facta resurrectione ipse esset et iudicaturus”.

²¹ S. IGNATIUS MARTYR, EPISCOPUS ANTIOCHENI, *Epistola ad Trallianos*, in: PG 05, 674D-686A, 682B: „Qui et vere resurrexit a mortuis, resuscitate ipsum Padre ipsius, quemadmodum ad eius similitudinem et nos, ei credens, Pater eius ita resuscitabit in Jesus Christo, sine quo veram vitam non habemus”.

²² S. POLYCARPUS MARTYR, SMYRNAERUM EPISCOPUS, *Epistola ad Fillippenses*, in: PG 05, 1005-1016, col. 1011B: „Omnis enim qui non confessus fuerit Jesum Christum in carne venisse, Antichristum est; et qui non confessus fuerit martyrium crucis, ex diabolo est; et qui Eloquia Domini ad desideria sua treaduxerit, dixertque nec resurrectionem nec iudicium esse, hic primogenitus est Satanae”.

²³ It seems that it is the Latin writer Rufinus who preserves the form given by the Apostles to the Apostolic Confession (*Symbolum Apostolicum*). In the 6th century, Rufin comments on the 12 articles of the Symbolum Apostolicum, explaining its origin and its being made up of the 12 Apostles themselves, each of whom wrote an article inspired by the Holy Spirit. Cf. TYRANNUS RUFINUS, *Commentarius in symbolum apostolorum*, in: PL 21, 335B-386C, col. 373; cf. Johannes QUASTEN, *Patrologia, vol. I fino al Concilio di Nicea*, trad. it. del dr. Nello BECHIN, Marietti, Torino, ²2000, 720pp., p. 29; cf. S. AUGUSTINI EPISCOPI, *Apendix tomii quinti Operum S. Augustini, Sermo 241*: in PL 39, 2190: „Petrus dixit, Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem. Joannes dixit, Creatorem coeli et terrae. Jacobus dixit, Credo in Jesum Christum Filium ejus unicum Dominum nostrum. Andreas dixit, Qui conceptus est de Spiritu sancto, natus ex Maria virgine. Philippus ait, Passus sub Pontio Pilato, crucifixus, mortuus et sepultus. Thomas ait, Descendit ad iferna, tertia die resurrexit a mortuis. Bartholomaeus dixit, Ascendit ad coelos, dedet ad dexteram Dei Patris omnipotentis. Matthaeus dixit, Inde venturus iudicare vivos et mortuos. Jacobus Alphaei, Credo et in Spiritum sanctum, sanctam Ecclesiam catholicam. Simon Zelotes, Sanctorum communionem, remissionem peccatoru. Judas Jacobi, Carnis resurrectionem. Mathias complevit, Vitam aeternam. Amen”.

bodies of the dead. The same meaning is also found in the ancient formulae – *regulae fidei* – preserved with various fathers such as Tertullian and Irenaeus. The former states that, according to these formulae, *regulae fidei*, this means precisely the Second Coming for the glory of Christ, meant to call the saints to life and the wicked to the eternal punishment of fire: *facta utriusque partis resuscitatione cum carnis restitutione*²⁴. The latter lists, in expressing the faith of the early Church, as formulae received from the apostles, the Second Coming of Christ meant to restore all things and perform the “resurrection of all mankind.”²⁵

The belief in the Resurrection of the dead or of the body, attested in the content of the ancient symbols and confessions of faith of the early Church, becomes the main instrument with which Christianity withstands Greek philosophy which was reluctant about abandoning spiritualism in favour of manifesting sensitive matter as being good for man. The confrontation with Gnosticism and paganism, in addition to bringing about a step-by-step crystallization of the Christian doctrine, maintained as a binding force the belief in the resurrection from a three-layered perspective: the resurrection of the dead, as an eschatological event: it will take place on the last day of the Second Coming; it will be universal, in the sense that all will rise; everyone will have a renewed bodily identity.

An important point in the crystallization of the Christian doctrine on death and resurrection is made by the 2nd century apologists, starting with Tatian the Assyrian, Justin Philosopher and Martyr in the East, passing on to Athenagoras and Tertullian in the West and then becoming established with the Cappadocian Fathers.

Tatian the Assyrian is the first to take on this difficult task of opposing the ancient Greek philosophy to the Christian outlook, using mostly philosophical arguments and less biblical ones, as in Justin Martyr and Philosopher. In his Address to the Greeks, it is he who states that both the immortality of the soul after death and the resurrection and judgment at the end of the ages emphasize the unity that is achieved between body and soul through creation, which is seen in the resurrection of bodies that retain their continuity and personal identity:

*“For this reason, we believe in the future resurrection of the bodies after the accomplishment of all things; not as the Stoics believe, [...] but once for all, when the periods of our existence are complete, only because of the constitution of men, for the purpose of bringing judgment upon them”*²⁶; *“The soul cannot become immortal unless it is united with the Holy Spirit. Oh, Greeks, the soul is not immortal in itself, but mortal. Yet, it cannot die the same way. For it dies and dissolves with the body, if it does not know the truth; but afterwards it will rise again at the end of the world with the body, receiving death by punishment into immortality.”*²⁷

²⁴ QUINTUS SEPTIMIUS FLORENTIS TERTULLIANUS PRESBYTER CARTHAGINENSIS, *De praescriptionibus adversus Haeticos*, in: PL 02, 09-74A, 27A.

²⁵ S. IRINAEUS, EPISCOPUS LUNGUDUNENSIS ET MARTYR, *Contra Haereses*, in: PG 07, 433-1118, col. 550B: „[...] Et de coelis in gloriam Patris adventum eius, ad recapitulanda universa, et resuscitandam omnem carnem humani generis[...]”.

²⁶ TATIANI ASSYRII, *Oratio adversus graecos*, in: PG 06, 803-888, col. 818BC: „Propterea etiam corporum resurrectionem futura credemus, cum omnia fuerint absoluta; non, ut Stoici decernunt, [...] sed semel, saeculis nostris absolutis, et in perpetuum, propter hominum solorum constitutionem, iudicii causa”.

²⁷ TATIANI ASSYRII, *Oratio adversus graecos*, col. 836B: „Anima non potest fieri immortalis, nisi cum Spiritu sancto conjugatur. Non est immortalis per se ipsa, o Graeci, anima, sed mortalis. Potest tamen eadem non mori. Moritur enim et dissolvitur cum corpore, si veritatem ignoret; postea autem resurget in fine mundi una cum corpore, mortem per supplicia in immortalitate accipiens.”

Generally speaking, Tatian, unlike the other apologists, represents a regression in terms of dialogue with the Greek culture structure, because of excessive polemics, but also because of his fragmentary and incomplete knowledge of the Christian doctrine, which makes him withdraw towards the end of his life and establish his own cult. Nevertheless, he can be considered an example of the ascetic dimension of early Christianity²⁸. Far from the materialism manifested by Tatian with regard to the soul and its afterlife condition, Theophilus of Antioch, in his discourse in favour of the resurrection of the body, unlike Tatian, appeals to biblical authority, especially that of the Old Testament, where belief in the resurrection relies on the agreement between the prophecy and its fulfilment²⁹: “[...] But why do you not believe? Or do you not know that faith comes before all things?”; “For neither did I believe that it would come to pass, but now I believe after having thought more carefully about these things; at the same time, I have found the Holy Scriptures of the holy prophets, who, with the help of the Holy Spirit, foretold the past in the same way as it happened, and the present in the same way as it is, and the things to come in the order in which they will come to pass.”

In his only work, *To Autolycus*³⁰, Theophilus sought arguments to prove the resurrection of bodies, both from God's created nature, through natural phenomena as analogies to the resurrection of the dead, as St. Paul and Clement of Rome made use of, not lacking descriptions of the seasons in their succession, day and night, seed and fruit, or lunar variations as an image of the future resurrection of the dead, as well as arguments and examples from Greek mythology when he speaks of the resurrection of Hercules and Aesculapius:

“First, I see what great things have always been, if only then will you believe, when you see the thing accomplished? But then do you believe that Hercules, who himself was burned, lives; Aesculapius, being struck by lightning, was restored to life; But those things which are told you about God, do you not believe? [...] Think, if you please, of the course of the seasons, the days and the nights; look at how even these perish and are born again. What? Is there not a resurrection of seeds and fruits, and that for human use? For the grain of wheat, for example, or of other seeds, when sown in the ground, first perishes and dissolves, then awakens and rises in the wheat spike. But does not the nature of trees bring forth, at certain times, at God's command, unexpected and previously unseen fruit?”³¹

²⁸ Pr. John ANTHONY, *Dicționar de teologie patristică [Dictionary of Patristic Theology]*, Doxologia, Iași, 2014, p. 488.

²⁹ S.THEOPHILUS ANTIOCHENUS EPISCOPUS, *Ad Autolicum*, in: *PG* 06, 1023-1068, I, 8, 1033C: „Sed cur non credis? An ignoras rebus omnibus fidem praeire?”; 1046A: „Nam et ergo non credebam id futurum, sed nunc credo postquam haec attentius consideravi; simul quod in sacras Scripturas incidi sanctorum prophetarum, qui per Spiritum Sanctum et praeterita eodem, quo gesta sunt, modo, et praesentia eodem, quo geruntur, praedixerunt, et futura eodem ordine quo perficerentur”.

³⁰ S.THEOPHILUS ANTIOCHENUS EPISCOPUS, *Ad Autolicum*, in: *PG* 06, 1023-1068.

³¹ S.THEOPHILUS ANTIOCHENUS EPISCOPUS, *Ad Autolicum*, I, 13, 1042C-1043AB: „Primum videm quid magni praestabilis, si tum credes cum rem factam videris? Deinde vero credis Herculem, qui se ipse combussit, vivere; Aesculapium fulmine percussum in vitam revocatum; quae vero tibi a Deo dicuntur, ea non credis? [...] Obseva enim, si placet, temporum et dierum et noctium interitum; attende quemadmodum haec etiam intereant et renascantur. Quid? An non seminum et fructum fit quaedam resurrectio, idque ad usum humanos? Granum enim tritici, exempli gratia, aut aliorum seminum, cum terrae injectum fuerit, primo perit et solvitur, deinde excitatur

Before St. Basil the Great³² or Blessed Augustine³³ stated that God is not the creator of death and evil, Theophilus said to Autolycus³⁴: “Therefore nature was neither mortal, nor immortal. For if He had made it immortal from the beginning, He would have made it God. Again, were it mortal, God would seem to be the cause of that death. He made him, therefore, neither immortal, nor mortal, but, as I said above, capable of both.”

With Theophilus, apologetics takes a step forward, even if until him the argument of faith was treated incidentally. After him, apologetics experiences a series of literary compositions aimed at treating the argument of faith as the priority of the debate. From this point of view, Justin Martyr and Philosopher, as well as Athenagoras, achieve a qualitative leap, both in terms of going in-depth regarding the doctrine within the Church and of the dialogue-confrontation in the cultural context of the Greco-Roman world. They represent the beginning of a new stage in Christian apologetics, where faith is required to be formulated without excluding rational consideration and without denying the intellectual structure of the believer. The first to take a stand against the heresies of the time and to deal extensively with subjects such as the resurrection, the universal sovereignty of God or the soul is St Justin Martyr and Philosopher. In his first Apology, Justin Martyr portrays belief in the resurrection of the dead more as a hope than as a true doctrine, attesting both to immortality and to the fact that every soul, after its separation from the body, until the Second Coming of Christ, receives either reward or punishment for its deeds, and remains in a state of waiting for its definitive place to be established:

“For while we say that all things were adorned and made by God, we seem to profess Plato's opinion: or while we say that there will be a conflagration, we seem to support the Stoics; And while we say that the souls of the wicked live even after death endowed with all the senses and are punished, whereas the good are freed from punishment, and have a happy life, we seem to say the same things as the poets and philosophers.”³⁵

Like Theophilus of Antioch, Justin Martyr uses the example of the seed to illustrate resurrection, affirming that all things are possible by the power of God, quoting the words of the Gospel (Mt 19:26):

“Just as before, because you have not yet seen the dead brought back to life, for this you are non-believers. But just as you have not believed at all, imagine how man could arise from such a small drop; likewise, the feeble

et in spicam assurgit. Arborum autem natura nonne certis temporibus Dei jussu latens antea et invisos fructus producit?”;

³² S. BASILIUS MAGNUS, *Homiliae: Quod Deus non est auctor malorum*, in: PG 31, 330-354, cap. 5, 338D-339A: „Non autem ex Deo malum est. Malum igitur quod proprie dicitur, peccatum videlicet, quoque maxime mali nomine dignum est, pendet ex nostra voluntate”.

³³ S. AURELIUS AUGUSTINUS, *De natura Boni*, in: PL 32, 551-572, 562: ”Nulla creatura Dei mala, sed ea male uti est malum”; ”Malum est enim mali uti bono”.

³⁴ S. THEOPHILUS ANTIOCHENUS EPISCOPUS, *Ad Autolicum*, II, 27, 1094B: „Igitur nec mortalis natura, nec immortalis factus. Nam si immortalem ab initio fecisset, Deum eum fecisset. Rursus si mortalem, videretur Deus causa illius mortis esse. Nec immortalem igitur fecit nec mortalem, sed, ut supra diximus, capacem utriusque [...]”.

³⁵ S. JUSTINIUS PHILOSOPHUS ET MARTYR, *Apologia I pro Christianis*, in: PG 06, 327-441, 358C: „Dum enim a Deo dicimus ornata et facta omnia, Platonis sententiam proferre videbimur: dum conflagrationem fore, Stoicorum: dum autem improborum animas, etiam post mortem, sensu praeditas puniri, bonorum a suppliciiis liberas beate agere; eadem ac poetae et philosophi dicere videmimur”.

bodies of men, like seeds dissolved in the earth, by God's ordinance, could at one time rise and not embrace decay."³⁶

St. Justin incisively adopts a critical attitude towards the ancient philosophical concept of the immortality of the soul on the theory of metempsychosis and the wandering of souls from one body to another. For him, souls do not go to heaven before the final resurrection, as the Marcionites and Gnostics believed, but go to a place better or worse than this world, as they belong to the good or the bad, nor do they wander from one body to another or in the bodies of animals:

*"But those who are deemed unworthy of such a view, what will they suffer? He said. They will be thrown, as if in chains, into the bodies of wild beasts, and this is their punishment. Do they know, then, that for this reason they are in those bodies and that they have sinned? I think not. They seem, therefore, to receive no benefit from the punishment; nay, nor should I have said that they should be punished if they did not feel the punishment. No, of course not. This is why souls do not see God, nor move into other bodies; for they knew that they were punished in this way, and feared lest they should sin more or more easily. But that they can understand that God exists and that righteousness and godliness are something important, I agree, he says. [...] However, I do not say that any soul should perish, because that would be unthinkable for true gain. Then how? The souls of the godly, indeed, dwell in a better place, but those of the unrighteous and wicked in a worse one, awaiting the judgment time. Thus, those worthy of God, upon judgment, die no more; but the others are punished as long as God wills it so, that they should exist and be punished."*³⁷

From an eschatological point of view, Justin Martyr and Philosopher seems³⁸ to be the first to introduce the phrase "Second Parousia," sharing the millennialists' idea that the righteous will rise first, with whom Christ will establish a thousand-year kingdom in Jerusalem. At the end of the millennium, the resurrection of sinners will also take place, followed by the final judgment, which could mean that St. Justin Martyr and Philosopher, in expounding the millenarian conception, which is not found with Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp or Athenagoras, was influenced by Old Testament apocalypticism rather than that of St. John the Evangelist:

³⁶ S. JUSTINIUS PHILOSOPHUS ET MARTYR, *Apologia I pro Christianis*, 358A: „Eodem modo quia nondum vidistis mortuum ad vita revocatum, incredulis estis. Sed quademadmodum nunquam omnino credidisset tales vos ex parva gutta fieri posse extimate, ut dissoluta hominum corpora, et instar seminum in terram resoluta, Dei jussu, certo tempore resurgant et incorruptionem induant”.

³⁷ S. JUSTINIUS PHILOSOPHUS ET MARTYR, in: PG 06, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo*, 471-800, 486B; 487B: „Quae vero idignae judicatae sunt, quae viderent quid patiuntur? Inquit ille. In aliqua ferarum corpora, velut in vincula conjiciuntur, atque haec illarum poena est. Noverunt igitur hanc ob causam sese in illis esse corporibus, atque aliquid a se peccatum esse? Non puto. Nihil igitur utilitatis videntur ex poena percipere; imo ne puniri quidem eas dixerim, si poenam non sentiunt. Non sane. Non ergo Deum vident animae, nec migrant in alia corpora; scirent enim sese ita puniri, ac metuerent ne quid deinceps vel leviter peccarent. Quod autem intelligere possint Deum esse, ac justitiam et pietatem praeclarum quidpiam esse, id ipse, inquit, assentior. [...] Non tamen perire dico ullas animas; vere enim de lucro id esset improbis. Quid igitur? Piorum quidem animas in meliore loco manere, iniquorum autem et malorum in deteriore, judicii tempus expectantes. Sic istae, cum Deo digne judicate fuerint, non jam moriuntur; hae vero puniuntur, quandiu eas esse et puniri Deus voluerit”;

³⁸ Russell DE SIMONE, „Giustino filosofo e martire” [Justin Philosopher and Martyr], in: ANGELO DI BERARDINO (coord.), *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane [New Dictionary of Patristics and Christian Antiquity]*, vol. 2 F-O, Marietti, Genova-Milan, ³2007, pp.2343-2347, p. 2346.

“I, along all truly orthodox Christians, know that there will be a resurrection of the body and a thousand-year time in the rebuilt, adorned and enlarged Jerusalem, as Ezekiel, Isaiah and other prophets say [...]. On the other hand, we also have a man named John, one of the apostles of Christ, who, following a revelation he had, says that those who believe in our Christ will spend a thousand years in Jerusalem, after which the general resurrection will take place there and, thus, in a word, eternal judgement for all. Our Lord has already told us that then ‘They shall neither marry nor be given away in marriage, but shall be equal with the angels, the sons of the resurrection of God.’ [...] That Jesus whom we acknowledge as Christ, the Son of God, that Jesus who was crucified, rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, will again return as the judge of all men beginning with Adam himself.”³⁹

Certainly, the Church did not follow this path of unattested millenarianism in the New Testament, but, by using the rational arguments employed especially by the apologists of the 2nd and 3rd centuries in combating heresy, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan definition of the resurrection dogma was subsequently achieved.

It is Athenagoras, in his so-called treatise *On the Resurrection from the Grave* (*Peri anastaseos nekron*)⁴⁰, who gives some substance to the Christian concept of the immortality of souls and eternal life. It is “so-called” because this ancient writing, even if presented as a scientific document, according to scholars⁴¹, is a *lectio publica*, a lecture given before a decidedly pagan audience to demonstrate that the Resurrection as a belief of the Church is not contrary to reason. Constructed according to all the rules of rhetoric, the paper contains no reference to revealed biblical content, nor does it refer to any biblical verse, but demonstrates the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead relying on rational

³⁹ S. JUSTINIUS PHILOSOPHUS ET MARTYR, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo*, in: PG 06, 667A: „Ego autem et, si qui recte in omnibus sentiunt, Christiani, et carnis resurrectionem futuram scimus, et mille annos in urbe Jerusalem aedificata et onorata et amplificata; quemadmodum Ezechiel et Isaias et caeteri prophetae promittunt [...]”; 670A: „Huc accedit quod vir apud nos nomine Joannes, unus ex Christiapostolis, in revelatione ipsi facta, mille annos Jerosolymis traducturos raedixit eos, qui Christo nostro crediderint, ac postea generalem, et ut verbo dicam, aeternam unanimiter simul omnium resurrectionem et iudicium futurum. Quod quidem et Dominus noster pronuntiavit: «Neque nubent, neque nubentur, sed aequales angelis erunt, cum sint filii Dei resurrectionis»[...]”; 782D-783A: „Ad hoc enim conducit ut vel ex illa cognosciatis Jesum, quem nos Chrisum esse Filium Dei agnovimus, qui crucifixus est, et resurrexit, et ascendit in coelis, et interum omnium omnino hominum usque ad ipsum Adamum, iudex venturus est”.

⁴⁰ ATHENAGORAS ATHENIENSIS, PHILOSOPHUS CHRISTIANUS, *De resurrectionem mortuorum*, in: PG 06, 974-1022;

⁴¹ cf. Henri CROUZEL – Vittorino GROSSI, „Risurrezione dei morti” [“Resurrection of the dead”], in: *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane* [New Dictionary of Patristics and Christian Antiquity], vol. 3 P-Z, Marietti, Genova-Milan, 2007, pp. 4526-4531; cf. Alberto D’ANNA, „Sulla risurrezione. Pseudo Giustino: discorso cristiano del II secolo” [“On the resurrection. Pseudo Justin: Christian discourse of the 2nd century”], Brescia 2001, 323pp.; cf. Alberto D’ANNA, „Notte sull’attribuzione del De risurrezione allo Pseudo-Giustino” [“Considerations on the assignment of De risurrezione to Pseudo-Justinus”], in: Alberto D’ANNA e Claudio ZAMAGNON (coord.), *Christianesimo nell’Antichità: fonti, istituzioni, ideologie a confronto* [Christianity in the Antiquity: sources, institutions, ideologies in comparison], Zurich; New York; Olms, 2007, 261pp., p. 83-106; Bernard POUDEPNON, „Athenagore et la tradition alexandrine” [“Athenagoras and the Alexandrian tradition”], in: Lorenzo PERRONE, *Origeiana octava: Origen and the Alexandrian tradition: papers of the 8 international Origen Congress*, Pissa, August 27-31, 2001, Louven, University Press: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2003, 811pp, p. 201-219; Pierre NAUTIN, „Note critique sur “Athenagora” [“Critical Consideration on ‘Athenagoras’”], in: *Vigilliae Christianae*, 29 (1975), pp. 271-275.

arguments. The work has two parts, the former comprises chapters 1-10 and talks about God and resurrection showing that divine wisdom, omnipotence and divine justice do not contradict the resurrection of the dead, but manifest it. The latter part, chapters 11-25, portrays man and the resurrection of the dead, showing the necessity of the resurrection because of man's nature. This is summarized by Athenagoras in four rational arguments⁴²: first, man is created for eternal life (chapters 12-13); secondly, because he has a dichotomous structure, the human being is made up of body and soul, and this unity broken by death must be rebuilt by resurrection (chapters 14-17). Thirdly, both the body and the soul must be rewarded, because both are subjected to the moral order, which means that it would be unjust for the soul alone to suffer or do penance for a sin committed together with the body; at the same time, it would be unjust for the body not to be rewarded for the good things done in good cooperation with the soul (chapters 18-23). The last rational argument Athenagoras makes supporting the resurrection of the dead is that this creation of man would be nonsensical, unless he was designed to enjoy eternal happiness, which cannot be attained in this world and must therefore be thought of as an afterlife (chapters 24-25). Thus, human identity in resurrection can only result from the reunion of the identical body with the same soul. Resurrection finds a purpose assigned to man, namely to open the way to contemplating divinity:

“It would suffice to consider even the cause of man's creation in order to demonstrate, with logical rigor, that the resurrection lies behind the decomposition of the body; [...]. Well, the constitution of the same men points to the subsequent resurrection of dead and weak bodies. For, without it, the same parts will never be united with one another according to their nature, nor will the nature of the same people be established. [...]. Well, the one who has received mind and reason is man, not the soul itself. Therefore, man made up of both elements must endure forever. But it is impossible to endure if there is no resurrection: since resurrection does not take place, man's nature as man would not endure; and if man's nature does not survive, the soul is uselessly associated with the poverty and suffering of the body; uselessly, the body, enmeshed and held in bondage by the soul, aches that it cannot satisfy its instincts; the mind is useless, prudence is useless, useless are the observance of justice and all exercise of virtue, the institution and disposition of laws, and, as I say in a nutshell, everything is useless in men and for the sake of honorable and distinguished men, or rather, even the creation and nature of men are useless. But if nothing useless can ever be found in all God's works and in all the gifts bestowed by Him, it is absolutely necessary that the perennality of the soul should also correspond to the persistence of the body forever according to its own nature.”⁴³

⁴² J. QUASTEN, *Patrologia [Patrology]*, vol. I..., pp.204-205.

⁴³ ATHENAGORAS ATHENIENSIS, *De resurrectionem mortuorum*, in: PG 06, 1003AB-106AB: „Cum autem spectata in hominum generatione causa demonstrare vel sola possit resurrectionem, naturali serie dissoluta, corpora sequi; [...]. Eorundem autem constitutio hominum necessario consequentem mortuorum et dissolutorum corporum resurrectionem demonstrat. Nam absque illa nunquam inter se eadem partes secundum naturam conjungentur, nec eorundem hominum naturam constiterit. [...]. Qui autem mentem et rationem suscipit, homo est, non anima per se ipsa. Necesse est ergo hominem ex utroque constantem semper permanere; non potest autem permanere nisi resurgat. Nam si nulla sit resurrectio, nequaquam hominum, quatenus hominum, natura permanserit. Hominum natura non permanente, frustra anima corporis indigetiae et perpersionibus sociata;

All these rational arguments of Athenagoras, as found with all the Apologists, confirm belief in resurrection and save it from the attacks of paganism and heresy, displaying an essentially rational character of argumentation.

It is due to the apologetic literature that the various stages of the Church's development can be traced; the writings of the Apologists accompany it through the difficult periods of persecution, defend it from outer and inner enemies against whom it was necessary to build a solid theological edifice. Being in direct contact with their adversaries' environment, the apologists felt their influence and were forced to adopt conciliatory attitudes in which, at times, Christianity perhaps took on too much of the character of a philosophical doctrine and lost some of its mystical ardour. Except for a few reasons, such as the Christological argument of Theophilus of Antioch and Justin Martyr and Philosopher, the apologetic work consists in philosophically justifying this article of faith, starting not only from the analogies to nature, like early church writers, but also from the anthropological doctrine underlying this justifying the possibility of resurrection.

An important stage in the theological crystallization of the article of faith on the resurrection of the body is the anti-gnostic attitude represented in particular by Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement Alexandrinus, Origen, Methodius of Olympus, Tertullian and St. Cyprian. While the Apologists therefore provide a rational justification for the resurrection of the dead, the anti-gnostic Fathers provide its theological systematization from the ecclesiastical point of view without departing from the millenarian conception of the apologists, as we see with Irenaeus and Tertullian. Except for Tertullian and Methodius of Olympus who write a dedicated work on the resurrection of the body, all the other fathers cited above discuss the issue of death and resurrection in the context of several theological topics necessary for the debate of their time. For example, St. Irenaeus of Lyons addresses the eschatological issue in the context of his opposition to the Gnostics, especially the Valentinians⁴⁴ who practiced Docetism, thus denying the reality of the embodiment of the Son of God and thereby excluding the salvation of human nature as God's creation. Creation, embodiment and resurrection are the reference points for St. Irenaeus in stating the value of matter. In the fifth book of his treatise *Adversus Haereses*⁴⁵, devoted entirely to the "last days,"⁴⁶ he provides evidence in support of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of bodies on the basis of God's omnipotence and kindness:

"Therefore, those who reject God's power and do not contemplate what the Word is, those who are focused on the weakness of the body, do not contemplate His power, who raises them from the dead. For if the mortal

frustra corpus constrictum, quominus ea quae appetit consequantur, animae habenis obsequentes et freno subjectum; inutilis mens, inutilis prudentia, justitiae observatio, ac virtutis omnis exercitatio, et legum institutio ac dispositio, atque, ut verbo dicam, inutile quidquid in hominibus et propter homines honesti et praeclari, vel potius inutilis ipsa etiam hominum creatio et natura. Quod si in omnibus omnino Dei operibus et donis ab eo concessis nihil est rebus inutilibus loci; necesse est omnino ut animae perpetuati respondeat perpetua corporis secundum propriam naturam permansio".

⁴⁴ Followers of Valentinus the Gnostic, of Egyptian origin, who, according to St. Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses* III, 4,3), came to Rome probably around 140, broke away from the mother Church and founded a school of Platonic influence. His works have not been preserved, various fragments can be found in CLEMENT ALEXANDRINUS, "Stromata," II, 36, 2-4; II, 114, 3-6; III, 59, 3; IV, 89, 1-3; IV, 89, 6-90,2; VI 52,3-53,1, in *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești [Church Fathers and Writers]*, vol. 5, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, Bucharest, 1982, p. 132; 169; 213; 274; 419-420;

⁴⁵ S. IRINAEUS, *Adversus Haereses*, in: PG 07 II, 433-1224, Liber Quintus, 1119-1224.

⁴⁶ S. IRINAEUS., *Adversus Haereses* V, 1192B: „de novissimo tempore”.

does not give life, and the wicked is not restored to purity, God is no longer powerful. And if He does not raise from the dead that which is mortal and make pure that which is now wicked, then He is not the Almighty God. [...]. For if the Demiurge, who here gives life to our mortal bodies and promises them a resurrection through the prophets, as we have shown: does He not thereby show Himself to be very powerful, and strong, and truly good?"⁴⁷

But, in his endeavour to prove the resurrection, St. Irenaeus provides the best arguments based on the existence and presence of the soul in the body and on the graces with which it is endowed, graces which give man the character of a spiritual being and which, at the same time, lead him to immortality:

"Therefore, it is necessary that, first of all, the human being be created and that it, as a created one, receive the soul and then receive the communion of the Holy Spirit. For 'Adam, the first man, was created' by the Lord 'with a living soul, while the second Adam was created with a life-giving Spirit' (1 Cor. 15:45). Thus, he who was made into a living soul lost his life, because he turned to what was evil, and in the same way, when he turned to what was good, he received the life-giving Spirit and found life. And there is no thing which dies and another which is alive and no thing which is lost and another which is found. But the Lord is looking for the same lost sheep. And who is the one that dies? Undoubtedly the flesh. Also, what is lost is the breath of life, for which we become breathless and dead. In the same way, what the Lord resurrects is what, in Adam, all die, being bodily in nature, because within Christ all are resurrected, as spiritual beings, not by forsaking the work of God, but by forsaking bodily desires and receiving the Holy Spirit."⁴⁸

In the same sense, St. Irenaeus states that the resurrections performed by the Saviour Jesus Christ testify to the possibility of future resurrection⁴⁹ and especially to the fact that those who believe in Jesus Christ receive, as St. Ignatius Theophoros said – *farmakon atanasias*⁵⁰ – the medicine of immortality, the Holy Eucharist, and they will also logically and naturally receive eternal life and resurrection⁵¹. However, even St. Irenaeus is not free from the theory of millenarianism⁵², thus pushing his own concept of recapitulation

⁴⁷ S. IRINAEUS, „*Adversus Haereses* V, 1129B: „Refutant igitur potentiam Dei, et non contemplantur quod est verbum, qui infirmitatem intuentur carnis, virtutem autem ejus qui suscitant eam a mortuis, non contemplantur. Si enim mortale non vivificat, et corruptibile non revocat ad incorrupteam iam non potens est Deus” [...]. 1138B: „Demiurgo enim et hic vivificante mortalia corpora nostra, et resurrectionem eis per prophetas promittente, quemadmodum ostendimus: quis potentior, et fortior et vere bonus attenditur?”

⁴⁸ S. IRINAEUS, *Adversus Haereses* V, 1153BC: „Oportuerat enim primo plasmari hominem, et plasmatum accipere animam; deinde sic communionem Spiritus recipere. Quapropter et primus Adam factus est a Domino in animam viventem, secundus Adam in spiritum vivificantem. Sicut igitur qui in animam viventem factus est, divertens in peius perdidit vitam; sic rursus idem ipse in melius recurrens, assumens vivificantem spiritum, inveniet vitam. Non enim laud est quod moritur, et aliud quod vivificatur; quemadmodum neque aliud quod perit et aliud quod invenitur; sed illam ipsam quae perireat ovem invenit Dominus exquirens. Quid ergo erat quod moriebatur? Utique carnis substantia, quae amiserat afflatum vitae, et sine spiramento et mortua facta. Ilanc itaque Dominus venit vivificaturus; uti quemadmodum in Adam omnes morimur, quoniam animales, in Christum vivamus, quoniam spirituales, deponentes non plasma Dei, sed concupiscentias carnis, et assumentes Spiritum sanctum [...]”

⁴⁹ S. IRINAEUS, *Adversus Haereses* V, 1156B-1157A.

⁵⁰ S. IGNATIUS MARTYR, *Epistola ad Ephesios*, in: PG 05, 729-778, 756A

⁵¹ S. IRINAEUS, *Adversus Haereses* V, 1123CD-1124AB.

⁵² S. IRINAEUS, *Adversus Haereses* V, 1210BC.

to the point of demonstrating this concept, which he probably takes from the apologists – Papias and Polycarp – as he himself confesses⁵³.

But the one who developed the doctrine of the resurrection of the body in a remarkable way and who remained normative in this regard for the Latin Church was Tertullian. The ideas of the African father on this vital and cardinal point of ecclesiastical doctrine, are found to some small extent indicated in many of his writings, but especially in the work “De resurrectione carnis”⁵⁴. In the introduction to this work⁵⁵, Tertullian first mentions all those who deny the resurrection of the body and against whom he will write: pagans, Sadducees, heretics, Pythagoreans, Epicureans, Platonists, Marcionites, Valentinians – against all of them he provides arguments to prove the inconsistency of their teaching. From the outset, the African Father argues that he who denies the doctrine of the resurrection which is characteristic of and professed only by Christianity⁵⁶ cannot be a Christian. Secondly, the Christian teaching on the resurrection is a logical consequence of the embodiment of the Son of God. If, for pagans, death and therefore matter are an ugly, shameful fact, a dark prison of the soul, for the Christian God, matter or the body is valid for His embodiment, to such an extent that Tertullian states that, for heretics, “it is more difficult to believe in the resurrection of the body than to believe in the existence of one true God”⁵⁷. Therefore, “De resurrectione carnis” develops its own theological vision which states the value of body and soul, of the unity of body and soul in man, starting from the fact that Adam was created and shaped by God in the light of Christ and the Church, in the perspective of the future kingdom, i.e. God, in his divine plan, sees Adam together with his fall in the light of Christ and the Church. With this in mind, the African Father writes that the body is not responsible for evil in the same way as the soul is. No doubt it is the weakness of the body that keeps us from entering heaven, but it is not inherently evil. It is an instrument of the soul unlike any other object man uses. To condemn the body is therefore to condemn the less guilty reality, in that it has committed sin only according to a higher order. Consequently, Tertullian claims the body's right to participate in the resurrection and eternal salvation as it is the soul's inseparable companion under all circumstances. Moreover, being shaped by the hand of God himself, it has a superior nature which distinguishes it from the rest of creation:

“First of all, because everything ‘was done by the Word of God and without Him nothing was done. Therefore, the body will be created in its form by the Word of God, so that nothing can be made without the Word. Let us make man, he says, before creating him; moreover, he moulds him by hand, because of his preeminence, so that he does not exist parallel with the universe. And God, it is said, made man. A wonderful difference which had its reason in the nature of things. The created beings were inferior to him for whom they were created; indeed, they were created for the man to whom God soon afterwards assigned them. Hence, rightly, the universality of beings, as servants, out of nothing, according to an order and at the

⁵³ S. IRINAEUS, *Adversus Haereses* V, 1214B..

⁵⁴ TERTULLIANUS, *De resurrectione carnis*, in: *PL* 02, 837-934.

⁵⁵ TERTULLIANUS, *De resurrectione carnis*, 841-844B.

⁵⁶ TERTULLIANUS, *De resurrectione carnis*, 845A: „Adeo non erit Christianus, qui eam negabit, quam confitentur Christiani, et his argumentis negabit quibus utitur non Christianus”.

⁵⁷ TERTULLIANUS, *De resurrectione carnis*, 843B: „Quia durius creditur resurrectio carnis, quam una divinitatis”.

command of the power which commanded them. On the contrary, man, in his quality of lord, was made by God himself in order to be lord, being created by the Lord. Remember, however, that the body itself is what we call man: And God made man of the clay of the earth. He was already man, though still dust. And the Creator breathed the spirit of life into him, and man, that is, the slime, the dust received a living soul. And God placed the man he had just created in paradise. So true is it that man, clay in the beginning, was not fully human until afterwards. Why these truths? That you may know that all the good things intended and promised to man by God, are due not only to the soul, but also to the body, if not to the community of origin, at least to the privilege of the name. [...]. Could not God create man by a mere touch and nothing more? So true is it that a great miracle was in store, for He worked this material with such care! Indeed, whenever this body feels the impression of divine hands, touched, kneaded, worked by them, so often it grows in honour. Imagine that God is completely engaged in this creation! Hand, spirit, action, wisdom, providence, above all love, He uses all His being for it. For, in shaping the coarse mud, the dust, he glimpsed his Christ, who one day was to become man, like this mud; the Word made flesh, like this earth back then. The Father begins by addressing his Son as follows: 'Let us make man in Our image and likeness. And God made man,' which is what He made; 'and He made him in the image of God,' that is, of Jesus Christ. Because God is the Word. The image of his Father, he did not believe that to equate himself to God was a usurpation on his part. Consequently, this dust, which then assumed the image of Jesus Christ in his future life, was not only the work but also the guarantee of a God. Why, then, in order to dishonour the body, do we cast upon ourselves the word earth as a gross and contemptuous element, whereas, if any other matter had been fit for the creation of man, should we not consider it?"⁵⁸

⁵⁸ TERTULLIANUS, *De resurrectione carnis*, 487C-848ABC: „Primo quidem, quo domnia sermone Dei facta sunt, et sine illo nihil. Caro autem et sermone Dei constitit propter formam, ne quid sine sermone: *Faciamus enim hominem*, ante praemisit. Et amplius, manu, propter praelationem, ne universitati compararetur. *Et finixit*, inquit, *Deus hominem*. Magnae sine dubio differentiae ratio, pro conditione scilicet rerum. Minora enim quae fiebant eo cui fiebant. Siquidem homini fiebant, cui mox a Deo addicta sunt. Merito igitur, ut famula, jussu et imperio, et sola vocabili potestate universa processerant. Contra, homo, ut dominus eorum, in hoc ipso Deo exstructus est, ut dominus esse posset, dum sit a Domino. Hominem autem memento carnem proprie dici, quae prior vocabulum hominis occupavit: *Et finixit Deus hominem limum de terra*. Iam homo, qui adhuc limus. *Et insufflavit in faciem eius flatum vitae; et factus est homo*, id est limus, *in animam vivam*. *Et posuit Deus hominem, quem finixit, in paradiso*. Adeo homo figmentum primo, dehinc totus. Hoc eo commendari, uti quidquid omnino homini a Deo prospectum atque promissum est, non soli animae, verum et carni scias debitum; ut si non ex consortio generis, certe vel ex privilegio nominis. [...]. Quid enim, si nullo amplius opere, statim figmentum de contactu Dei constitisset? Adeo magna res agebatur, qua ista materia extruebatur. Itaque totiens honoratur, quotiens manus Dei patitur, dum tangitur, dum decerpitur, dum deducitur, dum effingitur. Recogita totum illi Deum occupantum ac deditum, manu, sensu, opere, consilio, sapientia, providentia, et ipsa imprimis affectione, quae lineamenta ducebat. Quodcumque enim limus exprimebatur, Christus cogebatur homo futurus, quod et limus, et caro sermo, quod et terra tunc. Sic enim praefatio Patris ad Filium: *Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram. Et fecit hominem Deus*. Id utique quod finixit, ad imaginem Dei fecit illum, scilicet Christi. Et Sermo enim Deus, qui in effigie Dei constitutus, non rapinam existimavit parari Deo. Ita limus ille, iam tunc imaginem induens Christi futuri in carne, non tantum Dei opus erat, sed et pignus. Quo nunc facit, ad infuscandam originem carnis, nomen terrae ventilare, ut sordentis, ut iacentis elementi?"

By this attention given by God to the creation of man, the human body is truly, in Tertullian's view, a spiritual vessel, the dwelling place of the soul, and deserves to be saved and resurrected together with the soul. The relationship between body and soul is so intimate that no activity can be thought of as being dissociated as solely of the soul or as solely of the body, but according to Tertullian, the body is the consort, the co-heir of the soul. And if this is true of their earthly life, the same can be said of eternal life⁵⁹. Moreover, Tertullian clearly states that salvation is not achieved outside the body, the matter – *caro salutis est cardo*⁶⁰. This is because, just as the soul receives the grace of the Holy Sacraments, the body visibly receives baptism, myrrh, ordination, eucharist and becomes the bearer of immortality. With convincing and, at the same time, clear and persuasive logic, Tertullian overturns and corrects the fundamental assumption of the anthropological dualism inherent to the Gnostics, but also to Greek culture and philosophy, according to which man is essentially considered a living soul. Against this view on man, Tertullian proposes a unitary Christian anthropology, based on the reality that man during his earthly life is neither only body, nor only soul, but a being of both body and soul. In support of this first and essential gain of the unity of body and soul, the African Father provides the happy image of the bond between spouses in the sacrament of marriage. Body and soul, though very distinct constitutive elements, are mutually bound by a conjugal bond, constituting during earthly life, like man and woman in marriage, an indissoluble and inseparable unity, according to a determinate order – each with their place and duty both in relation to and in respect of the other – and a single goal, namely, achieving not only earthly goods but also those pertaining to gaining the Kingdom of Heaven. And from this point of view, the Resurrection is not only a pledge of human identity, but becomes an expression of divine unity: “It is precisely this teaching that defends the unity of God: how, in fact, divine unity is shaken when the resurrection of the body is denied, just as it is confirmed when the resurrection of the body is claimed”⁶¹.

The issue regarding the nature of the resurrected body is certainly the central issue of Methodius of Olympus⁶² *De resurrectione* († 311) as well. The original title of this composition-dialogue was in fact *Aglaophon*⁶³ and it describes a discussion that took place in the house of the physician Aglaophon in Patra. In three books, (three dialogues) the work of Methodius of Olympus refutes the Origenist theory of the resurrection of a spiritual body and defends the identity both of the human body during earthly life and of the body upon

⁵⁹ TERTULLIANUS, *De resurrectione carnis*, 851C: „Ita caro, dum ministra et famula animae deputatur, consors et cohaeredes invenitur. Si temporalium, cur non est aeternorum?”

⁶⁰ TERTULLIANUS, *De resurrectione carnis*, 852A: „Adeo caro salutis est cardo”

⁶¹ TERTULLIANUS, *De resurrectione carnis*, 843C: „Quia et hoc latere unio divinitatis defendetur. Sicuti enim negata carnis resurrectionem, concutitur; ita vindicata, constabillitur”

⁶² Methodius, called of Olympus, is one of the most mysterious ancient Christian writers of the 3rd century, hidden amidst obscurity and lack of biographical and literary data. Most of the information (life chronology, geographical area of activity, ecclesiastical position, martyrdom conditions, even identity) remains in the realm of probability. EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA does not mention him in the *Church History*, so we do not know much about him. His work has also come down to us in fragments, either in the original Greek or in Slavonic. cf. MIROSLAV MEJZNER, *Escatologia di Metodio di Olimpo [Eschatology of Methodius of Olympus]*, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, Rome, 2011, p. 6; It is only IERONIM who mentions him in his work *De viris illustribus*, saying that he was bishop of Olympus in Lycia, then bishop of Tyre. We also learn from him that he died as a martyr in Chalcis in Greece either during the persecution of Galerius and Daia or during the time of Decius and Valerian. cf. S. EUSEBIUS HIERONYMUS STRIDONENSIS PRESBYTER, *Liber de viris illustribus* 83, in: *PL* 23, 727C-730A; 729CD.

⁶³ SANCTI METHODII EPISCOPUS ET MARTYR, *Ex Libro de Resurrectione*, in: *PG* 18, 266D-330;

resurrection. Among the characters of Methodius' work, only Aglaophon⁶⁴, who represents the Platonic trend of Christianity, does not share the belief in a salvation of earthly realities and therefore does not believe in the resurrection of bodies. All the other three interlocutors: Eubulius (Methodius), Memian and Proclus share the fundamental belief of Christianity, i.e. that of the resurrection of the earthly body, transformed into a spiritual body. In the controversial context of the early 4th century, a detailed illustration of the concept of bodily identity was needed. This is precisely the crux of the debate in *De resurrectione* and the essential argumentative approach of Methodius of Olympus.

The hope of the material body being restored upon resurrection was, for pagan writers, the most controversial point of the Christian faith. Celsus, for example, considered this hope worthy only of worms⁶⁵. Even some of the Christians influenced especially by the Platonic tradition did not share the explanation of dogma within the categories of physical identity⁶⁶ and expressed in the formula (anastasis tis sarkos) *resurrectio carnis*. Origen, considering it simplistic, advanced his own theory of the resurrection only of – *eidos tis sarkos* – the form of the body⁶⁷.

The main objective of Methodius' argumentation was to defend the notion of material identity both of the earthly body and of the resurrected one by explaining it organically and rationally:

“I cannot support the nonsense of some who eagerly use violence against the Scriptures to justify their view according to which resurrection takes

⁶⁴ The character Aglaophon understands resurrection as merely freeing the soul from the seclusion or prison of the body. The soul yearns for this freedom and therefore identifies resurrection with the physical death of man. Cfr. S. METHODIUS, *Ex Libro de Resurrectione*, 306C: „Quibus non corpus mortem pronuntiat, sed peccati legem quae est in membris, in quibus a violato mandato ceu latibulum habet, nec animum ad injustitiae mortem, variis imaginibus illudendo, trahere desint”; (“Therefore, the body is a genuine dungeon in which we are imprisoned for breaking the law, so that we might suffer punishment for disobedience.”); 307A: „Itaque non corpus hoc, o Aglaophon, mortem appellat sed peccatum quod per cupiditatem in corpore residet; a quo Deus Christi adventu ipsum eriquit. Lex enim spiritus vitae in Christo Jesus, liberavit nos a lege peccati et mortis, propter inhabitantem Spiritum eius in nobis vivificet et mortalia corpore nostra, damanato peccato quod est in corpore ad abolitionem: Ut justificatio legis naturalis, consentanea praecepto qua trahimur in bonum, ceu recens accessa novoque aucta lumine, refulgeret” (“Therefore, Oh, Aglaophon, he (St. Paul the Apostle) calls this body not death, but the sin that dwells in the body through covetousness; from which God has delivered it by the coming of Christ. For the law of the spirit of life within Jesus Christ has freed us from the rule of sin and death, by the life of His Spirit dwelling in us, and it is not our body that is doomed to dissolution, but the sin that is in the body to dissolution. So that the righteousness of the natural law, according to the commandment by which we are drawn to good, has shone forth as a fresh and new light”).

⁶⁵ ORIGENES, *Contra Celusm*, V, 14, in: PG 11, 651-1632, 1202B: „Nec eos modo qui tum in vivis erunt, sed et qui iaprimdem obierint mortem et eadem carne induti e terra emerterint. Quae spes, plane dicam digna vermibus est” (“And not only those who will then be among the living, but also those who have died will come out of the earth clothed in the same flesh. This hope, I tell you, is worthy of worms”).

⁶⁶ Such inter-Christian polemic is also present in other works of the early centuries, as we have seen for example in Justin Martyr and Philosopher. cf. Alberto D'ANNA, „Sulla resurrezione. Pseudo Giustino: discorso cristiano del II secolo” [“On resurrection. Pseudo Justin: Christian discourse of the 2nd century”], Brescia, 2001, 323pp, p. 142-143; 168-177.

⁶⁷ S. METHODIUS, *Ex Libro de Resurrectione*, 322A: „Et haec ut demus aliquid Origeni, qui ipsam per se formam, post mortem a corpore seiunctam, animae reddi dicit, quod prae omnibus minus videtur possibile”. (“And this, to give something to Origen, who after death says that the form itself, separated from the body, is restored to the soul, which seems less likely than all the others”); 323A: „Ait eidos et formam esse, quod membrorum identitatem, in figura formae propriisque uniuscuiusque distinctivis, exhibet” (“He says that *eidos* is a form, which represents the identity of structures as form and distinctive features of each individual”); 323C: „Haec, inquit, ait Origenes. Atqui potest moveri dubium de Lazaro et divite”. (“Origen says these things. But there can be no doubt about Lazarus and the rich”).

place outside the body. They assume spiritual bones and flesh and change Scripture in various ways by resorting to allegories. [...] The body lies between corruption and incorruption, but it is neither corruption nor incorruption. When it was overcome by the pleasures of corruption, it, which was the creature of incorruption, yielded to the dust. Therefore, having been conquered by corruption and given over to death because of transgression, God did not want to leave corruption itself as the inheritance of victory; So says the Apostle: For this corrupt body must put on incorruption, and this mortal (body) must put on immortality (1Cor 15:53). And this corrupt and mortal body, which must put on incorruption and immortality, what else is it than that which was sown in incorruption and raised in incorruption (for the soul is not corruptible and mortal, but the body is mortal and subject to corruption) for as we have borne the image of the earthly (Adam), so shall we also bear the image of the heavenly (1 Cor 15:49). For, to the earthly image, it was said, "You are dust and to dust you shall return," whereas the heavenly image is the resurrection from the dead and incorruptibility: just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we should also walk in the renewal of life. [...] But if anybody may think that this body is called the earthly image, but the heavenly image, the spiritual body is different from the body; Let him first think here that Christ, that heavenly man, was seen wearing the same form of his members and the same image as that of our body; for this reason, he himself was not man, he became man; that, as all die within Adam, so within Christ all are raised. [...] so that He might truly show himself to be the firstborn raised from the dead (Col 1:18), that He might truly change the earthly image into the heavenly, and the mortal into the immortal."⁶⁸

Methodius' argument, employed to explain the stability, completeness and material identity of man, is based on a theological principle, derived mainly from the biblical text of Genesis 2:7. He argues that God's direct involvement in the creation of the human body

⁶⁸ S. METHODIUS, *Ex Libro de Resurrectione*, 267B: „Neque enim certos homines ferre possum, qui consulto nungantur ac Scripturas impudentissime detorquent, quo suum illis de resurrectione sine carne dogma procedat: qui ideo, et ossa quaedam intelligibilia, et carnes similiter intelligibiles commenti sunt, ac suis allegoriis alias aliter sursum deorsumque sese convertunt”; 283ABC: „Quoniam caro inter confinia corruptionis et incorruptionis, ac nec corruptio nec incorruptio creata erat; victa vero est a corruptione propter voluptatem, quanquam esset incorruptionis opus et possessio: idcirco facta est corruptioni obnoxia, inclinavitque in terram aggeris. Postquam ergo victa fuisset a corruptione, mortique propter praevaricationem tradita, noluit Deus ipsam ceu haereditatem corruptioni ad victoriam relinquere; sed rursus victa per resurrectionem morte, incorruptioni reddidit, ut ne corruptio incorruptionem, sed magis incorruptio, quod est corruptibile, in haereditatem acciperet. Ad haec itaque respondet Apostolus: Oportet enim corruptibile hoc induere incorruptionem, et mortale hoc induere immortalitatem. Corruptibile autem et mortale hoc induere immortalitatem et incorruptionem, quid aliud sit, quam ut quod seminatur in corruptione, surgat in incorruptione (non enim anima corruptibilis est aut mortalis; corruptibile vero et quod corrumpitur, ista caro est)? Ut sicut portavimus imaginem terreni, portemus et imaginem coelestis. Nam imago terreni quam portavimus, illud est: Terra es, et in terram reverteris. Imago autem coelestis est resurrectio ex mortuis et incorruptio: Ut sicut Christus surrexit per gloriam Patris, ita et nos in novitate ambulemus. Quod si quis terrenam imaginem, carnem istam dici existimet, coelestem vero imaginem, corpus aliud spiritale praeter carnem; hic prius cogitet, ut Christus, coelestis ille homo, eadem membrorum formam, eandemque imaginem ac carnem nostri similem gestans, visus sit; propter quam etiam, ipse non homo, homofactus sit; ut sicut in Adam omnes moriuntur, ita et in Christo omnes vivificentur. [...] sed ut veritate, primogenitum mortuorum, terreno homine in coelestem, mortali in immortalem mutato, sese exhiberent”.

makes it a well-ordered and defined work. Thus, the individual and personal body of every individual is destined for resurrection. From Methodius' exposition, one can see the constant concern to demonstrate the rationality of the resurrection of the flesh, i.e. its correspondence to philosophical and scientific principles, while the supernatural dimension of this event is highlighted and protected. The focus of the argument shifts from Christological or theological issues in general to anthropological, cosmological and logical ones. In fact, the polemic is not about resurrection, but about the concept of bodily identity. The reasoning is generally developed at a profound theoretical level, even if Methodius – the pastor of a community of believers – does not forget that the hope of universal resurrection, rooted in that of Christ, belongs to the very core of faith and has a crucial influence on the moral behaviour of believers, even preparing them for martyrdom⁶⁹.

However, Methodius does not escape millenarianism either, and, indeed, by interpreting the Platonic term *eidos* – *form* – in the sense of external belonging, he will argue for a later interpretation that will not exempt him from the charges of millenarianism and anthropomorphism⁷⁰.

The climax of this debate on the identity of the body upon resurrection undoubtedly rests with Origen, criticized, as we have already seen, by Methodius of Olympus. The issue of the resurrection of the dead with Origen has been studied in depth by some of the best exegetes⁷¹ of the work and philosophy of the man who is still called the Alexandrian, and whom his contemporaries called *Adamantius* – the Invincible. His work, so vast⁷² and

⁶⁹ M. MEJZNER, *Escatologia di Metodio di Olimpo [Eschatology of Methodius of Olympus]*, p. 342.

⁷⁰ H. CROUZEL – V. GROSSI, „Risurrezione dei morti” [“Resurrection of the dead”], p. 4528.

⁷¹ Henri CROUZEL e Emanuela PRINZIVALLI, „Origene. Vita, Opere, Carattere del pensiero di Origene, L'esegeta, L'uomo spirituale, Il teologo speculativo” [“Origen. Life, Works, Character of Origen's philosophy, The exegete, The spiritual man, The speculative theologian”], in: *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane [New Dictionary of Patristics and Christian Antiquity]*, vol. 2 F-O, Marietti, Genova-Milan, 32007, pp. 3665-3680; Emanuela PRINZIVALLI, „Resurrezione” [“Resurrection”] in: Adele Monaci Castagno (a cura di), *Origene Dizionario, la cultura, il pensiero, le opere [Origen Dictionary, culture, philosophy, works]*, Città Nuova, Rome, 2000, pp. XXII-490, 401-405; Emanuela PRINZIVALLI, „Polemiche escatologiche fra origenisti e Antiorigenisti” [“Eschatological controversies between Origenists and Anti-Origenists”], in: Emanuela PRINZIVALLI, *Magister Ecclesiae. Il dibattito su Origene fra III e IV secolo [Magister Ecclesiae. The debate on Origen in the 3rd and 4th centuries]*, Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum, 82; Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, Rome, 2002, pp.231, 65-136; Emanuela PRINZIVALLI, „La risurrezione nei Padri” [“Resurrection with the Fathers”], in: Salvatore Alberto PANIMOLLE (ed.), *Dizionario di Spiritualità Biblico-Patristica [Dictionary of Biblical-Patristic Spirituality]* 45, Borla, Rome, 2007, pp. 448, 169-288, Origene: 210-211; 217-222; Henri CROUZEL, „La doctrine origénienne du corps ressuscité” [“The Origenian doctrine of the resurrected body”], in: *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique [Journal of Ecclesiastical Literature]*, 81 (1980), 175-200; Gilles DORIVAL, „Origène et la resurrection de la chair” [“Origen and the resurrection of the flesh”], in: Lothar LIES (ed.), *Origeniana Quarta*, Innsbrucker theologische Studien, 19; Tyrolia-Verlag, Innsbruck–Wien, 1987, 291-321; Alberto D'ANNA, „La risurrezione dei morti nel «De principiis» di Origene: note di confronto con alcuni testi precedenti” [“The resurrection of the dead in Origen's *De principiis*: notes on comparison with some previous texts”], in: *Teologia y Vida. Anales de la Facultad de Teología [Theology and Life. Annals of the Faculty of Theology]* of the Pontificia Catholic University of Chile, vol. 55, 1 (2014), 65-82; Roland HEINE, *Origen: Scholarship in the Service of the Church*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p. 275;

⁷² Because of Origenist disputes, a very large part of Origen's writings together with their complete list has disappeared, what has been passed down to us seems to come not from the Greek text but from translations from Latin. cf. J. QUASTEN, *Patrologia, vol. I fino al Concilio di Nicea [Patrology, vol. I up to the Council of Nicaea]*, p. 320; Fer. Ieronim in his work *Apologia adversus libros Rufini* counts 2000 volumes. cf. S. EUSEBIUS HIERONYMUS STRIDONENSIS PRESBYTER, *Apologia adversus libros Rufini*, in: *PL* 23, 415-514, 467A: „et non dico sex millia, sed tertiam partem non reperies”; St. Epiphany speaks of 6000 volumes. cf. S.

complex in its subject matter, stands apart from any attempt to reconcile Holy Scripture with the philosophy of his contemporaries influenced by Greek culture. To this end, he tries to relate the history of the salvation of the world and of man to the endeavour of cosmology, starting from the ancient idea of the cyclical nature of time: “The end is always identical to the beginning”⁷³. This is how Origen envisaged the unity of the beginning of the world as destroyed by the souls’ falling into sin, a fall that took place before the beginning of mankind’s history, but which in “the end will be restored and all will be called back, by God’s kindness, to obey Christ and to be one with the Holy Spirit, towards a unique end that will be equal to the beginning.”⁷⁴

As for the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, his work: *Peri anastaseos* – composed of two books, as Eusebius of Caesarea⁷⁵ confesses, is lost, except for a few fragments – *De resurrectione* – written in his younger years and preserved by the Greek Patrology⁷⁶, in Panfilius of Caesarea⁷⁷, disciple of Origen and teacher of Eusebius of Caesarea, and of course in Methodius of Olympus⁷⁸, who criticizes him, as we have seen Origen do in his work, *De resurrectione*. Origen himself confesses in *De principiis* (2, 10, 1)⁷⁹ that he addressed this issue (about the resurrection of the body) in other treatises he had already written and where he expounded his arguments. Taken as a whole, Origen's entire work, which has been passed down to us, contains information about his outlook on the resurrection of the body, so that, by combining these fragments, we could say that Origen acknowledges the possibility of resurrection, but interprets it in his own way. The focal point of Origen’s exposition on the resurrection is not Christological or generically theological, but anthropological. In fact, the fundamental issue concerns the nature of the body itself and, specifically, what ensures its permanence. The issue of the identity both of the earthly body and of the resurrected body is a mere consequence⁸⁰. He tries to prove that there is identity and otherness to be found with the earthly body and the resurrected one, by using the comparison with the seed and the plant⁸¹ in 1 Cor 15:34-44: “Awaken properly and do not sin. For some have no knowledge of God; I say this to your shame. But will anyone say: How do the dead rise? And in what body shall they come? You fool! What you sow does not give life unless it has died. And that which you sow is not the body that is to be, but an empty grain, perhaps of wheat, or of something else; and God gives it a body, as he has so

EPIPHANIUS CONSTANTIENSIS IN CYPRO EPISCOPUS, *Adversus Haereses. Haeres.*, în: PG 41, 173-1199, 1178D: „sex librorum millia”

⁷³ ORIGENES, *Peri Archon*, in: PG 11, 115-414, 166B: „Semper enim similis est finis initiis”.

⁷⁴ ORIGENES, *Peri Archon*, 166B: „Et ideo sicut unus omnium finis, ita unum omnium intelligi debet initium; et sicut multorum unus finis sita ab uno initio multae difereñtiae ac varietates, quae rursus per bonitatem Dei et subiectionem Christi, atque unitatem Spiritus Sancti in unum finem qui sit initio similis revocantur”.

⁷⁵ EUSEBIUS PAMPHILI CAESARIENSIS EPISCOPUS, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, VI, in: PG 20, 9-910, 579A: „In hoc tom mentionem facit librorum quos scripserat De resurrectione: sunt eius argumenti libri duo”.

⁷⁶ ORIGENES, *Fragmenta ex libris De resurrectione*, in: PG 11, 91-95; *Sententia Origenis de resurrectione*, 95-100.

⁷⁷ S. PAMPHILUS MARTYR, *Apologia pro Origene*, in: PG 17, 541-616, VII, 594A-601C.

⁷⁸ METODIU DE OLIMP, „Aglafon sau Despre înviere” [“Aglaphon or On Resurrection”], in: *Părinți si Scriitori Bisericești [Church Fathers and Writers]*, vol. 10, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, Bucharest, 1984, pp. 121-211, p. 132-137.

⁷⁹ ORIGENES, *Peri Archon*, 233D: „De quo in aliis quidem libris quos de resurrectione scripsimus, plenus disputavimus, et quid nobis de hoc videretur, ostendimus” (“We have fully discussed this in the other books we have written on Resurrection and have shown what we believe on the subject”).

⁸⁰ M. MEJZNER, *Escatologia di Metodiu di Olimpo [Eschatology of Methodius of Olympus]*, p. 25.

⁸¹ H. CROUZEL e E. PRINZIVALLI, „Origen...” [“Origen...”], p. 3677.

willed, and to every seed a body of its own. Not all bodies are the same body, but one is the body of men, and another is the body of beasts, and another is the body of birds, and another is the body of fish. There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies as well; but one is the glory of the heavenly and another of the earthly. The brightness of the sun is one thing, and the brightness of the moon another, and the brightness of the stars another. For each star differs from others in brightness. Such is the resurrection of the dead: they are alike in corruption, they rise into incorruption; they are alike in dishonesty, they rise in glory; they are alike in weakness, they rise in might; they are alike in natural body, they rise in spiritual body. If it is a natural body, it is also a spiritual body.” Such a teaching directly expresses the fluid character of the earthly body which cannot be defined by the ever-changing material elements. For this reason, in Origen's view, the resurrection body will be endowed with an ethereal quality, but which at the same time is the same earthly body but different in quality. Origen states this by the term – eidos – form, the metaphysical principle of the unity and identity of the body⁸².

Philosophically, this concept relies on a hypothetical Stoic matrix, integrated with a Platonic background view of two *ousiae* (substances), namely of material substance understood as amorphous substrate and qualities that can be modified differently. Origen hypothesizes radical transformations of the external structure of the body which is always the result of the soul's adaptation to life in a given environment. Therefore, even in the kingdom of heaven, there will be a qualitative change of incomparable superiority, so that the soul might acquire a spiritual body (*soma pneumatikón*), consisting however of the same form – eidos – resurrected:

“All these, then, include this argument, that God created two general natures: the visible nature, that is, the corporeal, and the invisible nature, which is incorporeal. But these two natures receive their distinct permutations. The invisible, indeed, which is rational, is intended for the mind, because it has been granted freedom of its will; and, by this, it is sometimes found in the good, sometimes in its opposite. But the corporeal nature has also undergone a substantial change; And this, so that God, the artisan of all things, might have the instrumentality of all things to make, manufacture, or remove this matter, so that he might transmute and transfer the corporeal nature into whatever form or species he pleases according to the state of things. This is what the prophet also clearly means when he says: God is the One who makes all things and changes them.”⁸³

Platonically interpreting biblical texts, especially those of St. Ap. Paul, Origen regards the resurrection body as a spiritual body, shining and glorious like the angelic bodies and bright as the stars of heaven, so much so that the ancient formula of *resurrectio carnis*, by which the apologists in particular saw the resurrection of the dead body and soul, is

⁸² S. METHODIUS, *Ex Libro de Resurrectione*, 323A; cf. H. CROUZEL – V. GROSSI, „Risurrezione dei morti” [“Resurrection of the dead”], p. 4528; cf. E. PRINZIVALLI, *Magister Ecclesiae... [Magister Ecclesiae...]*, p.110;

⁸³ ORIGENES, *Peri Archon*, 340B: „Omnis igitur haec ratio hoc continet, quod duas generales naturas considerit deus: naturam visibilem, id est corpoream, et naturam invisibilem, quae est incorporea. Ista vero duae naturae diversas sui recipiunt permutationes. Illa quidem invisibilis quae rationabilis est, animo proposito quae mutatur pro eo quod arbitrii sui libertate donata est; et per hoc aliquando in bonis, aliquando in contrariis invenitur. Haec vero natura corporea substantialem recepit permutationem; unde et ad omne quod moliri, vel fabricare, vel retractare voluerit artifex omnium Deus, materiae huius habet in omnibus famulatum, ut in quascunque vult formas vel species, prout rerum merita deprecant, naturam corpoream transmutet et transferat. Quod evidenter propheta designans ait: Deus qui facit omnia et transmutat”.

difficult to decode in Origen. All the more so if we also consider his deviations from Church dogma, even if, during his time, one cannot speak of a definitive wording of the Church's teaching, nevertheless the pre-existence of souls⁸⁴, including Christ and the apocatastasis: when the world comes to an end, all, including the demons, will enjoy eternal happiness, throw Origen off the pre-Nicene trajectory of the Church's confession of faith in the resurrection of the dead. This results in his being convicted in 553 during the 5th Ecumenical Council as a heretic along with the writings and followers of Origenism.

CONCLUSION

Considering the theological debates of the first three Christian centuries, we can discern the clarity with which the Church gradually crystallized its belief in the resurrection of the dead through the extraordinary synthesis set forth in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol of Faith: "I await the resurrection of the dead; and the life of the age to come." The relatively simple ancient Christian teaching on the resurrection of the dead developed into a true theology based on the disputes about the immortality of the soul and ancient anthropological debates, on the one hand, but also on church practice, i.e. martyr worship and prayer for the dead, on the other. Today, although the Church has expounded its teaching on the resurrection of the dead from the beginning, we find that the new understandings of man and matter in the name of excessive tolerance are rehashing the former ancient philosophies, and that a large part of the West either professes a kind of uncertainty about the afterlife or no longer believes in the possibility of resurrection and hence of salvation because of belittling the matter and the body that has irredeemably succumbed to sin and corruption. There is only one step to take from here to the new technologies of manipulation and violation of matter, which can be clearly seen when we speak not of acceptance but of the imposition of sin as the normality of life, abortion, birth control, in vitro fertilization and, no less, the manipulation and control of man through genetic engineering and nanotechnology. This is because human facts and matter have no value and, because of this, anything is possible.

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⁸⁴ According to the theory of the pre-existence of souls: God from the beginning created "intelligences" all equally immersed in divine contemplation. The fading contemplation ardour led to the primary guilt that divided them into angels, humans and demons. At that time, the "intelligences" were frozen, chilled into souls, since the Greek word for soul: psihi is cognate to psihos: chill, cold. From here, God sends them into bodies as in a prison from which they can only be freed by complete purification. cf. H. CROUZEL e E. PRINZIVALLI, „Origene...” [“Origen...”], p. 3677.

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