



ABOUT AN ORTHODOX GEOGRAPHY OF TIME

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ABSTRACT

Although perceived as an implacable reality, a kind of liquid frame of existence, which inevitably frames being, the latter being defined as a dynamic in time, nevertheless, the systematic analysis of time involves difficulties specific to a subject as obvious as it is abstract. We have approached time from a theological-phenomenological perspective in which we have tried to capture it both in its manifestations and in its implications. The horizon of faith proposes the eschaton as the ultimate goal of personal fulfilment, but, however desirable, this horizon is determined by our being in time or, in other words, by our relation to time. Beyond relating to it as an external phenomenon with major implications, it is vital to understand how we can embody time and what are the levers through which it can be transfigured. To transfigure time is to convert it from an implacable destiny into a tool, bridge or lever for anchoring beyond it. It is not a simple management of time but a new category of time. This is how liturgical time and the new context in which we realize the section in time, the timeless moment of temporality, which is the moment, is born; and the moment implies in its equation, presence. The key to resolving the casuistry of time is anthropological, unfolding in the corridors of spirituality and communion. Our ontological fabric metabolizes time by conjugating it with the process of sanctification of the person. Only in this way will time have known its fulfilment.

Keywords: *Time; temporality; presence; instant; space;*

INTRODUCTION

It would probably take forever to talk about time. The subject is difficult because it is both abstract and complex. Any discussion of time initiates a process of time capture, and this closes us in a seemingly hermetic circle. However, just by looking back, we can feast on what the minds of those before us have decanted into the cup of culture. From the philosophy of the Greeks to the theology of the Holy Fathers to the reflections of modern phenomenology, we are already the beneficiaries of a vast universe that has managed to tame the subject at hand. Thus we know that Greek antiquity drew a line between two types of time: *chronos* and *kairos*. The first is the one that makes us captive to a temporality hostile to human destiny - that god who devours his children, moments - while *kairos* is the space of a presence and a relationship. It allows the assumption of the human condition in time in the form of an interiorization and verticalization; that is, it affirms an opening of existence towards a timeless and meta-temporal horizon, time becoming a function of the realization of the person.

From this point on, the discussion of time shifts its focus to an ontological, anthropological and spiritual register. Thus we can identify the place of time as the inner universe of the person, with its areas of manifestation. Even though the discussion is broad,



we have tried to mark its serious areas. In the logic of internalized time, of time seen as a function of the person, we discover the otherness beyond time that makes its presence felt in time and that is God. The space of the encounter between man and God establishes a new time, namely liturgical time, which is also a time of mystery; mystery is understood as a reality outside of time which, however, makes itself accessible in temporality. We discover, through the moment, a timeless section in time and, through the state of presence, a way of capturing the moment and investing it in eternity. The most important function of the person, spiritually speaking, is to acquire holiness, and time fulfils its purpose if it is imprinted with a spiral dynamic, if it makes the honest transfer to eternity.

1. TIME - A DEFINITION

„Time is the horizon of what I am”¹, said Jean-Yves Lacoste in his extensive work on the subject. There is no universally accepted formula of time, precisely because the subject always slips through your fingers and is perpetually revealed as a vast fabric, in texture and consistency alike. If we were to look for a formula for time in the palette of statements drawn from the spiritual experience of Orthodoxy, we would recall Father Arsenie Papacioc who manages to capture, in an expression as simple in appearance as it is complex in essence, precisely this aspect: „Every moment is a time and every sigh can be a prayer”².

However, a dictionary definition would put etymological issues in the foreground. This is why the Lampe dictionary proposes two notions of time. The first is Cronos (Χρονος) and the other Kairos (Καιρος)³. Chronos represents the time we usually refer to, the time in which you settle, the time that constitutes itself as a framework of existence subject to it, or the time whose effect is temporality itself. Through him we see that God is the creator of time, but also through him we understand that God stands outside of time or beyond it, in the sense that he does not know the constraints or limitations of temporality, God being timeless. This time knows its sequence and the years themselves are inscribed in it. Everything that happens between time and/or for a time is its own⁴. Kairos, on the other hand, presents itself as a more refined yet friendly time. It is not an accountant of our temporality, but opens up the prospect of a wider and deeper assumption of existence. It can be understood as time, the opportune moment of the present times, but also of those to come. It is the unit of measurement of history, but also the term of comparison of eternity. Kairos is the opportune moment for the service of God⁵.

Greek philosopher and theologian Christos Yannaras defines time as „the measure of personal relationship with beings”⁶. Another definition of time is provided by Father Dumitru Stăniloae himself: „Time is the interval of waiting for the response to the call; a spiritual distance between persons”⁷, The caller being God, and the implicit and expected answer coming from man. A gradual, organic evolution is involved in this process. As a comparison, „within the Holy Trinity the waiting period for response is reduced to nothing, because the gift of one Person to the Other is immediate. ... For humans the response implies freedom of

¹ Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Timpul – o fenomenologie teologică*, Deisis, Sibiu, 2005, p. 155.

² Arhimandrit Arsenie Papacioc, *Veșnicia ascunsă într-o clipă*, Reîntregirea, Alba-Iulia, 2004, p. 122.

³ G. W. H. Lampe, D. D., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1961, pp. 693; 1534.

⁴ G. W. H. Lampe, D. D., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, p. 1534.

⁵ G. W. H. Lampe, D. D., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, p. 693.

⁶ Christos Yannaras, *Persoană și eros*, Anastasia, București, 2000, p. 147.

⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, „*Timp și veșnicie*”, SLG Fairacress, Oxford, 1971,

https://archive.org/stream/Dumitru_Stanioloae-Timp_si_vesnicie/Dumitru_Stanioloae-Timp_si_vesnicie_djvu.txt.



will, effort and progress. ... This gradual, slow movement in response to God is equivalent to time”⁸. The prayer that man prays in time gives consistency to time, in that it constitutes the response to a call that comes from beyond time (by beyond we can understand both achronology and simultaneity with time, without being confused with the latter). Through prayer, the intervals are metamorphosed to the point of changing their valence; they are no longer characterised as separating, but, on the contrary, become the colour of meaning and interpersonal communication. This is probably what led the theologian Christos Yannaras to strongly affirm the consistency of time decanted, on a personal level, as relationship: „Personal relationship is the existential premise of ... the experience of time. The experience of time presupposes the personal relation - the ec-state of the person and the presence (παρ - ουσια) of beings in relation to the person. ... Time, therefore, exists only as a function of personal relation ...”⁹. In the face of this drastic reduction of Yannaras, Father Arsenie's statement presents itself as a synthesis of rare finesse.

Time can be perceived as that element that implacably conditions our existence, from which we can only escape through death and which we cannot control or manage. It seems to have its own metabolism, and we humans are time's tolerators, without the right to reply. It is up to us how adept we are at intuiting the itinerary of time, to align ourselves with its corridor. However, even death does not promise to be a resolution of time, for the simple fact that there is no more time on its ground. The itinerary of time can be captured in time, not out of it. In this sense, Pavel Florenski defines time as an implacable element, as destiny itself, and this destiny necessarily spills over into death: „To exist in time is basically to die - existence in time is a slow but implacable advance of Death. Living in time is the inevitable submission to the Rapture. Living and dying are the same thing. And Death is nothing but Time more tense, more efficient, drawing more attention to itself. Death is instantaneous time, and Time, lasting death. ... Death does not burst in from without into serene Life, but Life itself, in its depths, conceals the embryo of death which grows unyieldingly. Living - we die, dying - we live. Death is the condition of life... ... The destiny that gravitates on us is Time”¹⁰.

The definition of time is contained, from this perspective, in the very definition of life and death: „Time is the material from which death grows; it lends life to death”¹¹. Why is it important to have a correct understanding of time? Without this understanding, we will have neither a coherent assumption nor a valid axiological positioning in time. In the absence of a clear vision, counterfeit and harmful conceptions take shape: „In particular, the objectification of time alters the meaning of life and leads to confusion and self-delusion. For us, time is not just an objective process, but a profound existential reality. Moreover, time has less to do with objects and more to do with our personal existence. This is why only the existential experience of time frees us from the delusion created when we objectify it. A proper attitude towards time is the fundamental requirement for a proper *modus vivendi* and *modus operandi* in the world. Another basic misconception about how we experience time is the following: people usually forget the meaning of their lives in the present and look for it in an ever-expected future”¹².

⁸ D. Stăniloae, „Timp și veșnicie”, SLG Fairacress, Oxford, 1971.

⁹ C. Yannaras, *Persoană și eros*, p. 146.

¹⁰ Pavel Florenski, *Stâlpul și Temelia Adevărului*, Polirom, București, 1999, p. 329.

¹¹ Andre Scrima, *Antropologia apofatică*, Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 341.

¹² George Mantzarides, *Time and Human Life*, <https://pemptousia.com/2021/01/time-and-human-life/>.



Time is given to us to be lived. It enters into our definition because time itself is „a form of created existence”¹³. The question of Blessed Augustine - What did God do before he created everything (before time existed) - is a sophism to which he also replies: „He did not do anything involving time”¹⁴. With this observation, we come to the definition delivered by Jean-Yves Lacoste and mentioned above, that „Time is the horizon of what I am”.

However, time is not just an interval that hosts our dwelling, nor a simple path to be travelled, but we ourselves are the ones who give meaning and finality to time by the way we „inhabit the aporia of time”¹⁵.

2. TIME - LOCALIZATION

„Time is organically linked to space and cannot be conceived in its absence. They were created instantaneously. In other words, both time and space were created outside of time by the will of God: «In the beginning» means ... and the beginning of time. As a dimension of material creation, time began at the same time as the universe”¹⁶. In the same way, St. Basil the Great interprets the verse «In the beginning God made heaven and earth» (Genesis 1:1). He observes that „just as the beginning of a road is not yet a road, nor is the beginning of a house yet a house, so the beginning of time is not yet time, nor even part of time”¹⁷. Father Stăniloae affirms the clear distinction between the nature of eternity and the nature of time, that is to say, the way in which time came into being: „Time did not appear in the existence that exists by itself from eternity, but it must have come into being, a temporal existence must have appeared that is distinct from that existing from eternity, not as an emanation of it, but created by it”¹⁸. The same is revealed by theologian Vladimir Lossky, analysing creation from a double perspective, both temporal and eternal. Moreover, describing the triggering moment of time, he draws an analogy between the biblical account of the creation of the world and the prologue of the Gospel of John. Both biblical places reveal moments of beginning or, in other words, we are dealing with two distinct and valid beginnings. «In the beginning was the Word» (John 1:1), writes St. John, and the book of Genesis states, «In the beginning God made heaven and earth» (Genesis 1:1). The author invokes Origen, saying that „God created everything in His Word, therefore, throughout all eternity, in Himself. ... Saint John evokes an eternal beginning, that of the Word ... on the other hand, the call to existence of the world gives rise to time. In an ontological sense, the Genesis is thus secondary to the Prologue of St. John”¹⁹.

There is a consensus that time is born together with creation, time being a dimension of creation. It is difficult, however, to specify their simultaneity in the act of creation: „The creature appears in an instant at once, eternal and temporal, at the boundary of eternity with time. The beginning ... is a kind of timeless instantaneity in itself, but whose creative

¹³ Drd. Daniel Ciobotea, „*Timpul și valoarea lui pentru mântuire în Ortodoxie*”, in revista *Ortodoxia*, XXIX (1977), nr. 2, p. 196.

¹⁴ Brandon F. Gallaher, „*Chalice of Eternity: An Orthodox Theology of Time*”, in *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 57:1 (2013) 5-35, p. 8.

¹⁵ Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Timpul – o fenomenologie teologică*, Deisis, Sibiu, 2005, p. 78.

¹⁶ Alexandros Kalomiros, *Sfinții Părinți despre originile și destinul omului și cosmosului*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 1998, p. 6.

¹⁷ George Mantzarides, *Life and Time according to Basil the Great*, <https://pemptousia.com/2021/01/life-and-time-according-to-basil-the-great-1/>.

¹⁸ Preotul Profesor Dumitru Stăniloae, *Sfânta Treime sau La început a fost Iubirea*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă, București, 2012, p. 14.

¹⁹ Vladimir Lossky, *Introducere în teologia ortodoxă*, ediție electronică, Editura Apologeticum, 2006, p. 28.



explosion gives birth to time. It is the point of the touch of the divine will with what henceforth becomes and lasts”²⁰. We will develop this idea when we discuss liturgical time, because the first day of creation (the first day in time) coincides with the eighth day of creation, which, though in time, opens time; this is the mystery by which the two meet and overlap²¹.

Returning to the question of Blessed Augustine, mentioned above, about the so-called inactivity of God prior to time and, consequently, the very uselessness of a God apart from time (What did God do before there was time?), Father Serghei Bulgakov offers us a synthesis of great depth. Time did not appear in time, and yes, there is something that precedes it. A time without a beginning is unthinkable because it would undermine the very foundations of time. Simply put, time without beginning would not be time: „You do not anticipate time with time, otherwise you would not have anticipated all time. But You anticipate all times with Your past eternity without beginning, which has always been Your own, and with it You also anticipate all future times, which only come and immediately become past times, while You also are, and Your years do not escape. Therefore there was not a time when Thou remainedest idle, for time itself is Thy work. ... Therefore the word before is inapplicable where there is no time”²². Saint Dionysius the Areopagite attributes to God the quality of divine and mysterious principle of the birth of time: „All time and eternity is from Him. ... He has pre-existence and super-existence in abundance. He established existence as such. God is to be glorified both as eternity and as time, as the culprit of all time and eternity, as that which is ancient of days, as that which is before time and above time, and as that which presupposes times and terms”²³. In the time line, the mention of change, as an immediate indicator of temporality, is obligatory. Not only man, but everything that comes into being in time „derives its existence from an initial change: the transition from non-being to being. ... This change manifests itself as movement, as the contingent articulation of time and space”²⁴.

It seems inappropriate to talk about the place of an aspatial phenomenon, which fills everything but cannot be located at a point or delimited three-dimensionally. However, if time is a dimension of creation, we can say that its place, cosmically bounded, is creation itself. Closer to home, the exponent of creation with the greatest space allocated to time is the human person. And the place in which man stores and validates time is consciousness: „Time has consciousness as its place. But it does not generate it; temporality is correlative to being-in-the-world and corporeality But it constitutes it”²⁵. This is where all forms of time dwell, including what some thinkers call „bad time.”²⁶ For humans, time means relationship and becoming; movement itself translates as a characteristic of time appropriated in the human program. Man manifests himself by being aware of his position in time, and this reality is claimed at the level of consciousness: „The consciousness of time is the empirical function of the manifestation of living beings. ... Time ... is the relation to the person, the dual relation as presence, the emergence from the concealment of non-relation measured as time. Beings

²⁰ Drd. D. Ciobotea, „*Timpul și valoarea lui pentru mântuire...*”, p. 196.

²¹ V. Lossky, *Introducere în teologia ortodoxă*, p. 29.

²² Serghei Bulgakov, *Lumina neînserată. Contemplații și reflecții metafizice*, Anastasia, București, 1999, p. 274.

²³ S. Bulgakov, *Lumina neînserată...*, pp. 274-275.

²⁴ Ieromonah Makarios Simonopetrul, *Triodul explicat. Mistagogia timpului liturgic*, ediția a III-a, Deisis, Sibiu, 2008, p. 119.

²⁵ J.-Y. Lacoste, *Timpul – o fenomenologie teologică*, p. 155.

²⁶ B. F. Gallaher, „*Chalice of Eternity...*”, p. 19.



appear in the horizon of the person and not in the horizon of time; the person delimits the manifestation of beings, while time measures this manifestation, it is the measure of the personal relation to beings”²⁷.

The only true relationship that leads to the fulfilment of the person has as its premise and manifestation love. Without love, man becomes vindictive and his relationship to his surroundings is altered. He then „suffocates within space and wants to kill his time. He eliminates spatial distances by the means he possesses and transfers his relations to utopian planes that are subject only to time, which he cannot control. This becomes the new place of encounter with others. And because this time is unposed or lacking in sustenance, it creates in man a sense of emptiness and the need for self-affirmation”²⁸.

We can say that man himself can be seen as a place of time. When we say man, we refer both to his individuality and to the universal aspect of creation, of which man is the prime exponent. So it is not nature that was created for time, but time that was created for nature and simultaneously with nature. The place of time implies a new category, namely that of the presence.

3. LITURGICAL TIME

The Church is one of a series of institutions that have a place in history, but it does not merely occupy a place in history, it marks history in a way that changes its course and substance. How does it do this? By the fact that it stands at the confluence of meta-history and history: „The historical Church, concrete, clearly delimited in time and space, brings together in it earth and heaven, humans and angels, the living and the dead, sinners and saints, the created and the uncreated. ... The Church can be defined as the «place» where time and eternity meet, as they met before in the person of the incarnate Logos”²⁹. Moreover, in Christ, time itself undergoes a transformation, in that „He assumes the time of wickedness in order to fill it with eternity, to transfigure it, to deify it”³⁰.

Father Holbea states, in this sense: „The Church is the new reality of history, which extends from the Incarnation to the Parousia as a continuation of the Divine Economy. Christ is that «yesterday and today and forever the same» (Hebrews 13:8). ... The Church, therefore, keeps time under her power. This means that the Church's time can neither be lost nor threaten her. ... In the life of the Church there is also the dimension of expectation”³¹. One of the Lenten hymns captures the Christian's personal experience of the confluence of time and eternity: „In the church of your glory we seem to be in heaven, O Mother of God, you heavenly door; open to us the doors of your mercy...”³², which is why time spent in the liturgical life is nothing other than the present or „salvation time”³³. The Apostle Paul repeatedly draws attention to this aspect, but we will mention only one place: «In due time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you; now is the due time, now is the day of salvation» (2 Corinthians 6:2). In the preamble to the Mass, before the pronouncement of

²⁷ C. Yannaras, *Persoană și eros*, pp. 145-147.

²⁸ Georgios I. Mantzaridis, *Morala creștină*, Editura Bizantină, București, 2006, p. 426.

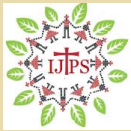
²⁹ Drd. D. Ciobotea, „*Timpul și valoarea lui pentru mântuire...*”, p. 200.

³⁰ Ier. M. Simonopetritul, *Triodul explicat...*, p. 380.

³¹ Lector Dr. Gheorghe Holbea, „*Timpul: între chronos și kairos*”, in: *Timp și Spațiu. O abordare din perspectiva științelor umaniste*, Facultatea de Teologie Ortodoxă „Patriarhul Justinian Marina”, Editura Universității din București, 2006, pp. 98; 100-101.

³² <https://ziarullumina.ro/teologie-si-spiritualitate/theologica/in-biserica-slavei-tale-in-cer-ni-se-pare-a-sta-71917.html> (accesat la 15.03.2021).

³³ Drd. D. Ciobotea, „*Timpul și valoarea lui pentru mântuire...*”, p. 200.



the Great Blessing, which sets and opens the prospect of the kingdom and therefore of eternity, the deacon says: „The time (καιρος) is to serve the Lord. Bless, Father!”³⁴. Father Scrima tells us that „The Liturgy announces the eschaton not by breaking or suspending time, but by its rhythm. ... The essential relationship is now no longer that between past, present and future, ... but between the seen and the unseen. [It is what he also called] «the time of the Mystery»”³⁵. Penetrating the Holy Mass with the senses of the spiritual man, Father Arsenie Papacioc said, „Is it a small thing to save a world in an hour and a half, two, while you do the Holy Liturgy?”³⁶.

In spite of appearances, attributed to its contemplative vocation, Orthodoxy calls for an extremely serious use of time as being, on the one hand, unrepeatable, but, on the other hand, precisely because of this irrepeatability, becoming an extremely precious resource in the pursuit of the desire for salvation. The indiscriminate use of time, this resource of salvation, is disapproved of by Father Arsenius, even in the context of liturgical time: „Some have a stupid principle: to take Communion in order to make up for the time you spent uncommunicated. ... It is not time that decides but the breaking of the heart”³⁷. This is why great men of life, such as Father Arsenius, have taken up with the utmost responsibility the exhortation of St. Paul the Apostle: «Take heed to yourselves how you walk, not as the unwise, but as the wise, redeeming the time, for the evil days are» (Ephesians 5:16-17). Ava Dorotheus asks rhetorically, „Who will give us this time if we lose it?”³⁸.

The uniqueness of time must also be affirmed. There is no alternative to temporality in temporality, and this further emphasizes the importance that the Christian must attach to time. Deploring a so-called lack of time is not a solution in itself. Father Stăniloae's explanation is more than telling: „We will not have another time in which to repair what we have broken in our being, in the time of now. We do not relativize the importance of this time as in reincarnationist theories. If we devalue this time, we would consistently devalue every other time. We would never arrive at true seriousness and absolute good. Everything would become an eternal boredom. But to devalue an eternal temporality is to never value taking notice of ourselves in eternity. ... We often waste time, not using it to know and fulfill ourselves. The fact that our time is short does not prevent us from fulfilling its purpose. It is precisely the shortness of time that demands a concentrated attention to ourselves”³⁹.

The whole architectural and liturgical ensemble speaks to us of this exit from time made possible by liturgical time, an exit in which both (historical) time and our destiny are fulfilled: „As soon as we step into an Orthodox church, we step into another world - another realm. We leave our everyday world to enter the world of the eternal - and thus have the opportunity to foretaste the heavenly kingdom of God. ... In an Orthodox church, through its icons and services, we enter two worlds; with one foot in temporality and the other in

³⁴ *Liturghier*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă, București, 2012, p. 132.

³⁵ Ioan Alexandru Tofan, *Omul lăuntric. André Scrima și fizionomia experienței spirituale*, Humanitas, București, 2019, p. 132.

³⁶ *Ne vorbește Părintele Arsenie*, vol. 2, ediție îngrijită de Arhimandrit Ioanichie Bălan, Editura Mănăstirea Sihăstria, Vânători, 2004, p. 27.

³⁷ *Ne vorbește Părintele Arsenie*, vol. 2, p. 13.

³⁸ Ava Dorothei, in: *Filocalia sfințelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, vol. 9, Humanitas, București, 2011, p. 501.

³⁹ Pr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, in: *Filocalia sfințelor nevoințe ale desăvârșirii*, vol. 9, Humanitas, București, 2011, pp. 501-502.



eternity. We are thus given the opportunity to transcend the sense of everyday temporality and welcome the transfigured and redeemed time of the Kingdom of Heaven⁴⁰.

It must be said that this access to the realm of the heavenly kingdom takes us into a kind of contemporaneity, a presence of heavenly origin, rightly called „liturgical contemporaneity⁴¹, in which „the whole history of salvation is evoked: vespers represents the messianic time of the Old Testament, the utrology - the dawn of Christ's activity, and the midday meal has an eschatological character of tension in hope towards the future kingdom⁴².

Sacred/liturgical time is different and totally opposed to decadent time. Decadent time brings the movement into question in its aspect of disintegration, decomposition, abrupt finality, implacable destiny. We would be tempted to assume that sacred time, in antithesis, would invoke changelessness, immutability, passivity. However, this is not so, for it too has its own dynamics, through which we find our fulfilment. Only liturgical time induces a new human category in history, which is the holy. Now, the saint is that human being who „fully assumes history⁴³. In this respect angels serve as the most suggestive examples, representing a kind of oxymoron: „eternal beings subject to change⁴⁴. Here a new distinction is made, designed to clarify forms of existence according to their temporal/temporal/eternal framework, and this distinction refers to the notions or quality of created vs. uncreated. In this key, we can deduce that there are three modes of being: „Some Fathers, including St. Basil the Great and St. Maximus Confessor, spoke of three modes of being (time - chronos, the ages or eternity of the created - eon, and eternal or uncreated eternity - aidios, aidiotēs and sometimes aionios and often even proaionios or pre-eternity, which is ateleutetos or without end), not just the two categories of time and eternity⁴⁵. Father Andrei Scrima defines the eon as „the commensurable time of eternity, but distinct from the eternity of God. It is eternity «compassionate» with temporality. There is, indeed, a kind of discontinuity, of discretion that passes beneath time; at this level you discover a presence, a face⁴⁶. In order to clarify this point, we bring back into writing Saint Maximus Confessor, who elaborates like no other: „The eternity of the intelligible world is a created eternity: Portions, truths, the unchanging structures of the cosmos, the geometry of ideas governing creation, the network of mathematical essences, all these constitute the aeon; the aeonic eternity, which has a beginning, like time (hence its name, since it has its beginning «in the age», en aioni, by the passage from non-being to being), but which remains unchanged, subject to a timeless existence. This aeonian eternity is immutable: it gives the world coherence and clarity. ... The aeon is still time, time is the moving aeon, and only their coexistence, their intertwining, allows us to conceive of time. The aeon is related to the angelic world. Angels and humans participate together in time and eon, but in different ways⁴⁷.

As a conclusion to this idea, the Fathers consider as valid for Orthodoxy only two categories of being, based on the categorical distinction between created and uncreated:

⁴⁰ Dr. Jane M. deVyver, *The Experience of Time and Eternity in Orthodox Worship*, <https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2010/05/experience-of-time-and-eternity-in.html> (accesat la 22.02.2021).

⁴¹ Drd. D. Ciobotea, „*Timpul și valoarea lui pentru mântuire...*”, p. 201.

⁴² Drd. D. Ciobotea, „*Timpul și valoarea lui pentru mântuire...*”, p. 201.

⁴³ Paul Evdochimov, *Iubirea ne bună a lui Dumnezeu*, Editura Anastasia, București, 1992, p. 25, p. 70.

⁴⁴ B. F. Gallaher, „*Chalice of Eternity...*”, p. 11.

⁴⁵ B. F. Gallaher, „*Chalice of Eternity...*”, p. 11.

⁴⁶ André Scrima, *Timpul Rugului Aprins. Maestrul spiritual în tradiția răsăriteană*, ediția a II-a, revăzută, Humanitas, București, 2000, p. 94.

⁴⁷ V. LOSSKY, *Introducere în teologia ortodoxă*, p. 30.



„Temporality in the dual form of time (sentient creation: chronos) and the ages of created beings (supersensible creation: eon) in contradistinction to eternity (aidiotes), the eternity of the divine uncreated before the ages (proaionios), as a negative or apophatic category meant to emphasize the unknowability of God, i.e., that He is the «unoriginal origin - archen anarchon»⁴⁸.

Incorporated into the Church's spiritual metabolism, time, which has now become the property of those who are an organic part of the Church, changes its dimensions and properties. Thus it is that the baptized are on an upward trajectory, and time is their ally. The program of life begun at baptism continues in and through the Church, and time metamorphoses: „Some Fathers of Orthodoxy have even called the time of the present life the sixth or preparation day par excellence - παρασκευη. For those who are in continual preparation, earthly life is like a single day equal to itself, according to the expression of St. Gregory the Theologian: «all human life is a day to those who are in desire (live it in love)». For this reason the Apostle exhorts: «while we have time, let us do good to all» (Galatians 6:10)⁴⁹.

The services that are celebrated in the Church are a mirror of the heavenly divine service. In fact, it is impossible to make a clear separation between the two, since the very reason for the Church's divine service lies in its close correspondence, even to the point of simultaneity, with the heavenly one. Angels participate with men in the most important moment of the invocation of the Holy Spirit: „A vital component in Orthodox services is the experience of time. There are a number of aspects of Orthodox liturgical practice which are designed to convey that what we celebrate in the Divine Liturgy is a reflection of the heavenly Liturgy, in which we participate through the uninterrupted singing of the angels who stand before the throne of God in heaven, and in which we leave the world of temporality and its concept of earthly time (chronos) and step into the dimension of transfigured and redeemed time (*kairos*)⁵⁰.

4. AN ONTOLOGICAL JOURNEY INTO TEMPORALITY: THE INSTANT AND PRESENCE

Time is not an unlimited resource, much less a place of passive installation in a comfort zone which, by its inert nature, cancels any future horizon and perspective. We are called to conquer the „beautiful and the moment that carries within itself transfigurations of life⁵¹. This is where the role of the moment as a power to assume the present comes in: „The instant redeems lost time. Every instant of our lives is a potential instant of rising from sin, of our salvation, a divine opportunity. ... Every instant must be taken seriously, as if it could be our last. ... The importance of the present instant is linked above all to the fact that it is the only instant given to us in a certain way by God. ... There are two essential meanings of the word «now» in the New Testament: a) through «now» history is experienced as something present; b) this «now» in the New Testament constitutes a period in time charged with eternity⁵².

⁴⁸ B. F. Gallaher, „*Chalice of Eternity...*”, p. 14.

⁴⁹ Drd. D. Ciobotea, „*Timpul și valoarea lui pentru mântuire...*”, p. 206.

⁵⁰ J. M. deVyver, *The Experience of Time and Eternity in Orthodox Worship*.

⁵¹ Arhimandrit Arsenie Papacioc, *Epistole*, Editura Accent Print, Suceava, 2015, p. 36.

⁵² Lect. Dr. G. Holbea, „*Timpul: între chronos și kairos*”, pp. 96-98.



We understand that „The world and time must become the space and time of our salvation”⁵³. Through the exhortations that Father Arsenius Papacioc, for example, offered to all those who came to find an answer, an encouragement or a comfort, he placed a very great emphasis on living the present as a continuous reality, a reality suggested and captured in the power of the moment. With the firm exhortation: „Have a state of continuous presence”⁵⁴, correlated with the well-known saying: „every moment is a time and every sigh can be a prayer”⁵⁵, father reveals to us both the depths of the inner man and the breadth of the personal, intimate relationship with God, which also introduces man to the spiritual dimensions of existence. C.S. Lewis's insights are again eloquent: „Men live in time, but the Enemy [God] sorts them out for eternity. Which means, I think, that His desire is that they should focus on two things above all: eternity as such and that moment of time which they call the present. This is because the present is the particular point at which time meets eternity. The human experience of the present moment, and it alone, is analogous to how the Enemy [God] embraces reality in its entirety; it alone gives them freedom and manifestation in the act”⁵⁶.

Ava Dorotei urged us „Let us be awake while we have time”⁵⁷, and for this, „only the awareness of death will give life this awakening and depth, will give life life life, will make it so intense that its totality will be brought back to the immediate moment. This is how the ascetics have struggled with mindlessness, carelessness”⁵⁸. The sanctification of man also implies an implicit effort to sanctify time, to redeem time and to open temporality to the horizon of eternity. «May he, according to the riches of his glory, give you that by his Spirit you may be strengthened in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; rooted and grounded in love, that you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which is beyond knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God» (Ephesians 3:16-19).

We insist on the importance of the moment and on the need to be anchored, this being the mark and confirmation of a conscious, full assumption of one's own existence: „You must first conquer God and he will appoint us. The great mistake made by almost everyone is that he sees God as a stranger to his own struggle, to his own neediness, and thinks that it is only by what he does that he reaches this goal: the acquisition of the Kingdom. No! You have to have this sense of finesse to recognize the presence of grace in every moment within you. If you succeed in seeing the Kingdom of Heaven within you every moment, it is a good move - a divine inspiration”⁵⁹.

Andrei Pleșu gives us a definition of the moment that is worth mentioning: „When we talk about the moment, we do not mean the over-valuing of the moment, but its de-temporalization. ... We emerge from the fluidity of time through the «pin-ear» of an illuminating instant. The true moment ... is timeless, as the point is aspatial. ... Without the presence of such a subject, the world is non-local and non-temporal. ... For a subject that is

⁵³ Lect. Dr. G. Holbea, „Timpul: între chronos și kairos”, p. 94.

⁵⁴ Arhimandrit Arsenie Papacioc, *Cuvânt despre bucuria duhovnicească. Convorbiri*, ediția a II-a, Eikon, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, p. 203.

⁵⁵ Arhimandrit Arsenie Papacioc, *Veșnicia ascunsă într-o clipă*, Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2004, p. 122.

⁵⁶ Clive Staples Lewis, *Sfaturile unui diavol bătrân către unul mai tânăr*, Humanitas, București, pp. 77-78.

⁵⁷ Ava Dorotei, in: *Filocalia sfințelor nevoițe ale desăvârșirii*, vol. 9, Humanitas, București, 2011, p. 511.

⁵⁸ Mitropolitul Antonie de Suroj, *Viața, boala, moartea*, Editura Sophia, București, 2015, p. 158.

⁵⁹ Ieromonah Benedict Stancu, *Iată duhovnicul: Părintele Arsenie Papacioc*, ediție integrală, Editura Sophia, București, 2010, p. 111.



not spatially located and not temporally situated, all aspects of space and time are co-present”⁶⁰.

In the church, for example, the passage of time is no longer limited to what is implied by its primary meaning, but is overcome, being „the passage of a presence, of the Spirit who discreetly floods the world”⁶¹. The loss of time, which we spoke about in the previous pages, has a not insignificant relevance in terms of assuming the moment as a present time in a state of continuous presence. This is a matter designed to define man in relation to his projection into eternity: „Not only time in general has an absolute value, but every moment. ... The loss of time itself becomes a habit. It is not only an external matter, but an internal one”⁶². For Remi Brague, relevant is only time that can be experienced, lived or at least imagined⁶³. From an eschatological perspective, the loss of time has catastrophic consequences: „God has given you time to build your eternal salvation. Do not waste it!”⁶⁴. Life is lived neither in the past nor in the future but, above all, in the present. The deficient assumption of the present coincides with the state of self-forgetfulness or dispersion⁶⁵. In our defining moments, we objectively cherish the time of our lives and weigh the weight of the moment: „How would we behave towards each other if the present moment were the only moment we had and if this moment should express all the love and care we have for each other”⁶⁶? We discover, spontaneously, „the value of time as an existential dimension”⁶⁷. In what follows, we will see the valences of the present and the moment, which the present concentrates qualitatively rather than quantitatively.

A number of Christian thinkers even assume that the only reality of time is the moment, the others being only extensions of it in memory (the past) and/or intuition (the future). From a Christian perspective, one can make nuances of substance characteristic of the temporal moment by which the quality of the moment is defined: „the moment of creation, when the attainment of eternity initiates paradisaic dynamism; the moment of the fall, when the attainment of relative nothingness, to which human freedom turns, introduces into the time of the beginning being for death; and the moment of the resurrection, from which a transfigured duration emerges, not so that paradisaic temporality may be restored from nothing, but so that time, itself fallen, may henceforth become the receptacle of eternity”⁶⁸.

Between moment and presence there is a close connection of an inner nature, a connection that also gives rise to a dilemma, because „it is incomprehensible how a 'moment' could have appeared in an eternity, in which time and evolution could have begun”⁶⁹. The explanation leads us to „God, the only self-existence”⁷⁰. Time can be in our consciousness through protention and retention, protention anticipating the future or even letting an imaginary future invade and confiscate the present, and retention ensuring continuity by

⁶⁰ Andrei Pleșu, *Minima moralia. Elemente pentru o etică a intervalului*, Humanitas, București, 2017, pp. 65-66.

⁶¹ I. A. Tofan, *Omul lăuntric...*, p. 135.

⁶² Pr. Prof. D. Stăniloae, *Filocalia sfințelor nevoițe ale desăvârșirii*, vol. 9, Humanitas, București, 2011, p. 511.

⁶³ Remi Brague, *Modern cu moderație. Timpurile moderne sau inventarea unei înșelăciuni*, Spandugino, București, 2022, p. 233.

⁶⁴ Arhimandrit Sofronie, *Din viață și din Duh*, ed. a 2-a, rev., Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2014, p. 59.

⁶⁵ Pr. Prof. D. Stăniloae, *Filocalia sfințelor nevoițe ale desăvârșirii*, vol. 9, p. 511.

⁶⁶ Mitruț A. de Suroj, *Viața, boala, moartea*, p. 90.

⁶⁷ A. Scrima, *Antropologia apofatică*, p. 276.

⁶⁸ Olivier Clément, *Hristos a înviat! Cuvinte despre sărbătorile creștine*, Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2017, p. 9.

⁶⁹ Pr. Prof. D. Stăniloae, *Sfânta Treime sau La început a fost Iubirea*, p. 11.

⁷⁰ Pr. Prof. D. Stăniloae, *Sfânta Treime sau La început a fost Iubirea*, p. 11.



retaining the past in memory, which is natural up to a certain point, beyond which it becomes a masked utopia. So the present is, according to some, the only reality of time, the moment of its consummation: „in short, the past and the future, according to a theological tradition of time, are unreal and only the present moment (the moment), as an image of eternity, is real”⁷¹, because „the image of eternity itself is manifested in every moment of self-consciousness”⁷².

That continuous presence that fully assumes the moment can only be realized in the full manner of human creative manifestation. Now, this manifestation leads us to the prototype after which we were created, the incarnate Logos, Jesus Christ. Both his coming into history and the manner of his presence are marked by - and confirm - the rule of love: «For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believing in Him should not perish but have eternal life. That God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world through him might be saved» (John 3, 16-17). Further, this rule is part of our nature and is meant to overwhelm and become our nature, which is possible only to the extent that we remain consistent with the program begun at baptism, that of fulfilling the likeness, the conformity to the Image after which we were created. Now, this becoming in the likeness of God knows only one valid way, the way of love: «Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love has not known God, for God is love» (1 John 4:7-8). Through love we are established in the moment: „the present and love are manifestations and prefigurations of the eternal present and eternal love, of God”⁷³.

We are faced with a new challenge; that of giving a definition to the instant / moment / present. To paraphrase Vladimir Lossky⁷⁴, we turn our attention to St. Basil the Great, who considers that the first moment of time, the moment of its appearance, is not time, arguing his idea on the analogy of a road; the beginning of a journey is not the journey. In the dynamism of time, the moment cannot be captured, nor can it constitute time; it is more a section in time. The moment cannot be considered a point in time either, because, as St. Augustine points out, the boundary between past and future is liquid and impossible to capture. The difficulty of this approach led some, like the philosopher Zeno, to reduce time to absurdity by the fact that it could simultaneously be both motion and rest. The one who captures the quality of the moment with great finesse is Plato: „Plato had a remarkable conception of the «moment» which, he said, is not time but a boundary and, through it, an opening to eternity. The present without dimension, without duration reveals itself as a presence of eternity”⁷⁵. This understanding brings us quite close to the dimensions of the moment, all the more so because the moment is a false trail when we try to place it between its chronological frames, between past and future. It is not in this external aspect that the moment can be captured, but in the inner categories of being. In this way, the moment is made permanent or, through it, the possessor of the moment enters a state of continuous presence. The moment expands, becoming timeless time. According to this reasoning, the relevance of temporality changes, the moment is no longer claimed in the dispute between past and future: „The present, which is always swallowed up by the past and moves towards

⁷¹ B. F. Gallaher, „*Chalice of Eternity...*”, p. 9.

⁷² B. F. Gallaher, „*Chalice of Eternity...*”, p. 9.

⁷³ Pr. Dr. G. I. Mantzaridis, *Morala creștină II*, p. 427.

⁷⁴ V. Lossky, *Introducere în teologia ortodoxă*, p. 29.

⁷⁵ V. Lossky, *Introducere în teologia ortodoxă*, p. 29.



the future, is a kind of dimensionless point, moving in the ocean of neonal existence: of the semi-existence of past and future - of the already- and still-undefined”⁷⁶.

The instant is a special category of time, which does not unfold horizontally, but has its dynamics vertically. It is therefore only apparently part of the sequential temporality of the past and the future, neither of which has any legitimacy in claiming the moment. In fact, the ratio of forces is exactly the opposite; it is the moment that claims both, because in the moment, as in a timeless and dimensionless present, the horizon of time and the natural necessity of eternity as its purpose and fulfilment open up: „it is the time in which the past is kept whole, and the present opens up to the immensity of the ages: it is the «memorial of the Kingdom», the fact of relating to God, of being wholly present before the Eternal God. ... The lived time represents a very intimate interaction between its mathematical form and its existential content”⁷⁷. Now, in this key, the three notions invoked by Tudor Arghezi are vital parts of the ontological mechanism of the moment/moment, manifesting as a result of: „the ticking of the heart, consciousness and intelligence”⁷⁸. We can now assume that death would remain the only unknown in the equation of time and that, if this chapter were resolved, time would change its constitution and have finality in itself, not beyond itself: „perhaps it would be legitimate to bracket death in order to liberate a present time, the meaning of which it no longer possesses; ... the theological tradition, almost all of it, has denied this suggestion and tried to produce the concept of an eternity for man”⁷⁹. We say that theology has done nothing but ascertain, crystallize and affirm eternity as the only valid resolution of time.

The difficulty of defining time, of placing it in a category of thought that covers, to a considerable extent, the subject, is hidden behind the definition of the moment. The moment/the instant is the sensitive point in the discussion of time, because it is the most fluid reality of temporality. „Man does not experience isolated moments, but through memory, hope and imagination he creates for himself that continuous moment which he feels each time as present. But the present is also particularly important for man, because it is in it that the future is decided and the past is judged”⁸⁰. The Orthodox theology of the time offers the most convincing keys to understanding the theme, which is not only a theme of thought, but a theme of life. In this sense, Father Dumitru Stăniloae considers the moment as the element of dynamism of time, its inner spring and that which ensures the combustion of time: „The present moment is always a moment that expands in the hope of another time. It is not only a present moment”⁸¹.

As I said, the moment is a timeless moment, more than and beyond a mere section in time. In this sense, the combination of the moment and presence is of maximum depth and topicality. Here is how Father Andrei Scrima puts it: „Temporality is the realm of illusion and sufficient exteriority, built on «having» (it is entering into alliance with space); atemporality is on «being». And you are, you have an identity, when you are permanently what you are; and you are not so except in God, when you feel that you have your roots in the transcendent”⁸². Presence has a double valence; on the one hand, you are involved, the

⁷⁶ S. Bulgakov, *Lumina neînsurată...*, p. 271.

⁷⁷ Paul Evdochimov, *Ortodoxia*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1996, p. 223.

⁷⁸ Tudor Arghezi, „Ziua, momentul, condeiu și cuvântul”, în: Ovidiu Pecican, *România și Europa mediană: contribuții la tipologia culturală a Europei*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2021, p. 345.

⁷⁹ J.-Y. Lacoste, *Timpul – o fenomenologie teologică*, p. 122.

⁸⁰ G. I. Mantzaridis, *Morala creștină*, p. 417.

⁸¹ D. Stăniloae, „Timp și veșnicie”, p. 9.

⁸² A. Scrima, *Antropologia apofatică*, p. 253.



personal subject of your own presence, but, on the other hand, God is involved as a relationship in presence. Moreover, my presence in relation and relationship to God's presence reveals a kinship of myself with God: „The seal of His image, imprinted on our being, shows that it belongs to Him and He, in turn, belongs to it. The ultimate word that can be uttered for understanding the divine image of the creature is therefore «a presence»: a presence is all that is innermost and deepest in the soul. ... It is in presence that the antinomy of the incomprehensibility of the image is resolved and overcome: a presence is «something», «a configuration» (or rather a structure), but not a limited figure; but it can only be understood through real contact, through an impression that only it «as presence» can give, and not through its conceptual substitutes. (This is what St. Gregory of Nyssa somewhere calls «the sense of presence», opposed to and superior to discursive intelligence.) For the profound man, for the interior man, the relationship with God unfolds on the dimensions of presence, ... God being here more present to him than his own presence. ... The category of presence also fulfils an essentially anthropological function: it is constituted as the dynamic centre”⁸³.

We can say that continuous presence is the only valid condition of being of the human person. Outside this sphere, man becomes a marginal of his own life, and his anchorage in time is off-centre. These aspects go far beyond the sphere of the so-called theology of hope, in which the present is seen as a stage, a necessary and useful instrument, a rudder of destiny, through which one can influence the itinerary of the future. The liturgical expression „now and for ever and ever” finds its succinct explanation, applied to our subject, in the theologian Georgios Mantzaridis: „«Now» operates the synthesis of all the dimensions of time, it widens itself by becoming «for ever» and is taken up into divine eternity. As the body of Christ, «the One who is and the One who was and the One who is to come» (Revelation 1:4)”⁸⁴, and all of this is centered on a firm hope: „The strength of the Christian rests on the expectation of the Kingdom of God. And this, in turn, already exists in the present and nourishes the Christian life”⁸⁵.

The liturgical expression concerning the events that happened in time and/or are commemorated liturgically, in which we participate through the phenomenon of liturgical contemporaneity, although they may be temporally framed long before us, makes explicit reference to the new timeless dimension, the continuous presence: „Kairos is the time of the present moment. Today Christ is born! Today Christ is risen! Today Christ is baptized! This is the day of salvation! Kairos is also the «fullness of time», when eternity enters and pervades our fallen earthly existence, transfiguring it and us, in which we are given the gift of capturing in temporality a moment in the presence of God. This is the realm of what might be called «religious experience - or having a personal experience with God»; it is the present moment of repentance and change. We have stepped into a Kairos where we are surprised and don't even notice/feel the dynamics of temporality”⁸⁶.

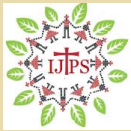
Each moment is a time which, together with the sigh-prayer, can be a turning point in the path of our temporality. It is about the power of the moment to redeem time (see the case of the Dysmas robber), about the chance with which each moment is endowed, and about the fact that the moment is delivered to us with the possibility of a personal climax. Each moment can be a starting moment, it can be the beginning of a life changed for the

⁸³ A. Scrima, *Antropologia apofatică*, p. 123.

⁸⁴ G. I. Mantzaridis, *Morala creștină*, p. 420.

⁸⁵ G. I. Mantzaridis, *Morala creștină*, p. 421.

⁸⁶ B. F. Gallaher, „*Chalice of Eternity...*”, pp. 1-2.



better; it is a resource that must be realised and exploited. I was saying that the strength of the moment lies not in the time-quantity elements, but in the qualitative aspects of time; it is a dense time, a section, a gate in time. In this sense, the moment can be seen as a perpetual chance for salvation: „The instant can redeem lost time when communion with God is restored in it. ... If the moment were not a bridge or a syncopation of passage, there could be no lever for the sinner to launch himself from the dimension of «lost-time» into another dimension: «redemption-time». For the sinner's repentance, the moment is a new beginning, which rhymes, spiritually speaking, with a new «creation» of time, because in it a new «birth» of the ins”⁸⁷.

A very important aspect, which concerns the substance of time and, implicitly, of the moment, tells us that a real anchoring in time is possible through a state of presence, and this presence finds its most appropriate frame of manifestation in the moment. You can only be present in the moment, in the moment actually lived, in a personal and personal way. The moment of rising or redeeming past time establishes us in the truth, thus becoming a mark or measure for „understanding the truth (non-hiding)”⁸⁸.

Truth becomes personal and assumed, it leaves the sphere of theoretical discourse and becomes part of a person's life. At the same time, the moment becomes a unique space, a space par excellence of the affirmation of the person, but not anyway, but affirmation in truth. The moment and the present thus become defining for a complete Christian anthropology; they become that unique, par excellence „space of personal presence”⁸⁹. That is why the present focused in the moment is the place of the „Dimensionlessness of personal immediacy. John Damascene defines the now as time «without quantity», and Basil the Great relates the now to the divine «perception» of time, time that knows no movement or change. Maxim Confessor sees in the now the truth of «still time», that is, of «the age». ... The age is the time of the fulfilment of man's personal relationship with God, because time «is motionless» only when «nature unites, unites itself directly with the Providence»⁹⁰.

Another fact of presence and of the moment is revealed to us. Life closed in time lasts as long as it is not invalidated by death. Beyond death, we can think of the person as an absence rather than a presence, and the moment of death as a last measure in the portal of life. However, by the consistency of the lived moments, man can last beyond the moment of death, through the manifestations or inheritance of his moments. This is why, in a painting, its creator is also present, beyond the horizon of temporality⁹¹. Here, once again, the power and depths of the moment are revealed to us, as „an uninterrupted duration of communion”⁹². It is essential „to communicate inwardly with the Truth, not to wait for its foundation from outside, objectively, from the desperate flow of Time towards a truth that justifies it”⁹³. The culminating point of uninterrupted communion is the Eucharistic moment, part of liturgical time and its determining fact: „The Eucharist, repeated and thus unchanging and always a present possibility of communion, suspends the past and the future in the immediacy of presence: The offering and making of the Eucharist is an act of universal existential unity, which abolishes all existential, moral or temporal differences: the living and the dead, the

⁸⁷ Drd. D. Ciobotea, „*Timpul și valoarea lui pentru mântuire...*”, p. 200.

⁸⁸ C. Yannaras, *Persoană și eros*, p. 147.

⁸⁹ C. Yannaras, *Persoană și eros*, p. 155.

⁹⁰ C. Yannaras, *Persoană și eros*, p. 149.

⁹¹ C. Yannaras, *Persoană și eros*, p. 156.

⁹² C. Yannaras, *Persoană și eros*, p. 160.

⁹³ A. Scrima, *Antropologia apofatică*, p. 311.



near and the far, the holy and the sinful, the former and the latter are all present here and now «before» Christ and «in Christ» - in the immediacy of the personal relationship with him⁹⁴.

In the hierarchy of things done by man, we place the priesthood very high, at the intersection of time and eternity, and this precisely for its eucharistic reason. „«Now» becomes the vow of eternity, transfigured into «for ever» and there are always two points «for ever and ever»⁹⁵.

Without this kind of continuous presence, the consciousness of time cannot be assumed with clarity of mind. A reality expressed like this: „Until the fall of the forefathers, the unit of measure of time was blissful eternity, the consciousness of what St. Maximus Confessor calls «the state of existing forever in good»⁹⁶. Time knows no routine or monotony, because it constantly reinvents itself, and this property of time shapes the present: „The centre of being is at the same time a present that continually reappears⁹⁷, and on this reasoning we understand as native „inclination towards permanence⁹⁸. Assuming that every moment is time, we understand that time is in our hands and that it is not the quantity of time that matters, but its quality, which ultimately translates into our relationship to time. Again, reference is made to inner coordinates: „The heart is the place and time of our salvation⁹⁹. That is why there is a special category of people who know how to anchor themselves in time, but not in the sense of settling or abandoning themselves in time, but in the sense of seizing or appropriating it. We are now discussing the category of the saint. For him, time is: „the place of chance - of a determinism of another order than the physical, which intervenes with a special meaning in the life of being. ... Therefore, a capital act for our spiritual fulfilment is the discovery of the law and work of time, which transforms beings under the power of circumstances and chance. This means creating time, which is essentially a divine task¹⁰⁰.

Even if one can invoke the possibility of a pseudo-exit from time, a break in contact with time¹⁰¹, it is only in the state of presence that time regains its true density, and relations with otherness will find their proper path: „If we were fully present for each other, we could rightly expect miracles to happen. To be fully present to one another is to help others to personally experience God's love¹⁰².

Moreover, the human being is also not the definitive place of time, because, on the one hand, it is impossible for man to live „in a pure present¹⁰³, and, on the other hand, it is itself conjugated with time, for a higher meaning and a complete fulfilment. „Temporality and corporeality are really housed in God. There is room in the Absolute for a body and for time; they do not vanish in contact with its divinity¹⁰⁴.

⁹⁴ C. Yannaras, *Persoană și eros*, pp. 167-168.

⁹⁵ Georgios Mantzaridis, „Hristos și Timpul”, in: *Revista teologică*, Studii și articole, V (1995), nr. 2, p. 92.

⁹⁶ Lect. Dr. G. Holbea, „Timpul: între chronos și kairos”, p. 94.

⁹⁷ A. Scrima, *Antropologia apofatică*, p. 209.

⁹⁸ C. S. Lewis, *Sfaturile unui diavol bătrân către unul mai tânăr*, p. 128.

⁹⁹ Arhim. A. Papacioc, *Epistole*, p. 196.

¹⁰⁰ A. Scrima, *Antropologia apofatică*, p. 208.

¹⁰¹ Aldous Huxley, *Minunata lume nouă*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2011, p. 150.

¹⁰² Anthony M. Coniaris, *Taina persoanei – calea către Dumnezeu*, Editura Sophia, București, 2012, p. 154.

¹⁰³ J.-Y. Lacoste, *Timpul – o fenomenologie teologică*, p. 115.

¹⁰⁴ J.-Y. Lacoste, *Timpul – o fenomenologie teologică*, p. 87.



CONCLUSIONS

We can make a logical reduction to the equation of time, in which a very important place is occupied by the human person. Time and man are the poles of a discussion in which the premises are volatile, and advantage tends to favour one or the other of the poles. Either time manifests itself with the force of an implacable destiny in the face of which man can only resign himself or, in the best cases, can trick time, or time is incorporated and transfigured in the plane of the mystery in which man is established on a spiritual level, managing to imprint time with an ascending, sacred dynamic. Hence a whole suite of implications and variations. The loss of time throws man into a suicidal complicity from a soteriological perspective, just as the genuine anchoring in time implies the valorization of the moment and the access, as in a section through time, to imperishable realities.

If the major challenge of temporality is the reversal of poles and the gaining of human control and levers for conditioning time, the key to resolving the equation of temporality lies not outside but in a radical interiority, in the very inner being of the human being. We have access to these registers only in the spiritual corridors of existence. In this sense, the space par excellence is the liturgical one, in which time too is transfigured and changes its substance. We break down the definition of time as a sequence - past, present and future - and access its deeper registers, such as the moment and presence, new aspects that give time a vertical dynamic, transcending its horizontal nature.

Time is most acutely felt at the level of consciousness, where it can disguise itself in a past that is forcibly legitimised in the present or, conversely, in a future that rushes to manifest itself, violently compromising the moment. We hope that the above lines will bring the benefits, at least, of a reading that will challenge the reader towards his inner dimensions.

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