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Email: iconfaith_journal@yahoo.com

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial Board of ICOANA CREDINȚEI	2
Table of contents	3
Preface	4
* THEOLOGY STUDIES	
Fr. Prof. PhD. Leontin POPESCU, TESTIMONIES OF THE HOLY FATHERS DURING THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES ON DEATH AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD	5
Prof. Ph.D. Gheorghe F. ANGHELESCU, TIME AS RESPITE FOR DISCERNING AND BEGINNING ETERNAL COMMUNION WITH GOD	29
Prof. Rodica Elena SOARE (GHEORGHIU), BYZANTINE PUBLIC POLICIES: CHARISTIKE	37
Prof. Ph.D. Ph.D. Peter. O. O. OTTUH, AN EVALUATION OF RELIGIOUS SKEPTICISM IN RELATION TO HUMAN SUFFERING AND PAIN: TOWARDS A THEODICAL SYNTHESIS	50
Fr. Prof. Ph.D. Marin BUGIULESCU, THE THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA	62
Fr. Prof. Ph.D. Dragoș Corneliu BĂLAN, DIVINE FREEDOM – THE BASIS OF THE REGENERATION OF HUMAN FREEDOM	70
Presentation of ICOANA CREDINȚEI	82

Preface

The 16th issue year 2022 of *Icon of Faith (Icoana Credinței)*, *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Scientific Research (IFIJISR)* encompasses a group of articles on various themes, dedicated to the areas of Theology and Christian life.

The commencing paper: *TESTIMONIES OF THE HOLY FATHERS DURING THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES ON DEATH AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD*, by Fr. Prof. Ph.D. Leontin POPESCU, present the mystery of death. . 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. The subsequent paper, signed by Prof. Ph.D. Gheorghe F. ANGHELESCU, bears the title: *TIME AS RESPITE FOR DISCERNING AND BEGINNING ETERNAL COMMUNION WITH GOD*. At the beginning of the Holy Apostles' mission, Greek philosophy was dominated by ideas of permanence and return. Despite the great variety of existing trends, a common model seemed to be accepted in all the systems: the vision of an eternal cosmos. The next paper belonging to Prof. Rodica Elena SOARE (GHEORGHIU) is *BYZANTINE PUBLIC POLICIES: CHARISTIKE*. The institutional strengthening of monasticism as derived from the iconoclastic period, increased the popular piety towards the monks through that of the upper Byzantine social classes, the civil and military aristocracy and the imperial circle. This led to a substantial increase in the number of monasteries from the ninth to the twelfth centuries.

Professor Ph.D. Peter. O. O. OTTUH, signs the paper: *AN EVALUATION OF RELIGIOUS SKEPTICISM IN RELATION TO HUMAN SUFFERING AND PAIN: TOWARDS A THEODICAL SYNTHESIS*. The issue of human suffering and pain might be seen as a variant of the basic problem of evil. The evidential question of evil has been a heated topic in the philosophy of religion. It concluded that suffering and pain are possible catalysts for a search for meaning in life and God, as well as a test of faith, hence, religious traditions should not restrict medical interventions. Fr. Prof. Ph.D. Dragoș Corneliu BĂLAN, propose the paper: *DIVINE FREEDOM – THE BASIS OF THE REGENERATION OF HUMAN FREEDOM*. Freedom is inscribed, in fact, in the human being. Lastly, Fr. Prof. Ph.D. Marin BUGIULESCU, signs the dogmatic paper: *THE THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA*. The dilemma in which humanity finds itself when it tries to rationally discover what belongs to God and man can only be solved in the golden mystery given by divine revelation, therefore, no matter how advanced from a scientific point of view, it would human thinking, "face to face" with the divine-human indescribability, collapses into derisive reasonings and sophisms that do nothing but deceive through equivocal answers, deepening the mystery, even more, placing man and God in radically different frames.

Therefore, the content of the current issue is a good invitation to reading research on specific themes presented in the journal book. *Icon of Faith- International Journal of Interdisciplinary Scientific Research* lends expression to competent voices of researchers from different countries worldwide in order to promote an excellent scientific community interested in a dynamic Christian tradition and culture, open for a constructive dialogue.

June 2022

Editor Prof. Ph.D. Marian BUGIULESCU

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

Prof. PhD. Leontin POPESCU,
Faculty of History, Philosophy and Theology
“Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați,
ROMANIA
E-mail: prleonpopescu@yahoo.it

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 Proskomedia 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

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.

existence. Man is very much aware that such a moment² awaits him sooner or later, and it is 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.

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.

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 Orientis peculiarem de singularitate famosum, de posteritate monstruosum; qui semetipsum lubenter funerans

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, while He lived on earth, in order to show that He Himself would judge as one who had

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, ilium 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”.

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 bodies of the dead. The same meaning is also found in the ancient formulae – *regulae fidei* –

²⁰ S. BARNABAS APOSTOLUS, *Epistola Chatolica*, in PG 02, 727-778, col. 735A: „Ille autem, ut vacuam faceret mortem, et de mortuis resurrectionem ostenderet, quia in carne oportebat eum apparere, sustinuit, ut promissum parentibus dedderet; 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, 2000, 720pp., p. 29; cf. S. AUGUSTINI EPISCOPI, *Apendix tomi 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”.

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 Haereticos*, 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 perficientur”.

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 usus humanos? Granum enim tritici, exempli gratia, aut aliorum seminum, cum terrae injectum fuerit, primo perit et solvitur, deinde excitatur et in spicam assurgit. Arborum autem natura nonne certis temporibus Dei jussu latens antea et invisos fructus producit?”;

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

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 supplicii liberis beate agere; eadem ac poetae et philosophi dicere videmimur”.

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

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:

“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

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, iudicii 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.

*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 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

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 tracturos 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 cognoscatis 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, 32007, 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.

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. Necessesse 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 perpessionibus sociata; 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

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 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

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”.

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

⁴⁷ S. IRINAEUS, „*Adversus Haereses* V, 1129B: „Refutant igitur potentiam Dei, et non contemplantur quod est verbum, qui infirmitatem intentur carnis, virtutem autem ejus qui suscitant eam a mortuis, non contemplantur. Si enim mortale non vivificat, et corruptibile non revocat ad incorrupteiam 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*, în: PG 05, 729-778, 756A

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

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

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

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 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

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”.

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

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

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 ab 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 commendarim, 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. Quodcunque 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 Chresi. 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?"

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 resurrection. Among the characters of Methodius’ work, only Aglaophon⁶⁴, who represents

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, constabitur”

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 Metodiu 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 METHODIUS EPISCOPUS ET MARTYR, *Ex Libro de Resurrectione*, in: *PG* 18, 266D-330;

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

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 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

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 Aglaphon, 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 Celsum*, 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 emerent. 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”).

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 (1 Cor 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 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

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 rursum 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, mortalique in immortalem mutato, sese exhiberent”.

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 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

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

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 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

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 diferentiae ac varietates, quae rursum per bonitatem Dei et subjectionem 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, „Origene...” [“Origen...”], p. 3677.

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 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

⁸² S. METHIDIUS, *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 condiderit 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”.

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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TIME AS RESPITE FOR DISCERNING AND BEGINNING ETERNAL COMMUNION WITH GOD

Prof. Ph.D. Gheorghe F. ANGHELESCU,
Ovidius University of Constanța,
ROMANIA.
Email: anghelescug@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

At the beginning of the Holy Apostles' mission, Greek philosophy was dominated by ideas of permanence and return. Despite the great variety of the existing trends, a common model seemed to be accepted in all the systems: the vision of an eternal cosmos. Each thing worthy of existing was considered to have existed in a perfect manner before all times and was impossible for it to be added in this perfect plenitude. It was considered that no essential change was possible, and no real novelty could ever emerge. However, in this framework dominated by the idea of cyclicity, the Saviour's disciples were going to bring a new message: the good news of the birth, death, and Resurrection of the embodied Son of God. This unique reality would open the perspective of a linear time endowed with the concept of union with eternity.

Keywords: *time, cyclicity, Church, East, Greek philosophy,*

INTRODUCTION

When the Holy Apostles came out of Palestine to preach Jesus Christ's Gospel, they were faced not just with a world that was using a different language, Greek, but also with one that had mentalities and philosophical concepts different from the Jewish ones. However, Christ's disciples had the power to speak with these people and even attracted them on the side of their teaching by the redeeming message and the power of the miraculous deeds they were performing. Among the features marking the difference between paganism and Christianity, there were, as well, the notions of time, which the Greek philosophers already possessed and submitted to a careful elaboration. Were these notions adaptable to the Christian meanings about the cosmos and life or did the Christian teaching suffer a Hellenization of its content through this contact? This is a topic worthy of a more careful examination, considering the fact that, often, these two visions about the notion of time, the pagan and the Christian one, are presented as totally opposite.

1. THE CYCLICAL TIME OF THE WORLD OF GREEK-ROMAN ANTIQUITY

Before presenting the Christian vision about the notion of time, it is necessary to prioritize with a brief presentation the more elaborate conception of temporality specific to Hellenic thinking and philosophy.

Far from constituting a unitary vision, it included at least two perceptions: one, absolute, and another one, relative. The first was represented by thinkers such as Strato of

Lampsacus (c. 269 B.C.)¹ and Boethus of Sidon (c. 50 B.C.),² who considered time as a quantitatively invariable temporal flow within which the other processes, dynamic or static, took place in a larger or smaller area of space. The second, dominant viewpoint, starting with Aristotle's affirmations from *Physica* (IV. 10–14. 217b–224a)³ and nuanced by the Stoic philosophical school and the Neo-Platonic one, associated time with the cyclical movement of the celestial bodies, identifying even a psychological dimension of time, with a particular inner rhythm, different from soul to soul, either slower or more alert.

This second perception of a time, related to the spatial dimension and with the cyclicity of celestial motions, gained in popularity, even imposing itself as scientific, having on its side the doubtless support of the succession of seasons in a year and of the continually uniform “rotation” of the asters world in a stable and intangible position. Time, therefore, was going to be measured using periodical “spatial” measurement units (such as those related to the movement of the bodies in space), and the spatial “movement” (be it the simple rest or that on a certain distance) using a certain temporal interval.

Before Aristotle, there had been other visions of temporality. The Platonist one, for instance, firmly distinguished between eternity as an absolute (perfect) idea of time and time as imperfect image of eternity (*Timaeus* 37D–38B).⁴ In this vision, the One, the absolute principle of the intelligible and material universe, was conceived as exempted from any temporal attribute and “located” beyond space and time (idea taken over and elaborated especially by the Neo-Platonists).

Thus, what eternity represented in Plato's vision, was going to become transposed in the language of the Aristotelian realism by the association with movement (as defining element of temporality), a succession of present moments (“now”) in close connection with the movement of the objects in the universe and, therefore, characteristic of the cosmos. The eternity of the cosmos was going to become, with the Stoics, that *continua*,⁵ a permanence made up of divisions of “present”, in an indefinite chain, and was going to be associated implicitly with the existence and movement of the bodies.⁶

Plotinus in his work *On Eternity and Time*, refuting all the previous definitions the philosophers applied to eternity, makes a step forward developing his own conception of eternity as “the life which belongs to that which exists and is in being, all together and full,

¹ Samuel Sambursky, *The Physical World of Late Antiquity*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2014, pp. 10-12.

² Philo IX, *De aeternitate mundi* 76–84, in col. “Loeb Classical Library” (“LCL”), vol. 363, edited by Jeffrey Henderson, with an English translation by Philips H. Wicksteed and Francis M. Cornford, ²1954, pp. 239-245. Boethus dismisses the Stoics's opinion that the world would undergo a destruction. He supported the world's perennity and, at the same time, according to Philo's testimony, the world's existence along with its Principle / Cause (Divinity), as environment of manifestation of the divine action, understood in the sense of the philosophy of time (a meaning taken over by Origen, as well, along the line of Gnosticism), of *anima mundi* (world soul).

³ Aristotle IV, *The Physics*, books I-IV, in col. “Loeb Classical Library” (“LCL”), vol. 228, with an English translation by Philips H. Wicksteed and Francis M. Cornford, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, ²1957, pp. 372-427.

⁴ Plato IX, *Timaeus. Critias. Cleitophon. Menexenus. Epistles*, in col. “LCL”, vol. 234, with an English translation by R.G. Bury, 1929, pp. 74-77.

⁵ Paul Scade, “Plato and the Stoics on limits, parts and wholes” in Alexander G. Long (ed.), *Plato and the Stoics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013, p. 92.

⁶ Samuel Sambursky, *The Physical World of Late Antiquity...*, p. 16: “Periodicity on a small and on a large scale, and the return of the identical, must have been a welcome counterbalance to the conception of an eternally lasting universe, existing without beginning and without end.”

completely without extension or interval“ (ch. 3. 36–38).⁷ Plotin’s view of the origin and nature of time consists in the life of the soul in its restless movement from one thing to another (a feature associated with the separation of the soul from the quiet unity of Intellect); the universe is, consequently, in time because the soul has put itself into time (ch. 11). If the soul turned back altogether to the intelligible world and its eternity, time would stop.⁸

With this vision about time from Antiquity, we will move on to exploring the reception of this notion in the Revealed teaching of the *Holy Scripture*, and in the way it was received and interpreted by the Church Fathers and Church writers of the Greek language.

2. CONCEPTIONS ON TEMPORALITY IN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

The Old Testament proposes a different vision of temporality compared to that of Hellenic philosophy. It speaks about a beginning of the world, a creation of the cosmos by God and the setting of a succession of nights and days for humans by the creation of “luminaries” with specific functions: the Sun, the Moon, and the stars (*Genesis* 1: 14-16). In other words, we have in front of us a time of Divinity with an infinite dimension, beyond the human power of quantification, and a time of creation encompassed in God’s generous time (measured in divine “days”, *Ps.* 89: 4), but with a beginning and with a possible end. Adam and Eve, the forefathers of humanity, appear as destined through the creation to an eternal communion with God, but, opposed to it, by cunning, is the tempting devil’s intervention, who proposes to man an autonomous existence, in competition with God.

The rupture of the connection between man and the Creator, by the sin of disobedience / opposition to the divine “plan” inscribed in human nature, leads to a breaking up of the whole human universe on all levels of existence, including in relation to time. Time becomes, from partner on the way to eternity, a merciless chronometer of its biological life toward the desolating end of corruption and death.

Only the divine theophanies and prophetic words of the prophets inspired by the Spirit keep filling with meaning the life of the earthly humans sent out of the closed Eden, waiting for a Saviour Who is a red thread of the history of humanity, especially by the chosen representative, the Jewish people, selected due to the faith of its forefather: Abraham. The coming of the Messiah awaited from generation to generation, king and archbishop at the same time, is accompanied by the promise of restoration of the entire created existence in a state of abundance synonymous to happiness and eternal peace. Mention is made of a reward for the just and a punishment for God’s enemies, with both of them situated in a temporal framework (*Psalms* 32: 35; *Wisdom* 11: 21; *Isaiah* 11: 6).

In brief, we have a linear vision of temporality and the time of the creatures in the divine time, without God’s “time” also supposing a limit or a beginning of His existence, but only the image that can be sketched by the creatures submitted inseparably to temporality and to the idea of time.⁹

⁷ Plotinus, *Enneads*, III. 7. *On Eternity and Time*, in col. “LCL”, vol. 442, with an English translation by A.H. Armstrong, ³1993, pp. 304-305.

⁸ Plotinus, *Enneads*, III. 7, pp. 294-295; 336-343.

⁹ Paul Plass, “The Concept of Eternity in Patristic Theology”, in *Studia Theologica*, 36.1 (1982), pp. 11-25. Saint Gregory the Theologian underlines the same powerlessness of the created beings to conceive an existence not encompassed by time, as God is: “we cannot avoid the imagery of time when we wish to express what is above time. For such expressions as *when* and *before* and *after* and *from the beginning* are not timeless, however much we twist their meaning. It will be necessary for us to adopt the standard of Eternity, that interval which extends through all things above and beyond time, and which is not divided or measured by any movement, nor by the revolution of the Sun, as time is measured.” (Gregory of Nazianzus, “Theological

The New Testament maintains itself along the same linearity of time, with some specific nuances. The embodiment of the Word, the Son of God, marks in the human time an indelible imprint of the divine plenitude, becoming a signpost for all the generations of humans. It is the sign of the Annunciation, of the beginning of salvation and of discovery of He Who is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end (the Creator and the supreme target) of all. As human, Christ fills the time with meaning, his ascent in time as a man being synonymous with a spiritual ascent He is realizing in union with His humanity, a means and, after the Resurrection, a source communicating holiness and life to all.

Christ comes to accomplish what had been written in the divine plan, namely in man's being, those moments *kairoi*¹⁰ necessary for the perfecting of virtue, salvation, and deification. "The day" and "the hour" ordained by God as saving and perfecting for man and creation are known only to Him, rather out of man's powerlessness to perceive them and instability in respecting them. Without representing predestinations or suspensions of man's freedom, they have to do with the providential divine action which intervenes in a saving manner when the creatures are heading toward self-destruction, the biological death of each man in turn and the eschaton of the world representing such stops "set" by God for mankind to avoid the general advancement of the being toward the abyss of the Gehenna. They are, therefore, like a necessary "freeze-frame", without which no one could achieve salvation (Mark 13: 20).

Christ's Resurrection refills with power the time of mankind, opening for man the communication and the communion with the spiritual world and with God by the fact that man can pre-taste "the lost paradise" ("the Tree of life", the Eucharist) and from the feast prepared in the Kingdom of heaven, realized partially "already", as beginning, here and now, but "not yet" in full. So, as Oscar Cullmann observed, time in the biblical vision does not appear to be a problem for the divine majesty, but, we could add, springs from Him as a life-carrying energy that offers a framework of existence to the universe created with a view to being made perfect: "The terminology of the New Testament teaches us that, according to the Primitive Christian conception, time in its unending extension as well as in its individual periods and moments is given by God and ruled by Him. Therefore, *all* His acting is so inevitably bound up with time that time is not felt to be a problem."¹¹

3. TIME IN THE VISION OF THE HOLY FATHERS

This vision of time, defined by its linearity ascending toward a restoring end, suffered in time under the inherent influences of Hellenistic culture and philosophy. There were Christian doctrines, such as Gnosticism, which "apostatized" from the understanding of time as a divine "gift", a framework for the human existence and forgetting to discern the way of meeting and knowing God as man's supreme (only) Benefactor.

The rejection of the vision of God's continual presence in creation (by His providential energies and by the embodiment and Resurrection) led to heresies such as

Orations 3: On the Son, 1", in *Five Theological Orations*, translated with an introduction and notes by Stephen Reynold, Estate of Stephen Reynolds 2011, p. 47.)

¹⁰ Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and time: The primitive Christian conception of time and history*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1962, p. 39-42.

¹¹ Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and time...*, p. 49.

Docetism (and later Arianism), which started from the presupposition of an incompatibility between the divine “unbegotten” simplicity and the multiple, “begotten” existence.¹²

Even great theologians like Origen and Evagrius Ponticus, under this cultural influence, were inclined to accept a cosmological model and a perspective on temporality alien to the divine revelation. The distinction between an eternal pre-temporal framework in which the spiritual beings pre-existed and a cyclical, enslaving, temporal framework, in which they fell out of negligence (by committing a *hybris*), sliding into materiality and finitude, was going to mark Christian theological thinking for centuries, depriving it of the sap and clarity of a presence and imminent arrival of God’s Kingdom (synonymous with the transfiguration of the present time by the communion with God and with one’s fellows).

It is the merit of Saint Irenaeus of Lyons for redrawing the boundaries of a Christian understanding of temporality. He did so by accentuating the redeeming character of time as temporal “topos” of man’s restoration in Christ, the true God and true man. The Fathers of Nicaea followed the same line of reasoning, then Saint Athanasius the Great, the Father of Orthodoxy (defender of the Divinity of the embodied Logos), and the Cappadocian Fathers, who clarified the distinction between the limited, generative character of the being and the unfathomable, yet revealing, infinity of the Tri-Hypostatic Divinity.

Far from being a fruit of abstract thinking, the patristic vision about time is one guided by the Tradition of the Church and outlined out of pastoral necessities and practical reasons. In his sermons to *Hexaemeron*, Saint Basil the Great rejects the co-eternity of the cosmos with God, a conception supported by the philosophy of Antiquity, as we have seen, but also by some Christian heresies and cosmological models, which insisted on God’s feature as Creator since eternity. In this polemic, the great Cappadocian theologian brings into focus several conceptions about temporality, some applicable to the divinity, others to the creation, indicating temporal divisions appropriate to the things that exist, as an adequate framework for their development. First, he insists on God’s attribute as Creator, an attribute conferring Him a minimal “pre-existence” to the creatures, the creation being an act of will on His part, not an emanation of the Divine Being. About God’s existence prior to creation, as Saint Basil the Great shows, we cannot affirm anything, as it goes beyond the power of our “age” as creatures; all we can do is express the conviction that “an order of things existed of which our mind can [only *our note*] form an idea.”¹³

At the same time, the creation seen in time was preceded by a temporal reality unknown to man, “eternal and infinite,” in which the spiritual beings, the angels, were created:

The birth of the world was preceded by a condition of things suitable for the exercise of supernatural powers, outstripping the limits of time, eternal, and infinite. The Creator and Demiurge of the universe perfected His works in it, spiritual light for the happiness of all who love the Lord, intellectual and invisible natures, all the orderly arrangement of pure intelligences who are beyond the

¹² Mihail Neamțu, “Teologie, metafizică și politică în secolul al IV-lea: Sf. Grigorie de Nyssa versus Eunomie al Cyzicului”, introductory study to the vol. Grigorie de Nyssa, *Împotriva lui Eunomie I (Contra Eunomium I)*, bilingual edition, translation and notes by Ovidiu Sferlea, edition curated by Adrian Muraru, Polirom, 2010, p. 52.

¹³ *Homily I, 5*, in Schaff, Philip (ed.), *Basil: Letters and Select Works*, in col. “The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. Second Series”, vol. 8, translated with notes by Rev. Blomfield Jackson, M.A. T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1997, p. 217.

reach of our mind and of whom we cannot even discover the names. They fill the essence of this invisible world, as Paul teaches us (Col. 1, 16).¹⁴

“At the end,” “a new world” was added to this creation, “both a school and training place where the souls of men should be taught and a home for beings destined to be born and to die. Thus, was created, of a nature analogous to that of this world and the animals and plants which live thereon, the succession of time, for ever pressing on and passing away and never stopping in its course.”¹⁵

Saint Basil insists on the pedagogical character of human time, in which the spiritual growth of the creatures, being largely abandoned through sin, impresses the flow of growth, maturity, and death of the biological creatures in the universe. The “natural” state of growth and decomposition, specific of the world seen after the separation of man from God, is, however, a temporary and finite one, as a supplementary certitude that the visible existence, too, will undergo, after death, a transfiguration in harmony with God’s will and providence. The provisional character of the visible existence excludes, all the more, the claim of some that it would be simultaneous to the divine Principle:

Therefore, if he [Moses n.n.] makes the world appear in the beginning, it is not a proof that its birth has preceded that of all other things that were made. He only wishes to tell us that, after the invisible and intellectual world, the visible world, the world of the senses, began to exist.¹⁶

Saint Gregory of Nazianzus admits, in his turn, that time has a preparatory character. The limits of time have an instructive character and revitalize in people the desire of eternity and of “permanent” things. All the more in the Church, the sanctifying topos and kairos, time is shaken and suffers a transfiguration unfathomable to the human mind, related to the temporal framework submitted to transience and ephemerality. The Church, Christ’s Body extended in his humanity, experiences an intangible time, an Eucharistic time, living with restoring and anamnestic intensity all the blessed moments of the history of salvation. This is accomplished through Christ’s presence in the Holy Spirit descended from the Father, Who fills to the full human time, outpouring the heavenly overflow in the souls thirsting for the absolute. The old Adam submitted to death has passed, the New [Adam], Christ, is and will come.

The present time finds its plenitude on the eighth day, the day of God’s Kingdom. It erupts in our daily life even since this life when the Christian believer lives in time, yet in an eschatological manner oriented after the existence of God’s Kingdom. The eighth day has as equivalent in the ecclesial vocabulary those points by which the eschaton penetrates the present time and remakes, even since this life, in a mystical manner, the connection with the eternity of divine communion.

The Cappadocian Fathers reinterpreted the restoration that Origen was speaking about in scriptural terms, identifying it with the eighth day, when those disturbed through sin would resume their perpetual stability-movement to God by recapitulating all the people in Christ. “The Day of the Lord”, “the nightless Day”, “the day with no succession”, or “the endless day” will have neither night, nor end, being independent of the main characteristics of the rotation of the celestial bodies, the graceful light of the divine knowledge illumining man and every being by an overflow of endless life.

¹⁴ *Homily I, 5, p. 217-218.*

¹⁵ *Homily I, 5, p. 218.*

¹⁶ *Homily I, 5, p. 218.*

CONCLUSION

Far from being a corruption of the linear vision of time as it is presented by the divine Revelation written in the *Holy Scriptures*, the Christian vision of the Holy Fathers presents several necessary mentions in the cultural and religious context of the Hellenistic world of Antiquity. Faced with heretical Christian doctrines, the Church came with the edifying answer, reinterpreting the terminology of the philosophy of Greek Antiquity in conformity with the revealed truth. In brief, the immeasurable distance between the uncreated Trinitarian God and the created spiritual and material universe supposes not just a qualitative ontological difference, but also a radical difference between the divine and human ways of thinking, the latter being powerless to discern the features of the divine being.

From a human perspective, one can speak about an infinite time or about the eternity as a mantle of the divine existence, as the authors of the *Scripture* express themselves, but, more adequately, man ought to keep silent regarding the divine.

Similarly, about the created spiritual beings, the angels, one can emit the opinion that they exist in an immense time, of the order of the aeons (“aeon”, αἰών), which extends beyond the power of comprehension of the human mind, which does not go against spiritual progress. Although it has a beginning through creation, it has no end in the direction of the communion with God.

Man, finally, is determined by some spatial-temporal coordinates that are provisional for him in their present form, as a consequence of his drifting away from the sense, by his drifting away from God. However, Christ, the embodied Son of God, reconnected man to the divine communion, offering as a gift to each human being an unshakeable stability in this spiritual ascent.¹⁷ The daily time is, therefore, a moment of meditation offered to man in order to formulate a decisive answer to his relation with God (the Way of entering the eternal Life) or, as the Romanian theologian Father Dumitru Stăniloae states: time is the distance between God’s calling and man’s answer.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ierom. Basil Lourié, “Temporality and a Metric for Created Natures in Gregory of Nyssa. Toward two recent monographs on his concept of time”, in *Scrinium*, 12 (2016), p. 351: “Διάστημα is precisely this distance. In the «distance spaces» on the intelligible creatures it defines their infinite distance that they have to overcome for reaching the deification.”

¹⁸ Pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Timp și veșnicie*, SLG Press Convent of the Incarnation Fairacress, Oxford, 1971, p. 8.

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BYZANTINE PUBLIC POLICIES: CHARISTIKE

Prof. Rodica Elena SOARE (GHEORGHIU),
Ph.D. student at Faculty of Orthodox Theology,
“Ovidius” University of Constanța,
ROMANIA,
E-mail: rodicagheorghiu12@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The institutional strengthening of monasticism as derived from the iconoclastic period, increased the popular piety towards the monks through that of the upper Byzantine social classes, the civil and military aristocracy and the imperial circle. This led to a substantial increase in the number of monasteries from the ninth to the twelfth centuries. While a good part of these did not last long, new monasteries continued to be erected and the wealth of others increased considerably. Due to the owned land properties, the monasteries became an active part of the Byzantine Empire's economy, imposing the need for regulations and activation of specific economic mechanisms. One of the practices applied to monasteries in the tenth and eleventh centuries is charistike. Its purpose was to assign the monastery to a person, charistikarios, who was obliged to manage it financially, receiving as a benefit, the right to dispose of total income and movable and immovable property of the monastery. This study aims to present aspects of the practice of charistike, and the influence and changes brought on Byzantine society and culture.

Keywords: Charistike; Monasticism; Typikon; Eleventh century; Economy;

INTRODUCTION

Monasticism occupied an important place in the Byzantine world, representing the spiritual ideal, the path to perfection for all Byzantines. Its spiritual character did not segregate monasticism from society, even becoming an active component of the Empire's economy over time. This is due, on the one hand, to the institutional character that monasticism has acquired over the centuries, based entirely on ascetic life with all the reverberations produced by it at all levels of the social structure.¹ The affirmation and acceptance of the monastic institution, especially after the confrontation produced by the iconoclastic heresy, had, as a result, the appearance of a large number of monasteries from the ninth to the twelfth centuries, most of them being an imperial and aristocratic initiative.² On the other hand, the monastery, a monastic “territory” par excellence, paradoxically also represented the meeting place and reason for the interaction between the monk and the secular world, with strong social, economic and political implications. Being involved in the

¹ Rodica Elena Soare, “Monahismul răsăritean, de la asceza particulară la forma instituțională”, in *Biserica Ortodoxă, statul și societatea românească. Istorie, cultură și mărturisire creștină în societatea europeană*, ediția a III-a, Constanța, 24-25 mai 2021, ed.: Pr. Conf. Dr. Constantin Claudiu Cotan, Editura Universitară, București (2021), pp. 81-89.

² Peter Charanis, *The monk as an element of Byzantine society*, *Dumbarton Oaks papers*, vol. 25 (1971), p. 67.

social and ecclesiastical life in the Greek East and in the Latin West, the presence of monks was equally manifested throughout the whole Christian area.³ The piety of the laymen led to the endowment with land properties and various other movable and immovable assets, which often exceeded the capacity of monks' administration and, especially, their desire to have these worries for the material aspects of life.

1. THE STATUS AND STATE OF MONASTERIES IN THE TENTH AND ELEVENTH CENTURIES

From a spiritual perspective, the monastery is a gift to God, which should limit human intervention in some respects. The most problematic human actions in this regard are related to the alienation of the goods consecrated to God. From the legal perspective, the monastery was built from a personal initiative, being therefore private property. Thus, the owned properties placed the monasteries among the landowners, subjecting them to the imperial laws applicable to them. From the canonical perspective, the establishment of a monastery could not be done without the consent of the Church through the local bishop, to whom the monks were subjected, according to canon 4 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon.

In this context, the imperial laws on the purchase of smallholders', peasants', or soldiers' properties by large aristocratic owners, also refer to monasteries, some of which are considered as belonging to large owners and others belonging to the category of small owners. According to the Emperor Romanus I Lecapenus's novel in 934, *hegoumenoi* falls into the category of the "powerful" – *δυνατοί*, along with the metropolitans, bishops and archbishops, the emperor forbidding them to purchase land from peasants.⁴ Another novel offers the example of a monastery as a small owner. The novel issued in 996 by Emperor Basil II redefined the status of monasteries founded in villages on the lands of free peasants, calling the settlements with less than eight monks, houses of prayer and not monasteries.⁵ Its purpose was to protect the land ownership of small monasteries founded by peasants on their own land. Such a settlement was found lasting no longer than the very life of the founder. If it was considered a monastery, after the death of the peasant founder who was sometimes a monk too, this land would go out of the economic circuit of the Empire passing into the Church patrimony.

The emperors' concern about the efficient use of land was natural in the context of the centralized economy based on tax revenues. The success of the army and therefore the security of the Empire depended on the proper functioning of the economy and the effectiveness of tax collection. At the foundation of the Byzantine economy was the fiscal economic unit, *chorion* – the Byzantine village, which provided most of the taxes paid from working of the land. The interest in the good administration of the monasteries' lands follows the same reasoning, and the imperial concern for them arose due to the inability of the monks to work the lands received through donations and the waste of capital due to the lack of labor force. At the same time, the emperors intuited the economic potential of the monasteries under the conditions of a good administration. The effective management of the monasteries brought revenue to both the State and the Church. A document with a double

³ Constantin Claudiu Cotan, „*Petru Damiani sau imaginea unei autorități bisericești din secolul al XI-lea*”, in *Biserica Ortodoxă, statul și societatea românească...*, pp. 362-380.

⁴ *Jus Graeco-Romanum. 3: Novellae constitutiones*, Zachariae von Lingenthal (ed.), T.O. Weigel, Leipzig, 1857, Coll. III, Nov. V, p. 246.

⁵ *Jus Graeco-Romanum. 3*, Coll. III, Nov. XXVIII, pp. 313-315.

significance for this study is the novel of Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (963-969) issued in 964.⁶ First of all, it provides information on the state of the monasteries in the tenth century. Secondly, it launches the concept of the efficiency of the material administration of monasteries, which was the basis of *charistike*, marking its initiation.

The contribution of the monastic institution to the victory over iconoclasm allowed the resumption of the momentum of the establishment of monasteries before it. Thus, “their number increased greatly and became disproportionate to the need”, and the erection of monasteries continued, although thousands of monasteries needed material support with the passage of time. The emperor condemned the obstination with which some people continued to establish monasteries instead of helping to rehabilitate the existing ones, considering it vain glory, so he also banned such initiatives. Instead, he recommended that the monasteries be endowed not only with land properties, but also with those necessary for the work of their land and the acquisition of income, “slaves, oxen, sheep and other animals.” Therefore, the monasteries with good administration, became even a source of material and not only spiritual profit for the Empire. However, in order not to lose this spiritual gain, material concerns did not have to prevail for the monks, but had to be left in the laymen’s care, this aspect being an essential aspect in differentiating the two social categories. This was the suggested solution to the present economic problem of the Empire: to stop the construction of new monasteries and to renovate and efficiently manage the existing ones. The involvement of the laity in the life of the monastery was not a novelty at the end of the first millennium, it seemed to be practiced even before the Fourth Council of Chalcedon, since canon 24 issued at this council, regarding the change of destination of the monasteries, stipulated that “the monasteries once sanctified (consecrated) with the consent (approval) of the bishop should remain forever to the monastery and the goods (things), the possessions which hang (hold) on them (belong to them) to be preserved.” The canon was reiterated at the Quinisext Council, explicitly specifying that the monasteries should not “be granted (...) by any man to the worldly men (lay people)”.

Despite these prohibitions, the practice of entrusting monasteries to the laity continued until the tenth century, being mentioned in the Emperor Basil II’s novel: “metropolitans and bishops can grant or transfer these monasteries to anyone who will want” (the reference being related to monasteries whose foundation violated the law of houses of prayer), or “as regards the independent and large old monasteries, we order them to remain, as in the past, under the authority of metropolitans or bishops who can present or transfer them to anyone they wish.”⁷

2. PUBLIC POLICY OF ADMINISTRATION OF MONASTERIES, *CHARISTIKE*

Since the end of the tenth century⁸, this practice of entrusting monasteries mainly to lay people, under specific conditions, acquires, through the legislative initiative of Emperor Basil II and the agreement of Patriarch Nicholas II Chrysoberges (980-992)⁹, the aspect of a public policy¹⁰ known as *χαριστική* – *charistike*.¹¹

⁶ *Jus Graeco-Romanum*. 3, Coll. III, Nov. XXVIII, pp. 292-296.

⁷ *Jus Graeco-Romanum*. 3, Coll. III, Nov. XXVIII, pp. 313-315.

⁸ Emil Herman, “*Ricerche sulle istituzioni monastiche bizantine. Typika ktetorika, caristicari e monasteri liberi*”, in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 6 (1940), p. 317.

⁹ Emil Herman, “*Ricerche sulle istituzioni monastiche ...*”, p. 317.

¹⁰ John P. Thomas, “*The Rise of the Independent and Self-governing Monasteries as Reflected in the Monastic Typika*”, in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, vol. 30.1 (1985), p. 24.

The origin of this practice is not explicitly documented, as it is inferred from the mentions in the various imperial or patriarchal documents, from its results, from the reactions aroused and from the measures that have been tried to be taken to limit or stop its negative effects. Also, another important source of information are the monastic typika, whose appearance in large numbers since the very tenth century is attributed to this practice of *charistike*.

“The gift of grace” or *χαρίστηκε δωρεά* – *charístike doreá*¹² was an assignment, made to any person, regardless of social status, sex or material situation, during his life¹³ (and can extend to the third generation), with the purpose of restoring and administering¹⁴ a monastery, church establishment or charitable foundation, hospital, orphanage, nursing home, etc. The donation was made as a whole, including the rights and privileges of the monastery and all its assets, both movable and immovable.

According to the law, the beneficiary, *charistikarios* did not become the owner, but had the right to usufruct, as a reward for his effort and expertise. He had to draw up a plan of investments from his own capital and measures, and his activity had to be limited to the material problems of the monastery, leaving the monks time and tranquility to deal with the spiritual ones. In the documents, *charistikarioi* also appear with the names *δεσποτης* – despot or *προνοήτες* – suppliers, *επίτροπος* – epitrope, *προστάτης*, *κοσμήτω* – deacon, *ἀντιλήπτωρ*, *ἀντιλαμβανόμενος* – preceptor, *έφορος* – curator, names adopted by the beneficiaries themselves to emphasize their quality as service providers to the monastery.¹⁵ The founder of a monastery could also be the *charistikarios* of another. The vast majority of beneficiaries came from among the laity, but there are some examples of *charistikarioi* and among the monks: Michael Psellos, Saint Simeon the New Theologian or clergymen, such as patriarch Constantine III Leichoudes (1059-1063).¹⁶

The most documented model of *charistikarios* is that of Michael Psellos. For him, *charistike* was not only the source of income that ensured his financial prosperity, but it was a commitment similar to that of marriage. The well-known Byzantine personality perfected this occupation to the level of profession. Being focused on the productive potential of the monastery, its administration followed an established business plan. For the success of the activities undertaken, tax exemptions, conflict resolution or the protection of monks, Psellos did not hesitate to use his personal relationships. He managed the monasteries taken in *charistike* with responsibility and good intentions, and for his experience, capital, relations and effort, he was sought after by the communities of many monasteries.¹⁷ Thus, he made important profits without injustice to the monasteries, which received their own benefit. For this, the monks of Ta Narsou monastery, to which he was connected by his childhood

¹¹ The form used in Byzantine documents is *charistike*, not *charistikion*, cf. Hélène Ahrweiler, „*Charisticariat et autres formes de fondations pieuses aux X-XI siècles*”, in *Zbornik radova Vizantoloskog Instituta*, vol. 10 (1967), p. 1.

¹² Mark C. Bartusis, “charistikion”, in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, A. P. Kazhdan et. alli. (eds.), Oxford University Press, New York/Oxford, 1991, pp. 412-413.

¹³ Peter Charanis, “*The Monastic Properties and the State in the Byzantine Empire*”, in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 4 (1948), p. 74.

¹⁴ Αλεξίου, *Ισον Υπομνήματοσ*, in *Σύνταγμα τῶν Θείων καὶ Ἱερῶν Κανόνων*, vol. 5, G.A. Ralli and M. Potli (eds.), Grigoris Publication, Atena, 1855, p. 21

¹⁵ Hélène Ahrweiler, “*Charisticariat et autres formes ...*”, p. 3.

¹⁶ Constantin Claudiu Cotan, „*Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog - părintele teologiei luminii divine*”, in *Biserica Ortodoxă, statul și societatea românească...*, pp. 178-190.

¹⁷ Constantin Claudiu Cotan, *Mihail Psellos și veacul său*, in *Biserica Ortodoxă, statul și societatea românească...*, pp. 49-61.

education period, considered him not only the *charistikarios*, but also the founder. All the letters of Psellos requesting something in the name of a monastery emphasized that the good deed by which the request was fulfilled was dedicated to Mother of God and the Holy Martyrs. From his letters one can deduce the particular situations in which the monasteries given in *charistike* could be: a monastery could be managed simultaneously by even 3 people, each being responsible with its investment and financial situation; the taxes paid by the monastery could be “adjusted”, depending on the relationship between the *charistikarios* and the imperial official designated for the *thema* where the monastery was located; the taxes paid were the same as for the private property; imperial officials, such as the *thema* judge (*krites*), could abuse the hospitality of the monasteries.¹⁸

Attribution of a monastery as *charistike* could be made to persons or institutions that had property rights or canonical jurisdiction over monasteries: the patriarch for patriarchal monasteries, metropolitans, archbishops and bishoprics for episcopal monasteries, the emperor for imperial monasteries, officials for monasteries located on the public domain of the state, private persons (usually the founders and their heirs) for private monasteries, the peasant communal assembly for the monasteries belonging territorially to a village, the various officials for the monasteries located on their domains, the monks themselves from a monastery represented by the abbot, in the case of autonomous monasteries.¹⁹

The reasons for giving the monasteries by the emperors were political ones. Thus, *charistike* was used to assign monasteries to some people as rewards for their services or loyalty. The *logothetes* Nikephoritzes asked Emperor Michael VII (1067-1078) to be assigned the Hebdeomon monastery, with the promise that he would strengthen it and grant it abundantly from his income. The monastery became the thriving economic headquarters of the *logothetes*.²⁰ The Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus (1042-1055) granted in *charistike* regime the monastery of Homonoia to Anna Radene. The same emperor attributed the imperial monastic complex Saint George of Mangana to Constantine III Leichoudes during his lifetime.²¹ The way in which this monastery was granted was called the *pronoia* in the documents of the time, although the use of this term in this situation is controversial. *Pronoia* represented the way of granting properties, other than monasteries, specific to the emperor. The monastery of Mangana was assigned in the *charistike* system, meeting all the specific conditions, the confusion came from the fact that the donation was made by the emperor.²² The granting of the monastery was strengthened in writing by Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus, exceptionally giving him this immunity. Constantine III Leichoudes renounced to his privileged position and implicitly the income of *charistikarios* in favour of that of the patriarch, accepting the conditioning imposed by Emperor Isaak I Komnenos (1057-1059).²³ By placing the possession of the imperial complex in balance with the patriarchal seat, one can assess the importance and value of the heritage offered by *charistike*. In this case, it was used politically, as a currency of exchange. Isaac Komnenos

¹⁸ Michael Jeffreys, Marc D. Lauxtermann, *The Letters of Psellos. Cultural Networks and Historical Realities*, Michael Jeffreys, Marc D. Lauxtermann (eds.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2017, pp. 185-186, 221-222, 229-230, 287, 375, 399.

¹⁹ Hélène Ahrweiler, “*Charisticariat et autres formes ...*”, pp. 7-8.

²⁰ Michaelis Attaliothae, *Historia*, Wladimir Brunet de Presle; Immanuel Bekker, Weber, Bonn, 1853, p. 201.

²¹ Michael Jeffreys, Marc D. Lauxtermann, *The Letters of Psellos...*, pp. 24, 199.

²² Hélène Ahrweiler, “*Charisticariat et autres formes ...*”, p. 25.

²³ Eugen Stănescu, “*Les réformes d’Isaac Comnène*”, in *Revue des études sud-est européennes*, Tome IV, Nos. 1-2, Editura Academiei de Științe Sociale și Politice, București (1966), p. 51.

wanted to diminish the power of the future patriarch over the imperial domains and to clearly delimit the powers in the State. Another example that shows the generalization of this practice is its use even in the areas bordering the Empire, in Italy. The *spatharokandidatos* Christofor Bochomakes received the administration of the monastery of St. Peter in Taranto from the *katepánō* Gregory Trachaniotes as a reward for his service in the battles with the Arabs in Sicily.²⁴ The *katepánō* was the representative of the emperor empowered to make decisions on his behalf.²⁵

The attribution of monasteries for administration appeared and developed in various forms, even in and by the Church.²⁶ With the exception of imperial monasteries, and later autonomous monasteries, the other monastic settlements were under the jurisdiction of the Church. They were an important source of income for bishops and metropolitans, therefore *charistike* was considered a good practice for streamlining monasteries in ruins or in financial stalemate, which would not only have brought any income, but would have been even a burden. Strictly within the Church, another type of donation was practiced, a variant of *charistike*, namely *ἐπίδοσις* – *epidosis*. With the establishment of patriarchal protection over stauropegic monasteries, the revenues from this type of monastery were transmitted only to the Patriarchate of Constantinopol, regardless of the diocese in which it was located. This led to a decrease of the incomes of the bishoprics from the monasteries. *Epidosis* was used to provide an additional income to these bishoprics and metropolitans. The beneficiary of the *epidosis* received for exploitation one of the properties of a monastery, for which he had to pay a part of the profit obtained, in money or its value by another way of remuneration. A bishopric or metropolitan in poor material conditions could receive the income of a well-equipped monastery in *epidosis*. Basically, it was a redistribution of income between two unequally developed church settlements.²⁷

3. ABUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE PRACTICE OF CHARISTIKE

From the very beginning of the implementation of *charistike*, negative effects have become visible due to the abusive use of this form of administration of church property. The first deviation is the very hijacking of the system from its main purpose. The monasteries given to the laity were not always the ones in a financial impasse or in need of improvement, but on the contrary, the thriving ones. Without investing, *charistikarioi* enriched themselves on the expense of the monasteries, which led to their ruination, because not only the additional income was used, but even the goods of the monastery were sold. The transfer of the right of *charistike* from one person to another allowed the exemption of responsibilities.²⁸ Thus, the trace of the abusively assigned goods was easy to erase.

Another violation of the rules of *charistike* was the intervention in matters of spiritual and monastic discipline: the imposition of novices in the monastery without taking into account the rules of the monastic community, at best, the abbot being only informed; the presence of a large number of laymen in the monastery, almost as that of the monks, who led

²⁴ Francisco Trinchera, (ed.), *Syllabus Graecarum membranarum*, Neapoli, 1865, X, p. 9.

²⁵ Rodica Elena Soare, „*Monahismul italo-grec din Italia bizantină în secolul al XI-lea*”, in *Glasul Bisericii*, nr. 4-6 (2021), pp. 132-133.

²⁶ Hélène Ahrweiler, “*Charisticariat et autres formes ...*”, p. 15.

²⁷ Albert Failler, “*Le monachisme byzantin aux XIe-XIIe siècles. Aspects sociaux et économiques*”, in *Actes des congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l'enseignement supérieur public, 5^e congrès*, Saint-Etienne (1974), p. 186.

²⁸For example, the patriarchal monastery of Saint Mamas, Paul Gautier, “*Réquisitoire du patriarche Jean d'Antioche contre le charisticariat*”, in *Revue des études byzantines*, tome 33 (1975), p. 114.

a life that did not comply with the monastic rules; undermining the authority of the abbot, which led to disorder and disobedience on the part of the monks; the use of the monastery as a domestic residence, which allowed the presence of women in the monasteries of monks or men in nunneries.

These abuses were reported by the Patriarch John V the Oxyte of Antioch (1090-1155) in an indictment addressed to the public opinion and attention of Emperor Alexios I Comnenus (1081-1118).²⁹ In order to emphasize the seriousness of the facts, Patriarch John – known as the notorious accuser of illegalities, compared the practice of *charistike* to the heresy and desecration of gifts to God. The likeness of the emperors who initiated, practiced and tolerated *charistike* with the iconoclastic ones, however, was exaggerated, being valid only in the effects that this practice could have had on salvation from the perspective of Patriarch John of Ochia. While iconoclastic emperors wanted to destroy monasticism for its ideological principles, the emperors of the eleventh century supported it to draw material benefits from monasteries for the economy of the Empire. The abuses, however, were undeniable. To correct them, some of the patriarchs tried to take some measures. Constantinopolitan Patriarch Sisinnius II (996-998) had sensed from the very beginning the wrong direction in which the use of this practice was heading, so he commanded that the patriarchal monasteries under the *charistike* program should return to the custody of the Patriarchy. This decision was overturned by his successor, Patriarch Sergius II (999-1019), who justified that the provisions refer only to the correction of irregularities and not to the entire system of *charistike*.³⁰ Subsequent measures followed that same pattern - *charistike* was not abolished, but only intervened to remove the abuses. Patriarch Alexius I the Studite (1025-1043) at the synods of 1027 and 1028³¹ highlighted the blatant illegalities of the *charistikarioi*, prohibited by the synodal decision: the transfer of the right of *charistike* to a third person; assigning a monastery of monks to a woman *charistikarios* and a nunnery to a man; punishing the abusive *charistikarioi* going as far as cancelling the cession of the monastery; imposing to the *charistikarioi* on diocesan monasteries to respect their duties to bishops and metropolitans; the prohibition of the assignment of monasteries in the vicinity of the diocesan headquarters; the return of monasteries assigned in *epidosis* to the bishoprics and metropolises in law, if their economic situation became unstable.³²

The limitation of the power of *charistikarios* over the material administration of the monastery failed with all the efforts of Patriarch Alexius I the Studite. Thus, by the middle of the eleventh century, the practice of *charistike*, now institutionalized, reached its peak. The Church seemed to give in to such rapacious beneficiaries, more and more monasteries being ceded. The takeover of power by Emperor Isaak Komnenos (1057-1059) raised a new issue for the Church. The emperor was determined to confiscate the entire monastic and church properties surplus, which put the Church in a position to choose the lesser evil, in this case, it accepted the continuation of the cession of the monasteries with all the risk of abuses, in order not to lose them in favor of the State.

²⁹ Paul Gautier, “*Réquisitoire du patriarche Jean d'Antioche...*”, pp. 87-89.

³⁰ The documents have not been preserved, but they are inferred from the commentary of the canonist Theodore Balsamon to canon 13 of the Second Ecumenical Council of Nicaea. *KANONES THΣ AΓIAS KAI OIKOYMENIKHΣ EBAOMNI SYNODOI EBAOMHΣ SYNODOI*, in col. *Σύνταγμα τῶν Θείων καὶ Ἱερῶν Κανόνων*, vol. 2, G.A. Ralli and M. Potli (eds.), Grigoris Publication, Atena, 1852, p. 614.

³¹ *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*, Vol. 1, John Philip Thomas, Angela Constantinides Hero, Giles Constable (eds.), Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington, D.C., 2000, p. 204.

³² Αλεξίου, *Ισον Υπομνήματος...*, pp. 21-22.

When Alexius I Komnenos became emperor, Patriarch Nicholas III Grammatikos (1084–1111) began annulling the *charistike* rights of the predators. He also took a series of measures to gain real control over the management and administration of monasteries and their assets and to recover monasteries granted under *epidosis*. These had been given to clergy who had emigrated from Asia Minor because of the Empire's loss of these territories in order to provide them with an income. All these measures were strengthened and legalized by a novel by Emperor Alexius I Komnenos³³, which contributed to their implementation. The rigorous control over the granting of monasteries and their inventory, determined the decrease in the interest of people eager for enrichment in taking over other monasteries in *charistike* during the twelfth century. Yet this practice was so ingrained that it could not be stopped, but only replaced by another variant of divestiture, *ephoreia*. In this case, the beneficiary, engaged in the effort to administer a monastery for symbolic remuneration or only for his spiritual benefit. Thus, by establishing clear boundaries of the benefits, the abuses were greatly limited.

Deviations from the original meaning of *charistike* produced reactions of people involved directly or indirectly. On the one hand, hierarchs such as Patriarch John V the Oxyte, Metropolitan Leo of Chalcedon and Patriarch Nicholas III Grammatikos of Constantinople, took the attitude corresponding to the hierarchical position occupied in the Church. Although there is no direct mention of a reform of monasticism in the documents of the time, their actions can be considered as reforming initiatives due to the proposed objectives and the reputation of these hierarchs. However, the purpose of these interventions wasn't the definitive stop of the practice of *charistike*, but limit the duties of *charistikarios* in order to stop the transgressions and correct the negative effects produced.

Another reaction to the abusive *charistikarioi* was that of the founders of monasteries. Although indirect, it was much more radical, by protecting their monasteries and obtaining for them the status of independence and autonomy specified in the monastery's *typikon*. Traditionally and implicitly, the monastery was a private settlement, and this status was respected as such over the centuries, without the need for a special way of attestation. This situation changed in the eleventh century, when through the practice of *charistike*, the interference of the laity in the life of the monastery imposed the need for a form of protection,³⁴ leading to the development of this type of document, the monastic *typikon*, specific to the Byzantine monasticism. Appeared in the seventh century, the *typica* are based on the previous tradition of regulation of the monastic life. This tradition completed the collection, recording and transmission of the rules of first Egyptian monasteries. Each generation of holy monks has gathered and synthesized the treasure of rules, from the *Perceptions* of Saint Pahomie and the *Monastic Rule* of St. Anthony, to the *Longer and Shorter Rules* of St. Basil the Great, finding themselves in one form or another, to a small or greater extent in the section of monastic rules in a *typikon*.

Until the eleventh century, the composition of the *typica* was not made according to a standardized pattern, being rather the product of the moment necessity of the monastery. In the eleventh century, this structure pursued by the authors of the *typica* was consecrated, including the concerns of the founders and/or of the community: the internal disciplinary rules, in addition to the moral ones, those of food, clothing, private property; liturgical program; the way of transmitting the monastery from the founder, the inheritance and the

³³*Jus Graeco-Romanum. 1: Novellae et aureae bullae imperatorum post Justinianum*, Zachariae von Lingenthal (ed.), T.O. Weigel, Leipzig, 1857, Coll. IV, Nov. XXXV-XXXIX, pp. 346-348.

³⁴*Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents...*, p. 43.

choice of the abbot; obtaining and maintaining the autonomy and independence of the monastery.

Self-governing terms – *autodespotos* and independence – *eleuthera*, with their synonyms that were later used as interchangeable phrases, *autonomos*– autonomous, self-government, appeared for the first time in the *Typikon* of the Great Lavra of Mount Athos: “In no case will we allow anyone from a foreign lavra or monastery to become its abbot, even after our death we do not wish it to be allowed to be granted to a lay person or clergyman or monk or subordinate to a lay person or clergyman or monk or subordinate to another monastery, but on the contrary, it must be free (*eleuthera*) and autonomous (*autodespotos*), in accordance to our intention and command.”³⁵ The condition of the monastery had been strengthened by a chrisobull of Emperor Nikephoros II Phocas, through which the imperial patronage provided protection to the monastery after his death and that of Saint Athanasius the Athonite (920-1000). It is interesting to note that this concept of an independent monastery was accepted and legislated by the same person who sowed the germs of the principle that was the basis of *charistike*, in about the same period of time. Although the zeal and care that property of the Church would not become subject to an inappropriate or unqualified person, were shared by the emperor and the monk in equal measure, the decision was made by the emperor on the advice and initiative of Saint Athanasius the Athonite, as he himself pointed out.

Thus, the status of an independent monastery was outlined: it was administered by the abbot, helped by the monks with administrative ministries, without the interference or the concession of economic benefits to the founder or his family. However, the independence of such a monastery came in exchange for the lack of subsidies and investments and represented, therefore, a financial effort from the founder and a sustained concern for administration from the abbot. That is why the independence status has not been generalized. In the eleventh century, from their *Typica*, three such monasteries are known to have obtained their independence from the civil and Church authorities because their owners used their friendly relations with the emperors and the patriarch of Constantinople: Mother of God *Antiphonetria* of Myriokephala on Crete, the community of monasteries on Mount Galesios and the Mother of God *Eleousa* of Stroumitza.

4. RELATIONSHIP OF CLERGY – MONKS IN THE CONTEXT OF *CHARISTIKE*

The circumstances of the operation of the monasteries on Mount Galesios, although detailed, were less used in the study of *charistike*. These monasteries were founded by Saint Lazarus, and information about them is presented in the *Life* of the Saint. Upon returning to his native lands from the Holy Land, Father Lazarus joined the two monk brothers from the Saint Marina hermitage, practicing the ascetism as a stylite. His holiness became quickly known, so with the help of some benefactors, cells were built to house the disciples gathered around him. A wealthy woman named Iudith of Calabria paid for the reconstruction of the church. Seeing the economic potential of the monastery in full development, the Metropolitan Theodore II of Ephesus donated land to the community, “which they worked it and obtained quite a lot of food from it”.³⁶ After seven years, due to the reputation of Saint Lazarus and the position of the monastery on the main road to Ephesus, the monastery had

³⁵ “Ath. Typikon: Typikon of Athanasios the Athonite for the Lavra Monastery”, in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents...*, p. 255.

³⁶ Richard Greenfield, *The Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion: An Eleventh Century Pillar Saint, in Byzantine Saints' lives in translation*, Washington D.C., 2000, Ch. 34, p. 120.

become thriving, but it was no longer a place of silence and prayer. For this reason, the Venerable Lazarus headed to a more isolated place on Mount Galesios. However, this decision was not approved by ecclesiastic authorities of Ephesus. The Metropolitan Theodore sent him a letter commanding to return to Saint Marina, which was the beginning of the conflict between Lazarus and clergy. The metropolitan's departure to Constantinople worked in favor of Saint Lazarus, who continued to quietly prepare his first place of hermitship on the mountain. The conflict escalated as the Venerable Lazarus persevered on the mountain, thus founding not one but three monasteries: of the Savior, the Mother of God and the Resurrection. Understanding that the saint's decision was unwavering and that any command would have not any effect, the metropolitan sent representatives to check him, trying to find reasons for inconsistency with the monastic life in order to denigrate his ascetism and force him to leave the mountain.

This harassment caused fear and insecurity among the monks, some of whom put pressure on Lazarus to secure another monastery, in the event that they would be driven off the mountain after his death. Thus, he founded the monastery of Bessai, despite of his wish, on a land given by the Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus. This monastery was located in an accessible and more friendly place compared to the mountain. Although it was only started and even with the church being in construction, the Monastery of Bessai attracted a very large number of monks, over 200, becoming economically efficient and a real commercial center,³⁷ but far from the ascetic ideal. This complicated the saint's situation even more. Owning the land given by the emperor seemed to legitimize the presence of the Venerable Lazarus with his community at Bessai, so the pressure to descend from the mountain increased considerably, coming from all sides: from some of the monks, from the emperor and from the ecclesial Ephesian authority. Before Saint Lazarus' death, monks Gabriel and Pachomius were sent to Constantinople to obtain imperial protection for the monasteries on the mountain, but monk Gabriel, pursuing his goal of moving to Bessai after the death of Father, asked the emperor for the protection for the monastery of Bessai, which was exactly what Father Lazarus didn't want to. The emperor was thus persuaded to issue an imperial administrative act, *prostagma*, recognizing the metropolitan's legal rights over Galesios and summoned Lazarus to leave the mountain.

Saint Lazarus maintained his position unchanged, following the promise made to the Lord to make his monasteries a place of almsgiving for people in need, against the petty interests of all others on the monasteries's fortune. If the wishes of the monks and even of the emperor seemed somewhat justified, the attitude of the metropolitan of Ephesus it was at least bizarre. An explanation not so far from the truth in the context of the events in the eleventh century, is the pursuit of the material advantages that would have brought to the diocese a monastery founded by a monk with the reputation of a saint as Lazarus, located in an area accessible to visitors. The physical effort involved in climbing the Mount Galesios, due to the geographical landscape, to which was added the fear of devil's attacks in the pass that offered the only access to the mountain, limited the number of pilgrims, while a monastery built on a practicable road, as Bessai, would have attracted more benefactors with their gifts, being a good deal for an eventual *charistikarios*. Even if in the Life of Saint Lazarus the term *charistike* is not mentioned, this is the obvious reason for the reaction of the monks to the attempts of the Church authorities to control in one way or another the monasteries. The statement of the metropolitan and other clergymen from his circle, such as

³⁷ Richard Greenfield, *The Life of Lazaros...*, Ch. 216, p. 309.

the bishop of Tralles, that the name of the Galesios will disappear after the death of Saint Lazarus, shows their lack of interest in the monasteries on the mountain. The imminent death of the saint could have been regarded by the clerics as a relief because it would have facilitated their takeover of these monasteries. But the continuation of the harassment of the monks even in the final days of Lazarus' life proves that, for the benefit of the metropolitan, the transition to the heaven of Father Lazarus had to take place in Bessai and not on Galesios, so the name of the saint could be linked to the first. The protection of the Lazarus' Monasteries on Mount Galesios was the reason for writing the ample composite document, the *Typikon*, which includes, besides the testament – the *dyatiposis* of Saint Lazarus, the set of rules that were to be observed by the monks in the monasteries and also the very comprehensive *Vita*. Immediately after the death of Father Lazarus, based on this act, the monks obtained the independence of the Galesiote monasteries confirmed by Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos and the Patriarch Michael I Cerularius (1043-1058).³⁸

CONCLUSION

The spiritual perfection offered by the monasticism was the goal of the ascetic movement of the beginnings of Christianity. The material side cannot be excluded, however, through the human nature of the monk. The evolution of monasticism from the personal ascetic movement to the institutionalized form and the interaction with the other Byzantine institutions, presents specific forms in the eleventh century. By this century, monasticism had become an integral part of the Byzantine society in all its aspects. From an economic standpoint the growth of the monastic land patrimony required imperial intervention through a public policy, the *charistike*. It was designed to solve the problems of all parties involved: the State did not lose taxes provided by the agricultural land, the Church no longer had the burden of monasteries that could not support themselves and the monks could peacefully deal with spiritual perfection and prayer for the good of the Empire. However, soon after the implementation of this public policy, in addition to honest administrators, there were also abusive ones. Throughout the eleventh century, there were made many attempts to correct the illegals practices without terminate the *charistike*. The rapacity of the *charistikarioi* sparked protest reactions from some hierarchs, measures from some Constantinopolitan patriarchs and protective initiatives from the founders. An important consequence of the *charistike* was the emergence of independent monasteries, whose status was obtained through the monastic *typikon*. Appeared in previous centuries, the *typikon* became a document officially accepted by the patriarch and emperor in the eleventh century, gaining a standardized form and becoming an emblem for the Byzantine culture.

The practice of *charistike* disappeared by itself when the shape of the benefits changed. A new type of monasteries award worked in parallel with the *charistike*, the *ephoreia*, for which the beneficiary received a symbolic payment or was content with the spiritual gain of the good deed. *Ephoreia* replaced the *charistike* in the early twelfth century.

The disappearance of the practice of *charistike* did not make up for the misdeeds. This overturned the way the secular world related to monasticism and brought changes in byzantine mentality. The boundary line between laity and monasticism had become extremely thin. The use of the goods of a monastery, although gifts brought to God, by laymen or even clergymen, was no longer considered a sin since the monks assumed poverty by entering into monasticism. The monks, sometimes being deprived of those necessary for

³⁸ Richard Greenfield, *The Life of Lazaros ...*, Ch. 223, p. 316.

the living by the *charistikarioi*, devoted more time than they should for work, and some even ended up practicing activities that were not in line with the status of a monk, such as trading.³⁹ The monks seemed infected by the care for profit of the *charistikarioi*. The “body” of the Byzantine Empire, the profane, tried to take possession of the “soul”, monasticism, and, finding blame for his own intrusion, lowered it from the pedestal of the Byzantine spiritual ideal by turning its face to the new humanistic cultural current born in the eleventh century.

Monasticism seemed changed also from the perspective of the clergy. The evaluation of monasticism during the twelfth century is expressed by the image of an abbot who teaches the monks how to obtain more fruits of the earth, forgetting about those of heaven. Archbishop Eustathios of Thessaloniki (1115-1195) noticed that the disobedience from inside of the monastery, mentioned by the Patriarch John V the Oxyte, was also extended outside it, some of the monks behaving without reverence for the local hierarchy⁴⁰. Thus, the reversal of the hierarchy clergy – monks – laymen, putting the laity forward, considered by the Patriarch John to be the cause of the failure of *charistike*⁴¹, actually revealed the disagreement between the clergy and the monks. Apparently, it’s nothing but the same reaction of monasticism to the constant attempt to impose the ecclesial authority. This attempt was initiated together with the process of institutionalization of monasticism, but in a new shape sketched by the political and cultural changes of the eleventh century Byzantine Empire.

³⁹ Eustathii Thessalonicensis, *De Emendanda Vita Monachica*, Karin Metzler (ed.), W. de Gruyter, Berolini, 2006, Cap. 62, 64, pp. 73-77.

⁴⁰ Eustathii Thessalonicensis, *De Emendanda...*, pp. 12-13, 203.

⁴¹ Paul Gautier, “*Réquisitoire du patriarche Jean d'Antioche...*”, p. 114.

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AN EVALUATION OF RELIGIOUS SKEPTICISM IN RELATION TO HUMAN SUFFERING AND PAIN: TOWARDS A THEODICAL SYNTHESIS

Associate Professor Ph.D. Peter. O. O. OTTUH,
Delta State University, Abraka
NIGERIA
Email: pottuh@delsu.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

The issue of human suffering and pain might be seen as a variant of the basic problem of evil. The evidential question of evil has been a heated topic in the philosophy of religion. In this sense, some skeptics question whether religion is a legitimate topic for criticism since faith is not based on evidence. This understanding of the problem of evil indicates that God is unlikely to exist, given the reality of senseless suffering and pain among humans. Hence, in some religions, suffering and pain are regarded as the only manifestations of evil in light of divine justice and compassion. Hence, it can be inferred that suffering and pain have both positive and negative functions in that they lead to the development of human noble character. The research is aimed at evaluating religious skepticism in relation to human suffering and pain, with the end-goal of arriving at a theodical synthesis. As a theoretical research that is literature-based, the historico-critical review method was adopted. The research argued from the theoretical viewpoints of fideism, naturalism, and evidentialism and discovered how religious skepticism, with its inherent distrust of the supernatural, prevents people from having a loving and personal relationship with any deity whose motives are unknown. It concluded that suffering and pain are possible catalysts for a search for meaning in life and God, as well as a test of faith, hence, religious traditions should not restrict medical interventions.

Keywords: *Religious Skepticism; Human Suffering; Pain; Theodical Synthesis;*

INTRODUCTION

There is little concern about whether a world without suffering is less spiritual or moral. God is said to be suffering in exile alongside the people. Human beings have the ability to recognize when they are in a state of discord. Humans will not be able to tell when their bodies are under attack if they do not have pains. Suffering, like pain, can indicate that something has gone wrong, and that awareness can be beneficial in a moral agent's life. However, relieving suffering can be difficult if the relief does not address the source of the discord. Human suffering, like so much else in the world, is a perversion and a disruption of what should be. Suffering is an anomaly; it has no intrinsic value and is not good in and of itself. But that is not to say that suffering is without value. In terms of suffering, most

religious texts contain both a naturalistic account of human life in dangerous environments and a philosophical account of the divine and human wills' interaction because some passages suggest that God is omniscient and has foreknowledge of suffering. Hence, they would say that suffering came into being as a result of a breakdown in the relationship between humans and their creator.

This research looked at how humans might become aware of God's reality, as well as religious skepticism in relation to human suffering and pain. It examined the contrasts between spectator and authoritative evidence when it comes to God's reality, using Kierkegaard's fideism, Dennett's naturalism, and Moser's evidentialism as theoretical frameworks. The paper also looked at whether people's moral views, as well as their likes and dislikes, are linked to human suffering and pain. As a result, the roles of reason, human choice, and love in the understanding of God's truth in relation to human suffering and pain were discussed.

1. RELIGIOUS SKEPTICISM

Skepticism is the concept in philosophy that rejects the possibility of knowing reality as it is, apart from human perspective. Skepticism has gradually evolved to represent uncertainty about what is usually regarded as true. All philosophical skepticism is epistemological in nature; that is, it is founded on beliefs about the extent and validity of human knowledge. The majority of the Greek Sophists in the 5th century BC were skeptics. The Pyrrhonists, a school of Greek philosophy named after its founder, Pyrrho of Elis, were the first to express the concepts of skepticism openly. Brains (2008) argue that skepticism may be taken to its logical conclusion by claiming that equally valid arguments may be made for and against every philosophical theory (Brains, 2008). The Greek philosopher Aenesidemus, who categorized 10 reasons in favour of the skeptical stance, and the Greek physician Sextus Empiricus, who stressed observation and common sense above theory, were the most influential skeptics of later antiquity (Popkin and Neto, 2004). Members of Carneades' middle academy, which grew from Plato's academy in the 3rd century BC and the new academy of the 2nd century BC, were more methodical but less extreme in their skepticism (Popkin and Neto, 2004).

Michel de Montaigne's essays throughout the Renaissance bore the strongest impact of ancient skepticism. Hume (1947), an 18th-century Scottish empiricist philosopher, was the foremost exponent of contemporary skepticism. Other contemporary schools of philosophy, such as pragmatism, analytic and linguistic philosophy, and existentialism, have elements of skepticism. Most people believe that the existence of anything is based on an illogical but natural inclination.

The term "skeptical" comes from the medieval French *sceptique* or the Latin *scepticus*, which means skeptic sect. It is from the Greek term *skeptikos*, which means inquiring, and was used to describe members of the Hellenistic Pyrrhonism School (Penner, 2014). Religious skepticism differs from atheism and agnosticism. Some deists are religious skeptics or theists who reject the prevailing organized religion they encounter, or even all organized religion (Coskun, 2006). Religious people are often distrustful of statements made by other faiths, at least when the two religious sects disagree on a specific tenet. Some thinkers argue that the sheer variety of religions justifies skepticism among believers and nonbelievers equally (Edgell, 2006). So, a religious skeptic could believe in Jesus even if they didn't believe he was the Messiah or did miracles.

Xenophanes is credited as being the father of religious skepticism (Wykstra, 2011). He was a critic of popular religion at the time, especially faulty notions of the divine that resulted from humans' proclivity to anthropomorphize deities. As chronicled in *The Apology*, Xenophanes' criticism of orthodox religion led to his impiety and corruption trial. On the other hand, Democritus was the originator of Western materialism, and his works include no evidence of believing in an afterlife, and Epicurus and the philosophy he created were subsequently influenced by this (Zuckerman, 2009). Lucretius declared Epicurean philosophy in his poem *De rerum natura*, claiming that the cosmos runs according to physical principles and is led by chance rather than the Roman gods. Cicero, an academic skeptic philosopher, presented arguments against the Stoics in *De Natura Deorum*, casting doubt on the gods' character (Penner, 2014). In ancient India, for example, a materialist philosophical school known as the *Crvka* was recognized for being dubious of the Vedic religion's holy claims (Coskun, 2006). Philosopher and founder of the Charvaka School Ajita Kesakambali did not believe in reincarnation.

Hobbes (quoted in Dennett, 2006) said that there are no incorporeal entities and that everything, including God, heaven, and hell, is corporeal, moving matter. Though scripture acknowledges spirits, he reasoned that he never says that they are *incorpore*, which means without dimensions and amount. The word "deist" has come to mean someone who values scientific and historical facts. Some skeptics dispute whether religion is a valid target for critique since belief is not contingent on evidence. Others, on the other hand, believe it is as important as any other kind of knowledge, particularly when it makes claims that contradict scientific conclusions (Wykstra, 2011). Since the late twentieth century, philosophers such as Schellenburg (2018) and Moser (2018) have focused on what it means to be a religious skeptic. The way some contemporary philosophers challenge the conceptual validity of believing in the supernatural has echoes of early Greek skepticism. Religious skeptics, especially those who are also atheists, face a certain level of skepticism and lack of acceptance in current times.

2. SUFFERING AND PAIN IN CONTEXTS

Those who suffer for no apparent reason in the Christian context can find solace in the knowledge that Christ and his Church suffer in solidarity with them, and that, despite having to endure something they cannot fully comprehend; God will bring good out of all ills. This is the vocation of suffering: they will finish Christ's task by embracing pain. And to reject this, to completely deny the idea of one's own sorrow, is to lose something valuable. According to Ottuh and Jemegbe (2021), suffering has no intrinsic worth from the perspective of biblical religion. Human misery, like so much else in our society, is a perversion and a disturbance of what should be. It came into existence as a result of a breakdown in the connection between humans and their creator - the benevolent God who created everything for his own pleasure and that of his creatures (Fitzpatrick, Kerridge, Jordens, Zoloth, Tollefsen, Tsomo, Jensen, Sachedina and Sarma, 2016).

Suffering is an anomaly; it has no intrinsic worth and is not desirable in and of itself. Indeed, we read some passionate petitions to God about the absurdity of suffering in the *Psalms* of the Old Testament. But it is not to imply that pain is without worth (Ottuh and Jemegbe, 2021). As a result, human suffering is a symptom that something is wrong with things as they are. Suffering, whether physical or psychological, should inspire us to look for God. Without it, the human state would seem to be completely terrible.

Evangelical Christians are undoubtedly of the opinion that human suffering should be avoided and alleviated wherever feasible, provided that the measures are ethical (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2016; Ottuh and Jemegbe, 2021). It is no coincidence that evangelical Christians, like Christians of other faiths, have long advocated for the advancement of medicine, palliative care, and hospice care for the ill and dying. Early Christians were known for what they did to help people who were sick.

The Qur'an is a key source for Muslims' religious system. In terms of pain, the *Qur* offers a naturalistic description of humans living in dangerous places, such as the desert, as well as a philosophical understanding of the complicated relationship between divine and human wills (Boston, Bruce and Schreiber, 2011). Suffering is seen as both an inherent part of human experience and an issue of faith or theodicy in the Islamic tradition, since it is ultimately the Almighty Creator who produces evil or suffering.

In various Quranic texts (including 4:63), people suffer an affliction for what their own hands have advanced. Other texts imply that God is omniscient and foreknows pain since no sorrow befalls the world or humans (*Quran* 57:22). While this seems to support a typical Muslim cultural attitude of passiveness in the face of adversity, it also fosters patience in the understanding that pain is predetermined and transient. Children are not considered to have any religious or moral duty (*mukallaf*) in Islam, and hence they cannot be 'punished' for failing to fulfill their responsibilities. Because all of God's actions are meaningful and nothing is in vain, some Muslim scholars claim that children's suffering is best viewed as a heavenly indication (Edwards, 2003). Different perspectives on how pain should be endured reflect the theological difficulties that the reality of suffering has caused for Islam. Suffering is seen as a tangible human experience in the Qur'an and Muslim traditions, and it should be the focus of care and medical treatment (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2016). A large variety of Muslim traditions serve as prophetic guidance regarding how to cope with sickness and how to visit the sick and bereaved. According to one narrative, when a person became sick, the Prophet would massage him with his right hand before praying to God.

The Buddhist idea of *dukkha* is more expansive than common suffering conceptions. It includes feelings of discontent, irritability, anxiety, frustration, and yearning, as well as all other types of stress. The Buddhist path is defined by recognizing that all sentient beings suffer, finding out how to avoid and alleviate misery, and then acting on that understanding. As a result, there is nothing to lose and everything to gain through avoiding and alleviating pain (Egnew, 2009). The Buddha taught that under the impact of mental defilements (*klesas*), humans eventually generate their own suffering. As a consequence of desire, aversion, and other afflictive emotions, they engage in unwholesome activities that result in future *dukkha*. If they fail to see this, they may get comfortable and, like a bird trapped in a gilded cage, never seek freedom. Humans are subject to the natural law of cause and effect, not to an external entity that rewards or punishes them. Pain is unavoidable; the tales people tell about it are entirely up to them.

Suffering may teach people a lot. Suffering as a result of disease, injury, old age, or bereavement might provide a chance to learn more about the fundamental nature of the human experience. If people could recognize the sources of their sorrow, they might eventually break free from the cycle of suffering. According to this causation mechanism, both human and nonhuman actors are personally accountable for their suffering, including physical, mental, spiritual, existential, and so on (Norris, 2009). In this sense, suffering may be seen as a test of faith or a method of obtaining knowledge in Hinduism. Some theistic

models reward or penalize devotees who worship a deity or goddess who can relieve or punish someone who is suffering.

In some traditions, like the one derived from Patanjali's Yoga Stras, pain is an unwelcome byproduct of attachment to the body, and *moksha* is only realized when one is divorced from one's body. Modern allopathic medicine is allowed to cure pain if it does so in a circumscribed, prosaic, and worldly context (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2016). Some Hindus recognize pain as a necessary part of *sasra* but are not opposed to striving to relieve it. A Hindu might also think that suffering makes it hard or impossible to do other things that help or speed up the search for *moksha*.

3. FIDEISM, NATURALISM AND EVIDENTIALISM

The word "fideism" refers to a school of thought that thinks religion is in some manner apart from; if not outright hostile to, reason (Carroll, 2008). Tertullian (quoted in Bishop, 2007) claimed that only revelation could disclose the truth of Christianity, elaborating on a theme raised by Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Kant's (1929) critical philosophy supplied an intellectual incentive for advances in religious thinking. In the case of God, Pascal (1992) believes that assessing the likelihood of a good conclusion is difficult. He suggests doing a cost-benefit analysis of the relative benefits of "wagering" for or against God's existence. These possibilities may be assessed using the "Expected Value Principle (EVP)". Critics have raised further objections to Pascal's premise.

According to Golding (2003), being a religious theist is acceptable if the value of a good relationship with God is valued more than any other value. Kierkegaard (1946) was a pseudonymous author who credited the majority of his writings to a number of other authors. He claims that speculative philosophy turns Christianity into a philosophical system or theory. He said that any religion that was based on historical or scientific approximations and could be broken by them was not real faith. For Clifford's (1999) "it is unethical always, everywhere, and for everyone, to embrace anything on insufficient evidence" Mackie's (2002) predicted that fideism is intellectually irresponsible. If the religious hypothesis is a living hypothesis, James (1996) argues that the choice it gives us must also be a real option. When the opportunity is one-of-a-kind, the stakes are great, or the decision is irreversible, the choice is critical (as opposed to insignificant).

Naturalism is a philosophical movement that asserts that nature encompasses all of existence and can only be comprehended via scientific inquiry. It rejects the supernatural and downplays metaphysics, or the study of the ultimate essence of things. As a result, values are relative, and ethics is dependent on habit, preference, or some type of utilitarianism. Naturalism holds that the material world is the only true world. It asserts that matter, not mind or soul, is the ultimate reality (Papineau, 2007). Naturalists are concerned with actual facts, events, and realities. Nature is everything to them; it is the whole of reality. Naturalism holds that instincts are to blame for all of our actions, whether biological, psychological, or social (Ecklund, 2010). Naturalists believe that there is no ultimate good or evil in the universe. Mind, according to naturalists, is an accident of evolution that may be described in terms of nature (Beilby, 2002). Naturalism is the philosophical belief that everything comes from matter and that there is no God or spirit. It is a philosophical theory that is opposed to supernaturalism basically.

There are no greater values; nor is there any transcendent objective or ideal of human existence. The introspective philosopher Hume (quoted in Audi, 1996) argues in his

Discourses that there is no justification for assenting to what he has realized he cannot help believing regardless. Hume defines admitting and acquiescing to the forces of nature as living in full acknowledgment of these forces and limits.

Evidentialism is a theory that determines which beliefs are true and which are false. Evidentialism is the greatest argument for justification, according to Feldman and Conee (2004). They argue that a person's doxastic attitude toward a proposition is justified if their evidence supports it. Plantinga's (2000) reformed epistemology stands in opposition to evidentialist epistemology. According to him, reason's deliverances include both correct fundamental beliefs and beliefs founded on propositional proof. This isn't fideism, or taking a leap of faith. Evidentialists may answer the charge that evidentialism implies that all faith-based beliefs are illegitimate. Fideism, for example, holds that evidence has no bearing on religious views, and those efforts to defend religious ideas in this manner are futile. In Babe Ruth's case, believing *p* is pragmatically justified, but it is epistemically unjustified; while the belief may be justified in terms of achieving another goal, it is not justified in terms of achieving the purely epistemic goal of having beliefs that are likely to be true. According to evidentialism, the nature of the evidence is not important as long as it provides proper support for some statement. Some argue that, due to cognitive dissonance, the human mind is not naturally motivated to establish views based on facts. A just belief, according to this reasoning, requires an infinite supply of reasons.

Responses to this argument may generally be divided into the following categories: foundationalism, coherentism, skepticism, and infinitism. Some views are legitimate, but not because they are founded on other beliefs. These are known as appropriately fundamental beliefs, because they serve as the basis for all other justified views. Justified beliefs are all evidentially supported by other beliefs, yet an unlimited number of beliefs are not formed since the chains of evidential support among beliefs are permitted to circle. A person's belief is justified in the resultant image when it fits together with their other views in a cohesive fashion, with their varied beliefs mutually supporting one another. Because the negation/complement of some statements is another statement, a modest reasoner subset of coherentism would necessitate that all justified beliefs be statements about some objects. There are no beliefs that can be justified.

Because the negation/complement of one some statement is another some statement, a modest reasoner subset of scepticism, like the subset of coherentism, would demand and define all justified beliefs as assertions about some objects. In addition to these replies, some philosophers have claimed that evidentiary chains end in unjustified beliefs. Others have said that limitless lines of reasoning may occur. Of the main responses, coherentism and skepticism are clearly consistent with evidentialism. Coherentism allows for evidential support for all of our justified beliefs in the face of the regress argument by allowing for circular chains of evidence of support among beliefs. And the skeptic here is utilizing an evidentialist demand to arrive at her skeptical conclusion. Many philosophers accept foundationalism as a reaction to the regress argument, rejecting the validity of circular reasoning as advocated by the coherentists. The foundationalist's fundamental views seem to be counterexamples to the evidentialist's thesis at first appearance, in that they are justified beliefs that are not rational since they are not supported by deeper evidence. And evidentialism and foundationalism are not always mutually exclusive.

Many current epistemologists disagree that empirical support is the complete story when it comes to belief justification. Many people feel that a more comprehensive theory would include considerations of the mechanisms that lead to and maintain beliefs.

Reliabilism, Causal Theory, and Truth Tracking Theory are examples of non-evidentialist theories. Because they are innocent-until-proven-guilty, some natural opinions may be accepted in the absence of proof. They are justified as long as there is no cause to believe they are untrue. However, expanding one's understanding of what constitutes evidence might help to overcome many of the criticisms against evidentialist viewpoints. There is an evidential dilemma of evil. Although God and the presence of evil are not logically incompatible, the evidential problem addresses whether the quantity or types of evil, such as human suffering, in the world qualify as likely proof against God's existence. This viewpoint contends that the vast quantity of evil in the world, as well as the presence of unjustified evil, precludes a credible belief in God, since human beings suppose God would not allow the existence of evil that seems to serve no beneficial purpose.

From a purely theoretical standpoint, the problem of human suffering can be understood as one formulation of the classical problem of evil, which questions whether the existence of a perfectly good, all-knowing, and all-powerful God is compatible with the extent to which human beings encounter and undergo positive suffering. The fact of what appears to be significant and gratuitous human suffering has been presented in the context of analytic philosophy of religion either as logically inconsistent with the existence of the God of classical theism or as an evidential consideration weighing heavily against the probability of that Being's existence or perfection (Adams, 2014). There are different ways to look at both problems in terms of the role that suffering plays in these arguments. This ranges from asking why people suffer at all to asking why there isn't less suffering than there is to asking why some people have to go through horrible evils or destructive suffering that makes them question the value of their lives as a whole.

4. RELIGIOUS SKEPTICISM AND HUMAN SUFFERING

Within religious philosophy, the evidentiary issue of evil has been a hot subject. Given the reality of senseless suffering, this interpretation of the problem of evil implies that God is unlikely to exist. Many theists have responded by adopting a position known as skeptical, which claims that one cannot make any reasonable judgments about such cases of suffering because humans are not omniscient and thus cannot know whether there are any goods attached that could justify the suffering's inherent evil (Thousand, 2016). People have argued that skeptical theism, as an answer to the evidentiary issue of evil, undermines the rest of theism by requiring skepticism of all other religious beliefs. Furthermore, this study contends that skeptical theism renders any interaction with the divine, which is a central tenet of most theistic faiths, impossible. Given these considerations, skeptical theism is not a reasonable position for a theist to adopt since it cannot provide a persuasive answer to the problem of evil without soon moving to skepticism that undermines theism.

The occurrence of meaningless suffering is central to Rowe's (1996) thesis, where he states that suffering that an omniscient and omnipotent entity could avert without sacrificing a tremendous good that would make the world a worse place without it, or causing an equally horrible or worse evil to occur. Most people would agree that this assertion is correct and that God would go to considerable lengths to avoid suffering unless doing so would result in the loss of a greater benefit or the imposition of a worse evil (Thousand, 2016). Many philosophers turned to a viewpoint known as religious skepticism in reaction to Rowe's statement of the evidentiary issue of evil. Their argument was that people have no reason to assume that they would be able to perceive any of the benefits that

may be associated with apparently senseless suffering. Bergmann (2001) was one of these philosophers that put forth three skeptical theses.

In essence, Bergmann argues that one cannot make any rational judgments regarding circumstances of apparently meaningless suffering since it is impossible to know whether or not there are goods connected with such cases. Much of Bergmann's reasoning is based on the assumption that humans are not omniscient and hence cannot know whether there are any benefits that are directly linked to situations of apparently useless suffering. Bergmann may be entirely correct. Should an omniscient God exist, it is likely that he would be aware of good things that are beyond human comprehension. However, arguing for this viewpoint is very harmful to theistic as a whole. In response to Bergmann's argument and skeptical theism in general, one may embrace skeptical theism and accept the premise that humans are not omniscient and hence cannot make rational judgments about what God would do in any given scenario. Second, one cannot know whether any of the other elements of religious faith are genuine if one cannot make fair judgements about what God would do in any particular scenario—for instance, that God created humans in his image or the idea that there is an afterlife (Thousand, 2016). Also, if you believe in skeptical theism, you have to be suspicious of every other part of religion.

Religious skepticism plainly allows for a far broader interpretation of skepticism than it originally meant. If one believes that God is omniscient and so capable of bringing about certain desirable outcomes that are beyond human comprehension, one must also believe that humans are incapable of making rational judgements about what God would do in any particular scenario. Given this, there is no compelling reason to assume that any other religious beliefs are correct (Thousand, 2016). For example, since it is impossible to predict how God would respond in any particular scenario, it is impossible to know if God made humanity in his image. It is possible that God brought about commodities outside of human understanding by not making people in his image and instead creating humans in a completely different manner. The same may be said for all other characteristics of religious faith, which seem to seriously undercut theism. Because the intentions behind most of what God seems to allow in the universe are unknown, it appears that laying such a foundation is impossible, because the benefits he may or may not be bringing about are beyond human comprehension. This shows that religious skepticism, which is based on a natural lack of trust in the supernatural, makes it impossible for people to have a close, loving relationship with a god whose goals are unknown.

5. TOWARDS A THEODICAL SYNTHESIS

The issue of human suffering may be seen as a variant of the traditional problem of evil, which raises the question of whether the presence of a flawless God is compatible with the amount to which human beings suffer. Theodicies, or heavenly justifications, have typically been used as philosophical solutions to this difficulty (Farennikova, 2013). It might be claimed that the theodical method in analytic philosophy of religion has both moral and epistemically destructive tendencies, and that such philosophers would be better off shifting their focus from the hypothetical God's point of view to people who really suffer (Griffioen, 2018). One can recover, construct, reconstruct, and reappropriate more virtuous approaches to the individual and collective struggle with the life of faith in the face of pain and human suffering by focusing less on defending the epistemic rationality of religious belief and more on the therapeutic effectiveness of particular imaginings of God with respect to suffering. While the divine idea's transcendence and inexplicability may put God beyond human

comprehension from a theological standpoint, the dynamic struggle of theodicy must grapple with how we imaginatively represent God in the life of faith on the ground and what these representations mean for how we react and respond to suffering in the world. Job was slain on the altar of classical theism by modern philosophical theodicy (Anderson, 2012).

On the battleground of anti-metaphysical transcendence and postmodern philosophical theology, traditional theism has been defeated. Perhaps, according to Griffioen (2018), one of the central tasks of a 21st-century analytic philosophy of religion is to return to the utter immanence of real human suffering, to reclaim Job's perspective and Jacob's tenacity, in order to locate theologically fruitful imaginings of a metaphysical God before whom we can sing and dance but with whom we can also wrestle face to-face, a God with whom we can earnestly struggle and against whom we can, perhaps, even loudly propound.

Outside suffering, theists argue that pain is biologically beneficial. For example, if a person does not experience pain, he or she will be unaware that they are ill. Hence, it can be claimed that pain is caused by obnoxious stimulation, indicating the beginning of damage to the fiber ending (Scott, 2015). Pain, according to David Hume, is not required in the creation of an all-loving, good, powerful, and knowing God; instead, constant pleasure and happiness should be required (Isiramen and Akhilomen, 1998). As a result, most atheists argue that there are insufficient grounds to prove God's existence in the face of evil because they cannot see the utility of pain in a good and powerful God's world. Theists also argue that pain is meant to serve a good purpose in that it can result in the formation of noble character when it is bravely born.

However, according to John Hick, the existence of God and the existence of evil cannot be reconciled rationally, but must be understood through faith (Cheetham, 2013). So, most of the time, theists try to explain away evil and say that it cannot be explained. They say that evil is a mystery and that no solution has been found that isn't fatal.

Undeserved suffering can cause people to doubt God's goodness, even if the suffering is the result of a greater good. The concept of predestined suffering links God to an act that seems to bring both bodily and moral harm. Sunni theologians placed a greater emphasis on God's omnipotence than on human liberty, pushing the problem of evil deep into the realm of theology and thus ignoring ethics and psychology. The state policy of the Umayyad rulers (660–748) was to promote belief in God's absolute will, which predetermined all human action. People were led to believe that human suffering was a form of God's punishment due to the divine will based on a few Qur'anic verses. Based on the idea that sin is the cause of suffering, these passages made people feel like they couldn't do anything about their own or other people's pain.

Suffering, in whatever form, is seen as part of God's promise to those who reject his commands in traditional theodicy. Faith in a fair, rewarding God who will repay virtuous servants for all they have suffered in this world is sustained by faith in the life to come. It simply links the evil of suffering to the sin of ungrateful disobedience, which stems from human denial of God's existence. In whatever religious tradition, reconciling God's kindness and goodness with the suffering of the innocent has proven difficult. In the bulk of religious debates, pain was defined only in terms of human beings (Fitzpatrick, *et al.*, 2015). Other examples of existence were not mentioned since moral evil only refers to human behaviors done against or harming other beings.

The basic tendency in Muslim piety is to hold people responsible for their own suffering and to encourage them to do good deeds in order to free the world from pain. In the light of divine justice and love, pain is considered the sole form of evil in certain faiths. The

ruin or destruction of the natural environment or the imposition of animal agony on forest animals is not the same degree of evil as when human life is involved. It is hard to imagine that a fair and kind God would let these kinds of pointless suffering be seen as less bad, unless they caused pain to higher beings, like people.

CONCLUSION

One of the findings of this research has revealed that vast majority of people believe that something exists as a result of an illogical but natural desire. Religious skepticism rejects the prevalent organized religion called deism. On the other hand, naturalism as a philosophical theory asserts that nature encompasses all of existence and can only be comprehended via scientific inquiry. Evidential chains, according to some philosophers, lead to illogical ideas. Others have claimed that endless thinking routes exist. Suffering, like pain, may indicate that something is wrong, and being aware of this can be beneficial in a moral actor's life. However, relieving pain might be difficult if the relief does not address the source of the conflict. Since faith is not founded on facts, some skeptics dispute whether religion is a suitable target for criticism. Others believe it is equally as important as any other kind of information. People see suffering as both an essential part of being human and a question of religion or theodicy.

Suffering is seen as a disturbance or disharmony in every spiritual tradition of the body, of the ego, and, in South Asian faiths, of cosmic order. Anguish and suffering are clearly defined in some viewpoints, while others take a wider approach that encompasses physical and mental pain, loss, desire, and spiritual or existential suffering. Suffering has no inherent worth, according to none of the viewpoints, and both Buddhist and evangelical perspectives contend that it does not. Suffering may lead to a quest for meaning and God, as well as a test of faith, the cultivation of virtue, and the enhancement of human dignity. Suffering allows people to reflect on their actions, their basic existence, and the prospect of freedom. The need to give meaning to pain becomes a method of reacting to the emptiness; of conquering the world's inequities and contingencies. While each of the viewpoints places distinct emphasis on enduring, witnessing, avoiding, and healing pain, they all agree that suffering should be reduced.

In general, religious traditions tend to have few limitations on medical treatments. The usefulness of religious explanations in medicine is that they may assist patients and doctors in regaining perspective on medical procedures. Physicians should encourage discussion about treatment goals, be aware of their patients' faith traditions, and understand how those faith traditions view suffering. As a solution to the problem of human suffering in relation to the evidentiary issue of evil, religious skepticism falls short. While it does raise some concerns about the problem of evil, it is evident that its fundamental skepticism may be used to criticize the rest of theism. Also, skepticism about religion makes it impossible to have a personal, loving relationship with God. Religious traditions should frequently have fewer constraints on medical treatments. On the other hand, suffering and pain, should be seen catalyst for a quest for the meaning of life and God, as well as a test of faith, hence religious rituals should be less restricted.

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THE THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA

Ph.D. Marin BUGIULESCU,

Member of ‘Dimitru Stăniloae’ Scientific and Interdisciplinary
Research Centre, ‘Valahia’ University, Târgoviște
ROMANIA

Email: m_bugiulescu@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This article presents the anthropological concept of Saint Gregory of Nyssa. The dilemma in which humanity finds itself when it tries to rationally discover what belongs to God and man can only be solved in the golden mystery given by divine revelation, therefore, no matter how advanced from a scientific point of view, it would human thinking, "face to face" with the divine-human indescribability, collapses into derisive reasonings and sophisms that do nothing but deceive through equivocal answers, deepening the mystery, even more, placing man and God in radically different frames.

Keywords: anthropological; Christianity; Saint Gregory of Nyssa.

INTRODUCTION

Man has a dynamic life. Of all beings, only man is fundamentally penetrated by the mystery of love which from within directs him towards a natural communion, which reveals a personal and conscious existence incorporated in an indissociable psychosomatic unity, with immeasurable psychic depth; free, master, rational, knowledgeable, etc. These are the attributes that eloquently reveal the true constitution of man. The eternal value of the human person, the uniqueness of his being achieved through the unity of contrasts that man represents as body and soul, shows that the person is not brought into the world by God in isolation, as a uniform abstract achievement, separated from nature, from being. The human person presents himself in the complex context of the bonds of love and cares manifested towards himself and other persons different from him, but who share the same common nature in which the divine presence dwells mysteriously.

The ANTHROPOLOGY OF SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA is part of a particular issue that philosophical research has sought to deepen by first-order reflection - metaphysics. If the body comes by birth from the bodies of the parents, the soul has an entirely different essence from the body through which it induces life. The soul is immortal, and immortality is somewhat of its essence.

In the space of patristic thinking, the problem of the soul is open, being a theologian. Saint Gregory of Nyssa presents very clearly the teaching about the soul assumed by the Eastern Patristics. Unlike Platonism, Gregory of Nyssa bases the immortal essence of the soul not on pre-existence or metempsychosis, but on resurrection understood as a continuous state of happiness, of knowledge, and love as spiritual progress – *epektasis*.

1. THE TEACHING OF THE SOUL AT SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA

In patristic thinking, the soul created by God is the reality (essence) that forms a unity together with the body. It has the property of being untouchable and uncontained materially, endowed with reason, self-awareness, and free will, immortal, immaterial, unique, and unitary, indelible, and unrepeatable. The soul through its faculties directs the human person towards spiritual living.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa (335? –394 AD) formulated the teaching about the soul about the process of apophatic knowledge. Therefore, the demonstrative approach has as its starting point what the revelation says about God to find in man what corresponds to the divine image¹. The human person as the image of God is a great mystery, it is the mystery of the divine seal on the earthly human nature, which is revealed only after purification and cleansing of passions that illuminates and establishes the mind in the above, having as its target and daily virtue the virtue, to acquire salvation by appropriating the reconciliation made by Christ's sacrifice, which restores the harmony lost through sin, harmony supported by the unifying atmosphere of grace achieved in connection with God. Through the power of knowledge and the freedom to choose, man tends toward God, but he can only know Him in a special relationship, and by knowing Him, he cannot overcome Him, because this knowledge is absolute and divine. The man knows the truth through cooperation with God, through the working power of grace given by Christ, but he does not use this power only as a tool that works alone and forces it to work. He freely accomplishes everything that leads him to salvation, salvation being the very will of God who deifies, being realized in relational connection both with God and with his peers, which makes humanity be likened to the existing first given by the breath of the Spirit Saint.

Man is a synthesis of the material and the spiritual world, the only being created in the image and likeness of God. Man, through the power of the rational soul, thinks beyond the sensible, and understands that the universe is a real thought independently of the senses, as we think of the sun and the other stars. As a bearer of the divine image, he will be guided by his reason and free will. In these two traits, the divine given of the human condition is best reflected. In Saint Gregory, the face does not mean, as in Platonism, the uneven analogy of the sensible world about the intelligible world, but participation, a communion, but this without assuming a transfer of substance. There are two levels of the image in his thinking: Christ – Logos of the Father, archetypal image, and man, the face of the Logos, the level in which the image assumes the ontological distinction between created and uncreated. The biblical account presents the way man was created as follows: „*Then the Lord God took dust from the earth and made man and breathed into him the breath of life...*”. Scripturally, human nature is constituted in a dual way, body, and soul, permeated by grace, by the breath of life so that “*the earthly may rise to divinity and a single grace may guide and pervade the whole creature ... which became the image of the power of up*”². The grace instilled in man by God makes the biological structure a living being with a life-generating soul. The “breath of life” makes man capable of dialogue, a dialogue meant to last continuously. Saint Gregory of Nyssa bases man's relationship with God on the affinity achieved between the image and the Model, on man's essential participation in the divine glory in which he enjoys the infinity and the illumination of the simplicity of the Triune Persons. Central to the biblical act of making man is the breath of life that generates the soul.

¹ Vladimir Losski, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, Traducere, studiu introductiv și note Pr. Vasile Răducă, Anastasia, Bucuresti 1998, p.144

² St. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechetical Word*; VI 2, Sophia, București 1993, p. 34

Once descended into the body, the soul develops and discovers man as the image of God. Therefore, human existence is based on an act of sharing, of giving as an expression of divine love. “*Look at the harmony of the universe, the heavenly and earthly wonders, as well as the fact that the elements, although they are opposed to each other, by their nature, nevertheless all intertwine in a communion with a view to the same goal, helping each in part, with their power, to perpetuate the whole.*”³ The actual act of creating man presupposes dialogue or relationship (to interact), therefore it is more of an act of sharing God's breath (grace) with man.

For Saint Gregory of Nyssa: „*the soul is a created being endowed with life and endowed with the thought which of itself infuses into the organic and sensitive body the power of life and feeling, the power of knowing so long as the Nature of the body admits these activities by its composition*”⁴. The soul's quality of rationality unique to man makes a connection with divinity possible. The special dignity of man is demonstrated by the fact that of all beings, only His body resurrects and goes to immortality. The soul synthetically includes the image of God that reflects on all nature and gives it the quality of mastery, of leading: „*ordained that man should come first as a spectator of so many wonders, and secondly as their master so that by using them he would realize who it is who gave them, and through the beauty and majesty of the whole view to be urged to walk in the footsteps of the unnamed and indescribable power that made them...*”⁵. Without arguing for preexistence and reincarnation the soul is unique and unitary in the thought of Saint Gregory of Nyssa and has three main activities or works:

- mind (nous) – reason, generator of acts of knowledge. The mind to be called the thinking soul has an ontological character and represents the main faculty corresponding to the soul. After the fall into sin, two other parts anger and lust accidentally appeared, these are not innate but have their roots in the beginnings of the soul. From anger and lust, all other passions develop. Out of anger and lust grow the passions called wounds which appear in the thinking chamber of the soul.
- anger, and impulsivity are defined as starting to harm.
- lust (concupiscence) – as the potency of all desires or will. “*Lusts are longings for what we lack, desire to live in pleasure, or pain for pleasure we cannot attain, or striving after pleasure that cannot be fulfilled*”⁶.

The image of God according to which man was created represents one of the fundamental problems in Christian theology. The theme of the face is full of mystery, being linked to the nature of man as an ontological given, through which the dignity, royal status, and personal value of man are reflected, as well as his role, that of a relational being fit for the special relationship with God. The word face “eikon” – defines what man is in himself in a natural, ontological way. The natural in the original state of the face reflected in itself the state of grace, grace being the medium in which the face – man – is manifested, being intrinsically human nature. The term image shows what man is from creation, and likeness shows what man is in potency, and what he must become through the realization of the image.

³ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Dialogue about the Soul and Resurrection*, PSB 30, IBMBOR, București 1998., p 353

⁴ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Dialogue about the Soul and Resurrection*, ed. cit., pp. 352-355

⁵ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *About the creation of man*, II, 1, Traducere Pr. T. Bodogae, în P.S.B. 30, Edit. IBMBOR, București 1998, p. 21

⁶ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Dialogue about the Soul and Resurrection*, ed. cit., pp. 365

The image of God does not aim only at a certain spiritual or moral function of man, but looks at human nature in its psychophysical integrity, because God created the entire human nature at once, and gave it likeness as the final goal, giving it the quality of a person that encompasses nature entire human being and gives the possibility that through relationship and work it becomes transcendent, deified.

2. THE HUMAN BODY IN THE VISION OF SAINT GREGORY

The divine image in the conception of Saint Gregory of Nyssa is unfolded in the body-soul nature of man. Human nature ontologically reflects its divine paradigm, and a methodological similarity with the theory of Platonic ideas can be observed: *"for the face is a face only as long as it does not lack any attributes that can be attributed to the original... if one of the characteristics regarding its Being divine is that of not being able to be understood with the mind, then necessarily and in this respect the face must be similar to the Model..."*⁷. Thus, Saint Gregory of Nyssa bases the kinship of man with God, on the affinity realized between the image and the Model. Man's kinship with God implies, on the one hand, his divine origin, but also the essential need to receive the immeasurable beauty and love of the Creator, fully realized through the union of humanity with the divine in the person of the incarnate Son. The image of man gives him a special royal status: *"the fact that man bears in himself the image of the one who rules over all creatures, does not mean anything other than that from the beginning man's nature was destined to be queen...being thus like a living painting, which has in common with its model both the dignity and the name..."*⁸.

The human soul as the presence of the divine image is kept in good condition as long as it is clean and keeps alive the archetypal likeness: *"the adornment that the soul wears consists precisely in the likeness to the beauty of its Model. And just as the mirror gains its happiness by the way it reflects the face of the one who appears in it, we believe that the same relationship is also between the mind and the nature that allows itself to be led and urged, being able, in this way, to gain for itself from beauty and perfection the model"*⁹. The body was created by God originally with a nature strongly imprinted by grace, but after the fall became a dense, carnal concept represented by the tunics of skin. Saint Gregory notices the bivalence of the body, the otherness, on the one hand, which represents the condition of biological mortality, and mortality necessary for the eradication of evil, and on the other hand, it represents the protective clothing of the man in this condition subject to sin. Saint Gregory of Nyssa, in this sense, affirms: *"through a movement of our free will we have become partakers of evil, mixing it into our nature through the mediation of a pleasure...we have transformed ourselves in the image of evil... after the first people were expelled from heaven, the Master covered them with skin clothing. I do not believe that Moses thinks of animal skins as we have imagined, for... the skin separated from the animal to which it belonged is a dead thing, so is the ability to die, which had been wisely taken from the nature of the speechless, he afterward cast it upon men, but not forever... for the garment is a thing outside of us, an object which has a temporal use, but which has nothing to do with our nature. Death ... clothed the outer nature of this nature, not the inner..., without touching the image of God in man..."*¹⁰. Of course, the body dressed in leather clothes became dense and

⁷ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *About the creation of man*, XI, ed. cit., p. 33

⁸ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *About the creation of man*, IV, ed. cit., p. 22-23

⁹ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *About the creation of man*, XII, ed. cit., p. 37

¹⁰ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *About the creation of man*, XVI, ed. cit., p. 41- 43

solid, carnal, but with it, the psychic functions also became carnal and corporeal. According to the Nicene, the leather garments are the fleshly mind concretized with the entry of sin into human nature, because: "the inclination to evil does not come to us from any external force, but as soon as we have chosen evil, it takes existence, producing -se when we choose it"¹¹. Panayotis Nellas, commenting on these quotes, says: "*Therefore, if someone wants to fully understand his existence, the good elements, but also the terrifying ones that plague him, man must widen his horizons, ask himself if what he considers natural, is not quite so self-explanatory.... We thus understand why for the Holy Bishop of Nice, in this biological, irrational, material carnality, death, the honors that man finds are inevitably ephemeral..., the certainties of the flesh are killers, meaning death, and bringer of death. ..*"¹².

The image of God in man is defined as an ontological given (fists) by Saint Gregory of Nyssa. The image presupposes what we call intellectual life (nous) and supernatural life (pneuma): the totality of these two realities constitutes human nature which is opposed by the added instinctual life. The anthropological model used by Saint Gregory imposes a fundamental role of reason (nous) in the moral framework because reason is the faculty closest to divinity. Moreover, thanks to this status conferred by reason, the entire inner life of man will be realized beneficially or not, depending on his ability to reset the soul faculties in the specific order of the beginning, which implies that all starts, and senses are subordinated to reason, the only faculty capable of discerning between what is good and what is bad.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa claims that the soul is thought-bound and manifests itself mainly through the mind, but also two other secondary forms: anger and lust¹³. The ordering faculty of the soul is the mind. The natural relationship between the faculties is achieved only if the mind is the one that rules over the others. The three faculties of the soul relate to each other and influence each other. Thus, according to the order of creation, lust longs for good, for virtue, while irascibility strives for this by opposing evil. Nicene's thinking shows that the soul individualizes the body it traverses, and its presence involves the intellectual part, self-awareness, and free will through which it perceives the biological body, but also the affective, sentimental experience that through grace becomes spiritual-mystical.

3. ON THE SOUL AND RESURRECTION

St. Gregory of Nyssa in his Dialogue on the Soul and Resurrection summarizes the patristic conception of the soul through his conversation with his sister Macrina, who was near death. The soul has not only the faculty of thought and knowledge but also attraction or repulsion, desire, and passion, lust, and anger. St. Gregory of Nyssa recalls the Platonic allegory of the visitation but does not use it in his argument, preserves the three characteristics of the soul, and subordinates the theories of the philosophical schools to the Scriptures, which, based on divine revelation, represent the only guide of faith¹⁴.

St Gregory of Nyssa in the Dialogue on the Soul and Resurrection uses a demonstrative speech aimed at the unity and simplicity of the nature of the soul located in the sphere of judgments of existence, but also a theoretical speech of judgments of knowledge: "*those who wish to know themselves, in their soul teaches them according to its wise guidance that it is immaterial and incorporeal, that it works and moves according to its*

¹¹ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *About happiness*, în P.S.B. 29, Edit. IBMBOR, București 1982, p. 372

¹² P. Nellas, *The Deification of Man*, trad. Ioan Ică Jr., ed. a II- a, Editura Deisis, Sibiu 1999, pp. 85, 90

¹³ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Dialogue about the Soul and Resurrection*, ed. cit., pp. 366-367

¹⁴ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Dialogue about the Soul and Resurrection*, ed. cit, p.367

nature, making itself known to them through the medium of the senses"¹⁵. Macrina argues that the soul is immaterial and incorporeal, active, moving according to its nature, but which makes its attributes known through the mediation of the body. The soul through the mind, anger, and lust activates together with the body which has an attraction towards evil. On the contrary, the approach to God is achieved through virtues, this fact is purifying. The argument is supported by the example of the life of Moses, who reached a high spiritual level precisely in the purification of passions. Moses, unlike the people, controlled his anger and lust through reason; these are not part of the soul's nature, they are not ontological, but accidents. Their roots are in the soul, but they are not part of his nature. Lust and anger are but instruments of virtue or vice, of perfection or destruction¹⁶.

In the thought and work of Saint Gregory of Nyssa, evil is not ontological, it exists only as a state, it has no being, and it lacks good: "*apart from God, there is nothing but evil alone, which, however strange it may seem, has its existence in non-being, because the origin of evil is the lack of what exists.*"¹⁷ Moreover, the Nissan speaks of the human soul stuck to the enslaved life of passions springing from lusts and instincts, this hypothesis is also found in Plato. Evil entered the world through man's free will. Saint Gregory of Nyssa, speaking about the tree of knowledge of good and evil, says: "*the tree from which we gather a mixed knowledge is part of the number of trees that are stopped. Instead, its fruit, whose defender the snake became, is a mixture of contradictions, perhaps because, according to its nature, evil is not offered to us directly and in the face. For if indeed evil did not leave such wretched traces, it would not have been adorned with the label of good, to arouse lusts in those whom it has deceived. This is how it happens that evil was presented in a veiled form, but... it was hidden, the destruction of man... it shows the face of good*"¹⁸. The fact that man was able to sin is linked to free will, but also to his dual nature, which had two movements, one ascending that belongs to the soul and another descending that belongs to the body. Thus, Adam, the first man seduced by lusts corporeal has acquired the condition that alters human nature. Evil, about human nature, caused pain and suffering that logically and ontologically ends in death, for which the body became carnal. Under the conditions of the "mixing" of good and evil, "*the power of desire no longer goes towards the natural good, the seed of anger no longer generates bravery, and the power of love takes away from spiritual things going wild beyond measure in the pleasure of the flesh*"¹⁹.

A specific problem is the relationship between soul and body, especially with the body identified by the skin tunics. "Saint Gregory expresses through the category of leather tunics the entire psycho-somatic garment of man after the fall."²⁰ Leather clothes have a dual and necessary character, specific to man. Nicene uses a metaphor of grafting, whereby the good variety is placed upon the wild variety to take from it the vegetative power of the wild. In the same way, leather clothes stand to give man the strength to resist in a world that has gone wild and requires wild skills for survival. There are two types of passions: natural-good, and unnatural-counter-natural. This state of human nature in the condition of leather clothes will end when man, following the Christ Archetype, will put on the "high priest's tunic", that is, the state of resurrection, of deification. The Platonic conception of

¹⁵ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Dialogue about the Soul and Resurrection*, ed. cit, p.354

¹⁶ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Dialogue about the Soul and Resurrection*, ed. cit, pp. 362-363, 365-366

¹⁷ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Dialogue about the Soul and Resurrection*, ed. cit, p 381

¹⁸ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *About the creation of man*, XX, ed.cit, p. 58

¹⁹ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Dialogue about the Soul and Resurrection*, ed.cit, p. 394

²⁰ Panayotis Nellas, *Omul – animal indumnezeit*, ed.cit., p 188

preexistence and metempsychosis pales in comparison to the resurrection state. At the resurrection, the body will not have the physical qualities of worldly life, being spiritualized or spiritual (1 Corinthians 15, 42-44)²¹. The resurrected body will be like the resurrected body of Christ, a transfigured body (Luke 24, 42-43). He will have a new life appropriated through the boundless path as the blissful state of contemplation of divine goodness and virtues. Resurrection means a perfected state. *"Thus I will say that in the resurrection there would not be any bodily difference between the virtuous and the wicked so that you might think that some have a perfect body, and others give it imperfectly, but as in this life the body of an imprisoned man is the same with that of a free man, but the difference between them in terms of the pleasure or pain they feel is great, so I think the difference between the good and the bad must be counted in the age to come"*²².

CONCLUSION

A defining approach in the Christian space is the thought and work of Saint Gregory of Nyssa. Nicene theology is an expression of what man must and can acquire by being like God. The soul is identified as the central part of man that belongs ontologically to the divine image. The soul together with the body forms man as a person, as a knowing, rational-spiritual being.

Man is a theological, rational, free, eloquent being, he has the tension towards deification planted in his face, which attracts him unconditionally, and frees him from all the weight of sin. The whole world of the first man is an icon, a reflection of God's love. Through man, the world and creation present themselves as a cosmic liturgy and service, a game of love and communion.

In the thought and work of Saint Gregory of Nyssa, the soul is unitary and has as its main faculty the mind or reason, to which anger-impulsivity and lust (will) are subordinated. Through reason man is linked to knowledge and love, this fact is possible precisely because the Truth, the One, is founded in the being, and the Being itself is the Truth. In the Platonic conception, Good in the ultimate sense has an impersonal existence, while for Saint Gregory of Nyssa it is identified with God – the Holy Trinity. For St. Gregory, knowledge of the reality to which only the divine being belongs, of what constitutes the true ontology, and not the imagined one, is possible. For non-Christian mystical currents or philosophical epistemology, this fact is impossible. The virtuous soul touches the divine darkness, that luminous darkness – the darkness. Being in the proximity of divinity, the soul reaches the most paradoxical situation possible: it is in front of spring from which, as it drinks, it becomes more and more thirsty. This blissful state perceived as the ecstasy of knowledge and love is defined by Saint Gregory of Nyssa by epektasis.

²¹ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Dialogue about the Soul and Resurrection*, ed.cit., pp. 404-406

²² St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Dialogue about the Soul and Resurrection*, ed.cit., p. 407

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DIVINE FREEDOM – THE BASIS OF THE REGENERATION OF HUMAN FREEDOM

Associate Professor Phd. Dragoș Corneliu BĂLAN,
“Ovidius” University of Constanta,
ROMANIA
Email: dragos_balan1980@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Recently, it has been noticed more and more clear that people are looking at any cost to prove that they have freedom. Freedom is inscribed, in fact, in the human being. Contemporary philosophers, contemporary writers speak in their works about human freedom. Moreover, there are also in our country certain journals which, in spite of the titles they carry, prove this fact. But, through these cultural means and mass media, as well as through many others, man seeks freedom apart from God. Our freedom consists in no longer being slaves to sin, to passions.

Keywords: freedom; depression; passion; torment; healing.

INTRODUCTION

In the current context, in which, contrary to divine Revelation, culture, philosophy, ideologies, science and even some theologies separate the unseen from the seen, spirit from matter, soul from body, grace from God and at the same time from man, God Himself from man, man from his fellow man by promoting individualism instead of communion and deal with the issue of human freedom ignoring its connection with God, it is natural and necessary to emphasize the union willed by God between man and the cosmos, between man and God, between man and his fellow men and between the parts of man himself.

This union on all planes, as a convergent order of creation, was designed with the capacity for dialogue in its bosom and with God and it is sustained by God through grace; however, it is man who chooses whether to accept or reject God's call. Adam and Eve misunderstood freedom and lost grace and with it they lost the possibility of experiencing true freedom. Death is nothing but the consequence of man's separation from God, a separation which in turn produced ruptures at all levels of existence. In man himself, these separations generated divergent tendencies between soul and body, and the rupture between them materialized through biological death. By breaking his unity and communion with God and fellow humans and the harmony with creatures and created things, man depersonalized himself. Incapable of personal relationships, man has lost grace, that is, the source of his living relationship with God.

The people in heaven - Adam and Eve - had the original state, without sin and with almost complete freedom, like God's complete and natural freedom, only with the requirement to fulfill His will. And after He built "all good", we learn that "God rested on the 7th day" (Genesis 20, 11), while the Holy Apostle Paul, referring to man's rest in "God's rest", i.e. quiet man in communion with God, asks man "to enter into the rest of God" (Hebrews, chapter 4). The apostle reasons that the man who, no longer free - in the sense that he is no longer in the right freedom, that of good and the relationship with the Creator -

commits many sins, many unnatural deeds, accepts and even accomplishes much evil, and then he can no longer be into "God's rest" nor "shall enter into God's rest" neither here nor in eternity.

As the fall affected the human nature hypostasized in Adam, so the healing of the nature had to be done in a person, since not the nature, but the person is the bearer of self-consciousness and the responsible subject. Since the sin committed by the human person affected the human nature, depersonalizing it, its actualization and personalization had to be accomplished also in a person. This time, however, an eternal and universal person was needed, a person who is both man and God. These qualities are not met by any historical person except for Christ. The actualization and personalization of the human nature in Christ consists in His nearness to God through His union with the divine nature in the Person of the incarnate Son of God; they consist in elevating human nature to the deified state of nature, in restoring its content by imprinting in it the aspiration towards God and openness to fellow human beings and in the activation of all valences and creative capacities placed in it, together with the creation of man. Human nature was personalized in Christ as a result of the fact that its bearer is One of the supreme Persons, Who made the human model of existence a way of personal manifestation, in which the supreme free will of God was imposed. One of the consequences of the hypostatic union in the Person of Christ is that the regeneration of human freedom was achieved on the basis of divine freedom. Jesus Christ was not a simple example of holiness like the righteous and prophets of the Old Testament, but He offered human nature a "spotless" hypostasis, in which the human will was not closed to the divine will, but helped by it, followed it freely as the baby obeys the mother "knowing" that everything she wants is for his own good.

The deliverance from death was due to the sanctity that Christ's human nature reached, as well as the fact that Christ was not a mere man, but man and true God. Thus, as God, the Savior defeated the devil, the cause of Adam's fall. However, this victory was not achieved brutally, but according to God's wisdom. God defeated him without suspending his freedom, therefore, without contradicting Himself in His goodness, but achieved this victory over sin through the holiness which entered His human nature united with the divine in the unique Hypostasis (divine) of the Logos.

1. DIVINE FREEDOM

We say about God that He is free because He identifies Himself with freedom or because He contains it in Himself as in a spring. We also affirm that God is free because he does good from eternity, according to his good will¹, so He does not act under the constraint of a necessity of His nature (in a negative sense ²) or external to Him.

¹ Luigi Pareyson, *Ontologia libertății. Răul și suferința*, translated by Ștefania Mincu, Editura Pontica, Constanța, 2005, p. 62: "To say <<God exists>> means to say: <<good was chosen>>, good was chosen ab aeterno, evil was defeated ab aeterno. God is nothing but the choice of good, the choice of good is the very existence of God".

² God does not act in contradiction with His being, but at the foundation of the Godhead there is a Person (the Father), whom we think of as inseparable from the Son and the Holy Spirit. By this we do not introduce a separation between being and person, but only distinguish them from each other. They are two realities that cannot be understood separately from each other, because by definition the being is the ontological content of the person, and the person is the concrete hypostasis of the common being of several individuals (see also Vladimir Lossky, *Teologia mistică a Bisericii de Răsărit*, trans. by Vasile Răducă, Editura Bonifaciu, București, 1998, p. 152). We find this idea in Vladimir Lossky expressed as follows: "*The idea of Person implies freedom from nature, the person is free from his nature, he is not determined by his nature*", p. 151.

Divine freedom is also observed in what concerns the existence of God. Therefore, God is above it, because the Father always gives birth to the Son and gives birth to the Holy Spirit in an outpouring of love and absolute happiness. God does not receive existence as something foreign to Him from an impersonal substance, but existence is the power of eternal love between the Persons of the Holy Trinity. Moreover, God can dispose of existence according to the goodness of His own will. He shares it with those He wills (through creation) and those to whom He makes Himself known (existence as eternal life) (I Timotei 2, 4; Ioan 17, 3).

Therefore, freedom is a feature par excellence of the Trinity, without which God cannot be conceived. Freedom can be correlated especially with divine omnipotence, although the full and eternal way of manifesting divine freedom does not consist in the abuse of power, but in love, that is, in the self-giving of the Triune Persons to Each Other without quantitative or qualitative limitations³.

Another aspect of divine freedom is the conformity of the divine will with His being. Thus, God wills only that which reflects His unbroken and substantial loving relationship of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. Of this true love, of this absolute and continuous appreciation, by which the Persons of the Holy Trinity surround Each Other, or - better said - two to the third, God willed to be part of other existences as well (not through being, because only God is not created, but in gift, by grace), because in *this is the divine freedom: not to close oneself in selfish and all-protective boundaries, but to manifest in the world and in the relationship with man through uncreated energies*.

A freedom that is fenced off to preserve itself, so as not to be lost in favor of another person, is not a real freedom, but a burden and a passion. Divine freedom is that which divides infinitely, without diminishing, and fills those who receive it with the same altruistic and beneficent will as the Persons of the Holy Trinity.

It must be said that by God's will man receives life, and by His will man advances in existence. But, man must participate in the freedom of God through the freedom with which he was endowed in order to acquire communion with the Creator. Therefore, we can say that God wants man to want what He wants. The image of God planted in man from creation achieves the likeness by internalizing and experiencing God's will. Therefore, what He is by being, God wants man to achieve through will and reason.

For Father Stăniloae, man is a paradoxical being precisely because, being created from nothing, but in the image of God, he is called to infinite growth in the likeness of his Creator. God does not oblige him, but leaves him the freedom to accept or refuse the invitation. It is created free, but with the possibility of becoming even freer, or even less free. Freedom is the power with which the face opens up or not to likeness: "Man is created free, but he is also given the power to make himself more and more free, or less and less free, but, keeping the opinion that he is free, that is, to use changefully or not to use his freedom. For him, freedom is a power that he can preserve and develop, but he can also let it weaken, allowing himself to be controlled by the unilateral desires of his lower behaviors. Man is free, but he promotes his true freedom only by strengthening his being as an omnilateral unity of his contrasting components in God, from whom they all come...Through freedom, man is called to raise his integral being in God more and more...Freedom makes him man, a being who is part in a special way with God, with the Absolute"⁴.

³ Jurgen Moltmann, *Treimea și Împărăția lui Dumnezeu*, trans. by Daniel Munteanu, Editura Reintregirea, Alba-Iulia, 2007, p. 81.

⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*, Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova, 1987, pp. 50-51.

For Western theologians, the relationship between divine freedom and grace is non-existent, because their teaching is focused on created grace, the Persons of the Holy Trinity cannot manifest Their freedom in relation to humans, because created grace is not the means by which God can come into contact with His creatures. Moreover, Anselm of Canterbury supports the theory that the definition of freedom contains an impediment; the definition of freedom cannot be applied to God and good angels because neither God nor angels can sin like men and fallen angels. So, the definition of freedom, according to Anselm of Canterbury, in order to be able to embrace all its cases, must not include the power to sin. "Since it seems that free will is incompatible with God's grace, predestination, and foreknowledge, I wish to find out what freedom of choice itself is, and whether we always have it. For if the freedom of choice means being able to sin and "being able" not to sin, as some usually say, and if we always have it, why do we sometimes need grace? And if we don't always have it, why is sin imputed to us, if we sin without free will?"⁵

Another great Latin theologian, Blessed Augustine, has a similar theory in this regard. "Free will is constantly present (even after the fall), freedom cannot be acquired after the fall except under the empire of grace. Man is always free (in the minor sense), but once he has fallen he cannot be free (in the major sense) unless he is freed (by grace)⁶"⁷.

2. HUMAN FREEDOM

a) Edenic human freedom

At his origin, according to the testimonies of the writings of the Old Testament, man possessed freedom accompanied by a happy life. This freedom had the following characteristics: purity, light, altruism. It was pure freedom, because man, without sin, acted according to his nature and by consulting the divine will. It was also an enlightened freedom, since, in his decisions, man's reason was enlightened by the all-wise divine grace, choosing only what was good and useful for his spiritual growth. It was, finally, an altruistic freedom, because the options of the first people had in mind the good of the other, the harmony with God and the humanization of creation. Thus, even when Eve chose to eat from the forbidden tree, she did so in order to acquire something better (the likeness to God - that's right, in a competitive sense) and out of the altruistic desire to offer it to her husband, Adam, this unique "chance" (man's disobedience to the divine command to "not eat" from the forbidden tree⁸ had consequences at the antipode of the goal proposed by the protoparents at the devil's urging).

⁵ Anselm de Canterbury, *Despre libertatea alegerii*, trans. by Laura Maftai, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2006, pp. 10-11: „Quoniam liberum arbitrium videtur repugnare, et praedestinationi, et praescientiae Dei, ipsa libertas arbitrii quid sit nosse desidero, et utrum illam semper habeamus. Si enim libertas arbitrii est posse peccare et non peccare, sicut a quibusdam solet dici, et hoc semper habemus quomodo aliquando gratia indigemus? Si autem hoc non semper habemus, cur nobis imputatur peccatum, quando sine libero arbitrio peccamus?”

⁶ „There is a proper meaning and an improper meaning of grace. In an improper sense, it designates all the gifts of God; only in this sense is nature a grace. In its proper sense, grace represents "the ensemble of God's free gifts whose purpose is to make possible the salvation of man from the fallen state of nature" – Etienne Gilson, *Introduction a l' etude de Saint Augustin*, Publishing House Vrin, Paris, 1949, p. 198.

⁷ Augustin, *De libero arbitrio*, trans. Gheorghe I. Șerban, Publishing House Humanitas, București, 2003, p. 123.

⁸ Augustin, *Opera omnia*, volume II, *De libero arbitrio*, First book, XXXIV, p. 191: „Sin or iniquity is not the desire of bad natures, but the abandonment of good ones, as it is written in the Scriptures: All God's creation is good (I Timothy 4, 7); and by this any tree that God planted in Paradise is, of course, good. Man, therefore, did not desire the evil nature when he touched the forbidden tree, but, leaving what was better, he himself committed the evil deed. Indeed, the Creator is better than any creature He has made: Whose commandment was not to be

Although the first people (Adam and Eve) possessed freedom, i.e. the power not to sin, this was not a good acquired by them or for any merit of theirs, but was a perfectible given through their advancement in communion with God. Therefore, man's freedom in Heaven should be reported and understood in close connection with its source, with God, and with man's ultimate goal, perfection. Although the paradisiacal man possessed pure freedom, this gift was received by man from God through the act of creation and, although it was a beginning of perfection, it had to be appropriated by man, in order to become a "natural" fact (belonging to nature).

Edenic freedom was in fact a charisma that offered man the support to shape himself "in the direction he wanted" (that is, in a personal way; people did not have to progress according to a predetermined cliché), as well as the ability to expand his to infinity (maximum) the valuable potencies planted in human nature by the Creator. Therefore, not being a definitive (or imposed) given, but dependent on the will expressed personally by man (on his free choices), Edenic human freedom is corruptible, that is, it could be diverted (used badly) or even lost (as it happened, then when it was understood and desired in a selfish sense - "outside/without" God. This loss of the state of freedom, synonymous with the state of sin, had both spiritual consequences (slavery to sin, inclination to sin, spiritual death) and and physical (physical death), introducing irrationality into the human being, even if not to an irreversible extent.

b) Post-Edenic human freedom

The fall from man's freedom "is and will forever remain a mystery"⁹, although the reality of its consequences is undeniable. After the sin of the forefathers, along with the distortion of the image of God in man, the freedom of the human will was also perverted. Man no longer naturally tends to fulfill God's will, but his current "natural" is a state inclined against God, separated from God. Therefore, human freedom is no longer objective (illuminated by divine grace), but its degree of purity reflects the spiritual state of man, which differs from case to case. We can say that, while Edenic human freedom overlapped with free will, this time, in the post-Edenic state, free will is a corrupted state of freedom, in which man vacillates between good and evil.

This oscillation between choosing good and evil is not reduced to a state of indecision, but its seriousness is that man, by sinning, gave the devil the power to act on him more than God. In this way, we must understand why the salvation that humanity wanted could not come from men, because "all have gone astray, together they have become unworthy; there is no one who does kindness, not even one" (Psalm 13, 3; 52, 4).

However, before approaching the liberation of man from the bondage of evil, let us observe what transformations man as a person, in general, and human freedom, in particular, underwent through sin.

The human person is not a ready-made given, but it is a given that must be strengthened as man gets to know his Creator more and recognizes Him as protector, source of life and meaning of existence. Therefore, as an easily understandable consequence, through unbelief, violation of God's commandment and rebellion, man acted, in Heaven, exactly contrary to the natural logic (of his nature), separating himself from all good. This was possible because man had not yet acquired God's grace as a personal good, as an

forsaken, that the forbidden might not be touched, however good, because, leaving the better, the good of the creature was desired, which was touched against the commandment of the Creator. And so, God did not plant an evil tree in Paradise, but He Himself was better, Who prevented that one from being touched".

⁹ Hristu Andrusos, *Simbolica*, trans. by Patriarhul Iustin, Editura Anastasia, București, 2003, p. 245.

expression of his freedom of choice, but only as a gift from God. All this immediately fell upon man, who fell as a person, remaining only with the potential data, but lacking the power to appropriate this data, which came to him from God. Moreover, the given itself (the face) became something unclear, because man lost the meaning of life and was eager to make actual what had been offered to him as potency.

This chasm between God and man, the cause of which was man's unhealthy choice, must be understood spiritually. It is not a neutral state between good and evil, but, on the contrary, it is a state at the antipode of God, in which man retains from the Edenic state only the consciousness of dependence on someone stronger than him. For, "God has not given anyone the freedom to do evil, otherwise punishment is not justified"¹⁰.

The Fathers of the Church testify almost unanimously that the origin of evil must be sought in general, in *the freedom of the being who commits it. "There is no evil, or more precisely, evil exists only when it is committed"*, writes Diadoch of Photiceia¹¹. Evil has no place among essences, but it is not just a lack either; there is activity in it. Evil is not a nature, but a state of nature. It appears as a disease, as a parasite that exists in the virtue of nature from which it feeds. More precisely, evil is a state of the will of this nature; it is the will of a fallen being towards God, and primarily, it is the spiritual sin of the angel¹². Therefore, evil has its origin in the world of angels who inoculated it in the world of men, as a morbid state of the nature of their will. Lucifer's attitude reveals to us the root of all sin: *pride as rebellion against God because he wanted to be himself, by himself, God*. We ask ourselves if the man who wants autonomy and emancipation, at any cost, before God, does not want the same thing? The Russian theologian, Vladimir Lossky, points out that the root of sin resides in „*Lucifer's thirst for self-deification and his hatred of grace*”¹³. Remaining dependent on God in his very being, for his being was created by God, the rebellious spirit acquires a hatred of being, a frenzy of destruction, a thirst for the impossible nothing, since only the earthly world remains open to him, he tries to destroy here the divine plan and failing in the attempt to destroy creation, tries to deform it on all levels through duplicitous, pluralistic and relativistic attitudes. The drama that began in heaven continues on earth, as the faithful angels close the gates of heaven, refusing to be swayed by the fallen angels¹⁴.

Freedom, meant to be a blessing for the "spiritual world" in heaven and on earth, through the misuse of the subjects in question, became a condemnation, a drama and even a tragedy. Both angels and men were created free and endowed with this great gift of freedom. Here is the greatness and the tragedy of man. From here comes the good and the bad in the world¹⁵. Historical experience shows us that everywhere and always the abuse of freedom gives rise to evil and suffering in the world. According to the Biblical Revelation, evil is sin and sin is the abuse of freedom. Here is the beginning of evil and the origin of suffering in the world, according to the Church Fathers and Christian philosophers. Freedom, when it degenerates into arbitrariness and anarchy, gives birth to evil and evil is pain, suffering,

¹⁰ Augustin, *De libero arbitrio*, p. 21.

¹¹ Cf. Vladimir Lossky, *Introducere în teologia ortodoxă*, trans. by Lidia and Remus Rus, Editura Sophia, București, 2006, p. 105.

¹² Ion Stoica, "Repere teologice și filosofice privind existența și lucrarea diavolului și a „răului” în om și în lume – eseu”, in *Almanah Bisericesc – Studii și articole de teologie, istorie și misiune creștină*, Editura Arhiepiscopiei Târgoviștei, 2010, p. 45.

¹³ Vladimir Lossky, *Introducere în teologia ortodoxă*, p. 106.

¹⁴ Ion Stoica, "Repere teologice și filosofice privind existența și lucrarea diavolului și a „răului” în om și în lume – eseu”, p. 46.

¹⁵ Ion Stoica, *Adevărul, lumea și omul*, Editura ASA, București, 2006, passim.

misery and death. But freedom is not only the origin of evil, but also of good. The personal relationship with God (grace), the Spirit of God and the Truth are the constituents of our Christian freedom and this means that our freedom is not absolute like God's, but is responsible, that is, a gift of God made to man to give quality to the relationship itself with Him. Where these are not, there is no true freedom and without it there is neither good nor bad. Good and evil have their beginning in the world, in the field of moral freedom, in the creative power of the free spirit, which preserves the relationship with God and does good or refuses this relationship and does evil¹⁶.

Evil itself does not exist with the title that Good exists as a principle in God. Evil is nothing but a bad use of good, meaning by this, what exists. It does not exist in itself as a principle of existence, but having grounds in the freedom with which angels and man were endowed, more correctly, in free will, it constantly tends to steal one or another concrete existence, in order to exist through it or more precisely, under its guise, as "someone". To the extent that it possesses it in order to exist, it destroys it, so that according to the divine reason, evil does not become existential¹⁷ and without limit¹⁸, but to remain only incidental, irrational and involuntary, as it penetrated and manifests itself in historical existence. Out of pride and disobedience or abuse of freedom. The luminary of the morning became Satan. He did not exist from the beginning, that is, from creation, but came "out of pride, bad will and bad use" of the gift of freedom. The abuse of freedom he exercised caused his downfall, but also limited the time and space of existential action. He was given "hell" as his abode, and "the world and history" as his sphere of action. Being a deceiver par excellence, Satan tries to make us believe that he too can create and that is why he maintains in us the illusion of an objective evil, of which he is the author. In fact, this is only a mirage of the demon, a protection of our errors. It is true that after many generations of sinners in history or sins in a life, evil will end up revealing a kind of apparent but active self-consistency, a counter-nature, but it has become a second nature that means nothing else than anti-nature or distortion. While we talk a lot about evil in general and often in impersonal language, Holy Scripture speaks less about evil in general than about the Evil One.¹⁹

Thus, in its post-Edenic state, the human will often choose contrary to nature and aims to satisfy the desires of the body, to the detriment of the needs of the soul. This reversal of roles between body and soul²⁰, caused by sin, affected to a significant extent the free will of man²¹. An unnatural disharmony has occurred between *libertas* and *liberum arbitrium*, which can justify us to say that man has lost his freedom, becoming a slave to irrational desires or a slave to sin. If man did not lose the faculty to choose, to position himself in favor

¹⁶ Ion Stoica, "Repere teologice și filosofice privind existența și lucrarea diavolului și a „răului” în om și în lume – eseu”, p. 47.

¹⁷ That is, to hold on to God's creation.

¹⁸ Death appears as a limitation of evil. "...so that wickedness may not be deadly...". See the prayer of release at the funeral service from ***, *Molitfelnic*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1992, p. 234.

¹⁹ Ion Stoica, "Repere teologice și filosofice privind existența și lucrarea diavolului și a „răului” în om și în lume – eseu”, p. 54.

²⁰ Vladimir Lossky, *Teologia mistică a Bisericii de Răsărit*, p. 156: „The mind had to find its nourishment in God, it had to live in God, the soul had to be nourished by the mind; the body had to live from the soul - this was the order from the beginning of the immortal nature”.

²¹ Jean-Claude Larchet, *Terapeutică bolilor spirituale*, trans. by Marilena Bojin, Editura Sophia, București, 2006, p. 229: „Through the sin that he commits with his will, man follows Adam, he becomes jointly responsible with that and with all the people who also commit the sin that lies in the fallen human nature, which is common to them. Only in this sense can we say that people are all guilty of Adam's sin”.

or against an option, the same thing did not happen to the purity, rationality or sanctity of his will. In other words, he no longer desires the good as something according to his nature, but often prefers what is contrary to the good, from the fear of suffering and the insatiable desire for carnal pleasures²².

3. MAN'S LIFE AS AN EMPTY SHELL, AS A TORMENT. DEMONS IN OUR LIVES

Viktor Frankl, the great Viennese psychiatrist and philosopher, survivor of four Nazi camps, conveys in his writings such traumatic experiences, but finds to lay down an important Christian teaching to which we must relate even when the forces of evil act upon us: the manner in which we will react to everything that happens to us, even in the most difficult moments of life. In *Man's Search for the Meaning of Life*, Frankl appreciated that even in the hardest moments, "a man who has nothing left in this world can know happiness, if only for a moment, when he thinks of the person he loves"²³.

The preferred environment of evil influences is the human soul and if we allow evil to gain control over us it can produce brutal and direct havoc or it can manifest itself in the form of subtle aggressiveness; both in one case and in the other this association with evil, which we make room for in our mind and soul, leads to tragic and total alienation from everything that is life: from God, from love, from beauty and from meaning. Andrew Solomon, himself a depressed man, believes that the bad associations we face every day bring man closer to the edge of the "abyss of life", leading him to a continuous torment: "the rhythm of life, the endemic loneliness, the entanglement between people, the collapse of traditional family structures"²⁴ are the main factors leading to an increasing rate of depression. He also proposes means of healing when he says that we must seek faith in God, help the disenfranchised, but above all we must deal with love and teach others to do the same. In the Bible, there is the moment when Jesus goes to the land of the Gadarenes, from the region of De-capolis, where there was a majority non-Jewish population, and heals a man possessed by demons, who was badly tormented, living in the tombs on the outskirts of the city, being kept tied up because he was violent.

Such a tormented, dehumanized man lived not only in the torment of his life, but also tormented others because in the mind and attitude of such a man irrationality, disorder, tumult, impurity, fear and pain are sown. It is enough to be possessed by only one passion, and such a life becomes a torment for you and for those around you:

- a) a man fallen into *the passion for alcohol* causes a lot of suffering to the whole family of which he is a part, becoming aggressive, no longer in control of his actions;
- b) *the passion for fornication*; Saint John Chrysostom, in one of his homilies, likens the demonized man to the man possessed by passions and gives several such examples. The demoniac walked naked; so does he who is possessed by the passion of fornication. He may not be empty in body, but he is empty in soul; he may not hurt his body with stones, but he hurts his soul with sins. Who will stop or bind such a man because the graves where the

²² Vladimir Lossky, *Teologia mistică a Bisericii de Răsărit*, p. 159: „Întorcându-se de la Dumnezeu, mintea, în loc să comunice hrana sa sufletului, începe să trăiască pe socoteala sufletului, hrănindu-se din substanța sa (este ceea ce numim noi de obicei <<valori spirituale>>). Sufletul, la rândul său, începe să trăiască din viața trupului, aceasta este obârșia patimilor; în sfârșit, trupul fiind silit să-și caute hrana în afară, în material neînsuflețită, află până la urmă moartea. Compusul omenesc se destramă”.

²³ Viktor Frankl, *Omul în căutarea sensului vieții*, trans. Florin Tudose, Editura Vellant, București, 2018, p. 50.

²⁴ Andrew Solomon, *Demonul amiezii*, trans. by de Diana-Ligia Ilin, Editura Humanitas, București, 2014, p. 32.

demonic lived are like the places of sin: they are full of rot and give off a terrible smell²⁵;
c) *the passion for the love of silver/money*; If in the case of the demonized, the demon in him immediately obeyed Christ's command and came out of that man, in the case of the silver/money lover things are more complicated. The latter does not listen to the Lord's command: "You cannot be slaves of God and Mammon" (Matthew 46, 24) and, even threatened with hell and endless punishments it does not go. And this is not because it is stronger than Christ, but because Christ does not want to make us virtuous without our will.

In the one enslaved by the passion of the love of silver and in the comparison that Saint John Chrysostom makes with the demonized from the land of the Ghergheses we find that just as the demonized is bound by many bonds, so is the lover of silver/money: he is bound with the disgrace of the world, with fear of court, with the threat of judges; sometimes he breaks these bonds and escapes. If anyone could take these bonds from the man possessed by this passion, he would clearly see that the demon inside him is much more fierce and hungry, much more eager than the one that came out of the demonized man. And when it comes to such a man, the moment his passion is revealed or discovered, people choose to leave him, to avoid him, especially since he is usually in the middle of the citadel (city) and not on the edge or in the wilderness.

Moreover, the lover of silver/money is so sick that he sees as an enemy even the one who has not wronged him in any way, threatening him with many evils, as the Greek Archimandrite Vasilios Bacoianis observes²⁶.

d) a man fallen into *the passion of vainglory (vanity)* who has the advanced form of pride or haughtiness has an obsession with the image, the desire to be placed at the top at any cost, becoming aggressive in his desire to seek something unnatural and, not being capable of what he wants, torments those around him especially by incapacity.; in fact, they are only people who hold on to everything that constitutes a source of material wealth, driving God, through their attitude, out from their lives, like the Gadarenes, who ask the Savior to leave their city, as soon as they saw that Jesus allowed the demons that possessed that man to enter a herd of swine that threw themselves off a cliff and drowned. The economic reason mattered more, than the joy of a healed man... The Gadarenes see a healed man, they saw God who brings freedom, but with all that they took Him out of their land. Metropolitan Antonie de Suroj describes such a community: „*In a false community, everyone protects themselves against everyone else. Each tries not to be known except in the ways in which he or she chooses to be known*”²⁷.

In the universal literature we find the case of father Serghi, who in his youth had been a prince, with the layman's name, Stepan Kasatski, and who, because of a disappointment in the relationship with the young woman he had chosen to be his bride, goes and becomes a monk. He does not find peace in that monastic community feeling too exposed to temptations and having to fight against them. Even Leo Tolstoy says through the mouth of the prince-turned-priest Serghi that „*the sources of this struggle were two in number: doubt and fleshly lusts*”²⁸. After a while, on the advice of his priest and at the wish

²⁵ Saint John Chrysostom, *Omiliu la Evanghelia după Matei, Omilia a XXVIII-a*, in col. „P.S.B.”, vol 23, Editura IBMBOR, București 1994, pp. 357-361.

²⁶ Vasilios Bacoianis, *Taine și descoperiri în evangheliile duminicilor*, trans. by Șerban Tica, Editura de Suflet, București, 2016, p. 214.

²⁷ Antonie de Suroj, *Ești creștin sau ești bisericos? Cuvântări despre trăirea autentică a credinței*, trans. by Ioan-Lucian Radu, Editura Doxologia, Iași, 2020, p. 126.

²⁸ Lev Tolstoi, *Sonata Kreutzer. Părintele Serghi. Hagi Murad*, trans. by Cezar Petrescu, S. Recevschi, Ștefan Velisar Teodoreanu and Mihail Calmicu, Editura Minerva, București, 1971, p. 197.

of the hierarch, Father Serghi moved to a monastery on the outskirts of the capital. But here the temptations become even greater, especially since many women came to this monastery. He asked to be moved to a secluded monastery and after a while he settled down as an ascetic in a cell that was a cave dug into the mountain. Here he lives in hardship for years, but he felt that "in him there was a spring of living water, although weak, flowing smoothly from my body, through my body", as he himself testified²⁹. There is a moment of temptation when a harlot comes to his cell trying to lure him into worldly pleasures; to curb his carnal desires the hermit Serghi cuts his finger with an axe. This moment meant not only the protection of carnal desires for Father Serghi, but also the conversion of the woman, who a year later became a monk, in turn, becoming Mother Agnia.

Finding out about the pure life that this hermit leads, a monastery was built near his cell and many people came here to receive blessings from Father Serghi. For a while he refused to give much advice to people who sought him or to offer prayers for people who came to receive healing through the father's prayers. From a certain moment he yielded to the entreaties and even healed many people through his prayers. Only he was not at all reconciled to his condition, considering that after the moment of the conversion of the one who was now called Mother Agnia, he "felt like a light burning torch, and the more this feeling grew, the more distinctly he felt that it was fading, that it was going out of the divine light of truth, which burned in his heart...she (n.n. mother Agnia) sipped from the living, clean water. But from then on, the water didn't collect well, because the thirsty ones came, pushing and shoving to get first. They have dried up the spring, all that is left is the mud"³⁰.

In a short time Father Serghi fell into the passion of carnal desires with a young woman who had been brought to him to heal her. He immediately left the monastery, in a peasant's house, saying nothing to anyone, leading a rough life. He has a dream in which he is shown a woman from his childhood, Pašenka, whom he seeks and finds in a city. She was a poor old woman who lived with her children and grandchildren, giving music lessons to support her family, but living according to God's teachings, helping and having mercy on people in need. The message of Tolstoy's story expressed through the mouth of father Serghi, now a layman eager to receive forgiveness for the bodily sin committed, through his efforts, but also for the fact that as long as he was a monk he sought and did not stop worldly fame: "So here it is what was the meaning of my dream. Pašenka is how I should have been and how I wasn't. I have lived for men, saying that I live for God; she lives for God, imagining that she lives for men. Yes, a single good deed, a cup of water given without thinking of reward does more than all the good deeds I have overwhelmed people with. But did I have the sincere desire to serve God? he asked himself and answered: Yes, but all this was smeared, smothered by worldly fame. *Yes, for a man who lived like me, for the sake of worldly fame, there is no God. I will look for him*"³¹. Evagrius Ponticus speaks of the eight spirits of evil that assail man, making him a "closed universe": *the gluttony of the womb* (insatiable appetite to eat a lot), *fornication, love of silver/money* (greed), *sadness, anger* (irascibility, which leads to acute verbal and physical conflicts), *boredom* (the midday demon, who empties man of enthusiasm and the genuine joy of life), *vain glory* (vanity) and *pride* (haughtiness).³²

²⁹ Lev Tolstoi, *Sonata Kreutzer*, p. 210.

³⁰ Lev Tolstoi, *Sonata Kreutzer*, pp. 209-210.

³¹ Lev Tolstoi, *Sonata Kreutzer*, p. 228.

³² Evagrie Ponticul, *În lupta cu gândurile. Despre cele opt gânduri ale răutății și replici împotriva lor*, translated by Ioan I. Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2006, pp. 45-60.

CONCLUSIONS

Our freedom consists in no longer being slaves to sin, to passions. We need freedom as long as we do the will of our Heavenly Father. In God's rest there is no sin, no sorrow, no trouble, but God Himself. What the Holy Apostle Paul explains in the same chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews: „*He who has entered God's rest has also rested from his things, just as God has rested from His.*”. It is what the Savior also says at one point: „*Learn from Me that I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls*” (Matthew 11, 29).

Against demons only God can act in a curative sense, because the only power recognized by the devil is divine. Therefore, when we talk about the demons in our life, the passions and the influence of evil in our actions, we are convinced that only God can annihilate this force, the divine power being the only one known in this sense: „*What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Highest God? Please don't torture me ...*” (Luke 8, 28). The nature of our attitude as humans is to pay attention to the one next to us and not torment; to succeed in "resting" a man who seeks our communion and interaction, to enjoy a man with whom we meet. Not paying attention to these things leads to a lack of harmony, a lack of communion because neither you nor the person next to you "rests". In order to be able to fight these evil spiritual forces, the Holy Apostle Paul also shows us what the Christian "weapons": *the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the gospel of peace, the breastplate of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God*. All this must be supported by *the secret power of the prayer* (Efeseni 6, 14-18).

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