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About the soul and its immortality in the Holy Scripture

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INTRODUCTION

After the teaching of the Church, man comes, like all the other creatures, from God through the act of creation, being the last of the creatures, but also the most prominent of them, the one that ends and is the crown of creation - the being that through its nature and dignity differs from all the earthly creatures. Therefore, the man ranks in the middle between the spiritual and the material world; to the first one it belongs with his soul, and to the last one with his body. He is the crossing point of two worlds and a summary thereof; it is, as often noted, a representation of the big world, a microcosm. Thus, in the work of creation, the man is presented as a crown, being especially built by God at the end stages of the creation, receiving from the Creator a special mission, to care for the visible ones.

Therefore, the Orthodox Confession (1:18) says of man: "At the end God created the man, which is composed of immaterial and rational soul and material body, as from this embodiment of man, on the one hand to be known the truth that God is the creator of the spiritual world, and on the other hand, that he also built the material world. Therefore, the man is also called small world, because it carries within itself the image of the great world."

All Parents, of both the Eastern and Western Church, have seen in the very fact of man's creation in the image and likeness of God, a certain harmony between the human being and the primordial being of God. However, the theological expressions of this revealed truth are, in the Eastern and Western traditions often different, though not entirely contradictory. St. Augustine, striving to conceive an idea of God, begins with analyzing the image of God in us and tries to rediscover in God what can be found in our soul, created in His image. This method of psychological analysis is applied to the knowledge of God, to theology. St. Gregory of Nyssa, on the other hand, takes as its starting point what revelation tells us about God to discover in man which corresponds to the image of God. This theological method is applied to the science of man, to anthropology. The first way is trying to know God starting from the man created in His image, and the second one seeks

to define the true nature of man starting from the concept of God, by whose likeness the man was created¹.

Functioning from God, as expression of the divine will "to be", part of the divine plan, man has embedded itself in two distinct realities. The first of them, the body is the undeniably existing material, falling under the scope of the senses, and therefore, accepted unanimously. The second component, also with existence in itself, independent and more superior to the body, through the perpetual existence from the time when it begins to exist, it is the soul. During the human evolutionary stages, standing under the sign of dark reason, the soul, its existence or some of his traits, were the subject of many controversies; views differed from century to century, influenced by the socio-historical context.

Almost in all the mankind religions it is met the firm and general conviction, that human existence does not end with death. The concern of philosophers of all time, the anthropological question, appeared from the primitive religions to the monotheistic ones. Thus the Christian philosopher Petre Țuțea writes the following: "The eternal religious man acquired the certainties lost by the historical man, who moves asymptotically to the ideal ... the modern scientist, located between hypothesis and experiment, accepts with difficulty the placement of the truth in religion and his saving function (...). Science united with religion and art means freedom and immortality"².

The human person is primarily a self-conscious existence. Descartes saw it and stated the fundamental truth about him: "cogito, ergo sum", meaning "I think, therefore I am". By this, he understood the act of thinking as an act of the person headed toward itself, thus as an act of self-consciousness. The formula "cogito, ergo sum", swept through it two affirmations: the ego and its thinking, or its self-consciousness of him³.

In this paper we approached the existence's problematic, of the origin and immortality of the soul, based on the scriptural Revelation, and pointed out that the soul

¹ Vladimir Lossky, *Introducere în teologia ortodoxă*, Editura Sofia, București, 2006, p. 59;

² Pr. Conf. Dr. Alexandru Stan, Prof. Dr. Remus Rus, *Istoria Religiilor*, Editura IMBOR, București, 1991, p. 19;

³ Pr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Studii de teologie dogmatică ortodoxă*, Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova, 1990, p. 147;

comes from God through creation, not by emanation, because by its soul the man is connected with God and the spiritual world, but until the crystallization of this teaching, the views and visions related to the immortality of the soul and its origin, have suffered different deformations, in different eras of time. Therefore the V-III centuries BC have gone under the auspices of controversy and philosophical rationalism. The lovers of wisdom, philosophy, have raised the issue of the existence of the human soul and the argument of this assertion. The soul as an entity existent in itself was revealed by the unanimous acceptance. The awareness of the actions and the perception of the functions externalization led to moral contradictions; causality principle as a general principle, led to the appearance in school of the Athenian philosophy, pre-existential and metempsychosis theories.

The soul because it is not a constitutive part of the general nature, it is the product of the conscious eternal spirit which is based on rational principles of matter, principles that plasticized them, transforming it in a conscious soul who thinks the principles and spiritualizes the material reality that is united with spiritual eternal conscious. The soul raises the rational principles together with the eternal principles of the world thought by God in a dialogue of cooperation and continuous learning with Him.

Eastern Church Fathers had presented the human nature as following: a tripartite structure composed of spirit, soul and body (nous, psyche, the soma) or the union of soul and body. The difference between the supporters of dichotomism and trichotomism generally reduces to the terminology. The Dichotomists see in nous the top faculty of the rational soul, the faculty whereby man enters into communion with God⁴.

The research has as topic a theme that has preoccupied over time, the issue of immortality of the soul, of its existence, but also of its origin, based on the scriptural Revelation and patristic teaching, and its results can be used to take some position. In the research are called upon the elements from the Holy Scripture, from patrology and philosophy, the work having a trans-disciplinary approach. The research aims to show off the main guiding directions that were the basis of the soul's immortality doctrine

⁴ Vladimir Lossky, *op. cit.*, p. 65

crystallization, starting from the pagan philosophy, then going to the anthropological Jewish philosophy, crossing the first Christian centuries, and reaching the current complex vision of the Church. It pervades these works and all other ideas focus around it and hence, resulting the foundation of the researched subject.

This universality of belief in the immortality of the soul, to which in some nations (Persians, Greeks, Romans, etc.) the belief has been added in a judgment of the souls after death, explains the great similarity of the main funeral rites and ceremonies of all the great religions of humanity, such as: washing and dressing the corpses, their burial or incineration, the processions and wailing, meals or funeral feasts and commemoration for the dead.

The fact is particularly obvious for some of the larger nations of antiquity, as the Egyptians, whose art and culture has in general an emphasized funerary character, visible in the embalming of bodies, in the pyramids and various cemeteries designed to protect the mummies or bodies of the important characters, in the paintings and texts from the inscriptions and hieroglyphics and papyrus, in temples, in the origin and religious affiliation of writing and reading⁵.

The same goes with the Greeks and Romans, of which was said and demonstrated that their religious rites in connection with the family cult of the ancestors ("Lares", "Manes" and "Penates") have determined and influenced not only the whole spiritual and brilliant life the Greco-Roman culture and art, but also the organization and political life, economic and social development of old cities and states founded by these two great nations of the pagan classical antiquity⁶.

"The speculation limits of the immanent scientist does not exceed the meta-psychology, the meta-logic, the language moving it between intuition and method, not exceeding the useful, convenient and gratuitous, existing only one way of access to the truth, the revelation"⁷. In the case of the anthropological discourse, in the narrative registers

⁵ Horia C. Matei, *Enciclopedia Antichității*, Editura Meronia, București, 1995, p. 351;

⁶ Pr.Conf. Dr. Alexandru Stan, Prof. Dr. Remus Rus, *op.cit*, pag. 20 ;

⁷ Petre Țuțea, *Mircea Eliade*, Editura Eikon, Cluj-Napoca, 2007, p. 13;

of anthropogenesis, the reasons are: dust, image, resemblance; it is about a replay of the text of Genesis 1, 26-27⁸ with the text in Genesis 2, 7⁹.

The difficulties met have only been in connection with taking one of the three theories that try to explicit the origin of the soul: pre existentialism, traducianism and creationism, since about the eternity of soul confess both pagan peoples philosophy and the whole scriptural Revelation.

The main goal of this scientific research is to expose and analyze the main scriptural testimonies that are referring both directly and indirectly to the eternity of the soul, but also of the patristic texts taken as sources of interpretation of the scriptural texts, realized in the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

This paper is primarily a scriptural, philosophical, patristic research, stressing however the correct interpretation, of the word scriptural, in the light of the Father's interpretation, having as a main approach the outlining of soul's eternity doctrine, because "He is not God of the dead, but of the living (Mt 22, 32).

The earth (dust) is not a mystery, but is intended to the sacredness, remain two constituent that hold the "sacred mystery power the image and likeness of the which have their origin in God, that divine paradigm of ever existing, and simultaneously flow from the creation, is shown from creation, though, after the Greek theologian Panayotis Nellas¹⁰ and Justin Popovich¹¹, are telos of creation: filling the image or the ecclesiastical achievement of creation, or the ecclesial environment is the fundamental anastasis.

Another goal is to emphasize the idea that the Scripture is not written only for the early readers, nor only for future generations but for some, and also for others. The overall

⁸ "26. Then God said: "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

27. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female.”;

⁹ "7. Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person;

¹⁰ Panayotis Nellas, *Omul - animal îndumnezeit. Perspective pentru o antropologie ortodoxă*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2002, p. 21;

¹¹ Iustin Popovici, *Credința ortodoxă și viața în Hristos*, Editura BunaVestire, Galați, 2003, p. 18;

aim of both the Old Testament and the New Testament, is to show what God has done for the salvation of mankind and how God prepared this salvation, first through the prophets and patriarchs, and eventually even through His Son made Man. The wording, under the overall goal, is the history of salvation, and more specifically the history of preparation the human's race salvation.

The goals have materialized during the reading, research, and elaboration of the material in several well defined objectives:

- Highlighting the scriptural and patristic texts relevant to the research topic;
- The presence of the idea of immortality of the soul in all philosophical systems;
- The presentation of the main theories on the origin of the soul extracted from the patristic thought throughout the history;
- Grammatical and contextual analysis of the terms: "nefes", "nesemah" and "ruah";
- The presentation of the new-testament's teachings main points about the soul and his eternity;
- The centrality of the idea that man, through his soul, can stand in an ontological, dialogue bond with his peers, with the creation, but also with the persons of the Holy Trinity.
- Highlighting the authenticity and veracity of the Orthodox teaching on the eternity of the soul in opposition with the sectarian doctrines that are incidents to this theme.

The title was chosen for two reasons: first, the desire to return to the fore the thorny issue on the origin of souls and their eternal essence as it originates from the pages of the Holy Scripture, but also from the doctrine handed down by the Holy Fathers under the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit and secondly, due to the need to clarify the meaning and origin of the souls and their immortality in opposition to the heretical views of the sectarian doctrines.

The paper's anthropogenesis is received by biblical anthropologies¹² as expressed in the Genesis 1, 26-27 and Genesis 2, 7 and the parallel places that take over the theme. Only that, in these biblical passages, there is not made by the theologians, a clear distinction between the two types of actions that are described: between the Holy Trinity's advice

¹² Walter Wolf, *Anthropologie de l'Ancien Testament*, Geneve, Labor et Fides, 1974;

(Gen. 1, 26) which is done in eternity and cannot be treated, analyzed according to immanent hermeneutic epistemes, and between the own act of creating (Gen. 1, 27; 2, 7) which consumes in time and is capable of a classical hermeneutics.

Given this distinction, we can see that in the first text, we have an act specific to the eternity and therefore in the verse we have "feleni" and "demut" - image and likeness, but we also have the specification of the "tetos" of the human being in the womb of creation.

The paper aims to analyze and highlight the main verses that were the basis of the long crystallization process of the Orthodox Church conception and talk about the eternal origins of the souls. It is also the result of a detailed documentation which aims the systematization and clarification of the spread information a variety of sources about the origin and destination of their eternal souls.

The paper is divided into eight chapters, made up of many sub-chapters and sections that take place after insertion.

In the scientific approach, there was made an appeal, to several research methods, as follows:

The first method is that of documentation and bibliographic research. In this method we collected bibliographic materials that refer to the subject, thus managing to outline the chosen topic.

The second method used is the comparative research. By this method we checked the truth of the same information in different sources cited.

Another method is the quantitative one, allowing the collection of a variety of materials and presents the data clearly and tangentially similar to the theme. The method has a strength point, which allows us to check the quality of the selected materials.

Another method is the chronological longitudinal timeline that can be observed throughout all the chapters, in order to give the project a uniform look, but also to support the reader in the understanding mode, of deepening and structuring the empirical vision, of topicality on the subject.

In the realization of the work there was used the exegetic-hermeneutical method, through which were interpreted in an Christological and ecclesial perspective the patristic and scriptural texts.

I used in the thesis the interpretations of the Holy Fathers that are referring to the main verses in which is reflecting with necessity the idea of the soul's immortality. I redeemed also articles, speciality studies, sequences related to the studied topic and found interesting lineages to authors such as: St. Augustine, Origen, Tertullian, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Basil the Great, Athanasius the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, St. John Chrysostom.

The bibliography that I used is very rich, well balanced both in terms of religious tradition from which authors come, and linguistic space in which they occurred or the year of emergence of these books, studies or articles. I interpreted these bibliographic sources through their own personalities, I have profoundly reviewed them and I've built the assumptions or I've defended my ideas using them as a true Jacob's ladder.

The thesis brings in attention to the reader the main problems and divergences that appeared throughout the history of the patristic thinking generated by the problem of the souls origin and their eternal destination by presenting the three theories. These theories outlined in the paper have the ability to give a profound image and subtly detailed through the approach of more synchronous coordinates, therefore with a concurrent deployment, retracting the tempting practice and the habit to treat an interdisciplinary subject not only from a biblically point of view, but also from a dogmatic one.

In the proposed scientific approach it is operating with concepts such as: Old Testament, New Testament, soul, immortality, resurrection, eschatology, pre-existentialism, traducianism, creationism, faith confession, essential themes grounded in the biblical, patristic testimonies of the Holy Fathers.

In the pages that follow we'll proceed to a presentation of scriptural texts on the soul and its immortality, and then followed by the analysis of each verse, analyze that we will make on the Hebrew text, and respectively on the Greek text. We hope that through this we will bring more meaning and light, to these fundamental texts in explaining the doctrine of man, in an era marred by numerous heresies and controversies, in which the Church must face the permanent challenge of secularism and of a society more away from the moral values and Christian teaching.

We conclude by saying that, the belief in immortality of the soul delimits the Christian teaching about God of other doctrines and concepts, meaning that only such a divinity is the only redeeming as the basis of the love communion with us in eternity. She protects us from confusing God with the world, as the pantheism does or considering Him not having after the creation, any report with the creature in general and with the man in particular, as wrongly supports Deism.

More the Christian faith in resurrection shows us that God is transcendent and immanent at the same time, and that He is above the world, but also in the world where even more He descends to His creation with one of His people. He fully approaches to the people to enable them to ascend to heaven, namely in communion with Him.

From the study on how the inspired writers of Holy Scripture understood the soul, and that he was immortal, we could gather useful teachings both in fighting false teachings on soul, and also the foundation of a major teaching of the Church, that on honoring the dead, the important part of the liturgical life, of the ancestral Orthodox worship.

The first chapter of the thesis presents the theme of human and soul conception in the Ancient Middle East religions. Therefore, the conception of soul of the ancient Egyptians was different from that of the Old Testament and the soul was thought to be composed of several divisions, each bearing a distinctive name: Ba, Ka, Akh.

Ba, was part of the triad, Ba, Ka, Akh, the concept of triad being found in the Indo-European religions. Terms of Ba and Ka are actually a synonym for the word soul, while Akh plays the notion of spirit.¹³ Ba was the spirit that animated the body, and after death it would go to the gods. Ba was represented by a bird (crane), this symbol suggesting the soul to soar to the gods after the death of body.

Ka was symbolized by a hieroglyph with his arms in an embrace gesture, imagining the energy force that had to be always fed to function optimally. According to some researchers, Ka would have been a "double" astral, a vital principle, closely linked to the body, that would not forsake it even after death, keeping itself as long as the body was preserved. From here the care of Egyptians to preserve dead bodies as long as they can. In

¹³ *Anatomia sufletului în cultura egipteană*, de Renata Tatamir în *Perspective românești asupra științei și teologiei*, Ed. Curtea Veche, București, 2006, pag. 353;

case of the body's deterioration, they would make statues, fine replicas of the deceased so that the KA soul could have a place to live. Even more for the KA soul, the ancient Egyptian would make the tomb as comfortable as possible, being abundantly stocked with food and other necessities for a man in his everyday life. This practice was fueled by fears that KA will come as a zombie in the world of the living.¹⁴

Ran represented the name of the deceased, having a particular importance for the ancient Egyptians. Therefore they sought to preserve him as much as possible by writing him on the funeral stones. An extremely severe penalty was deleting the name of the pyramids or tombstones.

Akh represented the heart considering keeping the memory of all good or bad actions committed by the deceased. Incidentally at the judgment day the heart was set on one side of the balance before the 42 judges gods. On the other side of the scale was sitting the goddess Maat, the goddess of truth and justice.

In the concept of the ancient Egyptians, death was accepted by the Egyptians, because death was not destroying, but was making possible the existence of the being on a higher level, "in the land of eternity."¹⁵

Thus, the soul goes through a difficult trip to the judgment of Osiris. Once in front of the judges, the dead would make a confession of innocence that constituted in an authentic "moral code", although this confession was confirmed only by the heart placed on the scale with the truth and justice. The dead would not expect the verdict with resignation, but sit in front of the gods, because he wanted to become "a justified Osiris", a reinstated man in the great world order. Academician Gheorghe Vlăduțescu believed that death at the Egyptians was the return to the source, because the Egyptians regarded the being as part of the whole.

Therefore, if the righteous were rewarded with a better life than in the terrestrial one, things were not the same with the sinners. However the idea of punishment is less developed in the Egyptian texts. Therefore, in the textiles of Thebans origin it is met the

¹⁴ Nicolae Ciudin, Aurelia Ciudin, *Istoria lumii antice. Orientul*. Iași, 2006, pag. 142-142;

¹⁵ Gheorghe Vlăduțescu, *Introducere în Istoria filosofiei Orientului antic*, Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1980, pag. 138;

lugubrious idea, with atrocious sufferings, and from other texts would seem that those that went bad at the judgment of Osiris, were soon devoured by judges or the hideous beast mentioned before, return to earth at a miserable life or would incarnate in unknown animals.¹⁶

In the subchapter entitled "The concept of man in ancient Mesopotamia" I presented the earliest civilizations in the Middle East that were founded, according to the chronology of the Bible of Jerusalem - based on archaeological research - around the year 3000 BC, in Mesopotamia - today's Iraq. The Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians and the Israelites, but also other nations, later will appear on the map of history, being organized in small states.

Thus, the belief of this people was polytheistic, and the gods from the pantheon of these people had a strong anthropomorphic feature. The ancient Mesopotamian religion was founded based on the old Sumero-Akkadian religion. King Hammurabi¹⁷, after he founded the first independent state in Mesopotamia, united the local cults also, creating a unique religion, the religion of Babylonian, continued after by the Assyrian, and which is why it was called, the Assyrian-Babylonian religion. A characteristic of the belief of these people was that the pantheon included a large number of gods, and the gods were grouped in triads or major tetrads and secondary gods were grouped around the main divinities.

But the Sumerians did not had a myth about the creation of the world in the archaic period, but late myths asserted that the creation of world was due to the son of ENLIL, NINURTA¹⁸. According to the Sumerian, the goddess MAH conceived the man from clay at the behest of the god ENKI. After she uttered the magic formulas upon the 14 pieces of clay, the seven men and seven women were born. They and their descendants were later destroyed by a flood, which after the man was rebuilt by the gods, being called LULLU, meaning "the weak one" because he was useful only to please the gods. His destiny was not of his knowledge, being decided up there. The Historian Ștefan Reșceanu states the

¹⁶ Emilian Vasilescu, *Istoria Religiilor*, Editura IMBOR, București, 1982, p. 112;

¹⁷ Hammurabi the Great (1792-1750 BC) was a Babylonian king who invented the first code of laws;

¹⁸ Constantin Daniel, *Civilizația sumeriană*, Ed. Sport – Turism, București, 1983, pag. 159;

following about the human destiny in the Sumerian religion: "It is not found anywhere, not even in Islam, such resignation in front of fate."¹⁹

Regarding the eschatology, the Assyrian-Babylonian theology and mythology came with some remarks on the future life. The kingdom of the dead, Arali was seen as a strong fortress, surrounded by seven closely guarded walls. In this kingdom it will not be able to enter without the permission of the god Ereškigal. In this realm lies "the source of life" that even the goddess Ishtar is looking to restore the life of Tammuz. Also in the realm of the dead it can be found the "tree of life". Therefore we can say that the idea of immortality from the Sumero-Akkadian mythology is also found in the Assyrian-Babylonian myths²⁰.

Syria's ancient religion was influenced by the ancient Assyrian-Babylonian religion. Leading the Syrian deities was the god El, name that wasn't his own, but was common to the Semitic deities, meaning "god", but not in a monotheistic meaning like at the Hebrews. The El god of ancient Syria, was the central figure in the pantheon and had the goddess Asherah as wife -Yam ("the protector of the sea").²¹

From Philo we know how Phoenicians understood the emergence of the gods and civilization.²² Since ancient times there was the belief in the immortality of the soul. Beginning with the Canaanite period we have archaeological evidence to support this thesis. From this period they have been discovered graves in pits or caves of 8-9 meters. The Canaanites did so in the belief that the souls of the dead, Rephaim, Hebrew and Aramaic, shadows, stood in touch with their bodies. Because of this belief it was forbidden touching or dishonoring the body. On the sarcophagus were discovered inscriptions that were requesting the passersby not to desecrate the graves.

At the Hittites it is found existent, both beliefs of soul's separation from the body, to his ascension to heaven, faith that leads to the corpse burning on the stake, and those involving the revival from the womb, reflected not only in the cemeteries biritualism, but

¹⁹ Reșceanu Ștefan, *Mesopotami, Istorie, cultură, religie*; Ed. Universitaria, Craiova 2006, pag. 252;

²⁰ Banu Ion, op. cit. pag 80;

²¹ Diac. Prof. Dr. Emilian Vasilescu, op. cit. pag.135;

²² Pr. Conf. Dr. Alexandru Stan, Prof. Dr. Remus Rus, *Istoria religiilor*, Editura IMBOR, București, 1991, p. 98, ș.u.;

also in the partial incineration of the corpses of kings, followed by gathering the bones, oil bathing and covering them in fine fabrics, before being buried; here the Mother Goddess, the birth and rebirth are intimately associated with the urn, idea also met at the Egyptians, in more recent dynasties, when in the hieroglyphic writing the signs for "urn" and "swing" are identical²³.

Chapter II, entitled "Man and his destiny - key topic of Greek philosophy," talks about that Hellenism have not only influenced the Jewish civilization, but also the nations around the Mediterranean Sea and early writers and church fathers. And if the first Latin theologians have expressed reservations about the cultural heritage of classical antiquity, those of Greek language, considered that the selective uptake of this heritage was natural and even necessary, since every thought and achievement were inspired by the same divine Logos.

Since those very distant times – when, having no knowledge of their body structure and not be able to explain dreams, came to the idea that their thoughts and feelings are due not the body, but of a soul separate from the body, that remains in the body as long as it lives, and leaves it when he dies - people must have thought about the relationship between the soul and the outside world²⁴. Cabaris and Molschet state that: "The brain is the one who feeds with impression and then expresses ideas"²⁵.

Deep knowledge of ancient philosophy was necessary for the Holy Fathers to defend the Church's teaching against heretical trends of the first century, like Arianism and Apollinarism, given that these heretics based their claims on the central concepts of platonic philosophy. Thus the Holy Fathers such as St. Gregory of Nyssa will have to specify the key terms of ontology.

²³ Margarete Riemschneider, *op cit*, p. 102.

²⁴ K. Marx, F. Engels, „*Opere*”, volumul 14, Sotehghi 2, M-L, 1931, p. 643;

²⁵ Cf. L. A. Gaffe, „*L'Âmmè*”, Paris, 1913, pp. 67-126;

For us humans, death is a topic generating fear and suffering. At all times man has sought to avoid this oppressive reality, and consoled himself with the idea that his soul is immortal. Ancient pagan religions present enough evidence for supporting this belief²⁶.

Thus, the soul as an entity in itself existent was revealed by the unanimous acceptance. The awareness of the actions and perceptions of its functions externalization led to moral contradictions; the causality principle as a generator principle, led to the appearance in the Athenian philosophy school, of the pre existential and transmigration theories.

Athenian philosopher Plato shows in his work "Phaidon" or "About the soul", considered his most Christian work, the last day of Socrates's life, in which he starts to argue the attributes and existence of the soul, its spiritual functions: "What seems a strange thing, my friends, what people call pleasure, as through a miracle the pain born with the appearance of being contrary"²⁷. The elements of this dialog are multiple. Firstly the visible aspect of the human, the body that is decomposing, being transitory, and the indivisible one, the soul, which is imperishable; the eternity of the simple soul, which is not thought, psychogenic, although by the divine nature; transmigratory-Pythagorean; the anamnesis and anamnesia to motivate the foreknowledge of the ideas brought by the soul from another existence²⁸.

With Chapter III, I've made the transition from the philosophical conceptions to the scriptural thinking on the "The soul and its immortality in the Old Testament", and I

²⁶ Mesopotamians religion: man once shared the divine substance, which suggests that there isn't a great distance between man and god. Egyptians religion: death was the purpose and perfection of life, while life was only a period of preparation for a higher stage. The religion of the Celts and Germans: they were convinced that the souls would not perish, but pass after death from one body to another. Islam: after death, souls go before two angels that show them the heaven and hell; after this stage, they remain in a kind of drunkenness until judgment day. For more information on world religions, it is recommended to consult this works: *Istoria religiilor* de Pr. Conf. Dr. Alexandru Stan, Editura Institutului Biblic și de misiune A Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1991 și *Istoria Crediințelor și ideilor religioase*, de Mircea Eliade, Editura Universitas, 1992.

²⁷ Platon, „*Phaidon sau despre suflet*”, București, 1923, p. 21;

²⁸ Petre Țuțea, „*Omul. Tratat de antropologie creștină*”, Iași, 1993, p.149;

pointed out that the human person has a peculiar status among the other creatures created by God. The very act of man's creation sits under the sign of dialogue and sharing. Dialog, because before the creation of man, God sets a council (Gen. 1, 26²⁹)³⁰. The act itself of creation implies an approximation (to interaction), moreover, is an act of sharing of God's breath (nesamah), to the man, which gives him the power of life and soul (Nefes). "The soul is a result of God's spirit outpouring upon the man's material matter"³¹. Therefore the human existence is based on an act of sharing, of giving.

But the wrong views that have emerged more recently, about the role and value of the Old Testament are also due to the fact that not everyone appreciates him and look at him for his true value. Instead of being viewed as "Teacher for Christ", as the character of the Apostle Paul determines them (Gal 3, 24)³², many think it is a scientific didactic book setting out the teachings, knowledge and theological truths, and cosmological and geogonical. The truth is that in the Old Testament Scripture there are included truths and religious teachings and can only be reached briefly some truths from the profane sciences. Not even some, or others are treated scientifically, methodically and completely, but only insofar as necessary for their general purposes and in the form proper for the primitive conception of authors and first readers.

Faith in the survival of the soul even after the death of the body can be drawn from the words spoken by patriarch Jacob when he received news of the presumed death of his son Joseph: "Crying I will descend to my son into the recess of the dead!" (Gen. 37, 35).

²⁹ Then God said: "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

³⁰ After the Father Prof. Dr. Eugen Pentiu, *Jesus Christ in Hebrew Bible (optional class)*, class notes, p.2, the Rabbinic tradition was interpreting this passage in a meaning of a dialogue of God with the angels, as beings close to Him, implying also that the angels themselves participated in the creation of man. The Church Fathers will see here an advice of the Holy Trinity. In both traditions, this "advice" is an indication of the value and teleological importance of human.

³¹ Pr. Dr. Mircea Chialda, *Doctrina Vechiului Testament despre nemurire*, în „Altarul Banatului”, anul I (1944), nr. 9-10, p. 370;

³² "Therefore the Law was guidance towards Christ, for us to straighten from belief."

By Sheol here it is not understood Joseph's tomb, but instead the spending place of his soul. With the hope of life after death, Jacob is comforting on his deathbed. "I wait for Thy salvation, O Lord" (Gen. 49, 18). Moreover, the oft-repeated expression: "adding his people" or "to His parents" (Gen. 25, 8; 35, 29 etc.), does not mean the bodily burial in every common crypt, but spending together of the souls. This is seen from the words of Numbers 20, 24: "Aaron will be gathered to his people; because you will not enter the land which I bequeathed the Israelites, and this because you rebelled against My command at the waters of Meribah." St. Paul shows clearly that the patriarchs had faith in the next life, the one after death. "By faith they died all these, not having received the promised fruits, but from afar having seen them and embracing them, and confessing that they are strangers and pilgrims on this earth. For those who speak thus prove that they search a homeland; and if they would have thought of that of which they've left, they would have had time to get back; but actually they want a better one, that is heaven. This is why God is not ashamed to be called their God: He has prepared a city for them"(Heb. 11, 13-16).

Therefore, the Holy Fathers and interpreters who commented the eschatological texts, were aware that the final Parusia will be over millennias, when only God knows, because "...who knows and expects this and prepare for it by faith, facts pleasing to God and uninterrupted communion with Christ – is also ready for the final Parusia, at which even if he dies, then he would rise and will welcome the Lord"³³.

Chapter IV examines how human nature is seen in the Old Testament by examining four key terms, namely, soul, body, heart, and spirit³⁴. The different meanings and uses of these terms are analyzed to determine whether they were used to designate an immaterial substance which operates independently of the body, namely the "soul".

The present study indicates that the Old Testament does not distinguish between the spiritual and physical bodies, because the whole range of human functions, such as feelings, thinking, knowledge, are attributed not only to the spirit or soul but, also, to some organs, such as the heart and sometimes even kidney or viscera.

³³ *** *Îndrumări misionare*, Editura EMBOR, București, 1986, p. 933;

³⁴ A.M. Dubarle, *The biblical doctrine of original sin*, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1964, p. 9;

The soul, *nephesh* and spirit, soul, *ruach*, are used in the Old Testament to denote, not immaterial entities capable of surviving the body at death, but a whole range of physiological and psychological functions³⁵.

A very good summary of the Old Testament anthropology we owe to a young researcher.³⁶ The man, he says, belongs earthly to both the terrestrial and the celestial, but must enroll in a continual upward movement. Does it reach a deprecating conception about physicality, at a dualism of Jewish origin, along with the Platonic one? Law commentators refused such net distinctions between body and soul: a significant argument is that the term designating the body - *Basar* is never understood separately from the soul - *nefesh*³⁷. The body should not be understood at any moment, even theoretically, outside his deep connection with the soul, and the natural solidarity manifests itself in multiple ways. First, the body must be understood as a concrete manifestation of the soul, a phenomenon thereof; this makes that the body can lead to a certain "visibility", to a certain concreteness of the soul.³⁸ This rigorous interdependence between body and soul send an absolutely positive vision about the human body. In fact, the body, the rabbis say without hesitation, is the most perfect part of the creation, the Creator's masterpiece. Firstly, the body is an image of the whole universe, Talmud proposing a thorough system of correspondence between body parts and elements of the created universe. Secondly, the Talmudic sages insist on the perfect insertion of the body in the Universe, its ability to adapt and the harmony of its

³⁵ Claude Tresmontant, *Essai sur la pensee hebraique*, Lectio Divina 12, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1962, p. 119;

³⁶ Marius Lazurca, *Invenția trupului*, Ed. Anastasia, București, f.a., p. 97.

³⁷ The terms through which are designated in the Old Testament the spiritual part of man are: *nefesh*, *neshamah*, *ruach* and *leb*, the last one designates the anatomic organ (heart), but is assigned also the "intimate life of the feeling, passion and thought" (Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique, Paris, 1923, tome I, p. 969). Very often, the term *nefesh* means even the man in his whole, v. PhD. Petru Semen, soul doctrine in the books *Vechiului Testament*, în "Studii Teologice", nr. 9 – 10 (1977), p. 674.

³⁸ For example, some parts of the body belong to some faculties of the soul: *the heart* must be considered an equivalent embodied in the soul; *the kidneys*, an organ associated traditionally to the heart, designates the faculty of secret thoughts, the intimate being of the man; *the liver* represent the elementary feelings (M. Lazurca, *op. cit.*, p. 97).

functions.³⁹ The quoted author warns, however, that some Old Testament texts were written in a climate dominated by the Hellenistic culture. Therefore commentators talk about the existence of two anthropologists from the Old Testament origins: the first, true to the original spirit of Judaism, proposes, especially through the Talmudic hermeneutics, a positive image of corporality; the second, marked by the fundamental ideas of Hellenistic anthropology, insists on the unreconciled distance between the body and soul. In the Wisdom of Solomon, text written between 100 and 50 BC in Alexandria, the signs of this influence are visible, but without it becoming dominant for the Jewish anthropology ensemble. However, Olivier Clément stresses, that the Biblical distinction between body and spirit has no connection with the Hellenistic dichotomy between the soul and body despite countless historical confusions that often made Christianity a "Platonism for the people".⁴⁰

In this study we must take into account that inspired scribes were not familiar with details of the modern medical science, physiology or psychology. The word "brain" does not appear in the modern translations of the Holy Scripture. Inspired authors had no knowledge about the nervous system or respiratory system. Therefore, the human nature is described in terms related to the "visual" or "touch".

The present chapter is divided into four major parts. So in the first part it is aimed the narration of the biblical essay of man's creation, trying thus to understand the origins of human nature. After that there will be studied the four key terms for how the Old Testament authors understood the human nature, namely, the soul, body, heart, and spirit.

Other terminology clarifications, relevant to succeed the correction, not just of some expressions of Platonic-Origenistic origin, but actually related teachings and attitudes, Claude Tresmontant provides us with. He says that the Hebrew people created a culture whose noetic structure is "very original", "the originality of this thinking only in a small step was taken into account in our Western culture dominated by Greek and Latin

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁴⁰ Trupul morții și al slavei. Scurtă introducere la o teopoetică a trupului, ed. Christiana, București, 1996, p. 8.

culture."⁴¹The departure from the scriptural spirit has led, in the West, to an anthropological mentality of Neoplatonic and Platonic type, with the exception of the XIII century Aristotelians. The deviation is explained by the fact that when the books of **the Old Testament** were translated from Hebrew into Greek language, the word *nefesh*, in Hebrew designating the principle of life, was rendered by *psyhe*, and in Latin by *anima*. "The great illusion and big mistake, says the author, is to imagine that it can pass from a universe of thought to another only through the fact that it has been established a linguistic correlation between terms, which in reality, it is not the same. Because the Hebrew **Bible** is a term that has been translated into Greek by *psyhe* and in Latin by *anima*, we imagined that it could have been thought about what **the Bible** calls the *soul* that what Plato, Plotinus, Descartes name soul. Here was the mistake. Under the identity of the term, in translations, the content differences are radical". Indeed, while in the Orphic, Platonic and Neo-Platonic traditions the soul is of divine nature and immortal by law, preexisting to the "body" in which "falls" as into a prison and seeking to release itself to quickly return to the origin, in the Hebrew tradition the soul is ontologically of another substance than God who created him, not being nor preexisting to the "body."⁴² The idea that the existence of the soul in the "body" would be a calamity, the consequence of a mistake, is foreign to the Jewish tradition. Therefore, "the Jew has no idea of substantial duality between «soul», on the one hand, and «body», on the other. In Hebrew there is no word to describe the body in the sense that Plato or Descartes talk of the body, a substance distinct of the soul. There is a word to describe the corpse, which isn't anymore a body". The confusion between the body and the corpse is the Cartesian error.⁴³

The present study on the Masoretic Hebrew text, attests that, all these terms do not describe different concepts, but each has distinct functions, interrelated and integrated to the capacities and functions of the person.

⁴¹Claude Tresmontant, *Le problème de l'âme*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1971, carte recenziată de Constantin Iana, în "Ortodoxia", nr. 2 (1971), p. 233.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 34.

Chapter V - "New Testament teaching about the soul and its immortality", highlight the Church's teaching that man originates like the other creatures of God, through Creation. For Christians, the Creation narration in general has a historical character and constitutes a truth of faith. The main ideas of the described created world and of the man created by God, are presented in various contexts throughout the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, namely that the idea that man was created by God (Job 10, 8⁴⁴; 14, 15; Psalm. 118, 73; Luke 3, 8).

Therefore, the New Testament confirms the Old Testament doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Our Lord said it as clearly as possible: "Do not fear those who can kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear the one who can destroy the body and soul in Hell" (Matthew 10, 28).

The scriptural paper also tells us the fundamental truth, that the human body was created from dust, and the soul was given by God (Ecclesiastes 12, 7; Job 10, 9; Job 33, 4; Wis. Sol. 10, 1; Wis. Sir. 17, 1; I Cor. 15, 47). Scripture also realtează us about how they were created Adam and Eve protopărinții (Fac. 2, 22-24; I Tim. 2, 13; I Cor. 11.8).

Regarding the human constitution it is stated that the soul comes to us from God through Creation (Genesis 2, 7; I Cor. 15, 45), not by emanation and through it the man is connected with God and the spiritual world.

About the immortality of the soul it is spoken in many places in the Holy Scripture, but this truth is best summarized in the words of the Savior: "Do not fear those who can kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear the one who can destroy the body and soul in Hell" (Matthew 10, 28).

In the New Testament the spiritual nature of man is known by the Greek terms: psihi, pnevma (soul, spirit). With reference to the apparent Pauline opposition between the mentally human or bodily and the cleric or spiritual human (I Cor. 2, 14-15; 15, 45; Gal. 5, 17) it is not existential, but moral; it is not based on the existence of some special principles in the spiritual component of the man, but exactly on the particular feeling of the same principle of life, that of the soul.

⁴⁴ "Your hands shaped me and made me and then You destroy me entirely ";

The Holy Scripture makes no distinction between the two terms of soul and spirit, but in fact speaks of two functions or levels of the spiritual perfection of the same principle, namely the grace of God working in the believer (Gal. 5, 16-17), because: "The natural man doesn't receive those of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2, 14).

In the Holy Scripture are described to us the features and qualities of the soul. The soul cannot be killed with the body (Matthew 10, 28), "... it is diligent, and the body helpless ..." (Matthew 26, 41). The soul of man is endowed with freedom, fact that results from that to the human was given to follow the moral law (Rom. 2, 14-15). Thus, the disruption of the earthly life does not break the connection between the body and soul, for they remain united for eternity (Philip 3, 21; I Cor. 15, 20, 44).

The soul can resist the temptations and cravings that come from the body, restraining them and removing them (Rom 13, 14; Gal. 3, 3; 5,13), making the body obedient (I Cor. 9, 27; Gal. 5, 24).

"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (I Cor. 3, 16). This Pauline verse summarizes the New Testament doctrine about the fact that the body due to the presence and activity of the soul in it, has the purpose of temples of the Holy Spirit.

In Chapter VI, I treated the problem of the human, as a spiritual being in connection with the divinity, with the peers and with creation. The whole creation was made not from an internal necessity of God, but was brought into existence, by virtue of His love and as the Holy Fathers showed, the reason of creation lies in the goodness of God: "Thus God the Word, Wisdom, Power, was the Creator of human nature, not driven by the necessity of creating the man, but by virtue of his love for the being whose existence has produced. The light should not be unseen, the glory should not prevail without witness, the kindness should not to be without another person to enjoy it, and the other gifts that are seen around

the divine nature, should not remain ineffectual, without someone that should share and enjoy them".⁴⁵

Saint Maximus the Confessor, reinforces through his monumental work, the whole theological teachings of Saint Gregory of Nyssa about anthropology, that the world was created by God for the man and has been entrusted with the government of it in order to a fully and perfect communion with Him. Thereby, the world serves towards the lifting of our ultimate purpose or achieving our perfection in communion with The Personal God.

As shown by the father professor Dumitru Stăniloae, the real signs of God's love toward man manifests as three separate gifts: the material, the human being and the peers gift.⁴⁶ These gifts were not made by God for a specific person, but for the Man, as a subject in his relationship with others to share with them the gifts received. The gifts received by man from the Creator are also divided into common and personal gifts. Common gifts are those gifts without which the man could not lead his existence on the earth given by God. Personal gifts are the ones that result from the direct intervention of man upon creation, supplementing it. Through these gifts, the man turns his love towards the One who created him and towards his peers, so that we can exchange this gifts between us, confessing through them the love for each other. Therefore if "...things would not exist, as gifts of God, we could not exchange them between us..."⁴⁷.

Withal, the gifts of God cannot be perceived as a manifestation of His love, only by a being capable of reasoning, will and free feeling. What man can turn his love in response to God, is only a small part compared to how much God loved the world, "...that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3, 16).

God created us all equal giving us the opportunity of choosing and sharing His gifts. The one gift which allows the existence of the other gifts is the love of God, is God

⁴⁵ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Telogia dogmatică ortodoxă*, vol. I, Ed. IMBOR, București 1978, pag. 337, apud. Sfântul Grigorie de Nyssa, *Cuvântarea catehetică cea mare*, P.G., 45, col. 21;

⁴⁶ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ierarhia darurilor și treptele rugăciunii*, rev. "Ortodoxia", nr. 3 / 1983, pag. 408;

⁴⁷ Ibidem, pag. 409;

Himself. He gives Himself through His work to bring the existence of beings, capable of receiving love. As a proof of His love, although He does not need the world, He wants to bring it into existence, and He shows His omnipotence in creating the world out of nothing. Through the biblical phrase "In the beginning ..." (Genesis 1, 1), we understand the start time of nothingness turned into matter "...tohu va bohu..." without form and void, that later became heaven and earth. The phrase "In the beginning..." is expounded by the father professor Dumitru Stăniloae as "...the beginning of the descent of God in time, and the start time which was founded by the creative power of God...is the first moment of God's dialogue down to the creature, the creature that begins his temporal journey".

We can safely say that the human person grows spiritually continuously surpassing every time another and another barrier, but still remaining bordered by its nature, and not comparing with God. The essential difference between the man and the animal is that he is updating on forever after the image and likeness of The One who created him⁴⁸. At the end of the sixth day, if the creation travels a gradual order, from the mineral kingdom, to the vegetable and at then at the animal one, through the logical path, it results, that the man is the perfect being, the crowning creation. Although created last, the man ranks in the middle between the seen and the unseen world, being also a summary of them: "And then God created the man, composed of immaterial soul and endowed with judgment and the material body as in this embodiment of man to know the truth as He Himself is the Creator of both worlds, of the immaterial (spiritual) and of the materials. And for this reason, the man is called small world, because it carries itself the image of the great world"⁴⁹.

The man is created by God in a single act, as if the creatures were created only by word, in the case of man, God made the body from the dust and breathed into his nostrils the "breath of life" and made him a living soul (Genesis 2, 7).

In the biblical brief it is not mentioned any temporary succession, therefor we can say that the man was created simultaneously in its entirety. What the inspired author wants

⁴⁸ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Studii de teologie dogmatică ortodoxă*, Ed. Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova, 1991, pag. 185;

⁴⁹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Radu, *Îndrumări misionare*, Ed. IMBOR, București 1986, pag. 178, apud. *Mărturisirea Ortodoxă*, I, 18;

to emphasize is that the man consists of two parts, the body and the soul, through the body it relates to the matter, and through the soul has a special kinship with God, his Creator.

The kinship between God and the soul creates a state of participation of the human to God, while the kinship between body and soul creates the unity into a unique creature, The Man.⁵⁰

According to the Holy Scripture, God not only created the first parents, but the entire mankind is the making of His own hands, because Adam and Eve were not given the power to create people, but only to cooperate with God in bringing the existence of other people.

Chapter VII - "Man God's creature - Short study on the patristic thought", treats about the problem of the man considered the crown of divine creation, issue that has preoccupied a number of apologists, polemicists and various Church Fathers.

Thus, regarding the creation of man, the Cappadocian Holy Fathers like the other fathers of the Church, sought to assemble a full anthropological system, but the only one that fully addresses this issue is St. Gregory of Nyssa in his treatise on man's creation, in which he actually continues the work of his brother St. Basil the Great, entitled *Hexaemeron*.

The human's nature is what it constitutes him, namely his fundamental essence and especially his powers and properties of actions. In the views of the Cappadocian Fathers, man agrees and joins in itself both the intelligible and the sensible world, being the meeting point of spirit with matter. The Holy Fathers complement each other in this regard.

Regarding the soul we must mention a specific teaching of St. Gregory of Nyssa known as the doctrine of *epektasis*, according to which the soul being drawn to God is in a continuous upward movement towards the higher stages of grace's fullness⁵¹. This teaching is developed in the work "Life of Moses" or "perfection through virtue".

But not only the Holy Fathers had the man in the center of their concerns, but with the desire to respond the heresies of that time, St. John of Damascus composed his most

⁵⁰ Pr. Dr. Vasile Răducă, *Antropologia Sfântului Grigore de Nyssa*, Ed. IMBOR, București 1996, pag. 113;

⁵¹ Asis. Univ. Dr. Telea Marius, *Antropologia Sfinților Părinți Capadocieni*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba-Iulia, 2001, p. 6;

famous writing *Dogmatica*, whereby he dedicates an important part to the man's creation, its constitution, to the soul and its functions, and its place in the economy of God's creation.

Referring to the man in his homilies, St. Gregory of Nazianzus speaks of the communion with the divine being, thus "God, the highest Light, ineffable, the second, the angels, a certain overflow or communion with the first Light, and the third light, the man, called the light because his spirit is illuminated by the primordial Light which is God"⁵².

We ended this thesis by presenting the Orthodox teaching in combating some sectarian teachings, about the existence of the soul and its divine origin, and have shown that from the conducted study on the way of which the Old Testament Hebrew thinking understood the soul, and the fact that he was immortal, we could depict useful lessons both in fighting off some erroneous teachings on soul, and also the foundation of an important teaching of the Church, that referring on honoring the dead, the important part of the liturgical life, of the ancestral Orthodox worship.

Thus from the erroneous interpretation of the scriptural texts, the theosophy, confusing God with the world, they believed that after death the soul passes from one body to another, until they reach perfection.

Also from the understanding and erroneous interpretation of the Holy Scripture, have arose two very dangerous currents: spiritualism and anthroposophy.

Spiritualism, although has existed since the earliest centuries, starting with King Saul (I Kings 28, 7), Simon Magus (Acts 8, 9) or wizard Elymas, has reappeared in the modern times in North America, in 1848.

The spiritualist concepts, confusing and incoherent, believe that the souls, the spirits evolve through reincarnation, Jesus Christ being only a superior soul, who nevertheless brought us salvation.

⁵² Sfântul Grigore de Nazians, *Despre Botez*, cap. V. P.G., 36, col. 364, BC;

This concept imbued with the Protestant teaching about predestination was tackled even from the early centuries by the great teachers of the Church, such as St. John Chrysostom and St. Augustine⁵³.

Anthroposophy is another syncretistic movement that gets in conflict with the Christian teaching, not interpreting correctly the Scriptural texts gets to deny the facts importance for salvation, it diverts from the doctrine about the particular judgment and the universal one denies the necessity of grace and makes incomprehensible the resurrection. Instead, it merges the Catholic dogma of purgatory with parsist and Buddhist concepts. Saviour Christ is, for the founder of this current, Rudolf Steiner, a spirit as Zoroaster or Buddha, reincarnated and doubled⁵⁴.

Of those contained in the present chapter, and throughout the whole study, necessarily follows the presentation of the Christian precepts, and also their analysis under the light of biblical teachings on soul and its immortality.

In addressing this section I will show that from the content of Old Testament books, we see that the soul was created by God to live in the human body, but also outside of it, after the end of human life. It is true that this is not said with clarity in the New Testament. The author of the first book of Moses (Genesis) does not directly say that man was created for eternal life, but this follows logically from his words that assure us that man was created in the image and likeness of God. We also reach the belief that man was created immortal also from the divine threat to man, that he would die if he ate from the forbidden fruit (Gen. 2, 17). If the man wouldn't have broken this divine command, would have remained strangers to death.⁵⁵

In the New Testament the immortality of the soul is a truth generally acknowledged and confessed: "For we know that if our earthly house we live in is destroyed, of its tent, we have in the heavens a building from God, the eternal house, not built by human hands." (II Corinthians 5, 1)

⁵³ Diac. Petre I. David, *Călăuză creștină pentru cunoașterea și apărarea dreptei credințe în fața prozelitismului sectant*, Editura Episcopiei Aradului, Arda, 1987, p. 79, ș.u.;

⁵⁴ *îndrumări misionare*, Editura IMBOR, București, 1986, p. 867 ;

⁵⁵ Pr. Prof. Athanase Negoită, *op. cit.*, p. 137;

The Holy Tradition also testifies the reality, spirituality and immortality of the soul, in agreement with the revelation contained in the book of the Holy Scripture. About the immortality, some Fathers and church writers emphasize especially the immortality of the soul after its nature, as spiritual substance, simple, without its immortality to be the same as God's, others even more the immortality after the divine grace. Both ideas are included in the truth that, by His grace, God has given the soul such a kind, so it won't die⁵⁶.

The New Testament books say that the death and eternal life are always related to the coming of Christ, and then it becomes clear that for the early Christians the soul is not immortal in an intrinsically way, but rather becomes like this through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and by faith in Him. It becomes clear, too, that death itself is no friend, but rather its "sting", its power is taken from them by the victory of Jesus over death. And finally, it becomes clear that the already achieved resurrection it isn't a state of fulfillment, thing reserved for the future when the body will also rise, which will not happen until "the last day".⁵⁷

In concluding this chapter, we can say that between God and the human person has been determined a dialogical relationship, intrinsic, in a communion of love since its creation. The human being, through the divine image - ontologically given, which the man has to develop, in the likeness of the Creator, was meant to become immortal and holy, as God the One in Trinity by grace, listening to His command given at the creation.

⁵⁶ James D. G. Dunn, *op. cit.*, p. 39;

⁵⁷ Oscar Cullmann, *op. cit.*, p 31;

CONCLUSIONS

If for the ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, man has not been an ongoing concern, in the biblical and patristic-inspired meditation, the man's problem was dealt firmly. Founded on the Revelation, the entire patristic thought was marked by the interest of man, the Holy Fathers seeking to find a foundation of the human conceptions. The full scriptural report highlights the idea that any discussion of God is sterile and meaningless, if man is not understood in relation to his Creator.

We can say therefore that the belief in immortality of the Israelites developed in the cultural context of the existing religious beliefs within the oldest civilizations of the ancient Middle East, such as the Egyptian culture or the Sumero-Akkadian and Assyrian-Babylonian civilizations, Hamito-Semitic with which the Jew nation were moreover related.

The belief in immortality runs like a red thread throughout the whole Holy Scripture pages. But we cannot expect to find in the Old Testament the theologically clarified teaching and detailed nor the immortality of the soul, nor the future life. The Old Testament is only a teacher to Christ (Gal. 3, 24), this teaching being complete in the pages of the New Testament (Col. 2, 17). These truths revealed to us in the Holy Scripture, God reveals to us in order to reach salvation, because God has in sight the need, not the curiosity. With respect to immortality, the Savior continues the Law teachings, shared also by his contemporaries and which is why, although in other occasions when the Pharisees and Sadducees were accusing him of breaking the Law, do not show any opposition when He was expounding from the text of Exit 3, 6, from which it can be depicted the doctrine of the existence of the soul and the resurrection of the dead (Matthew 22, 23 and the next). His contemporaries have not contradicted Him in spreading His Gospel, this thing being proved to us that belief in immortality was a universal truth known and accepted at the time for the Jewish people.

Thus, after our study, we saw that in the Hebrew Bible for the concept of the soul, the Hebrew language was using three terms: ruach, nefesh and nesamah. Using modern

means existing in modern exegesis, we believe we brought light through the comparative analysis of these Hebrew terms, and last but not least through the comparative study of the Masoretic text with that of the Septuagint.

Proceeding to the analysis of the key texts for understanding the concept of soul in the New Testament we have noticed the increasing use of two Greek terms, namely, *psihi* and *pnevma*. In fact the two Greek terms are used to describe the same man's spiritual faculty.

No matter how much the research means would evolve of the biblical exegesis, the true exegesis must consider the interpretation of the Holy Fathers, because the Patristic writings are part of Revelation, and their authors were inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit in their writings, and we theologians can write mostly opinions about the matter subject.

The study of the Holy Scripture, apart from the concrete benefit for the acquisition of salvation, gives us the weapons and the means to combat the schismatic and heretical teachings. On the other hand, the good knowledge of the biblical texts is a reliable aid for ministers of holy shrines in preaching the word of God.

In our humility this study we considered useful for the spiritual edification, since belief in the resurrection of the dead must be one of our constant concerns, as we are shown in the symbol of faith:

"We look for the resurrection of the dead.

And life in the age to come. Amen."

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