

**DOCTORATE SCHOOL
THEOLOGY**

PH.D. THESIS SUMMARY

**ABOUT THE DUHOVNIC DEATH AND THE BODILY
DEATH – NEW TESTAMENT TESTIMONIES ON
GAINING ETERNAL LIFE**

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The present thesis aims to address the issue of death, discussed today mostly on moving and repeatedly antagonistic grounds, as “products” of a culture obsessed with consuming and extending only the “physical” part of life. As such, the non-Christian orthodox books, studies and articles that address the problem are usually the result of a sophisticated philosophical discourse or, when a technical analysis is involved, the medical sciences.

We come, through our approach, with a *clear vision of death* offered by the tradition of our Church, following - like a red thread - the theology derived from the writings of the Holy Fathers, offering a contextualization of the problem in orthodox coordinates. Today, within a social context dominated by hatred, intolerance, violence and selfishness, the endeavour represents a natural manifesto; one anchored in the reality of our daily lives, aiming to generate a “constructive dialogue” between orthodox Christians, on one hand, and those who “do not share our desires and aspirations”, on the other.

For us, Orthodox Christians, death is a mystery: a passage from an existence most often subjected to trials and misfortunes to a blissful one (the third birth), “temporal in eternity”¹, as Brancianivov put it.

As a main objective, through the arguments presented in order to support the working hypotheses, we wanted to set the valences of the main guidelines on which the whole scaffolding of the understanding of death rests from the perspective of non-orthodoxy in contrast to the understanding (as a passage into another life – eternal and not forbidden by corruption and sin) offered by Christian orthodoxy.

Paradoxically, we argue, the more we try to “defeat” death from the perspective of the free-thinker or that of an adherent to any other religion, the further we get away from really solving the problem. This is because without learning and understanding that true immortality is beyond “here and now”, man will not look into the eternal dimension of what “will be beyond”, in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Further we argue that only in Christianity – and especially in the Orthodox church – death is a certainty through the Passion, the Sacrifice and the Resurrection of the One-Born Son of the

¹ Saint Ignatie BRANCIANINOV, *Cuvânt despre moarte*, translation from Russian by Adrian & Xenia Tănasescu-Vlas, Edit. Sophia, Bucureşti, Edit. Cartea Ortodoxă, Alexandria, 2007, p. 5.

Father and Son of Man. Here, the work of the Word of God and the Holy spirit allow the pure and thin senses of the believer² to have “the sight” and to feel the measure of the mystery of death.

Ultimately, it is argued that *we can't grasp the dimension of death outside the dimension of sin*. This is because death and sin are interlocked just like sin and passion are – accidentally or not – through chains that strengthen their gravity. In any case, it is important to remember at least three things about how we approach and embrace death. First, death is closer than we usually imagine. Secondly, it is something profoundly unnatural, going against the divine plan of God. However, at the same time, death is also a gift from the Creator. Lastly, death is “a departure that is not a departure”³.

As soon as man has sinned⁴, argued the Holy Fathers, he has departed from God, lying to himself – through the spell of the Devil – that he can become God. Him, created out of the dust, came to manifest a “stubbornness” of trying to understand and empower his free will⁵.

Non-Christians usually see death as an inexorable fate and, we could argue, this is also one of the main reasons that makes them incapable of seeing how the deep sleep of others could give way to light. Some of them might see death through the lenses of darkness or indifference. Seeing just darkness, however, means not looking at Christ, but directly at themselves or another illusion generated by the Devil.

Not looking at God, we might become devoid of faith, going into another direction, submerged into sin, by our fear. This is the fear of sickness, suffering or death. Undoubtedly, some people might not even see any reason for the existence of man and, as such, abandon themselves wholly into the “abyss of the ego”. There, in silence, they might forge their own hell out of loneliness and misery.

From a Christian-orthodox point of view we can't understand, even partially, the mystery of death without analysing the creation of man by God and, of course, without examining the ways man has fallen into the sin of stubbornness and what followed next. This means losing Trinity's grace as the primordial pair plunged in an unknown world dominated by sin, disease, suffering and death – a world fundamentally different from the environment of the Heavens. Thus, we

² *Ibid.*, p. 7

³ **Kallistos WARE**, Selected texts from „*Împărăția lăuntrică*”, Edit. Christiana, București, 1996 *apud* Ionuț Bursuc, „*Misterul vieții și taina vieții veșnice*”, ziarul „Lumina” (27.09. 2009), p. 6.

⁴ Here we are talking about the Original Sin, which is different from the personal sins we make deliberately. These type of sins, of course, are linked to the original one through its consequences.

⁵ Later on, in our thesis, we will come back to this terrifying aspect that defines the autonomy vs. teonomy war.

considered, the starting point of our analysis should be grounded in first moments of genesis, continuing afterwards with the downfall of the first pair and ending with the Incarnation of the Son, the Passions, the Sacrifice and the Resurrection of Christ, the Only-begotten Son of the Father and the Son of Man, to the Holy Mysteries, until the acquisition of eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven, viz. a kingdom that was prepared for us from the beginning of ages because, fundamentally, eternal life implies the righteous live together in the kingdom of God, after the Second Coming of the Lamb and the Judgment of the Common.

“Essence” – if we can speak of it – when discussing the fall of Adam and Eve as extrapolated to the entire creation, consists of understanding “the grace after the gift of Christ” (v. Ef. 4, 7) – of the divine reasons and external thoughts of God⁶ that “planted, sown, and hidden in things, become the reason of things”⁷. Running parallel to these plans, “the reasons of time that represent the eternal thoughts of God, are planted chronologically through events and happenings of both rational and irrational creatures”. The reasons of time are thus the seeds of events that connect into history and, as Saint Maxim Mărturisitorul put it, they can be divided into *reasons of the past* - understandable through studying; *reasons of the present* – understandable through observation and contemplation and *reasons of the future* – which can only be discovered through the prophetic gift of the Holy Spirit.⁸

The creation of the world – and especially that of man – by the Holy Trinity represents a mystery that is amplified through and in “the eternal work of God in Christ, a work that is seen as creation itself.”⁹ A mystery remains, however, of how man, *made good through creation* by the One God, fell by *his own will* through the *temptation of the Devil* in the *sin of pride*, thus embracing darkness and death.

When we talk about the Logos, born from the Father, we are referring to the Creator of both the seen and the unseen, but also about the Saviour and Judge of the world. “In his capacity of supreme reason, the Son is the source of the uncreated reasons or energies through which the

⁶ Devine reasons, of course, will forever be unknown to earthly creatures for in their essence and mystery, they can only contemplate the natural reveal of divinity. The understanding of divine reasons can only be performed through divine revelations. See for example The Reason of Time by Arhieeu Daniil STONESCU, Ziarul Lumina din 26.11.2017, p. 5.

⁷ Arhieeu Daniil STONESCU, *Rațiunile timpului*, ziarul „Lumina” din 26 noiembrie 2017, p. 5

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁹ Pr. John BEHR, *Taina lui Hristos: viața în moarte*, translated from English Gheorghe Fedorovici, Edit. Sophia, București, 2008, p. 93.

universe was brought into existence from nothingness, maintained and guided by God's purpose in order to become a new Heaven and a new earth in Christ.”¹⁰

The question remains if Adam, *the first born* and the essence of our primordial nature, not in complete appearance, as Catholics and Protestants suggest, but in his potential to become similar to God (as the Orthodox Church teaches us) represents the *true human*, as a root of all diseases and death transmitted to the human species.

On Mount Tabor, the three disciples – Peter, James and John - “met the true man in all His glory”¹¹ as much as they could. They saw it though something that goes beyond any dimension of space and time: the gathering of all the Church – the Church before and after Christ, the Church of those living and the dead, of the apostles, together with Lord Jesus Christ, rebirthed and risen. As such, the event that happened on Mount Tabor is not an event in history, but an exit from history that marks an entering into the Kingdom of God. The Christ, Peter, James and John saw and talked to is the Christ that will come later to judge the living and the dead at The Second Coming. He is the Christ of life and the ruler of the eternal kingdom, viz. the New Jerusalem. The Christ on Mount Tabor is ultimately “He who will turn off the sun and become the Sun of all creation.”¹²

A distinction should be made here between our *primordial nature* (i.e. that present before the fall) and the nature we got after Christ. The “newly risen”, clean nature that “we get from the Son of God and the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, He who made himself flesh and has risen above death on the throne of God [...] was made eternal and immutable on the right of the Father”.¹³

In the first part of the thesis we argue that, *grosso modo*, according to Christian faith, at least, the existence of God's creation can be roughly divided in three: (1) from the creation of the world to the first arrival of Jesus Christ; (2) from Christ, the Son of God and Man who was crucified, but has risen above death, up to the end of this world; and (3) from the end of this world to that which will form after The Second Coming, shaped according to the judgment of the Divine Judge – a world in which man has understood the way to fulfilment is according to the Gospel of Christ.

Adam and Eve, we argue, were not the children of God anymore after the fall, for in following the devil serpent, “they thought they will not die [...] and like gods, they will know right

¹⁰ **Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru POPESCU**, *Ortodoxie și contemporaneitate*, Edit. Diogene, București, 1996, p. 65.

¹¹ **Dr. Alexandros KALOMIROS**, „Cele șase dimineți”, In *Sfinții Părinți despre*, p. 45.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 45.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 47.

from wrong” (cf. **Fc 3**, 4-5). Once God called them to Him and asked them for repentance, they sank even more in their sin and “accused the Creator for their disobedience”¹⁴. As Usca put it, they were not “without sin anymore, but living the earthly existence we know of today.”¹⁵ In other words, the divine grace departed from them and they were driven out of the Heavens to corruption and death.

God, however, in his eternal love, did not forget His blessing given to man in the Genesis. He cursed the Earth on which man walks, but not the man who was driven by passion. According to the tradition of Christian-orthodoxy, as we point out, the forgiveness of man must be absolute and definitive, and our existence turned from autonomy to one centred on Christ. As such, true believers do not aspire – like Adam and Eve – to live sporadically in Heaven but become inhabitants of the Kingdom of God. Death – containing both the spiritual part, as well as the realm of the senses – may come to us in two ways. Roughly put, we argue that first there is a spiritual death and then a physical one.

Spiritual death, of course, appeared with the “first spark” that crystalized in Eve’s mind: that of accepting the *temptation of the devil serpent*¹⁶. This course of action was a “possible outcome” that manifested after the first bite of the forbidden fruit. Thus, we argue, *spiritual death* is not something that comes from God, but from the free will of man coupled with the temptation of the devil. To give a more articulate description, *spiritual death* has its roots in the Original Sin performed in the Garden of Eden and through it, man has become forever poisoned. *Spiritual death* is thus the vanguard of *physical death*.

The latter, as we point out in our thesis, represents the (relative) “end of the road” for man, at least seen through the lenses of the senses. Physical death breaks the link between the soul and the body and proves to be useful insofar as man realizes that sin is the “seat of death” (cf. **1 Co 15**, 56), for “desire births sin and sin, once abandoned to, brings us death.”(**Iac 1**, 14-15).

Death, however, is not something God wished upon our species. He desired eternal life for us, not death. By performing the Original Sin, man separated himself from God and fell into the sphere of the devil; he has fallen into autonomy and self-determination, viz. a perpetual, savage war with he who dominates him through the passions. With these being said, the main argument

¹⁴ **Sfântul Simeon NOUL TEOLOG**, *Omul cel întâi-zidit*, ed. cit., p. 106.

¹⁵ **Pr. Ioan Sorin USCA**, *Vechiul Testament...*, ed. cit., p. 129.

¹⁶ The strategy of the devil in what concerns man is to use illusions – things that are the opposite of those that are right and come from God.=.

is that evil engulfs our world because Adam obeyed the devil. At that moment, the emperors are “reversed”. Namely, if before the fall, Adam was ruler and priest over creation, the symbol of God on Earth, after the fall his “place” is taken by Satan, the demon of evil and ruler of a decadent world.

Man’s departure from God, even temporary, led not only to losing “the life-giving grace”, but also falling to an psychosomatic, material existence in which sin, disease, suffering and death have dominion.

The spiritual death of our protoparents marks the formation of our chains of slavery. Man becomes “empty of light” and “full of darkness”, just like a vessel. Nature, also, once subordinated to him, becomes hostile. The Departure from God thus puts the world in chaos, disorder and the entire creation is shaken, for man fell and lost the *authority of the grace*.

In the Garden of Eden, God encourages man to avoid the intrinsic evil in himself by “listening to the divine commands and praying”¹⁷ He points out that “the danger that is not the devil, but his own insubordination.”¹⁸ In the womb of the Holy Mother, by contrast, the “spring of our true nature”¹⁹ will be formed. There, in that womb, the heaven of the Son and the Holy Spirit is formed through “the fusion of the divine and human nature.”²⁰ In other words, there the “image of God, after which we were made, presented itself not as an abstract idea, but a living thing: our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who is a living icon of the Unknown God (**Col 1, 15**).”²¹

As God, suggested Saint Simeon, “wanted a human like he made Adam at the beginning, He sent his only Son, gaining a perfect human nature in order to become a perfect God.”²² Furthermore, Rafail Noica sees the sin of Adam – once he tasted the forbidden fruit - as a *metamorphosis of the being*²³. This metamorphosis, argues Noica, means that no descendent of Adam (i.e. a person made after Adam)²⁴ could sit at the right of the Father, because all descendants *gained death due to their sin* – a sin inherited from the once fallen. But God Himself, through the process of Incarnation, makes himself like Adam, living temporarily our life full of incapacities,

¹⁷ **Pr. Ioan Sorin USCA**, *Vechiul Testament...*, ed. cit., p. 43.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 43.

¹⁹ **Dr. Alexandros KALOMIROS**, „*Cele șase dimineți*”..., în volumul *Sfinții Părinți despre...*, ed. cit., p. 49.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 49.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 49.

²² **Sfântul Simeon NOUL TEOLOG**, *Omul cel întâi-zidit*, ed. cit., p. 56.

²³ First answers from the conference by Rafail NOICA, Alba-Iulia, 2002: „*Întrupare: Filocalie și premisă eshatologică*”. Available online at: <http://www.cuvantul-ortodox> (last accessed 15.03.2018).

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

including our death²⁵. First, through the crucifixion, God assumed this death and then, on the third day, He conquered it, opening the pearly gates to us. From this, a preliminary conclusion comes naturally: “man (in Christianity) represents the supreme value. He has the highest significance and the highest vision”²⁶ because looking at the throne of God, we can see the Son there, the Son of Man, on the right of the Father²⁷.

This fact leads us to the second conclusion: “the subject beyond time of Christian theology is the crucified and resurrected God, He who was from the beginning, showed Himself again, even if old, but births itself forever in the hearts of the saints”²⁸. His duty, suggest St. Paul the Apostle, for which he made himself entangled with human nature, beyond sin, was “to destroy through his death that which has dominion over death, which is the devil, and to deliver those whom the fear of death has kept in captivity all of their lives.” (**Evr 2, 14-15**).

The third conclusion, which is also the broadest, is that “at the origin of creation stands the Sacrifice, the Cross; and on it the complete being. Without the sacrifice nothing is born in our world.”²⁹ Consequently, the world rests on the sacrifice as a mystery of the Holy Trinity³⁰. The love coming from the Holy Trinity, we argue, represents the supreme model for man. More explicitly, when our protoparents lost the “conscientiousness of the sacrifice”³¹, they also started to lose their grace, abandoning the face of God. As such, they replaced virtues with sin, love with hate and sacrifice with egocentrism. They ultimately replaced communion with division, health with sickness and life with death.

Jesus Christ, we read in Scriptures, appeared in the world to destroy the works of the devil (*cf. 1 In 3, 8*), and, facing him from the “posture” of man, besides sin, he claims and assumes in himself our whole nature, becoming “man among men”³². The Holy Fathers see here an inner work of the Son – the humility of the Word that empties Himself of His glory before incarnation to fill

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ **Mitropolitul Antonie DE SUROJ**, *Dumnezeu și omul* (2nd edition), translated from English by Luminița Irina Niculescu, Editura Sophia, 2018, p. 87.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 87.

²⁸ **Pr. John BEHR**, *Taina lui Hristos: viața în moarte*, translated from English by Gheorghe Fedorovici, Editura Sophia, București, 2008, p. 15.

²⁹ **Părintele Constantin GALERIU**, *Cruce și Înviere în tradiția și viața ortodoxă*, Editura Doxologia, Iași, 2013, p.16.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

³² **Daniel, PATRIARHUL ROMÂNIEI**, „*Nașterea lui Hristos: programul lui Dumnezeu pentru viața lumii*”, ziarul Lumina 25.12.2016, p. 9.

our sinless nature (v **In** 17,5), having the purpose of exalting man in the heavenly glory of the Most Holy Trinity³³. Saint Maximus the Confessor sees here, in Christ, the “innermost mystery”³⁴ because “looking at Him, God has called all to be. For to Christ, to His mystery, there are all the ages and everything that they contain. In Christ, they have their beginning and end and this union was decided from the very beginning: a union of what is bounded and what is infinite, of what is measured with what is unmeasured, of what is decisive with what has no end; the union of the Creator with the creature, resting in movement.”³⁵ What is essential, however, is not just the adoption of our limited condition by God who came to become humble and by being humble to raise our fallen form, as Rafail Noica put it; but the *union in death with us*³⁶ that we rarely see. Saint Maximus considers this to be a logical impossible state³⁷ related to the divinity of Christ, but perfectly achievable when we speak of “the fulfilment of God’s plans.”³⁸

We can’t think of the next resurrection, which will happen with the Second Coming of Christ, in vague terms of a certain end of our *life here and now*, on the realm of existence that is temporarily and spatially limited between physical birth and death. Fundamental to Christianity is understanding life in all complexity and splendour, as part of a spiritual journey that *starts in this world* but continues beyond, in the Kingdom of the Son, “prepared for the building of the world.” (**Mt 25**, 34). Jesus Christ – says Chiril of Alexandria – “experienced death in order to conquer it [...]. Thus death marches towards the divine grace, having as end the final brilliant resurrection where the passion is conquered by supreme grace.”³⁹

The holy Fathers of Orthodoxy have pointed out in their works that Jesus Christ willingly received death, though he was undoubtedly not subject to it. More explicitly, Christ was not of male seed and, as a result, He was not touched by the sin of Adam and Eve⁴⁰. The argument goes

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

³⁴ **Sfântul Maxim MĂRTURISITORUL**, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, trad. , introd. și note de Pr. prof. dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, în „Filocalia”, vol III, Editura IBMBOR, București, 2013, p. 373.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 373.

³⁶ **Mitropolitul Antonie DE SUROJ**, *Dumnezeu și omul*, ed. cit., p. 96.

³⁷ „...în momentul zămisirii Sale și al nașterii Lui ca Om, Hristos nu avea părțășie cu moartea, întrucât omenitatea Lui era impregnată de viață veșnică a Dumnezeirii.”, v. Mitropolitul Antonie DE SORJ, *Dumnezeu și omul*, p. 96.

³⁸ **Sfântul Maxim MĂRTURISITORUL**, *Ambigua*, ed. cit., p. 373.

³⁹ **Sfântul Chiril AL ALEXANDRIEI**, *Scrieri, Partea I, ÎNCHINAREA ȘI SLUJIREA ÎN DUH ȘI ADEVĂR*, *Cartea a XI-a*, translation, introduction and notes by Pr. prof. dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, „Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești” Collection, vol. 38, Editura IBMBOR, București, 1991, pp. 391-392.

⁴⁰ **Sfântul Maxim MĂRTURISITORUL**, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, 61; **Sfântul Ioan DAMASCHIN**, *Dogmatica*, III, 1, apud Jean-Claude LARCHET, *Teologia bolii*, p. 30

that with his human body he “kills death”⁴¹ and wipes out the sin of all men, this being done both in a physical, palpable reality, as well as a spiritual one, by “breaking the power of de devil”⁴². The Saviour – as Paul tells us – “assuming our nature, wanted to save those whom the fear of death has kept in captivity all of their lives (**Evr 2, 15**).”⁴³

Christ’s victory over death, as a full person, meant that that his body passed through death without it becoming decayed or touched by corruption. This fact was proven in a real, physical manner on the third day, when Christ rose from the grave. With his soul, the Word remained alive and with this soul, the “Way, Truth and Life” (conf **In 14,6**) descended into the depth of hell to free our protoparents, patriarchs and prophets from the Old Covenant.

Christ, as the verse goes, “trampled upon death and the Firstborn of the dead was thus made”⁴⁴, opening “the gates of immortality to all men”⁴⁵, making himself known after the resurrection in order to be “seen, heard and even touched.” Christ reborn, ultimately, is just as real as the one before death. He inhabits, however, a different plane of existence because his body is not subject to death anymore (in it the Holy Spirit shines). As some have argued, “even if His body and human nature was raised to godhood, his flesh will continue unchanged and self-sustained for eternity”⁴⁶. As such, the Resurrection of Christ proclaims “the victory and forever dominion of eternal and infinite life”⁴⁷ over death. The Lord becomes thus “the Cross from the foundation of the world, the Cross in the centre of the world, through which the world as saved, and the Cross from the time of renewal”⁴⁸. As Saint Maximus the Confessor once put it, “Jesus Christ remakes the divine appearance in man, throwing into the grave, in the morning of Resurrection, the passionate aspect of humanity.” From that moment, he continues, “history enters the eschatological period and the Heavenly Kingdom, still transcendent, starts to engulf all of creation.” In Christ, he adds, “the worldly transfiguration begins, but this transfiguration appears only to those who reached sainthood.”⁴⁹

⁴¹ **Sfântului Ioan GURĂ DE AUR**, *Omilia la Coloseni*, VI, 3; *Omilia la toți sfinții din toată lumea care au suferit mucenie*, apud Jean-Claude LARCHET, *Teologia bolii*, p. 30.

⁴² **Sfântului Maxim MĂRTURISITORUL**, *Tâlcuire la Tatăl nostru*, apud Jean-Claude LARCHET, *Teologia bolii*, p. 31.

⁴³ Ionuț-Aurelian MARINESCU, *Învingem moartea la învierea de obște...*, art. cit., p. 14.

⁴⁴ *Troparele Învierii*, Glasul 3, <https://ro.orthodoxwiki.org>, 7 April 2015.

⁴⁵ *Teologia Învierii la Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul*, <https://doxologia.ro>, 14 aprilie 2012.

⁴⁶ *Învierea Domnului*, <https://m.crestinortodox.ro>, 08.04.2018.

⁴⁷ Jean-Claude LARCHET, *Teologia bolii*, ed. cit., pp. 30-31.

⁴⁸ Pr. Constantin GALERIU, *Taina zilei a 8-a*, ed. cit., p. 18.

⁴⁹ *Învierea Domnului*, <https://m.crestinortodox.ro>, 08.04.2018.

It is only in a communion with a God that assumes his human condition, outside of sin, that man can conquer death by killing death and reach the Heavenly Kingdom. The time between the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the common man represents a time of preparation for the incorruptible and eternal life. Early life is thus directed to its eternal path, for the death of the body is no longer eternal – it has become into the risen Christ the final passage of the human soul in communion with the risen and glorified Saviour. The dead are asleep to the Lord, anticipating the moment of resurrection. The light and the joy of this event are fundamental features of Christian life, despite all the trials and difficulties of life on earth. The light and joy of Resurrection shows us that life is a gift from God, uniting his love for man (conf. **Mt 25, 34-46**).⁵⁰

In the last part of our thesis we argue that the ultimate purpose of the ransom performed by Christ is human happiness, completed and fulfilled by His resurrection. Christ has shown His love for us not only by creating us and the world from nothing, by embodying a human vessel, suffering and dying on the cross, but also through the process of Resurrection, the Ascension to the Heavens and sending the Holy Spirit to fulfil His prophecy. After his Ascension, Christ did not leave us alone, but gave Himself whole for the Holy Liturgy.

The mystery of Christ, of the cross and of the Resurrection becomes the mystery of every Christian committed by the Holy Spirit in the Church. This mystery forever determines the sacrificial structure of the Church that the Christian lives all his life, culminating in the Eucharist, who prophetically anticipates the Parousia of the Lord⁵¹.

Of all the godly mysteries, that of Jesus Christ is the biggest. We say this because “Christ is the revelation of God’s secret mystery of the eternal times” (**Rm 16, 25-26**; **Ef 3, 3** and after; **Col 2, 2-3**). More articulately, God becomes man in the fulness of time (**Ga 4,5**) in order to achieve our forgiveness (**1 Co 2, 7**). God, the human – Jesus Christ – is the sacramental mystery through excellence and after and through it, The Church and the Eucharist. By the mystery of Christ, God wanted to raise the visible part of nature and communicate through it. This, we argue, was done in order to unite with the sacramental hole the entire human race and the universe. These mysteries, in the believer, are pnevmatophore works for his spiritual becoming, culminating in the Church, the liturgical environment and in the deification of the works of the Holy Spirit⁵².

⁵⁰ <http://patriarhia.ro/hristos-daruieste-oamenilor-vindecarea-si-viaa-7557.html> (last accessed 23.10.2018).

⁵¹ Părintele Constantin GALERIU, *Jertfă și răscumpărare*, ed. cit., p. 281.

⁵² Pr. prof. Nicolae C. BUZESCU, *Lucrarea Duhului Sfânt în Sfintele Taine*, in „*Ortodoxia*”, nr. 3-4/1979, p. 572.

The necessity of the mysteries for our lives derives from the necessity of the grace for salvation and their divine creation. Man receives the gift of grace and becomes stronger by collaborating with it. Every Christian, from birth, is indispensably linked to the Holy Mysteries, becoming an essential extension of the Church: uniting with Christ in Eucharist, returning to righteousness through Repentance, fulfilling the duty of marriage and becoming a follower of the Holy Apostles. All seven Holy Mysteries relate directly to the reality of our lives that we live in the hope of salvation and eternal life. Christ is light, love, life and a gate to the heavenly life – a life that is not encased in the limits of history and time. The final goal, we argue, and certainly the most difficult one to achieve after we pass through the earthly confines of our existence, is the *salvation* equivalent to the man's acquisition of the Kingdom of Heaven; regaining the lost communion between the created and the uncreated, between man and God, according to the Words of the Lord. “This is eternal life: to know Thee, the one true God and Jesus Christ who You sent” (**In 17**, 3). As such, knowing God, according to the measure of grace, and knowing the saving work done by the Son and the Word of God becomes synonymous with obtaining *eternal life*.

The man who believes in the Resurrection has his roots in Heaven, not in an hourglass. Until the Rapture, man is only prepared to enter the night. Through the Resurrection, however, man can enter the Eight Day – a day without dawn. Eternity, ultimately, does not have days or years. Eternity is just a permanent dusk; the dusk of a single day⁵³.

And yet, Eternity is not something; it is Someone. Eternity is God Himself, whom we can meet in the ephemeral flow of time, and through this encounter, through the communion that God offers us through grace and love, we can also walk forever to become partakers of the very life of God. In the words of St. Peter, the Apostle, we can “share the divine being” (**2 Ptr 1**, 4).⁵⁴

Eternal life has its roots in the passing life we have on Earth. It is, so to say, similar to an “exam” we give on graduation day on the subject of earthly experiences. For most of our lives we experience a duality between living “in flesh” and living “outside flesh”, in pleasures or in spirit. If the earthly life has its beginning in the conception / birth, eternal life means – fundamentally – a new existence of the “born again”, after the death of the body. This new existence extracts its essence in the proximity of God, viz. the good, light and love of the Trinity communion and the communion between the created and the Creator. “Behold, I say to you, We will not all die, but

⁵³ <http://ziarullumina.ro/Inviera-lui-hristos-usa-vesniciei-noastre-121806.html> (last accessed 26.10.2018).

⁵⁴ <http://www.cuvantul-ortodox.ro/inviera-si-crucea-antonie-suroi/>, (last accessed 26.10.2018).

we will all change; For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise unbelievers, and we shall be changed” (**1 Co 15**, 51-52).

Let us hope that “being born again, not of a corruptible seed, but of unrighteousness, by the Word of God, we remain forever” (**1 Ptr 1**, 23) and embark on a journey shown to us by God.

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