

ORTHODOX TEACHING ON TIME

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ABSTRACT

The Orthodox Church, taking into account the truths detached from the divine revelation, gave the concept of time a major importance, not only to eternal life, but also to the time of the present life. The Holy Fathers emphasized the axiological aspect of time, with reference to its significance for man's life in achieving its saving goal, although they also presented theoretical studies on the essence and origin of time, and showed that, paradoxically, although time is connected with the creation "ex nihilo", yet it is compatible with eternity, that is, with the uncreated.

Keywords: *time; orthodoxy; eternity; revelation; creation;*

INTRODUCTION

Orthodoxy teaches that time is, in origin, in solidarity with creation and constitutes a fundamental, inherent teaching of the creature, being its very condition or mode of existence¹. The indissoluble connection between time and the cosmos is also proved by the fact that time did not exist before the creation of the world, but began with it, so time and the world condition each other.

The biblical conception on which this teaching is based is admirably understood by Blessed Augustine, who says that the world and time were created together, which means that the very principle of time is good².

Time appears for man as a fulfillment of his being and with a unique value - "The destiny of human existence is fulfilled in time, it is placed under the sign of time".³ On the other hand, time introduces meaning into our lives, because it is linked to created existence (If our being is dependent, therefore, on time, time is independent of our being, having an objective reality, distinct from the creature and the changes of things). Everything that is created takes time. Created existence cannot be conceived outside of time, just as non-existence cannot be in time. Existence and time are closely ontologically linked⁴.

The objective reality of time is based on the fact of its creation by God Himself, for what God creates cannot have merely a fictitious or subjective existence, but a real one—objectively, like the entire cosmos created by Him⁵.

In an absolute sense, God does not need time. If, however, He created it, it means that it is not the Creator but the creature who needs it, for God does nothing superfluous and

¹ Drd. Dan Ciubotea, *Time and its value for salvation in Orthodoxy*, in *Orthodoxy* XXIX (1977), no. 2, p. 206.

² Paul Evdochimov, *Orthodoxy*, Paris, 1965, p. 204.

³ Nicolas Berdiaeff, *Cinq meditations sur l'existence*, p. 133, to Fr. Dr. Corneliu Sarbu, "The Nature and Value of Time", in *Theological Review*, Sibiu 1943, p. 16.

⁴ Drd. Fer Nicolae, *The Orthodox Teaching on the "Fullness of Time"*, in *The Voice of the Church* XXXII (1973), no. 5-6, pp. 538-539.

⁵ Fr. Dr. C. Sârbu, *op. cit.*, p. 38

pointless. Therefore, in time we must see an element necessary for the cosmos, for the created world⁶.

Like the world, time cannot be kept in existence without the will and power of the Creator, who sustains it through His provident action. If heavenly providence is a continuous creation of the world, then time is also continually created by God⁷. From Him we have every moment: "*For from Him and through Him and in Him are all*" (Rom. XI, 36). "*Yours is the day and yours is the night*" (Psalm 73:17) "*According to Your order the day remains, for all things are Your servants*" - confesses the psalmist (Psalm 118/91). The existence and power of time ultimately comes from God, and its value is that which divine influence confers upon it, as well as that which man imprints upon it through his action⁸.

It can therefore be affirmed that time is in solidarity with all creation not only in its divine origin, but also in its ultimate purpose. Having its distinct place in the bosom of creation, time rises with other creatures to serve man, so that man in turn may rise through service and love to God.

The Orthodox teaching on the nature and meaning of time rises above the one-sidedness and ambiguity of various philosophical conceptions that strive to reveal the truth about time in that it is founded on the Divine Revelation made by Jesus Christ, the Truth itself.

(Knowledge of it is therefore needed from every theologian and believer to substantiate the authentically Orthodox faith and piety).

1. THE REVELATIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF TIME TEACHING

The analysis of the terminology relating to time used in Scripture is a first step in specifying this teaching.

The notion of time is generally expressed by two terms: *καῖρος* and *αἰών*. The distinction between these two terms is likely to reveal the two fundamental aspects of time: the aspect of duration and the aspect of succession, passage.

The "*Καῖρος*" used in both the Old and New Testaments primarily means a decisive, decisive moment⁹. "*Why die before your time?*" (Eccl. 7:17). Another meaning is that of a favorable moment: "*There is a time for everything under heaven*" (Eccl. 3:1). The classic place in Scripture that reveals the meaning of the special moment time, crucial in existence, is the one in the Epistle to the Galatians chap. IV, 4-5: "*And when the fullness of time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might obtain adoption.*"

These favorable moments - chosen by God in the economy of salvation - are sprinkled in biblical time. What Christ did for the salvation of the world, He did at times willed and decided by Him, when "the hour came"¹⁰ (Matthew 26:45; 14; 35).

The reunion of the *Καῖρος* - distinct from each other - forms the ascending line of salvation¹¹. "*I work today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will finish*" (Luke 13:32).

"*Αἰών*" is the term used to show a stretch of time. or time as duration¹². He expresses the time of this world: "*The ages were established by the word of God*" (Heb. 11:3), but also

⁶ Fr. Dr. C. Sârbu, *op. cit.*, p. 38

⁷ Fr. Dr. C. Sârbu, *op. cit.*, p. 38

⁸ Fr. Dr. C. Sârbu, *op. cit.*, p. 38

⁹ Gerhard Delling, *Kairos*, art. in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Stuttgart, 1938, vol. III, p. 458

¹⁰ Drd. Dan Ciubotea, *op. cit.*, p. 199

¹¹ Oscar Cullman, *Christ el le temps*, second ed. Neuchâtel, 1966, p. 30.

the eternity of God (Rom. 16:26). The same term is used to delineate the life of the present from the future – "the present eon from the future eon".¹³ The present eon is identical with the time of light; the future eon is the new one that is coming: the Kingdom of God.

Therefore, the term "αἰών" signifies in Holy Scripture; an unlimited time – divine eternity; a time limited in both directions – the duration of this world; and a limited and unlimited time, the age to come, or limited in one direction¹⁴.

The relationship between time and eternity, as presented in Sacred Scripture, is not a relationship of exclusivity. Between time and eternity there is undoubtedly a great ontological and qualitative difference; However, both meet without disbanding.

If time is created God, then eternity does not abolish time, but gives birth and sustains it, coexisting with it¹⁵. The establishment of an exclusive contrast and an irreducible opposition between time and eternity makes impossible the connection between eternal God and temporal man.

Eternity is the creative cause of time: time originates in eternity¹⁶. Time being the creature's mode of existence, eternity is God's mode of existence. The two modes of existence are distinct but not opposites. For Orthodoxy, time and eternity, not being in opposition, although distinct, can communicate with each other, and this is the prerequisite for the possibility of God's descent in time and our participation in eternal life¹⁷.

The Holy Fathers were reluctant to define eternity as opposed to time, because if the categories of time are motion, change, passage from one state to another, then the term stillness, immutability cannot be applied to the eternity of God, for this would be the eternity of an intelligible world of Plato, not that of the living God. If God lives in eternity, this living eternity must overcome the opposition between movable time and motionless eternity. St. Maximus the Confessor, speaking of the relationship between time and eternity, compares the world to a room. The chamber is an ontological category: the bounding of the world by itself. Pondering an unlimited room and boundless time is a contradiction. Just as the world is bounded, like a bounded room, so "time is a bounded movement."¹⁸

Thus, God's eternity no longer appears opposite to time. On the contrary, eternity is turned to time, for it goes with it to fulfill it ontologically. Time does not have an existence, but a shared one. He keeps himself only in contact with eternity, which gives time meaning and value¹⁹.

Eternity makes it possible to understand time. God has made us beings capable of response; through this He has given us the connection to eternity and in communion with Him we will obtain eternity. But this eternity is obtained by grace and will no longer be like God's.²⁰ From a biblical perspective, between time and eternity we must show the nuptial relationship of the theandric mystery of Christ with the theandric mystery of the Church, the

¹² Sasse, *Aion*, art. in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Stuttgart, 1933, vol. I, pp. 128-200.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹⁴ O. Cullman, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

¹⁵ Fr. dr. C. Sârbu, *op. cit.*, p. 35

¹⁶ H. Andrusos, *Dogmatics of the Orthodox Church*, p. 63, cit. to Fr. Dr. C. Sarbu, *op. cit.*, p. 24

¹⁷ Drd. Dan Ciubotea, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

¹⁸ St. Maximus the Confessor, *Questiones ad Thalassium*, 65, P.G. XC, 757, D – cit. to Drd. Fer Nicholas, *op. cit.*, p. 545.

¹⁹ Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 344

²⁰ Fr. dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *God is love*, in *Orthodoxy*, XXIII (1971), no. 3, p. 380.

relationship of the wedding at Cana with the banquet of the Kingdom of God²¹. Time is an open path to eternity, in which the creature begins dialogue with God. Such was the paradisiacal time when God communicated with the creature as with a friend. Human nature tended toward God, for in paradisiacal time the creature was given the opportunity to rise into the likeness of its creator²².

The fact that the transition from image to Godlikeness had to take place for us under the species of time, is further proof that time, as a concretization of passage, had multiple valences and positive content in God's plan²³.

Time enables us to introduce meaning and value into the cosmos. It gives meaning to all events because it serves the macro- and microcosm as a medium and instrument of preparation for eternal happiness, as a gateway to existential wholeness and full participation in the Supreme Being²⁴. Only in time can the cosmos be realized as a harmonious whole and reach the fulfillment of its final destiny, the fullness of the Kingdom of God. Time appears as a cosmic riverbed, constitutive of created existence, through which the changes of creature's flow under the sky of eternal light. But time is not identified with these changes or with created existence, just as the bed of a river is not identical to the water of the river. Time and existence are distinct realities²⁵.

The solidarity of time with all creation is complete from the very beginning. The fall produces deep corruption over time. Original sin unites time with death. Time had been given to man to walk toward love and the fullness of his existence through the likeness of God. Man transforms, through the fall, time into death. The time of divine presence turns into a time of absence open to nothingness.

Time-passage to the deification of man henceforth also becomes a measure of the passage to death (Rom. V, 12). But time was not entirely fallen, it did not identify with the fall. The fallen time is strengthened by God's blessing upon it, so that during this time the creature turns freely to God, wants Him, and understands the immensity of love. The time will be waiting for God, preparing communion with the divine²⁶.

If the cyclical time of pagan religions depersonalizes God and the creature by wanting to absorb into eternity, Old Testament time is linear time, "teacher unto Christ" time (Gal. III, 24) that is never repeated, an ascending time of God's actions. All the significance of the linear time of the Old Testament, all its tension towards a fulfillment still in the future, will be summed up in the sermon of St. John the Baptist: "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near*" (Matthew III, 2).

However, the linear time of holy history isolated God from the creature, supported the duality between creature and God, and creature could not enter communion with the divine.

Only with the Incarnation of the Son of God – and the restoration of human nature through perfect union with His divine nature will time "be filled with God", will it once again become a paradisiacal time of divine-human dialogue²⁷.

²¹ Oliver Clément, Notes sur le temps, in Mesager, nr. avril, 1957, Paris, p. 90 – cit. to Drd. Fer Nicolae, op. cit., p. 546.

²² Drd. Fer Nicolae, op. cit., p. 546.

²³ Drd. Dan Ciubotea, op. cit., p. 198.

²⁴ Fr. Corneliu Sarbu, PhD, op. cit., p. 63.

²⁵ Drd. Fer Nicolae, op. cit., p. 344.

²⁶ Drd. Fer Nicolae, op. cit., p. 346.

²⁷ Drd. Fer Nicolae, op. cit., p. 347.

2. THE REDEMPTION OF TIME THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

The linear tense of the Old Testament confirms the awareness that God is far from the creature, that he has withdrawn from communion with it, leaving a time empty of his transcendent and real presence. The commandments, the divine law takes the place of communion until its realization. by law. God did not let man fall totally; The creature lived, in the tension of waiting for divine help. The prophets positively prepared the messianic time, thereby showing that time was still under God's dominion²⁸. The whole creature was waiting for the new time.

The removal of the empty time of death and sin could not be done until the Son of God himself descended out of love (John III, 16) to fill time with the presence of his deity. This is "the fullness of time" (Gal. IV, 4). There could not have been a quicker "fullness of time" because a certain experience was required on the part of the creature before it suffered from the state of non-communion in which it found itself with God, recognized the need for divine help, and ardently desired the state of communion²⁹.

"The fullness of time" means the moment from which Beginning we have a time full of God, of His presence, because His Son became man, took our nature and remains so forever, living with us filled with the Supreme reality. "Christ was born man for man and accepted day and time"³⁰

It is the fullness of time not only as a moment when messianic expectation is realized, but an ontological fulfillment. Orthodoxy sees in the "fullness of time" also a full realization of time through Christ. The time after Christ is different; new time, which receives value through the very fact of the Incarnation. The act of kenosis of the Son of God is the elevation of the cosmos and time to their filling by Him in whom "*dwelleth all fulness*" (Col. I, 19)

Through the incarnation of the Lord, all creation is sanctified and directed toward God³¹. With the incarnation begins the re-creation of the world and implicitly of time. Time virtually regains its primordial quality, that is, its exclusive effect as a promoter of life, as a dynamic factor of human fulfillment³².

The divine Logos became flesh, lived our time, and sanctified Him by His presence. The first Adam had to fulfill His calling, that of union with God, the second Adam, the Son of God, realizes this union of the two natures through His person, becoming flesh and rising to communion with God.

The new time has its beginning in the kenosis that eternity makes in time through the descent of the Son of God. The Incarnation produces a new cut in time, which causes time to receive a new center, Jesus Christ³³. The cutting of time by eternity makes possible the inauguration of the new time, of the time in which eternity is open to time. Time becomes new in that it is touched entirely by the incarnate Logos³⁴.

Christianity discovers God as God over time. This divine presence suppresses repetition and confirms to each event its uniqueness. Time is turned to Christ, to this focus of

²⁸ Drd. Dan Ciubotea, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

²⁹ Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

³⁰ Petru Hrisologul, *Senno CXXXI*, P.G., 52, col 560 B, *cit.* to Fr. dr. Corneliu Sârbu, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

³¹ Prof. Nicolae Ghîtescu, *The premises of Christian teaching on the relationship between grace and freedom*, in *Orthodoxy*, XI (1959), no. 1, p. 7.

³² Fr. Corneliu Sarbu, PhD, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

³³ O. Cullman, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.

³⁴ Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

light, which manifests its Eucharistic presence within time. The Incarnation being the descent of eternity into time, opens for us a whole new perspective, in which temporality is touched by the holiness of the Eternal³⁵.

In Christ, every moment of cosmic time is sanctified and transfigured. It is the vision proper to Orthodoxy that sees in the Incarnation the transfiguration of the cosmos and time³⁶. Jesus Christ is God in a human way and Man in a divine way. As a man He lives His divine life in human nature, He lives eternity in time, as God lives human life divinely, transfiguring time through the eternity of His divine life. In Christ time and eternity are found in perfect harmony, in a divine-human union. This is because the Savior unites the separate: heaven and earth, the sensible with the intelligible, the created nature with the uncreated,³⁷ time with eternity. The consequence of this union is the transfiguration and deification of the time of human nature from the divine hypostasis of Christ.

Christ's time is united with the appropriation of human nature by the person of the divine Logos with the eternity of the divine hypostasis. Through this temporal-supratemporal union, time is not abolished, just as, through hypostatic union, the two natures (divine and human) do not absorb into each other, nor do they separate, but each keeps its own personal attributes. The time assumed by Christ and transfigured is the basis of the deified time of the Church³⁸.

In Jesus Christ we are renewed and deified in principle. "God gave to the Word a created body," says St. Athanasius the Great, "that we might be renewed in Him and deified."³⁹ The Word, the image of the Father, becomes man in order to introduce the divine likeness to be attained in paradisiacal time and to renew human nature from within. Christ recapitulates us all in His human nature and renews us, making us live in the new time of deification. "When the Son of God became flesh," says St. Irenaeus, "He recapitulated in Him the long line of men, He brought us salvation. and that which we have lost through Adam, that is, to be in the image and likeness of God."⁴⁰

Recapitulated in Christ, we are all sacrificed to the Father and renewed. It is a mysterious, spiritual recapitulation, through which we are crucified and buried with Christ to be resurrected, redeemed through His sacrifice, together with Him in the new season of transfiguration: "Yesterday I buried myself with You, Christ – sings Orthodoxy on Resurrection Sunday – today I rise with You, raising You. Yesterday I was crucified with You, with You glorify me."⁴¹

Time itself finds itself recapitulated "with all" in Christ: "There is but one God the Father," says St. Irenaeus, "and one Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has recapitulated all things in Him."⁴² In Christ, the sanctified body transcends the time in Paradise in its new dimension: that in which men can become God's children according to grace. The time of the deification of the creature exceeds the time of the paradisiacal state. "Here" this time is present, "there" gave only in the future that the first Adam was supposed to reach. In the

³⁵ Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 549.

³⁶ O. Clément, *Transfigurer le temps*, Neuchâtel, Paris, 1959, *possum*, cit. to Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 549.

³⁷ Prof. Nicolae Chițescu, *The Saviour Jesus Christ, the center of our life*, in *The Voice of the Church*, XV (1956), no. 8-9, p. 445.

³⁸ Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 549.

³⁹ St. Athanasius the Great, *Against the Arians*, II, 47, P.G., XXVI, p. 248, cit. to Drd. Fer Nicholas, *op. cit.*, p. 549.

⁴⁰ St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III, 18, P.G., VII, 1932, cit. to Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 549.

⁴¹ Troparion of pasna III of the Canon of Matins Sunday Df. Easter, in *Pentecostar*, Bucharest, 1953, p. 7.

⁴² St. Irenaeus, *op. cit.*, III, 16, P.L., VII, 925, cit. to Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 550.

second Adam, the new time becomes a continuous present. Christ changes creation and time into receptacles of divine life. In time, the divine life is communicated, and it is the act by which it takes root in the Absolute and takes part in the divine⁴³.

Through Christ's sacrifice, time escapes the power of sin, death, and nothingness. In the face of the open nothingness of being, for existence and time to be saved, the divine Logos as man had to stand. The cry "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" ("But for a Small Moment | Neal A. Maxwell | BYU Speeches")(Matthew XXVII, 26) is the expression of the full vision of the nothingness that threatens to engulf existence, and which had to be overcome for the cosmos and time to receive transfiguration and graceful fullness through the resurrection⁴⁴.

On the cross, the eternal made time allows into Him all that was negative in time, not only to consume it and to reverse its meaning, to fill it with light, so that the glory it has from the Father (John I, 14) may henceforth come to us through time, to show that time, far from opposing eternity, it is God's chosen receptacle to communicate true eternity⁴⁵.

Through death on the cross and the resurrection of the Savior, time prevailed over sin and death. In Christ's resurrection, time has reached the final stage of its fullness (This is why Christ is the absolute summit of our salvation, the plenary form of time). Jesus Christ having risen, restored through the restoration of an updated content of life, full time, led him to the perfection to which he aspired. Now of resurrection, time is transfigured. The resurrection of Christ, the beginning of the new creation of the world and time. The moment of resurrection transcends and cancels, at once, the falling aspect of time, with its most painful consequence, death. He discovers the meaning of the "passover-passing" time to eternal life⁴⁶.

After the resurrection, Christ is closer to the creature, being raised Himself to a maximum state of communion with all believers. Jesus Christ is close to everyone, not as an external person, but as an inner, spiritual reality, and through it we grow spiritually during our transfiguration towards a pure life of intimate relationship between our ego, situated in the temporal dimension of existence, and Jesus Christ. The One who transcends His eternity and enters time, so that we may enter the eternity of love of the Holy Trinity. This is the fullness of time fully realized through the resurrection. Creation and time are filled with light as they enter a new region under the sign of the eighth day of the kingdom of light, of resurrection to eternal life. Time is turned to the time of resurrection, which is beyond death.

This is why the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the celebration of the cosmos and time⁴⁷. Without going out of time, but rising above the sinful experience of time, we meet the reality of Christ, Who, through the resurrection, lives in a form close to our temporality. Having perfected time, Christ ascended to the Father. After the Ascension, Christ's own time unifies earth and heaven, time and eternity.

Christ's connection with time and the world is intimate even after the Ascension, through the Holy Eucharist. In the deified time of the Church the creature must be assimilated to the glorious time of the Lord. The fullness of Christ's time opens the time of fullness in the church⁴⁸.

⁴³ Louis Lavelle, *Du temps et de l'éternité*, Aubier, Paris, 1945, p. 18.

⁴⁴ Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 550.

⁴⁵ O. Clément, *Notes sur le temps*, p. 92, cit. to Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 550.

⁴⁶ Drd. Dan Ciubotea, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

⁴⁷ Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

⁴⁸ Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

3. THE TRANSFIGURED TIME OF THE CHURCH – THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE DEIFICATION OF THE BELIEVER

Through the resurrection a new existential order is proven, for through it the kingdom of heaven breaks out in earthly time, the new eon, eternity, as an anticipation through transfiguration of the eternity of the world⁴⁹. Believers are already saved from this cunning age now (Gal. I, 4) and tasted the powers of the age to come (Heb. V, 5). If the resurrection from the dead means the change of eons, the beginning of the new, then the new eon began with the resurrection of Christ, which is the beginning of the general resurrection (I Cor. XV, 20-23).⁵⁰

The transcending of our profane time into a sanctified time takes place in the theandric structure of the Church, which shines with divine light emanating from the glorious Body of the Lord. The Church is the Pentecost of eternity in time, and in her we take part in the conditions of divine life⁵¹. The time transfigured by Christ is present in the theandric fullness of the Church in which we are given the eternal beauty of the Kingdom of God. Through the Church, time is more intimately connected with Christ and, through Christ, with the life of the Holy Trinity⁵².

The Church can be defined as the "place" of the meeting of time and eternity, as they met before in the person of the incarnate Logos. In the holy time of the Church the believer lives the divine life, for through the Church the life, which is eternally in the womb of the Father, after being communicated to the Triune Persons, is imparted by grace to spiritual creatures. In time, believers take part in sacramental eternity, because the Church is the extension of divine life⁵³.

Since the Church is the community of Trinitarian life in the Holy Spirit, she absorbs believers into her living reality, to pass them from the time of sin into eternity of communion with God. Through the mysterious Body of Christ, the Eternal manifests itself as the subject of communion with the call of those who are in time to communion with Him. This precisely means the transfigured time of the Church, through the sanctification of the believer⁵⁴.

The life of the Church is the new life of the Spirit, who makes present the reality of Christ within us and Who says: Come!

The action of the Holy Spirit, who calls us to dialogue of communication with Christ and with the entire Holy Trinity, achieves the fullness of time through the deification of the believer. Believers become by the grace of the holy temples in which the Holy Spirit shines and in which we take part in the eternal divine life that flows out in the deified time of the Church.

It is uncreated grace that makes possible the entological transformation of human nature. By grace God has made possible the living relationship with Him, which consists in a continuous transcendence of us towards Him and in His intimate communication with us. What was deified in Christ during His time is His human nature appropriated by the divine hypostasis. What must be deified in the time of the Church is our whole nature, which must enter union with God, live the transfigured time of the Lord's glorious time⁵⁵.

⁴⁹ Fr. Corneliu Sarbu, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

⁵⁰ Sasse, art. cit., p. 201.

⁵¹ Paul Evdochimov, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

⁵² Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 552.

⁵³ M.Y. Congar, *Ecclesia de Trinitate*, in *Irenikon* no. 2, tome XIV, 1937, p. 131, cit. to Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 552.

⁵⁴ Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 552.

⁵⁵ Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 552.

In the new time of the Church, the believer is saved from life torn apart by death and lives on the plane of divine life, lives the uncreated life of Christ: "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. II, 24). This is the purpose of the deified time of the Church, and the Church the purpose of sanctified time. The state of deification is an inner opening of our being in its temporal dimension, towards eternal divine life, an exit by sacramental grace from the immanence of time, towards transcending it into an eternal union with God, without a breaking of the boundaries of time and without a merging of our human nature with the divine, just as in Jesus Christ the deified human nature did not emerge from the coordinates of time and space until after the resurrection. The likeness of God is the attainment of eternal life, which for the believer begins beyond time. Deification means for the Christian the entrance into the eternity of God's life: "As the Lord, putting on flesh, became man," says St. Athanasius the Great, "so we, believers included in His body, are deified through the Logos and henceforth have eternal life as our inheritance"⁵⁶.

The divine life, enshrined by grace in human nature, transfigures our being and raises it to the fullness of existence. The time in which the believer lives is no longer a time open to death, as in Martin Heidegger, but a time in which the believer opens himself to divine life and the fullness of grace. Human existence transcends temporality in that it is destined for a life that transcends the frames of time into eternity. Man is a traveler to eternity⁵⁷. It is no longer a time and existence towards death, but an existence towards deification, in which the creature lives time in communion with heaven. Now the Christian becomes the friend of light and transfigured time, in which he unites with the divine. He takes part in the Absolute in the ford of time through which the uncreated divine light flows⁵⁸.

The time of the Church is a continuous actualization-contemporization of the work of salvation conducted by Jesus Christ. For the Church, the time of life presented has only one meaning: it is the time of salvation. This means that the Church's time expresses the maximum value of time. The holy time of the Church is par excellence the time of encounter with God, an encounter which also involves the presence of one's neighbor⁵⁹.

Every liturgical connection of the Gospel places us in the event narrated. "At that time" – the consecrated form with which every liturgical reading of the Gospel begins, signifies sacred time, contemporaneity.

In the celebration of Christmas, we see the birth of Christ, and the risen Christ appears to us on Easter night and makes those who celebrate eyewitnesses of the Resurrection. In the liturgical dimension every moment is near, for its content is present in everything else. "In the grave with the body, in hell with the soul, as a God in heaven with the thief, and in the chair, you are with the Father and the Holy Spirit, filling everything."⁶⁰

On Christian holidays there is no longer the inactive time of infinite repetition, but everything is still finally. The same divine act, which took place at a precise moment in history, is always offered in Mystery. He has the power to open time and be behind any moment, as the true content of all moments⁶¹.

The season of feasts is a holy time, sanctified by the real-mysterious presence of Christ and transformed into a factor of objective salvation, that is, all events connected with

⁵⁶ St. Athanasius the Great, *op. cit.*, III, 34, P.G., XXVI, 397 A.B., cit. to Drd. Fer Nicholas, *op. cit.*, p. 553.

⁵⁷ Fr. Corneliu Sârbu, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁵⁸ Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 554.

⁵⁹ Drd. Dan Ciubotea, *op. cit.*, pp. 200-202.

⁶⁰ P. Evdochimov, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

⁶¹ P. Evdochimov, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

objective salvation⁶². The services of the Church show a liturgical manifestation of time, its authentic manifestation of service in sanctifying man.

The religious force liturgically attributed to the dates of the astronomical calendar shows their function as sign and foreshadowing. Thus, the 12 days between Christmas and Epiphany (Dec. 25 – Jan. 6) foreshadow the 12 months of the year. In the Church Fathers – the Sabbath, being the seventh day of the week among the Jews, Sunday does not replace it but constitutes the eighth day, or the first in the absolute and unique sense. If the days of the week symbolize the totality of history, on the contrary, the day of resurrection, Sunday is the eighth day, Easter weekly and symbolizes eternity⁶³. Thus, the whole mystery of time and eternity is summed up for Orthodoxy in the meaning of Sunday. Sunday is the time when eternity gives birth to time and the moment it receives it. Sunday is paradise found and eschatology inaugurated, the haloed moment of that "fiat" of the Creator and the dark light of the eighth day in which time will be no longer (Rev. X, 6-7), for God "*will be all in all*" (I Cor. XV, 28).⁶⁴ The 40 years in the desert, the 40 days of the Saviour's fast, the 40 days of Great Lent are the days of waiting before reaching the "promised land." Thus, the time of fasting represents in small the totality of history, the time of waiting.

On the contrary, the 50 days between Easter and Pentecost are considered as 50 Sundays, a time of joy, symbol of the age to come, already begun⁶⁵.

The Orthodox calendar is a living organism for believers. He does not come to measure time, but to give it an expression, a face to the progress of the weather. The calendar organizes time, but not in a material sense, but spiritually. The moments in the calendar are units of rhythm, not measurement, time being something alive, the calendar is its rhythm⁶⁶.

The time of the church year and in general the time of Christian life is not an advance towards exclusively terrestrial goals and towards the definitive end of individual life, but an advance, in cycles ever closer to God or towards the eternity of full communion with Him. In the church year we advance from "glory to glory" but each year the next in a circle closer and closer to God, to the eternal glory that awaits our being⁶⁷.

CONCLUZIONI

A final aspect of the value of time is that of the ecological factor. The Parusia of God and the eschatological events connected with it have a historical side and a suprahistorical side. As the end of history, Parusia is a temporal event. But seen in its content, it transcends temporality and penetrates eternity. Time will be seen and judge of man's deeds in the public judgment, for he keeps our deeds imprinted in his "memory."⁶⁸

In terms of teaching about the place of time in eschatology, Western theology differs somewhat from Orthodoxy. Anchored too much in the cosmic-historical perspective, the Roman Catholic eschatological conception cannot give time its due transfiguration into the next life but teaches that there will be time there too⁶⁹.

⁶² Fr. Corneliu Sarbu, PhD, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

⁶³ P. Evdochimov, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

⁶⁴ Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 555.

⁶⁵ P. Evdochimov, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

⁶⁶ Fr. Corneliu Sarbu, PhD, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

⁶⁷ Fr. prof. D. Stăniloae, *The Road with Christ the Saviour through the Mysteries and Feasts of the Orthodox Church*, in *Orthodoxy*, XXVIII (1976), nr. 2., p. 416.

⁶⁸ Fr. Corneliu Sarbu, PhD, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

⁶⁹ Toma d'Aquino, Suppl. q., 84 a 3, cit. to Fr. Dr. Corneliu Sarbu, *op. cit.*, p. 73 – in note.

Through Christ, time fulfills its vocation as a servant of man to salvation: "It is impossible to suddenly become a good and wise man," says St. Anthony the Great. There must be persistent thought, living, trial, weather, striving, and longing for the good thing."⁷⁰

In an authentic Christian sense, time has a unique value because only in it can the Christian be saved. Therefore, the meaning of time transfigured in Christ and lived in sacramental form in the Church is that of the realization of the Kingdom of God, of glorious fulness in which Christ will be "First and Last"⁷¹

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⁷⁰ *Philokalia*, vol I, p. 10 (trans. by Prof. D. Stăniloae, Sibiu, 1946).

⁷¹ Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 555.