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PHD THESIS

**INDIVIDUAL ESCHATOLOGY IN ORTHODOX THEOLOGY-
Dogmatical , exegetical and cultural-philosophical aspects**

-ABSTRACT-

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PHD ABSTRACT

The paper is divided into four chapters. It compares the views of the Anglican clergyman Herbert Lockyer (1886-1984), editor of *The Liberty Illustrated Bible*, with those of theologians Gerhard Kittel, a Protestant Lutheran theologian, and Ion Bria. According to Herbert Lockyer, eschatology reveals the end of history. For him, the Apocalypse will be beneficial because Christ will definitively separate good from evil. In the 3rd chapter of the book of Genesis, God curses the world, but in 22nd chapter of Revelation, deliverance from this curse is announced. In Gerhard Kittel's view, Christ's judgment takes on human, natural dimensions. Judgement is the path of human freedom, the eschatological salvation of the whole person. He speaks of peace as an inner state achieved through death (*eirene* and *shalom*). For his part, Orthodox theologian Ion Bria observes that eschatology refers to immortality, to transfiguration, and that it must be a concern of man in the present through prayer and hope.

The paper discusses the negative dimensions of eschatology using the example of the Flood which becomes the justifying event of divine justice. Death has a double dimension: punishment, but also an opportunity to draw closer to God. The saint and the concern for transfiguration through virtue become key elements in understanding the positive dimensions of eschatology. St. Paul affirms faith in the resurrection as the foundation of Christianity. Death can only be understood in relation to faith in the resurrection (I Corinthians 15:16-19). Without resurrection, the theologian will come to accept non-being as the cause of the universe.

At the same time, the paper addresses issues and terms such as *being* and *non-being*, *transcendent* and *transcendental*, *supernatural* and *super-sensible*, *rationalism*, *enlightenment* and *empiricism*. Petre Țuțea, in his book, *Reflections on Religious Knowledge*, provides extremely important clarifications in this regard, which the paper takes into account. At the same time, the paper also discusses the way in which Western civilization was affected by humanism.

The paper deals with Platonic eschatology, the problem of death and non-life, problems that would later influence Christian thought, especially the thinker Origen (under Neoplatonic influence). A correct understanding of Plato's dialogue called *Parmenides* is essential to an awareness of reason as a limit. Also, the *Defence of Socrates* is a very important dialogue for understanding the relations between the Pythagorean, the Orphic and the Dionysian cults as opposed to the Platonic philosophy, which bases its eschatological discourse on the belief in the immortality of the soul, virtue, knowledge in steps, through which death can be overcome.

The paper shows both the similarities and the differences between Platonism and Christianity, the differences between Plato's eros and the Christian eros, and the differences

between the steps of knowledge proposed by philosophy and the Christian ones for reaching perfection, as antidotes against sin, suffering and death.

The paper also deals with the issue of death from the perspective of the Christian theologians St. John Damascene, St. Justin Popovich, St. Athanasius the Great and Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae. Death is the separation of the soul from the body as a result of man's use of his free will against God. St. John Damascene and St. Justin Popovich maintain that the cause of man's fall is the wrong use of free will. Adam and Eve were not forced by the devil to sin, even though the devil is also held responsible by St. Justin Popovich. St. Athanasius the Great shows that through sin man orients his being towards a fictitious reality, which makes him resemble the devil. He also shows that non-being has no existence in itself, but is a lack of Good. By cultivating evil, man cultivates the old self of sin, while he who cultivates goodness, Christian virtues and avoids fornication comes to resemble Christ, to become a new man (Ephesians 4:17-24). The teaching of St. Athanasius the Great is also supported by the Christian theologian Panayotis Nellas, who does not support the existence of non-life. He sees death as an antidote to sin, although it also remains a punishment. In his view, death is the limit, the break. The "garments of skin" received by man as a result of primordial sin are both a blessing and a burden. But man will be purified by the body of Christ made holy. St. Gregory Palamas, on the other hand, sees contemporary man as much more guilty than Adam or Eve, since the coming of Christ and Christian Baptism have erased and restored the primordial luster of human nature. Man can overcome death by practicing Hesychasm, regardless of his condition: married, unmarried, poor or rich. The fatalistic conception of sin and death in the vision of St. Augustine is surpassed by that of St. Gregory Palamas, who sees the transfiguration and deification of man as possible from here, by overcoming symbols, images and rational knowledge through the practice of Hesychastic prayer, which goes beyond the rational knowledge. St. Basil the Great also affirms the importance of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, in which man receives the image of Christ and the possibility of deification, the only one capable of overcoming death as a trauma. Thus, death can be experienced as the gateway to immortality, as union with God.

The paper treats the possibility of the existence of absolute justice as a consequence of the rational certainty of God's existence, as Anselm of Canterbury sees it through the ontological argument. This argument is also developed by other philosophers or scientists (Descartes, Kurt Gödel), but they all come to the same conclusion: the existence of God, of a person possessing perfect attributes, cannot be argued. Only revelation, faith, can justify God's existence and justice. It is also justified by the presence of Christ in history, who sacrificed Himself for man. The mystery of justice can only be explained by the divine-human Person, Christ-God. At the same time, it can also be deduced by analogy or by observations about

human nature, which is the partial image of God. His conscience speaks of the righteousness of God. The very conception of systems of justice are a mirror of divine justice, which is not an innate idea in man, but the goal towards which he is called.

Keywords: death, non-being, resurrection, sin, justice, love, transfiguration