

TEO, ISSN 2247-4382
57 (4), p. 146-170, 2013

Ontological Dimension of Death in the Light of the Orthodox Hymnographi

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Abstract

The eschatology, with its final events in the life of believers and of the nature, in general, is of great interest to anyone. For theology, death is a passage from the temporal life to the eternal life. In this context, death in the Orthodox Church teaching is considered a „falling asleep”, it basing its foundation on Christ’s death as a Holy sacrifice and His victory over death. The eschatological vision is based on the contrast between the present on Earth and the future of the eternal century. The eschatologic aspect of the religious services and of the liturgical texts, proves that they are a recap of the entire history of the salvation of the human race, from which it could not miss the great and last event of the Coming for the glory of Christ, the Supreme Judge, the glorious event involving the Church and its believers, since this world, through the joy of participation in the Holy Liturgy. The texts of Orthodox worship books depict the teaching of the Church, for all people, aiming at bringing people to God, but also at teaching them all the necessary for their salvation.

Keywords

Eschatology, death, sacrifice, Parousie, eternal life

Introduction

The Christian teaching about death is one of the fundamental themes of Orthodox theology. If only the eschatology gives meaning to life on Earth, then the death appears as a necessary and full of sense moment on life path, which started from birth, it making our earthly life to reach the eschatological phase, where the full sense of earthly existence is revealed. Death is a gate. The Resurrected Christ lets us go through death into life. We are baptized in His death, so as to participate in His life. Our life narrows gradually until our Baptism and our death match. Through the life-giving Cross, life finds its fulfillment through death. Without death our life would be unreal. It would be an illusion, a dream without awakening.¹ The texts of the burial divine service, and not only those, highlight these things in the following way: „People, why do you mourn me, why do you get upset in vain, speaks the dead Christ to everyone. Death means rest for everyone, just as I heard the voice of Jacov, saying: death is man's rest.”²

„And descending through the Cross, in hell, as to fulfill His all, he wiped out the pains of death. And rising/resurrecting on the third day and making a path to any body at the resurrection from the dead, that it was not possible to be kept under damage, the Initiator of life, made Himself a start to the dead, the First-born from the dead, so that He Himself may be the Initiator of everything.”³

St. Cyril of Alexandria said, „For God, death is truly a sleep, and nothing else, the temporary death of our body ceasing by the simple will of the life itself, that of Christ.”⁴

¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. III, EIBMBOR, București, 1997², p. 145.

² *Molitfelnic – care cuprinde slujbe, rânduieli și rugăciuni săvârșite de preot la diferite trebuințe din viața creștinilor*, EIBMBOR, București, 2002, Rânduiala Învmormântării Preoților și a Diaconilor de mir, Fericirile, Stihira a IV-a, glasul al II-lea, p. 273-274.

³ *Arhieraticon*, EIBMBOR, București, 1993, Rânduiala sfințirii Sfântului și Marelui Mir, Rugăciune în taină a slujitorilor, p. 223.

⁴ Chiril al Alexandriei, *Comentariu la Sfânta Evanghelie de la Ioan*, col. „P.S.B.”, nr. 41, EIBMBOR, București, 2000, p. 742.

The issue of death according to the hymnographic texts

In a certain sense, we are all dead in Christ's death, this death having to become an actual reality for each of us. This is the meaning of the baptism, whose sacramental efficacy unites us with Christ in the Cross: „all of you who have been baptized in Christ, have also dressed up in Christ” (Galatians 3, 27). Having been baptized into Christ's death, we are dressed in Him in death, giving shape to His death (Romans 6, 3; Acts 3, 10). From now on, we are like the dead, whose life is hidden with Christ in God. This death, materialized in a mysterious way is nothing else but one aspect of the liveliness of the grace of salvation. But even if we die, this is in the nature of beings, because we die for the sin (Romans 6, 11).⁵ „God, my loving Father, I'll sing celebration songs and burial praise to You, the One who opened my life entries with Your burial, and You killed the death and the hell with Your death.”⁶

Between this life and the next one, there, in the middle, stands the death, as a door that opens our entry into the eternal life. The word death, θάνατος, normally means cessation of life. Nothing is better suited to show the futility of man's earthly life, than the thought of death.⁷ Nothing is more certain than death, but the more certain the death is, the less certain the time of death is. Many liturgical texts emphasize the pain, the fear and the unknownability of the death time, aiming at making the believers aware of the reality and of their continuous preparation for the moment of meeting with the fair Judge: „seeing me lying voiceless and breathless, weep for me, you all, brothers and friends, relatives and acquaintances, because only yesterday I was talking to you and suddenly the dreadful time of death came to me.”⁸ „Soul, the end is approaching, it is coming and you neither care, nor prepare yourself; the time shortens, get up; the Judge is

⁵ Constantin I. Gheorghe, *Moartea și învierea după Sfânta Scriptură*, în „Studii Teologice”, XXX (1978), nr. 1-2, p. 30-31.

⁶ *Penticostarul – adică sfintele slujbe de la Duminica Paștilor până la Duminica Tuturor Sfinților*, EIBMBOR, 1999, Rânduiala slujbei din noaptea Sfințelor Paști, Utrenia Învierii, Canonul Sâmbetei celei Mari, Cântarea 1, Stihira a II-a, glasul al 6-lea, 9.

⁷ Alexiu Comoroșan, *Dogmatica Ortodoxă*, editată de Prof. Dr. Emilian Voiuțchi, Editura Arhiepiscopală, Cernăuți, 1889, p. 683, 685.

⁸ *Molitfelnic*, Rânduiala Înmormântării Mirenilor, Stihirile, Slavă..., glasul al VI-lea, p. 239.

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almost near the doors: the life time is passing like a dream, like a flower. Why should we get uselessly upset?"⁹

„Why do you behave lazily, my villain soul? Why are you thinking of old worthless worries? Why do you preoccupy yourself with ephemeral things? The last moment has come, and then we will leave everything we had here. Wake up while you still have time, and say: I have sinned, my merciful Savior, but please do not cut me as if a barren fig tree; show Your mercy to me instead, o merciful Christ, to me, the one who speaks with fear: Let me not remain out of the storehouse of Christ.”¹⁰

The mystery of life and the mystery of death find their full explanation and meaning in the life, the death and the resurrection of the Savior Christ, the birth and the death being nothing but a passing towards life; the first one in this ephemeral and temporal life, and the other one in the eternal life, because according to Christian teaching every end is a new beginning.

„The earthly life is required after death as a passing towards the full sense, because the fragmentary meaning from this life is required after the full sense, which is given by the fullness of life in God. Without death, understood as the gate through which we pass towards the full sense, the rationality snippet of the earthly life appears rather like nonsense and as unaccountable; and the world, if it must always remain in this fragmentary sense, is rather nonsense, because if there is nothing beyond, it leads all people to the final death. But death gives sense to the creation only because it is a bridge towards an existence, which is completely different from the existence on earth, towards an unephemeral existence, whose sense is its wholeness in God, i.e. it is an event that changes completely the way of the existence on earth only because it definitely marks the huge difference between the two modes of existence and, therefore, only because

⁹ *Triodul, care cuprinde slujbele bisericesti de la Duminica Vameşului şi Fariseului până la Sfânta Înviere*, EIBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2000, Joi dimineaţa în a cincea săptămână a Sfântului şi Marelui Post, Canonul cel Mare alcătuire a Sfântului Părintelui nostru Andrei Criteanul Ierusalimiteanul, Cântarea a 4-a, Alt Canon, Stihira a III-a, glasul al VIII-lea, p. 416.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, În Sfânta şi Marea zi Marţi în Săptămâna Patimilor, Denia de Luni seara, la Utrenie, Icos, p. 559.

it is a chasm,. A death as an end of an incarnation for other incarnation, on a same ephemeral essence level, does not give any sense to the meaningless world.”¹¹

The meaning of the earthly life finds its wholeness, its completion only in the eternal life, i.e. it is only through death that the life is elevated to the rank God wanted for humans, ever since the creation, when He decided that man should be created according to the image and likeness of God, the resemblance being precisely the ideal to which man is called through death, by passing to eternity through his deification in this life. We leave a life for another life, far more useful and better for man, if he obeyed the Creator’s commandment and Evangelical precepts.

Regarding the act of death, which finds fulfillment and value in the torments, death and resurrection of the Lord, father Dumitru Stăniloae says:

„the more a person turns his death into a valorizing presence throughout his life, the more he turns it into a passing to the wholeness of life and fills his earthly life with more value. The power of experiencing life, allowing God to develop it, is held by the Christians from Christ and in Christ, Who lived and died in an exemplary rendition to His Father, for His complete Union as a human with Him. In this respect, an example of the imitation of Christ in his power is given by the thief who stood on the right hand of the Crucified, who, through death, enter into heaven with Christ, i.e. at the Union with Him in his rendition to His Father. Christ died shouting «Father, into thy hands I give you My spirit» (Luke 23, 46), and then «He died». And when Christians die it is said that «they have given their soul into the hands of Lord». Most Christians die in Christ, in a lifetime of rendition or of death in God’s development, in order to make a complete rendition in life through the death at the end. This development with Christ in death is in the same time growing our spirited life, so that the moment of the highlight death, as parting of the soul from the body, coincides with the peak of the entry in the wholeness of life. Death has changed in Christ not only the mission in itself, but also in the experience of those who are living it, discovering itself as a entrance towards life. Man should think about death not only because his life is a life

¹¹ D. Stăniloae, *op. cit.*, p. 145-146.

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towards death, but also because death is a mystery of Christ-the Lord. Since Christ died for the salvation of the world, since the life of God and His glory finally came into the world through the death of the Crucified, there isn't a more decisive event in the world like this death. This last resort of life with Christ, which is also a dying with Him, and therefore the last resort of the final death and of the tendency towards the eternal life, is love. Man accepts all his asceticism, which ends up in death, out of his love for God. It was because of the love for God-Father, and for people, as well, that the Son of God received the death as a human being, in order that we may die with Him in the same way, because of our love for God.¹²

Through the sacrifice of Christ, man escaped from the curse of death, of destruction, because the man didn't have the hope of the eternal life, of the resurrection, of the light, until the Resurrection of Lord; starting from the moment of Christ's death and resurrection, the death has become a passing in the light, it has become the hope of man in the life after death, all these having their beginning in the resurrection of Christ, our Saviour. That's why Christian hymnographies have immortalized this victory in texts meant to encourage and strengthen the hope of Christians:

„Every single member of Your holy body endured disgrace for us: the head endured thorns; the face, spits; the cheek, slaps; the mouth, the taste of vinegar mixed with gall; the ears, the pagan blasphemies; the back, whippings and the hand, cane; the stretches of the whole body on the Cross; and the wrists endured nails, and the ribs, spears. You suffered for us, and saved us from sufferance; You who endured humiliations for us, because of your love for people, and lifted us, Almighty Saviour, have mercy on us.”¹³

„With Your Cross, O, Christ Saviour, lead us to Your truth, and redeem us from the enemy's traps; You who resurrected from the dead, save us, the ones fallen in sin, by giving your hand, You, Lord, lover of people, for the prayers of Your Saints. Amen.”¹⁴

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 150, 153, 155, 157.

¹³ *Triodul*, Denia de Joi seara, după Evanghelia a IX-a, Stihirile, glasul al III-lea, Stihira a II-a, p. 617.

¹⁴ *Octoiul Mare, care cuprinde slujba Învierii pe opt glasuri*, Tipografia cărților bise-

The whole orthodox cult is strongly amplified and irrigated by some hymnographic texts that are designed to help the believers, to teach them the necessary things for salvation, making out of the Eastern faith, a religion of hope, of life, of light and of joy par excellence.

The death of Christ as a Holy sacrifice and His victory over death

Our Lord Jesus Christ, through his entire saving activity, removed the man from the death and gave him eternal life. In fact, this is the purpose of the incarnation of the Son of God, because, through faith in Christ and through the Union with Him, we have strong confidence and hope that we will be able to trample over death as He Himself did through the Sacrifice of the Cross and, according to the troparion of resurrection, it is beautifully said : „with death trampling over death” (θανάτος θάνατον πατήσας), i.e. our God trampled over the God of death (Thanatos) together with the death¹⁵ , „having been altered by death, the picky death lies breathless, and as a result of its incapacity to accept the divine hit of life, the tough one let himself die and everyone was given the Resurrection”¹⁶, a sacrifice which ended with His glorious Resurrection from the dead, through which we will raise to life.¹⁷

„O, Saviour, You endured the Cross with your willing advice, and You, who set up the edges with Your word, were put into a new grave by mortal people. The foreigner tied himself for this,

ricești, București, 1952, Glasul al IV-lea, Duminică dimineață, La Laude, Stihirile Învierii, Stihira a III-a, p. 294.

¹⁵ Thanatos (gr. θάνατος, death) was the god of death in Greek mythology, female divinity Roman equivalent Mors. Thanatos is the son of the goddess Nyx (Night) and of Erebor (Dark), twin brother of Hypnos, the god of sleep. Because Greek mythology usually avoids grim details, Thanatos was mentioned in extreme cases and as far as possible, avoided and, superstition, rarely invoked, although it was a major god. Sisyphos was the only one by a cunningly managed to put it on Thanatos in chains and keep him captive a few years, so that time has not killed anyone. Hesiod in the Theogony calls „odious Thanatos”, „god awful” with „iron heart, soul, brass careless in his chest” source: Wikipedia, <http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thanatos>, 08.08.2012.

¹⁶ *Octoiul Mare*, Glasul al VI-lea, Duminică dimineață, alt Canon al Prea Sfintei de Dumnezeu Născătoarei, Peasna a 3-a, Stihira a III-a, p. 469.

¹⁷ Jean-Claude Larchet, *Creștinul în fața bolii, suferinței și a morții*, trad. din lb. franceză de Marinela Bojin, Editura Sofia, București, 2006, p. 224.

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and death terribly surrender and all those in hell cried out to Your raise, which is bearing life: Christ has risen/has resurrected, remaining forever the life-giver¹⁸,

and

„You, Saviour, received death with the body, giving us immortality, and You dwelt in the Tomb, to save us from hell, resurrecting us together with you, suffering like a human, but rising up like a God. For this we cry: glory to You, my God, giver of life and the One Lover of people.”¹⁹

Christ’s death is the killing of death, and His resurrection is the victory and the mastery forever of the eternal and unalterable life.

„Lord, You who killed the death, called yourself dead; You, who emptied the graves, put Yourself in a grave/tomb; on earth, soldiers guarded the tomb, while under the Earth You resurrected all the dead. For all these, Almighty and boundless Lord, glory to You”²⁰. „O, Lord, great and terrible is the mystery of Your Resurrection, since you come out from the grave, like a groom from the pantry; altering the death with death to save Adam. For these, Angels are dancing in the heaven and, on Earth, people glorify the great mercy You showed us, Lover of people.”²¹

Christ’s victory over death is also a physical reality, and not only a spiritual one. Christ, effectively and objectively, abolished death and resurrected with His own human features for the benefit of the entire humanity, as Apostle Paul’s words say clearly: „If Christ didn’t resurrect, then our faith is in vain!” (1 Corinthians 15, 17).

„Being nailed on the Cross, You, the Life of everyone and everything, and being counted among the dead, You, Saviour, The Lord without death, resurrected on the third day, and made Adam raise from alteration. Because of these, the Powers of the heaven cried out to You, Giver of life: O, Christ, glory to Your Godly suffering! Praise Your Resurrection! Glory to Your humility, the One Lover of people!”²² „Your Burial, my Lord, opened the heaven

¹⁸ *Octoiul Mare*, Glasul al IV-lea, Duminică dimineață, la Sedelne, Slavă..., p. 284-285.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, la Laude, Stihirile Învierii, alte Stihiri Anatolicești, Stihira I, p. 295.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Glasul al V-lea, Duminică dimineață, Sedelnele Învierii, Slavă..., p. 376.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Glasul al VI-lea, Duminică dimineață, alte Stihiri Anatolicești, Stihira I, p. 477.

²² *Penticostarul*, Joi în săptămâna a doua după Paști, la Utrenie, după întâia Catismă, Sedealna Învierii, glasul I, p. 76-77.

to the human race; and being saved from alteration/damage we praise You, our God, who resurrected; Have mercy on us.”²³

The resurrected Christ is what we find in the new era in which death is defeated, in which there is no alteration/damage anymore. If there really exists one single spiritual body, and not only an immortal soul, which arose from bodyflesh, then the power of death is truly crushed. The act of death is emptied of its previous significance, together with the victory of Christ. To die is no longer an expression of the absolute mastery/control of the death, but just one of the last struggles of death for mastery. Death cannot put an end to the grandiose and extraordinary fact that there exists one resurrected Body²⁴, a model and archetype of the body with which we will present ourselves at the resurrection of the community.

„Let the beings enjoy and flourish like the lily, since Christ arose from the dead like a God. Death, where is your sting/needle? Let us cry out: Hell, where is your victory? You were sent under the Earth by Him, who raised our horn like a Merciful one.”²⁵ „Let the heaven be cheerful, as it should be, and let the Earth enjoy. And let the entire visible and invisible world celebrate; Christ, the eternal Joy, resurrected.”²⁶

The undisputable fact is that „Christ is the first born from the dead. His Body is the body of the first Resurrection, the first Spiritual body.”²⁷ „Come to worship Him, the One born From Father before ever, let us worship God-the Word, who incarnated from the Virgin Mary; having endured crucifixion, He willingly let Himself be buried; and raising from the dead, He saved me, the wandered.”²⁸

²³ *Octoiul Mare*, Glasul al VI-lea, Duminică dimineață, La Laude, Stihirile Învierii, Stihira a II-a, p. 477.

²⁴ Oscar Cullman, *Nemurirea sufletului sau învierea morțior?*, trad. de Monica Medeleanu, Editura Herald, București, 2007, p. 65-66.

²⁵ *Octoiul Mare*, Glasul al VI-lea, Duminică dimineață, alt Canon, al Crucii cu la Învierii, Stihira a II-a, p. 476.

²⁶ *Penticostarul*, Rânduiala slujbei din noaptea Sfințelor Paști, Utrenia Învierii, Canonul Învierii, Cântarea 1, Stihira a III-a, glasul I, p. 16.

²⁷ Oscar Cullman, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

²⁸ *Penticostarul*, Duminica a treia după Paști, a Sfințelor femei mironosițe și a Dreptului Iosif, la Vecernia Mare, la Doamne strigat-am..., Stihirile Învierii, Stihira I, glasul al II-lea, p. 88.

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Death is defeated, the era of the resurrection is open. The resurrection is reached in Christ. When one starts from this principle, the chronological tension between the „already fulfilled” and the „still unfinished” constitutes the essence of the Christian faith. The fact that there is a resurrection of the body – the Body of Lord – defines the entire Christian interpretation of the time. If Christ is the first born from the dead, it means that the final Time has already arrived.²⁹ Time merged with eternity in Christ, and we live this in the Divine Liturgy, which is heaven on Earth, i.e. eternity descends in time, to make it eternal.

„Seeing You, who dress Yourself in light as if a garment, coming down off the wood, Joseph together with Nicodemus saw that you were dead, naked and lying unburied, and felt a merciful gloom, and whining he said, Woe to me, too sweet Jesus! Seeing You a little before nailed to the Cross, the Sun wrapped itself with darkness and the Earth was shaken for fear, and the iconostasis of the temple was torn; but, behold, I see You now willingly submitting Yourself to death for me. How will I bury my God? Or how will I enshroud You in burial shrouds? With what hands will I touch Your pure body? Or what hymns will I sing when You leave us, merciful Lord? I praise Your Sufferings; I praise Your burial with hymns, along with Resurrection saying: o Lord, glory to You!”³⁰

This is, in fact, the eschatological dimension of time. This means that we live in an intermediate time, between the Resurrection of Christ, which has already occurred, and our resurrection, promised, hoped for and included in the Christian one, which will not occur until the end, the resurrection that we live in this life through the Holy Liturgy, in which we live even the moment of eschatologiei, of the Kingdom of heaven, through what we call „already but not yet.”

„Resurrecting from the grave, Jesus, as he said before, gave us eternal life and great mercy.”³¹ „Seeing Christ’s Resurrection, let us worship Holy Lord Jesus, the sinless One. We worship

²⁹ Oscar Cullman, *op. cit.*, p. 69-70.

³⁰ *Penticostarul*, Sămbătă în săptămâna a treia după Paști, la Vecernie, la Stihovă, Stihirile Învierii, Slavă... Și acum..., glasul al V-lea, p. 126.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Rânduiala slujbei din noaptea Sfintelor Paști, Utrenia Învierii, Canonul Învierii, Stihira, glasul al VI-lea, p. 20.

Your Cross, O Christ, and we praise and glorify Your holy Resurrection; Because You are our God, and except You we don't know another god, and it is Your name that we call, All believers, come to worship the Holy Resurrection of Christ. The joy came through the Cross to everyone. Ever blessing the Lord, we praise His Resurrection, because with the crucifixion for us, He altered death with the death."³²

The resurrection of Christ, however, is not a bringing back to life of the crucified body with its transfiguration, so that it is no longer subject to spatial-temporal conditions of the common physicality, it is no longer a barrier to the manifestation of Jesus' divinity, but it is spiritualized and capable of transmitting all the infinity of the divine powers. This body is also issued by the Dominion of death, and ascended in the privacy of the Trinity.³³

„The Resurrection day! Let us lighten ourselves with ceremony, and embrace one another. And name brothers even those who hate us; Let's forgive everything for Resurrection. And let us cry out: Christ is raised from the dead, trampling down the death by death, and giving life to those in tombs."³⁴

The eternal life of the human person is possible and it exists not because of the natural consciousness of his soul, but because Christ resurrected and defeated the forces of death in the world, because in the cosmic miracle of the resurrection, the sense defeated the non-sense. The miracle of the Resurrection brings them together. The resurrection of my body is meanwhile the Resurrection of the world Body. The person in full is not related only to the soul, but also to an eternal shape of the body. If the coming of Christ hadn't taken place, the death would have triumphed in the world and in man. Therefore, the doctrine of immortality is paradoxical. Man is both mortal and immortal, spiritual and natural in the same time, he belongs to the time which is bearer of death and of eternity. Death is defeated by itself in the Resurrection.³⁵

³² *Ibid.*, Rânduiala slujbei din noaptea Sfintelor Paști, Utrenia Învierii, Canonul Învierii, Stihira, glasul al II-lea, p. 20.

³³ Nicolae Mladin, *Ascetica și mistica paulină*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 1996, p. 9.

³⁴ *Penticostarul*, Rânduiala slujbei din noaptea Sfintelor Paști, Utrenia Învierii, la Laude, Stihirile Paștilor, glasul al V-lea, Slavă... Și acum..., p. 24.

³⁵ Nikolai Berdiaev, *Despre menirea omului*, trad. de Daniel Hoblea, Editura Aion, Oradea, 2004, p. 341-342.

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„Being crucified, Master, you nailed the sin together with you, and as a merciful Lord, you deleted the curse with the penetration of the nails, and having Your rib stung with the spear, You Christ tore the document of the one first built. I praise Your sufferings, I glorify Your Resurrection, through which you raised all those killed by sufferings.”³⁶

The life-giving power, the Holy Spirit already works in us, in the Church, which shows the pneumatological ecclesiological dimension of time which cannot be separated from its eschatological character, the time being a creature which, just like man, finds its meaning and fulfillment in eschaton. Saint Apostle Paul designates the Holy Spirit through the same term „start of the beginning” (Romans 8, 23), which he uses for Jesus Himself (1 Corinthians 15, 23), this being an anticipation of resurrection. In fact, every time the Holy Spirit is present, the defeated power of death, withdraws, even after the body.³⁷

For us, Christ willingly accepts the death in our place, because He was not obedient by nature, he was not under the Dominion of sin, being the One born in a virginal way, and not of the male seed, in which the ancestral Sin passes to every person, the concupiscence remaining a sin and a human weakness; Thus, being untouched by alteration/damage, since in Him the human nature was tightly united with the godly nature which was working in it, Christ resurrects. And, raising, He saves us from the eternity of death and of depravity and gives us the strength to resurrect at the end of the ages, when our bodies renew and forever unalterable will be uplifted to an uncrushed and free of suffering life.³⁸ „Jesus, ascending on the cross, You ascended us together with you; and being unwillingly put into the grave, You resurrected from their graves all the dead, who praise Your boundless Dominion and Your undefeated power.”³⁹

The Lord’s resurrection, as a spiritual victory, gives us the strength and the power to overcome temptations and trials stirred up by the fear of death. By His death, Christ put the Sin to death and deleted the sins

³⁶ *Octoiul Mare*, Glasul al IV-lea, Marți seară, la Doamne strigat-am, Stihirile Crucii, Stihira a III-a, p. 321.

³⁷ Oscar Cullman, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

³⁸ Jean-Claude Larchet, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

³⁹ *Penticostarul*, Duminica a patra după Paști-a Slăbănogului, la Utrenie, Canoanele, Canonul Slăbănogului-alcătuit de Iosif Tesalonicul, Cântarea a 9-a, Stihira a II-a, glasul al III-lea, p. 141.

of the people. „You came back to life, Jesus, and the enemy was looted; Adam and Eve were saved from alteration/damage and links, through Your Resurrection.”⁴⁰

But the vicary ministry of the Saviour Christ has in its center the supreme sacrifice, a sacrifice which has the effect of restoration, sanctification and deification of human nature in Christ and through it, in all who believe in Him. Nicolae Cabasila says: „Christ turned Himself into justice from God and redemption; and He dissolve the enmity in His body and He reconcils God with us.”⁴¹ Even though over time there were people who denied either the deity, or the human nature of the Son of God, „be truly ashamed, you, impious people; because Christ is resurrected and he raised all the dead together, saying: dare and cheer up because I have overcome the world! So, believe in Him, or shut up, you traitors, who deny His resurrection”⁴², but the truth is that „One of the Holy Trinity suffered in the body/flesh.”⁴³

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Duminica a treia după Paști, a Sfințelor femei mironosițe și a Dreptului Iosif, la Utrenie, Canoanele, Canonul Mironosițelor-alcătuire a lui Andrei Criteanul, Cântarea a 3-a, Stihira a VII-a, glasul al IV-lea, p. 95.

⁴¹ Nicolae Cabasila, *Viața în Hristos*, P.G. 150, col. 488 B apud Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. II, EIBMBOR, București, 1997², p. 87.

⁴² *Penticostarul*, Duminica a treia după Paști, a Sfințelor femei mironosițe și a Dreptului Iosif, la Utrenie, Canoanele, Canonul Mironosițelor-alcătuire a lui Andrei Criteanul, Cântarea a 4-a, Stihira a VIII-a, glasul al IV-lea, p. 97.

⁴³ „One of the Trinity suffered in the flesh” formula called „Theopaschite” Scythian monks. As until today even some Orthodox theologians, perhaps influenced by Catholic theologians who, seeing more cross - Man Christ, divine hypostasis off somewhat, as Theopaschite qualify this formula, one they just take the view that it was necessary to demonstrate its orthodoxy, especially the fact that it plays an important role in specifying the Christological dogma; fourth Ecumenical Council, although based on the doctrine of St. Cyril, has avoided some terms and expressions, which caused much resentment and position papers, especially Letter from Leon, which presented some doubts regarding its orthodoxy. In these times of fierce discussion and updates occur Scythian monks formula: „*Unus de Trinitate passus est carne - One of the Trinity suffered in the flesh*”. And indeed, their formula was particularly necessary. For the Council of Chalcedon, while recognizing the unique person of Jesus Christ in two natures united in unmixed, unchanged, undivided and inseparable from human acts but does not stop the birth („born of the Father before all ages as deity in the last days... the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, for humanity”), can create ambiguity that after the incarnation, all acts of Jesus are only human, actually and interpreted as Nestorians in some cases. Using their formula, they wanted to show that after the divine - human subject incarnation of Jesus Christ is also God and therefore all acts made to salvati-

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This dogmatic formula, which belongs to the Scythian monks has been preserved in the worship books of our Church:

„Everything down below was shaken today, hell and death, the One of the Trinity; the Earth has moved, and seeing You, the guardians of hell were frightened; and the entire Creation, together with the Prophets, are happy and sing the hymn of victory to You, God, our Saviour, to You, who broke the power of death. Let's say and shout out to Adam and to Adam's descendents: the wood got him again: come out believers in the Resurrection.”⁴⁴

The sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ are portrayed in the hymnographic texts very carefully and with great finesse, in chronological order, especially those during the Lent, and even throughout the year, highlighting the importance given by the Church to this period in the history of the human race, texts, meant to support the atmosphere of mystery and repentance of believers gathered in a communion of love and prayer

„Now the Court ruling pen is taken from the unrighteous judges and Jesus judges and condemns Himself to crucifixion, and the creature suffers together with Him, seeing the Lord on the cross; Glory be to You, Good Lord, who suffer for me, according to the nature of the body”⁴⁵; „Before the honest crucifixion, the soldiers mocked at You, Lord, the understanding armies were frightened. And You were crowned with a ridiculous Crown, You who have graced the Earth with flowers; and You were dressed in shameful garment, You who dress the sky in clouds. It was with a ceremony like this, that Your mercy, was known, O Christ, and great mercy, glory to You”⁴⁶; „I let My back be beaten, and I didn't turn My face from spits. I stayed to be judged by Pilate's judgment, and I endured crucifixion, for the salvation of

on are His, so specific and committed by nature that has enhypostasized for herself, source: <http://www.crestinortodox.ro/alte-articole/68897-jertfa-de-pe-cruce-a-mantuintorului-in-lumina-unirii-ipostatice>, 08.08.2012.

⁴⁴ *Octoiul Mare*, Glasul al VII-lea, Duminică dimineață, alt Canon al Prea Sfintei de Dumnezeu Născătoarei, Icos, p. 559-560.

⁴⁵ *Triodul*, Slujba Sfințelor și Mântuitoarelor Patimi ale Domnului Iisus Hristos, Denia de Joi seara, după Evanghelia a XI-a, Stihovna, glasul al II-lea, Și acum..., p. 618.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, În Sfânta și Marea Zi Vineri dimineață, Rânduiala Ceasurilor, Ceasul al III-lea, Troparul, glasul al VIII-lea, p. 626.

the world"⁴⁷; „You willingly surrendered and brought Yourself to killers; During the judgment You stayed in front, being slapped with the hands that You created; Lord, You were crucified, scoffed, stung with the spear. You suffered with Your body, enduring everything with mercy, to save us"⁴⁸; „They undressed Me of My clothes and I was dressed in the red coat; they put a Crown of thorns on My head, and gave Me a cane in My right hand to break them like the Potter's vessels"⁴⁹; „You were nailed on the cross with spikes and being stung in Your rib, O Christ my Savior, you saved the people from the curse and You shared with them an unending joy; for this, we bless Your love for people"⁵⁰; „O Christ You were nailed on the Cross with spikes, You were stung in the rib with a spear, You tasted gall, You endured death, being placed in the Tomb as a dead; but, as a God You broke the ties of the hell and You resurrected together with the dead from ages; After this, without damaging the seals You showed Yourself to Your Disciples, entrusting them that You Resurrected"⁵¹; „stretching Your Godly palms on the cross You put together the most special things, Saviour; and interceding, you brought the sentenced human being to Father, as a gift. For this we praise Your pure crucifixion"⁵²; „Today He who sat the ground on water, has been crucified. The King of the angels has been crowned with a Crown of thorns. He, who dresses up the sky with clouds has been dressed in a lying red coat. He, who let Adam in the

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Denia de Joi seara, după Evanghelia a IX-a, Stihirile, glasul al III-lea, Și acum..., p. 617.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Miercuri dimineață în a Doua Săptămână a Sfântului și Marelui Post, Tricântarea-alcătuire a lui Iosif, Cântarea a 9-a, Stihira a V-a, Glasul al III-lea, p. 232.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Slujba Sfințelor și Mântuitoarelor Patimi ale Domnului Iisus Hristos, Denia de Joi seara, după Evanghelia a IX-a, Stihirile, glasul al III-lea, Slavă..., p. 617.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Miercuri în Săptămâna Lăsatului Sec de Brânză, La Utrenie, Canonul Triodului-alcătuire a lui Andrei Criteanul Ierusalimiteanul, Cântarea a 8-a, Stihira a VII-a, Glasul al IV-lea, p. 64.

⁵¹ *Penticostarul*, Joi în a doua săptămână după Paști, la Vecernie, la Doamne strigat-am..., Stihirile Praznicului, glasul al II-lea, Stihira a II-a, p. 75.

⁵² *Triodul*, Miercuri în Săptămâna Lăsatului Sec de Brânză, la Utrenie, Canonul Triodului-alcătuire a lui Andrei Criteanul Ierusalimiteanul, Cântarea a 8-a, Stihira a VI-a, Glasul al IV-lea, p. 65.

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water of Jordan, was hit over the cheek. He, the Bridegroom of the Church, was nailed with spikes. The Son of the Virgin Mary was stung with a spear! We worship Your sufferings, O Christ. Show us Your new and glorified Resurrection⁵³; „Although you tasted gall, You, who are the sweetness of the Church, unalteration sprang out of Your rib; you are our God and we worship You⁵⁴; „Nailing your hands upon the cross and being stung with the spear, You, Lover of people, you tore the document of the fallen Adam. For this, Giver of life, we praise and worship You⁵⁵; Seeing You, Mighty, nailed to the cross, the little lamb and the Virgin, wailed and said in tears: what is this unspoken descent of Yours, You, Word? How did the condemned people sentence You, my God, Who will judge us all? I praise your unutterable mercy⁵⁶; „Seeing You nailed to the cross, the Virgin cried like a mother, wailing: O my Son and my God, my sweet Son, how can You suffer disgraceful pains?⁵⁷; „Don't wail, Mother, seeing Me nailed on wood, Me, Your Son and God, Who put the land on the water without restraint and Who made the whole creation; and I will raise up and worship Myself, and I will strongly break down the kingdoms of hell and I will make it lose its power and as a merciful God, I will save those tied up from its wickedness and I will bring them, as a lover of people, to My Father⁵⁸; „Being nailed to the cross by those lawless and Your rib being stung with the soldier's spear, the Virgin Mary was bitterly wailing, and her

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Slujba Sfințelor și Mântuitoarelor Patimi ale Domnului Iisus Hristos, Denia de Joi seara, Antifonul al 15-lea, Stihira I, glasul al VI-lea, p. 610.

⁵⁴ *Penticostarul*, Duminica a treia după Paști, a Sfințelor femei mironosițe și a Dreptului Iosif, la Utrenie, Canoanele, Canonul Mironosițelor-alcătuire a lui Andrei Criteanul, Cântarea I, Stihira a IV-a, glasul al IV-lea, p. 94.

⁵⁵ *Triodul*, Vineri în Săptămâna Lăsatului Sec de Brânză, La Utrenie, Tricântarea-alcătuire a lui Iosif, Cântarea a 5-a, Stihira I, Glasul al VI-lea, p. 77.

⁵⁶ *Octoihul Mare*, Glasul al IV-lea, Miercuri dimineață, după a treia Stihologie, Sedelne, Slavă..., Și acum..., 323.

⁵⁷ *Mineiul pe Iunie*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba-Iulia, 2001, Ziua a douăzeci și opta, la Vecernie, la Doamne strigat-am..., Stihira Crucii și a Născătoarei, glasul al IV-lea, p. 255.

⁵⁸ *Mineiul pe Februarie*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba-Iulia, 2002, Ziua a douăzeci și doua, la Vecernie, la Doamne strigat-am..., a Crucii și a Născătoarei, glasul al IV-lea, p. 210.

heart as a mother was broken. And being frightened by Your great and terrible patience, she cried out: Glory to Your love for people; praise to Your goodness; glory to You, who made people immortal with Your death”⁵⁹; „Seeing You, the very patient One lying on the cross, without understanding this, the Heavenly Powers, wondered trembling, and the Earth has moved, and the illuminators faded their beauty and, You, lover of people, were sentenced without justice; The condemned Adam changed, praising your goodness”⁶⁰; „All beings were saddened seeing you crucified; mountains and rocks cleaved for fear and the Earth was shaken by an earthquake and the hell was emptied; and the daylight darkened seeing you, Jesus, with Your body nailed on the cross”⁶¹; „Two bad things were done by my firstborn son, Israel: he left Me, the fountain of the water of life, and digged a broken well. He crucified me on wood, and he asked Baraba and discarded him. Because of this, the sky got frightened and the Sun hid its rays; and you, O Israel, were not ashamed, but you gave me to death. Holy Father forgive them, they do not know what they did”⁶²; „Having Your rib stung, life Giver, You sprang up springs of forgiveness, of life and salvation, and You received death with Your body giving us immortality. And staying in the grave, You saved us, resurrecting us, together with You, glorified as a God. For this we cry out: O Lord, Lover of people, glory to You.”⁶³ „The place of the head turned into heaven, and no sooner had the wood of the Cross been stung, than the spring of life occurred, i.e. You, Saviour, to our joy, glory to You.”⁶⁴

⁵⁹ *Mineiul pe Martie*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba-Iulia, 2001, Ziua a patra, la Utrenie, Canoanele, Cântarea a 3-a, a Crucii și a Născătoarei, glasul al IV-lea, p. 30.

⁶⁰ *Octoiul Mare*, Glasul al IV-lea, Vineri dimineață, Fericirile, Stihira a II-a, p. 354.

⁶¹ *Triodul*, Vineri în Întâia Săptămână a Sfântului și Marelui Post, la Pavecerniță, Canon din Canonul cel mare al cuviosului Părintelui nostru Andrei Criteanul Ierusalimiteanul, Cântarea a 9-a, Stihira a IV-a, Glasul al VI-lea, p. 179.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Slujba Sfințelor și Mântuitoarelor Patimi ale Domnului Iisus Hristos, Denia de Joi seara, după Evanghelia a IX-a, Stihirile, glasul al III-lea, Stihira I, p. 617.

⁶³ *Octoiul Mare*, Glasul al V-lea, Sâmbătă seară, Vecernia Mare, la Stihioavnă, Stihira a II-a, p. 371.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Miercuri dimineață, Sedelnele Crucii, Stihira I, p. 412.

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The miracles that happened during the Lord's sacrifice on the Cross were nicely written by hymnographs in the religious books:

„the Sun was darkened, my Son, and the Moon, changed the light in a dark robe: the Earth was shaken and Your Church's iconostasis was cleft. But, my Son, how could my bowels and my eyes have remained untorn; and how could my cheek have remained untorn, seeing that You die without reason, sweet Saviour?”⁶⁵;
 „When You were crucified, O Christ, the whole world saw that and was terrified; the foundations of the Earth were shaken for the fear of Your power. Because raising You today, the Jewish lineage is lost. The iconostasis of the temple was torn into two parts and the dead from their graves were brought to life again; Seeing the miracle, the Gentile Centurion was frightened; and Your Mother, sitting next to you, cried out, weeping as a mother and saying How will I not cry and beat my chest, seeing you nailed to wood, naked as a culprit? O Lord, glory to You who were crucified and buried and resurrected from the dead”⁶⁶,

and then the moment of descending from the Cross of the Lord's body and of putting Him in the grave, the descent to hell, followed by the sublime moment of showing the glory of God by the Resurrection from the dead on the third day, all these moments have been captured in the Church hymns as follows:

„Joseph, the one with a good face, taking Your pure body down from the cross, covering Him with a clean shroud, put Him in a new grave with fragrances; but on the third day You resurrected, Lord, giving the world great mercy”⁶⁷; „He who looked the depth saw Himself dead, and being wrapped with myrrh and linen shroud, He, the immortal One, was placed in the Tomb as a dead; and women came to anoint Him with myrrh, weeping bitterly and saying: this is the overblessed Saturday, in which Christ, falling asleep, will resurrect on the third day”⁶⁸; „Following the

⁶⁵ *Mineiul pe Februarie*, Ziua a douăzecea, la Vecernie, Canoanele, la Doamne strigat-am..., a Crucii și a Născătoarei, glasul al VIII-lea, p. 191.

⁶⁶ *Triodul*, Slujba Sfințelor și Mântuitoarelor Patimi ale Domnului Iisus Hristos, Denia de Joi seara, după Evanghelia a IX-a, Stihirile, glasul al III-lea, Stihira a III-a, p. 617.

⁶⁷ *Penticostarul*, Duminica a treia după Paști, a Sfințelor femei mironosițe și a Dreptului Iosif, la Vecernia Mare, Tropolele, Slavă..., glasul al II-lea, p. 91.

⁶⁸ *Triodul*, Slujba Sfințelor și Mântuitoarelor Patimi ale Domnului Iisus Hristos, În Sfânta și Marea Zi Sâmbătă, Denia de Vineri seara când se cântă și Prohodul Domnului, Canonul-alcătuire a lui Cosma, Cântarea a 6-a, Stihira a IV-a, glasul al VI-lea, p. 664.

custom for the dead, the grave was given Life to all, and showed the grave as a source of resurrection, for our salvation, of those who sing: O God, Saviour, you are well blessed⁶⁹; „Come and see our Life lying in the grave, to resurrect those who lie in the graves. Come today, and seeing that the one in Judas fell asleep let's talk to him as the Prophet did, saying : going to bed, You fell asleep like a lion ; who will awake You, Master? But You get up with Your own power, o Lord, glory to You who gave Yourself for us freely⁷⁰; „You, usually dressed with light as if a garment, were taken down off the Cross and Joseph together with Nicodemus, seeing you dead, naked and lying unburied, felt a merciful gloom, and wailing, he said: Woe to me, too sweet Jesus! Seeing You a little before nailed to the cross, the Sun wrapped itself with darkness, and the Earth was shaken for fear, and the iconostasis of the temple was torn; but, here You are, I see now, willingly submitting Yourself to death for me. How will I bury You, my God? Or how will I enshroud You with burial shrouds? With what hands will I touch your pure body? Or what hymns will I sing when You leave us, Merciful Lord? I glorify Your sufferings; I praise Your burial, along with Your Resurrection with hymns, saying: o Lord, glory to You!⁷¹; „You descended in hell Christ, willfully, you defeated death as a God and Master, and You came to life again on the third day, also raising Adam from the links of hell and from depravity, the one who cried out and said: Glory to Your Resurrection, You, the only Lover of people. The wicked death, being altered by death lies breathless, because, not being able to be undergone to the godly hitting of life, the tough one was murdered and the Resurrection was given to all people⁷², thus „Christ rose from the dead, trampling down

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Canonul-alcătuire a lui Cosma, Cântarea a 7-a, Stihira a IV-a, glasul al VI-lea, p. 666.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, la Laude, glasul al II-lea, Stihira a III-a, p. 667.

⁷¹ *Penticostarul*, Duminica a treia după Paști, a Sfințelor femei mironosițe și a Dreptului Iosif, la Vecernia Mare, la Stihovă, alte Stihiri ale lui Alfavita, Slavă..., glasul al V-lea, p. 90-91.

⁷² *Octoihul Mare*, Glasul al VII-lea, Sâmbătă seara, Vecernia Mare, la Doamne strigat-am, Stihirile Învierii, alte Stihiri ale lui Anatolie, Stihira a III-a, p. 547.

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the death by death, and giving life to all those in the tombs.”⁷³

The sacrifice of Christ must be understood, however, both in its direction pointed towards God, and in its direction pointed towards the human nature accepted by Christ, and through it, towards the other people. The sacrifice serves to restore the communion between God and man. Through the sacrifice offered to God, Christ perfects Himself as a human, and, in the same time, through this Holiness, He also perfects the others.⁷⁴

„By having Your rib stung, far Merciful Lord, the document of Adam, the ancestor from ages, is torn; and the human nature, which was rejected, is sanctified with Your blood drops, singing: Glory to Your mercy, glory to Your divine crucifixion, Almighty Jesus, the Savior of our souls.”⁷⁵

But the aspect of Sacrifice is also extended to the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, as the Lord’s body, which is given to us as a sacrificed and resurrected body, and which print in us the status of sacrifice, helps us raise and to move towards the resurrection. In the Eucharist, Christ gives us not only an irradiation of his status of sacrifice and resurrection, but His own body in this status.⁷⁶ The prayer at the divine moment of bread sanctification, when the Holy Anaphora is taken out, says:

„He went like a lamb to be stabbed; And, as a sheep without voice against him who cut its fur, so He didn’t open His mouth; His judgment was shown for His humility; And, who will tell His family? His life was taken from the Earth. A soldier stung His rib with the spear. And immediately blood and water came out; and he who saw that testified, and his testimony is true”⁷⁷, and „You, O Christ, Lord, went like a sheep to be stabbed and as a lamb without malice, you were nailed on the cross by the

⁷³ *Penticostarul*, Rânduiala slujbei din noaptea Sfintelor Paști, Utrenia Învierii, Canonul Învierii, Troparul, p. 16.

⁷⁴ D. Stăniloae, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

⁷⁵ *Mineiul pe Octombrie*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2004, Ziua a zecea, la Vecernie, la Doamne strigat-am..., Stihirile, a Crucii, a Născătoarei, glasul al IV-lea, p. 133.

⁷⁶ D. Stăniloae, *op. cit.*, p. 71-72.

⁷⁷ *Liturghierul*, care cuprinde dumnzeieștile liturghii ale sfinților noștri părinți: Ioan Gură de Aur, Vasile cel Mare, și Liturghia Darurilor mai înainte sfințite, precum și rânduiala Vecerniei, Utreniei, Dumnzeieștii Proscomidii, Liturghiei cu arhieru etc., EIBMBOR, București, 1995, p. 98-99.

lawless men, for our sins, Lover of people”⁷⁸, and again „the Prophet saw You as if You were a sheep to be stabbed, and like a lamb, You, Word of God, who neither opposes to anything, nor cries, because you willingly suffered the crucifixation, as to save, as a Merciful God, those who may have done wrong.”⁷⁹

At the time that Christ gives His Spirit on the Cross, He overcomes the power of satan and the demons to control people through their fear of death, and while still on the cross during the sufferings, when the gap of death was standing open in front of Him, and the devil tempted Him in various ways, trying hard to make Him afraid of death, to take Him to despair, to make Him reject God’s will, that is, to deny him, and to rebel against him: „Having been crucified, O Christ, tyranny perished, and the enemy’s power was crushed; that neither Angel nor man, but You Yourself, o Lord, You saved us, glory to You!”⁸⁰

The sufferings of Christ in Gethsemane, when He was troubled and pained and saddened in spirit, represent the culmination of facing death, with which He saved us. In His prayer, with bloody sweat, we are revealed the way to follow in difficult moments.

Christ’s victory over death is a victory over death and decay as physical phenomena; It is a victory of sin and sufferings, which are brought forth and increased by the spectrum of death. Its meaning will not be clear until the end of the ages, at the resurrection of the community. Christ’s victory over death appears in the Holy Scriptures, as a double victory over sin, because death was not just a result and a sign of sin, but also a continuous source of never-ending sin and a stick used by the devil to make the man sin and to make him obey the law of sin.⁸¹ „Having been crucified, and Heaven was opened again and the thief, gladly entered before the others. O my Jesus, You put yourself to death, but the tricky enemy was also killed; Adam was killed but then he came back to life. Praise Your great mercy.”⁸²

⁷⁸ *Triodul*, Slujba Sfintelor și Mântuitoarelor Patimi ale Domnului Iisus Hristos, În Sfânta și Marea Zi Vineri dimineața, Rânduiala Ceasurilor, Ceasul I, Troparul, glasul al VIII-lea, p. 621.

⁷⁹ *Octoiul Mare*, Glasul al III-lea, Vineri dimineață, alt Canon al Prea Sfintei de Dumnezeu Născătoarei, Peasna a 4-a, Stihira a III-a, p. 256.

⁸⁰ *Penticostarul*, Miercuri în săptămâna a doua după Paști, la Utrenie, după întâia Căsimă, Sedealna Crucii, glasul I, p. 74.

⁸¹ Jean-Claude Larchet, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

⁸² *Octoiul Mare*, Glasul al V-lea, Miercuri dimineață, alt Canon al Prea Sfintei de Dum-

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Death was allowed by God only to avoid that the evil and the sinner status of man become eternal. Christ destroys death because He doesn't want the mortal status of man be endless and his death eternal. Through the saving work of Christ the punishment of death was displaced. There will still exist death up to the community resurrection, at the end of the ages, but it no longer rules over those United with Christ through the Sacraments and through the fulfillment of His godly commandments. The bodies still die, but death is no longer destruction, but rest.⁸³ „Sleeping in the grave, O Christ, like a man, with an unvincible power, You resurrected and raised together with those who lived in tombs for ages. For this, rest those who slept with faith, in the eternal places.”⁸⁴

St. John Chrysostom says,

„Death is no longer something to be feared of. It ended up being trampled, as worthy of contempt, something very evil and vile, a nothing. Once, people were living their lives in fear of death; they were its servants. Today, on the contrary, they escaped from its tyranny and laugh at this ghost which terrified their ancestors.”⁸⁵

Within Christ's saving work, the central place is held the Cross and Sacrifice on Calvary/Golgota, together with the resurrection and ascension to heaven, through which, the human nature, assumed by the divine person, reached the transparency for God, being sanctified. The Sacrifice holds the central place, because sacrificing Himself, as man, Christ gives Himself totally to Father, He completely renounces to selfishness and to Self – affirmation as human, man dies for the sin in order to be resurrected by God. Through this act, the last and most powerful affect, entered in the body as a result of the fall into sin, death is defeated, because of the free will of Christ, the human, through which ancestor Adam had fallen once „on the third day You, Christ, raised from the grave, as it is written, and together you raised our ancestor. For this the human race glorifies You and praises Your Resurrection”⁸⁶, as „You, good Word of God, stretched Your

nezeu Născătoarei, Peasna a 5-a, Stihira a II-a, p. 414-415.

⁸³ Jean-Claude Larchet, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

⁸⁴ *Octoiuhul Mare*, Glasul al III-lea, Vineri seară, La Doamne strigat-am, Stihirile stăpânești, Stihira a III-a, p. 262.

⁸⁵ Ioan Gură de Aur apud Jean-Claude Larchet, *Creștinul în fața bolii, suferinței și a morții*, trad. de Marinela Bojin, Editura Sofia, București, 2006, p. 227-228.

⁸⁶ *Penticostarul*, Vineri în Săptămâna Luminată, la Utrenie, la Laude, glasul al VI-lea,

palms on the cross, in order to mercy the sufferings, taking out the sin of Adam's hand, which stretched, once, to the tree of knowledge⁸⁷, and this remains to the end now, unto death, identical to the will of God. However, this was not possible for a self-divine human being. That is why the Son of God incarnated, and assumed the human nature in the divine person, so as to achieve, through it, the salvation from inside to outside, namely to achieve salvation through the body that had fallen from the communion with God through sin. For this fact, all the works of Christ are theandric. Even the Sacrifice of the Cross, the sufferings, the death and the resurrection have all a theandric character, because only this way they can be redeeming.⁸⁸

„We worship Your Cross, Jesus, we praise Your burial, we honor Your sufferings and the nail in Your hands, and the spear and Your Resurrection.”⁸⁹ „O my Saviour, you received the Cross for the wood of knowledge, You received gall, for the sweet food, and You poured Your divine blood for the alteration of death.”⁹⁰

Conclusions

According to the Holy Fathers and to the Christian hymnographs who compiled the liturgical texts of our worship books, invaluable treasure of the Orthodoxy, death occurs in these texts in various forms, as we have noticed, and almost every divine service tries to make the believer aware of the preparation and the vigil for the moment of separation of the soul from the body, and none of the church services is without hope of resurrection, the Supreme Act of human liberation from the bondage of death.

Stihira a III-a, p. 51.

⁸⁷ *Triodul*, Miercuri dimineată în a Doua Săptămână a Sfântului și Marelui Post, Tricântarea-alcătuire a lui Iosif, Stihira I, Glasul I, p. 230.

⁸⁸ Ioan Sauca, „*Jertfa de pe cruce a Mântuitorului în lumina unirii ipostatice*”, de pe <http://www.crestinortodox.ro/alte-articole/68897-jertfa-de-pe-cruce-a-mantuitorului-in-lumina-unirii-ipostatice>, 08.08.2012.

⁸⁹ *Penticostarul*, Duminica a treia după Paști, a Sfintelor femei mironosițe și a Dreptului Iosif, la Utrenie, Canoanele, Canonul Mironosițelor-alcătuire a lui Andrei Criteanul, Cântarea a 3-a, Stihira a VI-a, glasul al IV-lea, p. 95.

⁹⁰ *Octoihul Mare*, Glasul al V-lea, Duminică dimineată, alt Canon al Prea Sfintei Născătoare de Dumnezeu, Peasna a 4-a, Stihira a III-a, p. 380.

Ontological Dimension of Death in the Light of the Orthodox Hymnographi

Death as an ontological destiny, finds its true dimension only in the perspective of the resurrection and eternity, to which man is called since his creation, from his birth through the anamnesis of the paradise status of the ancestors of the human race, regained through the incarnation the Son of God, towards the perfection in eshaton.

The content of Christ's death as a sacrifice to God, and with great effect for His humanity is a complete surrender/giving of Christ as human, to Father. If we are saved, because we accept the status of sacrifice and new life that became through it the body of Christ, this sacrificed and resurrected body has a continuous central importance in our salvation, understood as purity, lack of sins and as a coming out of sin, or of the enmity towards God, and as a participation in the divine life⁹¹, by the grace and love that radiates from the person of the Savior.

„Christ, thus, defeats death itself, because in Him the communion of man with God is achieved through the climactic death. Uniting in His Divine person the human nature with the the godly nature, Christ put the basis of the resurrection. Death, thus accepted, followed by the resurrection, is also a finalization in this status of Self-renunciation, of Holiness and communion with Father. This is the way in which, in the faith of Church, it is reconcile the status of permanent vicar and Sacrifice and of Christ resurrection, of eternal victory over death, of His placing on his Father's right hand, after he entered with his own blood in the Holy of Holies from heaven. Between death and resurrection it is, thus, a continuity. Entering with His sacrifice in the Holy of Holies from heaven, He stays there forever, making us part of His glory (Heb. 1, 3, 10, 12).”⁹²

Thus, in the Supreme Act of Christ, our Lord, the act of victory over death, and in his resurrection from the dead, we don't see only a simple raising from the dead of Jesus, the human, but also our wonderful, real and final crossing in Christ, crucified and raisen, from death to life, from Earth to heaven, the moment of the resurrection of the dead, passing to the eternal life, a fundamental, spiritual passing of the entire world into another plane of existence, the new, undying life, of communion with the raisen Christ and in Him and through Him, with the entire Holy Trinity:

⁹¹ D. Stăniloae, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 96-97.

„We worship Your everpure face, Good Lord, asking forgiveness, o Christ our God, for our sins; You willingly wanted to ascend Your body on the cross, so that those created by You might get rid of the enemy bondage. For this, thanking You, we say: You have filled everything with joy, our Savior, You who came to save the world.”⁹³

⁹³ *Penticostarul*, Joi în săptămâna a treia după Paști, la Utrenie, după întâia Catismă, Sedelnele Octoihulului, Sdealna Crucii, glasul al II-lea, p. 122.