

Time and eternity:
theological background and experiential
understanding in man's struggle
between good and evil
The case of Saint John Damascene

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A. Introductory notes

What is “time” and how is it perceived? Its quest and markers, along with its precise definition constitute questions which engaged scientists, philosophers, theologians. In Patristic Theology time is a subject of study not only in terms of its content, but primarily with regard to the interpretation of the right management of the mystery of life from the believer. The interpretative approach of time is not connected with space only it is also connected with morality and the way of life of the member of the Church, who define his choices with sovereignty.

In the ancient Greek classical thought time is related to the creation. It is it which sets in order and maintains it in the universe. The Presocratic philosophers were not thoroughly occupied with time. Only some small fragments are preserved. In a subsequent time Plato, in the most read but difficult to understand dialogue *Τίμαιος* records his thoughts about time. The maker father thought: «νὰ κάμη τὸν κόσμον ὡς μίαν κινητὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ αἰωνίου, καὶ τακτοποιῶν τὸν οὐρανὸν δημιουργεῖ μίαν αἰωνίαν εἰκόνα τῆς ἀκινήτου καὶ σταθερᾶς αἰωνιότητος· ἡ δημιουργηθεῖσα αὐτὴ εἰκὼν, αἰωνία καὶ αὐτὴ, κινεῖται συμφώνως πρὸς τοὺς νόμους τῶν

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ἀριθμῶν· αὐτὴν τὴν αἰωνίαν κίνησιν τῆς αἰωνίου εἰκόνης τὴν ὀνομάζομεν χρόνον»¹. Time as creature, coexisting with the heaven, sets the universe in motion. The days, the months, the years are parts of the time, which cannot be seen irrespective of the existence of heaven («πρὶν οὐρανὸν γενέσθαι»). Heaven is instrumental in the notions of Plato about time. In the existence of heaven the maker father «μηχανᾶται» the birth of the parts of the measurable time and its forms, the past and the future². Plato already in the 5th century BC, examining in *Φαίδων* the world model, the worldview of his time, connects indissolubly the creation with time. However, he denies explicitly to attribute to the «ἄϊδιον οὐσία» any characteristic which suits to the material creation and is within the limits of the mutable of the senses³. Aristotle, disciple of Plato, a keen mind and conversant with the views of his teacher, takes also under consideration the cosmological facts of his time and expresses his thoughts about time with scientific criteria and structure. In the well known passage in *Φυσικά Δ*, 10, the Stageiritis philosopher appears sceptic with regard to the abilities of human to conceive the dimensions of which he consists; we would better say that he follows to a great extent the widespread convictions of the surrounding atmosphere, which he relativizes and emphasizes the phenomenality of time. How can anyone particularize his understanding concerning time, when the past does not exist anymore and the future has not come yet and at the same time he cannot argue that time consists, of the «νῦν», of the now? «Τὸ μὲν γὰρ αὐτοῦ [ἐνν. τοῦ χρόνου] γέγονε καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν, τὸ δὲ μέλλει καὶ οὐπω ἔστιν. ἐκ δὲ τούτων καὶ ὁ ἄπειρος καὶ ὁ αἰεὶ λαμβανόμενος χρόνος σύγκειται. τὸ δ' ἐκ μὴ ὄντων συγκείμενον ἀδύνατον ἂν εἶναι δόξειε μετέχειν οὐσίας ... τοῦ δὲ χρόνου τὰ μὲν γέγονε τὰ δὲ μέλλει, ἔστι δ' οὐδέν, ὄντος μεριστοῦ. τὸ δὲ νῦν οὐ μέρος· μετρεῖ τε γὰρ τὸ μέρος, καὶ συγκεῖσθαι δεῖ τὸ ὅλον ἐκ τῶν μερῶν· ὁ δὲ χρόνος οὐ δοκεῖ συγκεῖσθαι ἐκ τῶν νῦν»⁴. Nevertheless,

1. Plato 37cd; the translation by A. Papatheodorou (intr.-trans.), Plato, *Τίμαιος*, *Διάλογοι*, τόμ. Β', Ἑκκλῆσιον Ἑλληνικὴν Συγγραφικὴν, Papyros Press, Athens 1975, p. 53.

2. See 37d. «Ἡμέρας γὰρ καὶ νύκτας καὶ μῆνας καὶ ἐνιαυτούς, οὐκ ὄντας πρὶν οὐρανὸν γενέσθαι, τότε ἅμα ἐκείνῳ συνισταμένῳ τὴν γένεσιν αὐτῶν μηχανᾶται: ταῦτα δὲ πάντα μέρη χρόνου, καὶ τό τ' ἦν [παρελθόν] τό τ' ἔσται [μέλλον] χρόνου γεγονότα εἶδη».

3. See 38a.

4. Arist. 218a.

what is time by Aristotle? «τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ χρόνος, ἀριθμὸς κινήσεως κατὰ τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον»⁵. In order to realize the meaning of time we must consider the number of motion according to the «πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον», namely the before and the after. Without been identified with motion, time gives number to the motion⁶. He separates time from motion, as oppose to Plato who identifies them. Apart from that, in both leading philosophers of the Greek antiquity time is indissolubly connected with space and there is an explicit attempt to understand it.

These views about time were bequeathed and were a subject of study in patristic literature. The Fathers receive the legacy of the ancient Greek logos, which they recompose with the accomplishments of the natural sciences of their time. They approach this complex understanding in the light of theology. Saint John Damascene, in his well known work: *Ἐκδοσις Ἀκριβῆς τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Πίστεως*, which is the base for the writing of the present study, recapitulating the preceding tradition says that before the creation of the world, when even the sun, which separates the period of time to night and day did not exist: «οὐκ ἦν αἰὼν μετρητός, ἀλλὰ τὸ συμπαραεκτεινόμενον τοῖς αἰδίοις οἷόν τι χρονικὸν κίνημα καὶ διάστημα καὶ κατὰ μὲν τοῦτο εἷς αἰὼν ἐστὶ, καθὼ καὶ λέγεται ὁ Θεὸς αἰώνιος, ἀλλὰ καὶ προαιώνιος. Καὶ αὐτὸν γὰρ τὸν αἰῶνα αὐτὸς ἐποίησε μόνος γὰρ ἀναρχος ὧν ὁ Θεὸς πάντων αὐτὸς ἐστὶ ποιητής, τῶν τε αἰώνων καὶ πάντων τῶν ὄντων»⁷.

If we would like to investigate, even concisely, the meaning with which the notion of time is charged with in the orthodox Christian tradition, we have to take into consideration a twofold consideration-perspective: the semantic and the experiential.

5. Arist. *Φυσικά*, Δ, 11, 219b.

6. See *ibid.*

7. *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβῆς*, Kotter II, p. 44 (15): 19-24. The references in Saint John's Damascene works are from the editions De Gruyter; B. Kotter (ed.), *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 5 vols, Patristische Texte und Studien 7 [I] (Berlin – New York, 1969), 12 [II] (1973), 17 [III] (1975), 22 [IV] (1981), 29 [V] (1988).

B. The semantic content of time

According to theology of the Church, time constitutes the prelude to eternity and the absolute, since perishable time introduces the fallen man to eternity. Eternal life is tantamount to the life of the very Self of The Holy Trinity. Yet, due to the original sin, mortal man experiences the reality of time as mutability. Time, as well as anything related to it, induces the feeling of relativity or non-constancy. There are diffuse questions in people's mind such as: What is time? How is it perceived? What is its significance for the life of the individual beings and mainly of human beings? Which is its relationship with the ultimate of the eternity?

These questions occupy the mind not only of those who as members of the scientific community dedicate themselves to the answer of basic questions concerning the mystery of life, but also of each one separately no matter how simple he might conceive the mystery of life. This is also evident from the variety of the statements, ideological and scientific with which the modern man is faced and from which he is finally shaped. However, for the Orthodox Theology everything depends on the relationship between mutable and immutable, created and non created. It is exactly here that the answer to the question on the relationship between time and eternity depends on. The whole creation, material and spiritual, since it is mutable it is also created. The created of beings presupposes the existence of a Creator. «Τρεπτὰ τοίνυν ὄντα πάντως καὶ κτιστά. Κτιστὰ δὲ ὄντα πάντως ὑπὸ τινος ἐδημιουργήθησαν. Δεῖ δὲ τὸν δημιουργὸν ἄκτιστον εἶναι· εἰ γὰρ κάκεῖνος ἐκτίσθη, πάντως ὑπὸ τινος ἐκτίσθη, ἕως ἄν ἔλθωμεν εἰς τι ἄκτιστον. Ἄκτιστος οὖν ὢν ὁ δημιουργὸς πάντως καὶ ἀτρεπτός ἐστι. Τοῦτο δὲ τί ἄν ἄλλο εἴη ἢ θεός;»⁸.

The only uncreated, unoriginated, infinite and eternal principle is the Triune God. Saint John Damascene, based on the dogmatic faith of the Church notices that we believe in one Father, the principle and the cause of all things, Who was never begotten of anyone, the only uncaused

8. Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής, Kotter II, p. 11 (3): 33-37

and unbegotten Creator of all. God Father is the causal principle of everything, being Himself unbegotten and uncaused⁹. The Father is the cause of the Son and the Holy Spirit is also of the Father, they exist because of the Father¹⁰. The casual existence of these two persons from the Father does not introduce time, nor does it involve any change in the nature of the Father, since the unbegotten cause of all begets the Word and from the divine substance of the Father proceeds eternally the Holy Spirit.

In the case of the Son «ἀχρόνως καὶ ἀνάρχως καὶ ἀπαθῶς καὶ ἀρρήευστως γεννᾷ καὶ ἐκτὸς συνδυασμοῦ» Father God¹¹, Who cannot exist without His Word. The Word of God is not non-subsistent, nor is it dissipated in the air, like man's word, but is subsistent: «οὐκ ἔξω αὐτοῦ [ἐνν. τοῦ ἐνὸς καὶ μόνου Θεοῦ] χωροῦνται, ἀλλ' ἐν αὐτῷ ἀεὶ ὄντα»¹².

With reference to the Holy Spirit, Saint John in a concise and at the same time comprehensive formulation recapitulates the teaching of the Church namely that the Holy Spirit is consubstantial with the Father and the Son. Proceeds from the Father, comes to rest in the Word «δι' Υἱοῦ» and declares Him «ἐν Υἱῷ»¹³. At the same time is emphasized His hypostatic differentiation. His hypostatic attribute is not communicated from the hypostatic attributes of the other two Persons of the Holy Trinity, that is the unbegotten of the Father and the begotten of the Son. However, although we are aware of the difference between the hypostatic attributes, we ignore the kind or the nature of this difference¹⁴. The hypostatic attributes are not significative of the divine essence, but of the particular manner of existence of each Person and of the «πρὸς

9. See *ibid.*, p. 19 (8): 30-31.

10. See *ibid.*, p. 27 (8): 197-98. Cf. N. Xexakis, *Ὁρθόδοξος Δογματική, Ἡ Θεολογία τοῦ Ὁμοουσίου*, Ennoia Publications, Athens 2006, pp. 122-25.

11. See *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής*, Kotter II, pp. 21-22 (8): 81-82.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 15 (6): 6-7.

13. See *ibid.*, p. 25 (8): 173. Cf. M. Orphanos, "The Procession of the Holy Spirit according to Certain Greek Fathers", *Θεολογία / Theologia* 51, 1 (1980), pp. 280-282, and M. D. Torre, "St John Damascene and St Thomas Aquinas on the Eternal Procession of The Holy Spirit", *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 38, 3 (1994), pp. 305-306. See also the interesting analysis of M. Jugie, «Saint Jean Damascène», *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* 8, 1 (1924), pp. 721-22.

14. See *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής*, Kotter II, pp. 26 (8): 191-93.

ἄλληλα σχέσεως»¹⁵. With these theological clarifications Saint John, who reintroduces practically the theological thought of the Cappadocian Fathers, explains as natural as possible through the theological form of unity and distinction, the consubstantial and the distinctive of the three Hypostases. The Persons of the Holy Trinity are consubstantial and at the same time distinctive and perfect Hypostases. The perfection of the Hypostases from the one hand proves and from the other confirms the perfection of the divine essence which, is *one* and *un-compound*¹⁶. By reason of the identity of substance the three Hypostases communicate with each other whereas by thought of the manner of existence are distinctive (ἀγέννητον, γεννητόν, ἐκπορευτόν)¹⁷. This differentiation does not introduce division, since the divine Hypostases remain «ἀδιάστατοι» without interval, «ἀχώριστες» inseparable. The «ἀδιάστατον» without intervals, by no means indicates mingling of the divine Hypostases. The mutual indwelling «περιχώρησις» of the Persons is without confusion. Any theory about «συναλοιφῆς ἢ συμφύσεως ἢ συγχύσεως» coalescing or mingling or confusing between the Persons is theologically incomprehensible and therefore rejected¹⁸. The interpretation of the creation of the created world is founded in this Triune conception. It's the result of the uniqueness and simplicity of the divine will and attribute, although each Person performs His individual work. Since the movement of the divine Hypostases¹⁹, is one and the same «μία καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ κίνησις», the whole Holy Trinity is present in every attribute. The learned Father in the 54th chapter of the Ἐκδόσεως, quoting and repeating Saint Gregory the Theologian, notes: «Ἡμῖν δὲ εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατήρ, ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα, καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα, καὶ ἐν πνεῦμα ἅγιον, ἐν ᾧ τὰ πάντα, τοῦ ἑξ οὗ καὶ δι' οὗ καὶ ἑξ ᾧ μὴ φύσεις τεμνόντων (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν μετέπιπτον αἱ προθέσεις ἢ αἱ τάξεις τῶν ὀνομάτων), ἀλλὰ χαρακτηριζόντων μιᾶς καὶ ἀσυγχύτου φύσεως ιδιότητος»²⁰.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 32 (10): 5-6.

16. See *ibid.*, p. 27 (8): 214-22.

17. «Ἐπὶ τῆς ἁγίας Τριάδος ὑπόστασις ἐστὶν ὁ ἀναρχος τρόπος τῆς ἐκάστου αἰδίου ὑπάρξεως», see *Φιλόσοφα κεφάλαια*: Kotter I, p. 140 (67): 36-38.

18. See *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής*, Kotter II, p. 42 (14): 11-16.

19. See *ibid.*, pp. 28-29 (8): 238-46.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 129, στ. 16-23.

Everything depends upon the unoriginated, infinite and eternal Triune God. The angels, the creation, the human, eternity, time. The Triune God brings the creation into being. The cause of this action of God from the outside and not from Himself is love²¹. The Holy Trinity always creates through the loving relationship between the no-created and the created, so that other beings, of different substance from the divine substance, to be able to participate in His goodness²².

The creation of the world from non-being means that it is changeable. Even this transition from the non-being to being is defined as change²³. The changeableness of the creation becomes easier to understand than the relativity of time which always goes together with place. Time exists because it coexists with place²⁴. For that reason time is connected with decay and corruption²⁵. In the classic citation of Saint Maximus the Confessor, in his comments on *Εἰς τὸ περὶ θείων ὀνομάτων τοῦ ἁγίου Διονυσίου Ἀρεοπαγίτου*, we read: «χρόνος γὰρ ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ποιήσεως ἀριθμεῖται»²⁶. The appearance and the first beginning of time must be traced back to the material creation. That which existed before time was, if only we could use these words, the endless present, «τὸ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τοῖς αἰδίοις οἷόν τι χρονικὸν κίνημα καὶ

21. For the theological presuppositions of the creation from *non-being*, see N. Xexakis, *Ὁρθόδοξος Δογματική, Ἡ περὶ δημιουργίας διδασκαλία*, Ennoia Publications, Athens 2006, pp. 34-43.

22. See *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβῆς*, Kotter II, p. 45 (16): 2-6. «Ἐπεὶ οὖν ὁ ἀγαθὸς καὶ ὑπεράγαθος Θεὸς οὐκ ἠρκέσθη τῇ ἑαυτοῦ θεωρίᾳ, ἀλλ' ὑπερβολῇ ἀγαθότητος εὐδόκησε γενέσθαι τινὰ τὰ εὐεργετηθησόμενα καὶ μεθέξοντα τῆς αὐτοῦ ἀγαθότητος, ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι παράγει καὶ δημιουργεῖ τὰ σύμπαντα, ἀόρατά τε καὶ ὄρατά».

23. See *ibid.*, p. 98 (41): 2-5. «Ὡν γὰρ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς γενέσεως ἀπὸ τροπῆς ἤρξατο, ἀνάγκη ταῦτα τρεπτὰ εἶναι. Τροπὴ δέ ἐστι τὸ ἐκ μὴ ὄντων εἰς τὸ εἶναι παραχθῆναι καὶ τὸ ἐξ ὑποκειμένης ὕλης ἕτερόν τι γενέσθαι».

24. The interpretation of holy Augustine concerning the relation between time and place is very interesting. See *Ἐξομολογήσεις [=Confessiones]*, book xi, cap. xv, 20, PL 32, 817. “*Nam si extenditur, dividitur in praeteritum et futurum: praesens autem nullum habet spatium*”. Also see *ibid.* book xi, cap. xxiii, 30, PL 32, 821: “*Video igitur tempus quamdum esse distentionem. Sed video, an videre mihi videor? Tu demonstrabis, Lux, veritas*”.

25. See G. Mantzaridis, *Χρόνος καὶ Ἄνθρωπος*, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1992, p. 31.

26. PG 4, 336A.

διάστημα»²⁷, which is identified with God's eternity²⁸. This «κίνημα καὶ διάστημα» is characterized as «αἰών» and does not have the features of the measurable time²⁹. According to Saint Damascene, who follows the cosmology of St. Basil the Great, «χρόνος δέ ἐστι τὸ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τῇ συστάσει τοῦ κόσμου διάστημα»³⁰. In that way the Savvaitis monk describes time «χρόνο» before the creation. The relative time has begun and will cease to exist within eternity. It exists within the creature of the non-created attribute of the Holy Trinity. Its end will be the eternity, the eighth age, the eighth day³¹, since the introduction of man to the temporal been «χρονικὸ ἐῖναι» means also introduction to the timeless and eternal present³². From the creation of heaven and earth until the general consummation and resurrection of men this world is said to have “seven ages” («ἐπτὰ αἰῶνες»)³³. The eternity which will follow the end of time will be understood at its fullness after the corporal death of the man and his becoming imperishable in the Second Coming of Christ. For that reason the distinction between time and eternity is rather that of quality than of diarchy³⁴. Essentially, since God doesn't withdraw His attributes from the creation, the world is interpreted as a dynamic eternity, which simply began to exist, a fact which makes even more relative the ability to define the time measurement. In creation do not exist absolute aspects of the reality because of its creation from *non-being*³⁵. Saint Damascene points out, for example, that the time of

27. Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής, Kotter II, p. 44 (15): 20-21.

28. See G. Florofsky, «Ἡ κτίσις καὶ τὸ κτιστόν», Ἀνατομία Προβλημάτων Πίστεως, transl. archim. Meletios Kalamaras, Rigopoulos Publications, Thessaloniki 1977, p. 9.

29. For the comprehensive word «αἰών» and its different significance from time see βλ. Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής, Kotter II, pp. 43-44 (15): 1-38.

30. Κατ' Εὐνομίου, PG 29, 560B. Cf. N. Matsoukas, Δογματικὴ καὶ Συμβολικὴ Θεολογία Β', Ἐκθεση τῆς Ὁρθόδοξης πίστεως σὲ ἀντιπαράθεση μὲ τὴ δυτικὴ χριστιανοσύνη, [Philosophiki kai Theologiki Vivliothiki (ΦΘΒ) 3], P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1988, p. 158, note 131.

31. See Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής, Kotter II, p. 44 (15):18 and *ibid.*, p. 227 (96):82-89.

32. Cf. G. Mantzaridis, «Παράδοσις καὶ ἀνανέωσις», in: Μέθεξις Θεοῦ, Orthodoxos Kypseli Publications, Thessaloniki 1979, pp. 246, 250.

33. See Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής, Kotter II, p. 44 (15): 14-16.

34. See D. Tsamis, Εἰσαγωγή στὴ σκέψη τῶν Πατέρων τῆς Ὁρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1992, p. 49.

35. See N. Matsoukas, Ἱστορία τῆς Βυζαντινῆς Φιλοσοφίας μὲ παράρτημα στὸ

the creation of the intellectual beings is not defined exactly, although his views and the view of Saint Gregory the Theologian, that they were created before all creation «πρὸ πάσης κτίσεως», converge, without failing to mention other suggested patristic views³⁶. He points out that the angels were created from God before the formation of man³⁷. In some other place he notices they were created before the sensible. However, the intellectual substance of the angel means that they are in places intellectually³⁸, without overseeing the fact that they are sent within the limits of the material creation³⁹. The «Οὐρανός ἐστι περιοχὴ ὁρατῶν τε καὶ ἀοράτων κτισμάτων ἐντὸς αὐτοῦ αἷ τε νοεραὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων δυνάμεις καὶ πάντα τὰ αἰσθητὰ περικλείονται καὶ περιορίζονται»⁴⁰. The pointing out of all these facts aims to contribute to the cosmological understanding concerning the origin of the creation from non-being, from the theological interpretation's point of view. All beings exist within a certain place and limits. The concrete place of stay of the creatures give us the opportunity to talk about time precedence in the creation of some creatures compared to others.

While the creation with top the last and the most perfect creature of God, the created in His own image and after His likeness man, moves to its consummation, sin is ushered in it through the sovereign movement of the first created. However, the original sin and the expulsion from paradise and their consequences do not constitute insurmountable obstacles which restrict man to time and place with no way out. God intervenes in the historic course of humanity in order to make His creature anew participant to His glory⁴¹. All the redemptive facts henceforward and till the end of ages are realized and experienced in time.

σχολαστικισμὸ τοῦ Δυτικοῦ Μεσσαίωνα, Vantias Publications, Thessaloniki 1994, p. 220.

36. *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής*, Kotter II, p. 48 (17): 75-81. Πρὸβλ. Ν. Hexasakis, *Ὁρθόδοξος Δογματική, Ἡ περὶ δημιουργίας διδασκαλία*, pp. 89-90.

37. See *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής*, Kotter II, p. 48 (17): 75-81.

38. See *δ.π.*, p. 47 (17): 42-45.

39. See *δ.π.*, p. 47 (17): 52-56.

40. *Ὁ.π.*, p. 50 (20): 2-4.

41. See G. Mantzaridis, «Ἡθικὴ καὶ ἀποκάλυψις», in: *Μέθεξις Θεοῦ*, p. 35.

Theophanies and His initiatives which aim to keep the connection with His chosen people must be interpreted in the context of God's loving exit towards the fallen man. According to father John Romanidis, theophanies do not constitute simple prefigurment but real ability-state of communion of God with Israel through the incorporeal Word⁴². They are understood on an ecclesiological basis. They educate the chosen people through the charismatic knowledge⁴³. All the interventions of God and of His emissaries in history are understood under the same perspective⁴⁴. However, the culmination of the divine initiative in familiarizing man with salvation focuses on the incarnation of God the Word⁴⁵. It's a motion of emptying Himself out and of love for the creature⁴⁶. The incarnation is accomplished for the benefit of man. The non-created is united with the created, the timeless and eternal with the flesh assumed in time from the Mother of God. All people henceforward are called to be united with the incarnated Word, Christ in His Church. In this manner man transcends the destructible and the temporary. According to G. Mandzaridis, «ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ δὲν εἶναι κανέννας ἰδιαίτερος τόπος, ἀλλὰ ἡ αἰώνια

42. See "The Christological Teaching of St. John of Damascus", *Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς Φάρος / Ecclesiastikos Pharos* 58 (1976), p. 239.

43. See N. Matsoukas (text-trans.-intr.-comments), John of Damascus, *Διαλεκτικά*, ΦΘΒ 28, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1995, pp. 18-19. Cf. id. *Δογματική καὶ Συμβολικὴ Θεολογία Β'*, pp. 58-80 and Despo Lialiou, «Θεὸς καὶ κόσμος κατὰ τοὺς Καππαδόκες Πατέρες», *Ἐκκλησία, Κόσμος-Ἄνθρωπος*, ΦΘΒ 45, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 2000, pp. 47-50. .

44. It is cited an explanatory quote from *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής*, Kotter II, pp. 106-07 (45): 3-19, «... τοῦ παραδείσου ... γεγονότα ἐξόριστον [ἐνν. τὸν ἄνθρωπον] ... οὐ παρεῖδεν ὁ συμπαθής ... ἀλλὰ πολλοῖς πρότερον παιδαγωγήσας καὶ πρὸς ἐπιστροφὴν καλέσας στόνῳ καὶ τρόμῳ, ὕδατος κατακλυσμῷ ... συγχύσει καὶ διαιρέσει γλωσσῶν ... τυπικαῖς θεοφανείαις, πολέμοις ... ποικίλαις δυνάμεσι, νόμῳ, προφήταις, δι' ὧν τὸ σπουδαζόμενον ἦν ἡ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἀναίρεσις πολυσχεδῶς χεθείσης καὶ καταδουλωσαμένης τὸν ἄνθρωπον καὶ πᾶν εἶδος κακίας ἐπισωρευσάσης τῷ βίῳ καὶ ἡ πρὸς τὸ εὖ εἶναι τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπάνοδος».

45. See *Λόγος εἰς τὸ ἅγιον Σάββατον*, Kotter V, p. 126 (11): 1-8. Cf. G. Florofsky, «Ἀπολύτρωση», in: *Δημιουργία καὶ Ἀπολύτρωση*, transl. P. Pallis, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1983, p. 108.

46. See *1 Tim.* 2, 4. Cf. St. John Damascene, *Λόγος εἰς τὴν κοίμησιν τῆς Θεοτόκου Β'*, Kotter V, p. 533 (15): 26-28.

ζωή. Καὶ ἡ αἰώνια ζωὴ δὲν εἶναι μιὰ ἀτελεύτητη ζωὴ μέσα στὸν χρόνο, ἀλλὰ ἡ ἐν Χριστῷ ζωὴ»⁴⁷.

The historic course of humanity in time consummates in the Second Coming of Christ. When we refer to the Second Coming, we always mean the catholic resurrection of humans. According to orthodox dogmatic Resurrection means the resurrection of bodies. The Fathers argue using different thoughts⁴⁸. The soul is by grace immortal. Only the material element of man will be resurrected, for only that has undergone the destruction of death⁴⁹. It will be re-united with the soul⁵⁰. Before the corporal death man is a hypostatic union of sensible and intellectual elements. Resurrection is identified ontologically and conceptually with the raising up again of the initial hypostasis of man where the material element will rise up incorruptible⁵¹. Τὸ σῶμα δὲν θὰ εἶναι τὸ φθαρτὸ ἐκεῖνο τοῦ μεταπτωτικοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἄφθαρτο τοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασι⁵². The incarnated Word will «μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι αὐτὸ σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ, οὐ τὴν εἰς ἑτέραν μορφήν μεταποιήσιν λέγων –ἄπαγε–, τὴν ἐκ φθορᾶς δὲ μᾶλλον εἰς ἀφθαρσίαν ἐναλλαγὴν»⁵³.

The word («συντελείας») “consummation” of men has a double meaning: («μερικὴ») “partial” and («κοινὴ καὶ παντελὴς») “general

47. *Χρόνος καὶ Ἄνθρωπος*, p. 35. Cf. father D. Staniloae, *Ὁ Θεὸς εἶναι Ἀγάπη*, transl. N. Matsoukas, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1983, p. 45. Time despite its relativity in Orthodox Theology, has an optimistic aspect, since «τονίζει ... τὴν ὕψιστη ἐσχατολογικὴ σημασία τοῦ μέλλοντος, τὸ ὁποῖο δίνει νόημα καὶ ἐρμηνεύει τὸ παρὸν καὶ τὸ παρελθόν»; D. Tsamis, *Εἰσαγωγή στὴ σκέψη τῶν Πατέρων τῆς Ὁρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας*, p. 33.

48. See for example, *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής*, Kotter II, pp. 234-39 (100): «... Ἀνάστασιν δὲ λέγοντες σωμάτων φαμὲν ἀνάστασιν ... αἱ γὰρ ψυχαὶ ἀθάνατοι οὐσα πῶς ἀναστήσονται; ... ἀνάστασις ἐστὶ πάντως συνάφεια πάλιν ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος καὶ δευτέρα τοῦ διαλυθέντος καὶ πεσόντος ζώου στάσις. Αὐτὸ οὖν τὸ σῶμα τὸ φθειρόμενον καὶ διαλυόμενον, αὐτὸ ἀναστήσεται ἄφθαρτον...».

49. See *ibid.*, p. 234 (100): 2-5.

50. See *ibid.*, στίχ. 5-7.

51. See *ibid.*, p. 236 (100): 70-72: «Πῶς ἂν ἐγινώσκετο ἢ ἐπιστεύετο ἡ τοῦ τεθνεῶτος ἀνάστασις μὴ τῶν χαρακτηριστικῶν τῆς ὑποστάσεως ιδιωμάτων ταύτην συνιστώντων;».

52. See *ibid.*, p. 237 (100): 83-91.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 237-38 (100): 103-106.

and common”. The first follows the personal death of each man, whereas the second characterizes the common resurrection of men⁵⁴.

It is not only man who is redeemed. The irrational creation follows the imperishability and restoration of the rational being as with the fall it suffers along with man, likewise it receives the restoration according to its original nature⁵⁵. The creation could not have returned to non-being. It was created very good to serve the needs of man and this salvation. Its destination, that is the deliverance from corruption, is accomplished through Christ⁵⁶. The reference to the eschatological “restoration” of the creation to the «ἀρχαῖον κάλλος»⁵⁷, is familiar to patristic cosmology. The original aim of the creation of all beings of rational and irrational creation is emphatically confirmed: «Πάντα τὴν οἰκείαν ἀποκατάστασιν λήφονται μηδεμιᾶς ἐτέρας ὑπολειπομένης ἀποκαταστάσεως»⁵⁸. The adoption of these terms from St John does not reflect origenistic notions⁵⁹.

The restoration to the original, «οἰκεῖο» beauty is an expression of divine justice and love, which follows the universal resurrection of human beings. The deified beings rejoice at the divine love and divine Light. The restoration to the incorruption of eternity refers to human nature, as an absolute condition, unaffected by the will of the created beings. Man’s choice in the Sight of God as rescued or condemned relates to the freedom of will⁶⁰.

54. See *ibid.*, p. 44 (15): 16-18.

55. See *Εἰς τὸ ἅγιον Σάββατον*, Kotter V, p. 143 (35): 14-17. Cf. D. Tsamis, *Ἀγιολογία τῆς Ὁρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας*, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1985, p. 181.

56. See *Ἑρμηνεία ἐπιστολῶν Παύλου*, PG 95, 505.

57. Thoroughly about this subject see G. Florofsky, «Ἀπολύτρωση», *ibid.*, p. 171.

58. *Εἰς τὸ ἅγιον Σάββατον*, Kotter V, p. 143 (35): 14-17.

59. Saint John rejects the views of Origen, see *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής*, Kotter II, p. 44 (15), 28-38.

60. See G. Florofsky, «Ἡ “ἄθανασία” τῆς ψυχῆς», in: *Δημιουργία καὶ Ἀπολύτρωση*, pp. 263-264: «Ἡ “φύση” θεραπεύεται καὶ ἀποκαθίσταται μὲ ὀρισμένο καταναναγκασμό, ἀπὸ τὴν πανίσχυρη δύναμη τοῦ παντοδυνάμου Θεοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀκατανίκητη χάρη ... ἀλλὰ ἡ βούληση τοῦ ἀνθρώπου δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ θεραπευτεῖ κατὰ τὸν ἴδιο ἀκατανίκητο τρόπο. Ἡ βούληση τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πρέπει νὰ στραφεῖ μόνη τῆς στὸ Θεό».

C. The experiential aspect of time

In the moral-ascetic aspect of the Orthodox Church's reason, the kind of the eternal course of the created, rational creature is predetermined within the corruptible time, since human, who is at the top of the creation, always acts through his personal and sovereign acts. The contemporary saint Justin Popovits, participant in the charismatic theology of the Orthodox Church, outlines the real meaning of time: «Μόνο ζώντας “έν σοφία”, δηλαδή με τὸ Χριστό, “ἐξαγοράζομεν” τὸ χρόνο μας, ποὺ ἔχει καὶ αὐτὸς δημιουργηθεῖ ἀπὸ τὸ Θεὸ Λόγο καὶ γιὰ χάρη τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου... Ἡ λογικότητα τοῦ χρόνου συνίσταται στὸ νὰ ὑπηρετεῖ τὸ Θεὸ Λόγο... Ὁ χρόνος μᾶς ἔχει δοθεῖ γιὰ νὰ τὸν μεταβάλλουμε σὲ αἰωνιότητα ζώντας “έν σοφία”, δηλαδή ἐν Χριστῷ καὶ διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Μὲ τὴ λογικότητά του ὁ χρόνος εἰσῆλθε στὸ θεανθρώπινο σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, τὴν Ἐκκλησία, καὶ ἐκεῖ βρῆκε τὴν αἰώνια καταξίωσή του καὶ τὴ θεία τουπραγμάτωση...»⁶¹.

Communion between man and God is, nevertheless, validated within time. Thus, time in this sense receives ecclesiastical, ecclesiological, theological attributes. It lends itself to the sanctification of the believer and to the living experience of the mystery of salvation in Christ.

The nature of sanctity identifies with eternity as a way and quality of life which is attuned to the nature of the Creator⁶². The nature of sin is non-existent, since evil exists only in the guise of a side-existence to good itself and by being such it distorts the latter. Because sin does not exist ontologically, it does not accompany rational beings to their eternal

61. *Ὁδὸς Θεογνωσίας. Κεφάλαια ἀσκητικὰ καὶ γνωσιολογικά*, Grigoris Publications, Athens ²1992, p. 309.

62. Modern testimonies of saints orientate man with simplicity so as to perceive the meaning of time. The reverend mother Makrina, who was an ascetic in the Holy Monastery of Panagia Hodigitria in Portaria in Volos, pointed out in one of her speeches: «Ὅλα παρέρχονται καὶ μένει στὸν ἄνθρωπο ἡ ὑπακοὴ στὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὅ,τι προσευχῆς κάνει, ὅποιον πνευματικὸ ἀγῶνα κάνει, ὅ,τι ἐγκρατεύεται νοερῶς, σωματικῶς, πνευματικῶς, ὅ,τι ἔχει στὴν ἄκρη, ἐὰν ὅλα αὐτὰ τὰ ἐργάζεται γιὰ τὸν Θεὸ γράφονται καὶ παραμένουν στὰ βιβλία Του. Ὁ Θεὸς σημειώνει καὶ ὁ Ἄγγελος φύλακας τῆς ψυχῆς γράφει». *Λόγια Καρδιᾶς*, Published by Panagias Hodigitrias Monastery, Portaria 2012, p. 390. These words of the reverend mother point out on the one hand the eternal of the human being and on the other hand the holiness of the place.

course, although man, due to his free will continues to desire it even after his biological death, since he pursued it. The time of life on earth of rational beings constitutes an itinerary along which their freedom of choice is expressed as their personal way of life.

This good constitutes the only existing reality, since only this was created from God⁶³. It is existence and cause of existence («ὑπαρξίς καὶ ὑπάρξεως αἴτιον»)⁶⁴. The proof of the existence of good is constituted within the beings themselves. The learned Father points out: «Τὰ ὄντα οὐ παντελῶς ἐναντία· κατὰ γὰρ αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι κοινωνοῦσιν ἀλλήλοις, τῷ δὲ ὄντι τὸ μὴ εἶναι ἐναντίον. Ὡστε, εἰ παντελῶς ἐναντίον τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸ κακόν, ἔστι δὲ τὸ ἀγαθόν, οὐκ ἔστι τὸ κακόν ... καὶ εἰ οὐσία τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἀνούσιον τὸ κακόν ἢ οὐ πάντῃ ἐναντία»⁶⁵. The beings are sustained to being and communicate with each other, since it is only the good which possesses ontological existence, and functions as a connection between the different beings and as a spermatic cause of their maintenance in being. If good is understood as a countervailing-counterbalancing principle towards the opposite principle of evil and not as a unique existence, then some beings would have disorder in their nature. Since the origin of the created beings is one and good, beings are sustained in being through the perfect order⁶⁶. Even this entity of devil is not consider as being evil, since he is a creature of God's goodness, whereas his constant participation in God's good non-created attribute reassures his maintenance in being⁶⁷.

63. See *Κατὰ Μανιχαίων*, Kotter IV, p. 373 (36): 5-7. Similar views in *ibid.*, p. 374 (38): 1-4 and *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής*, Kotter II, p. 36 (12b): 28-29: «τὸ ἀγαθὸν ὑπαρξίς καὶ ὑπάρξεως αἴτιον, τὸ δὲ κακὸν ἀγαθοῦ ἦτοι ὑπάρξεως στέρησις».

64. *Ibid*; cf. N. Xionis, *Οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργειες τοῦ Θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν ἅγιον Γρηγόριο Νύσσης*, Grigoris Publications, Athens 1999, pp. 184-85.

65. *Κατὰ Μανιχαίων*, Kotter IV, p. 358 (13): 8-13.

66. See *ibid.*, p. 395 (81): 1-3.

67. See *ibid.*, p. 372 (35): 8-16. «Καλὸν οὖν ἐστὶν εἶναι τὸν διάβολον καὶ διὰ τοῦ εἶναι μετέχειν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ. Τὸ οὖν εἶναι καλόν, τὸ δὲ εὖ εἶναι κάλλιον. Τελεία γὰρ ὑπαρξίς τὸ ὑγιαίνειν, τὸ νοσεῖν καὶ εἶναι μερικὸν κακὸν καὶ φθορά· οὐ γὰρ τελεία ἀνυπαρξία, ἀλλὰ μερικὴ ὑπαρξίς καὶ μερικὴ ἀνυπαρξία. Τὸ μὴ εἶναι τέλειον κακόν· τελεία γὰρ φθορά καὶ ἀνυπαρξία τὸ τελείως μὴ ὄν. Τὸ οὖν εἶναι καὶ τὸ εὖ εἶναι καλὰ καὶ παρὰ Θεοῦ, τὸ δὲ κακὸν ἐξ ἀγαθοῦ γενέσθαι τῆς τοῦ γινομένου γνώμης. Ὁ οὖν Θεὸς δι' ὑπερβολὴν ἀγαθότητος καὶ τῷ πονηρῷ τὰ ἀγαθὰ δέδωκε, τὸ εἶναι καὶ τὸ εὖ εἶναι».

According to orthodox cosmology, the beautiful and good as the foundation of creation defines at the same time the aim of the existence of beings, since they have received the good in their nature. In sovereign beings the good or the evil use of rationale is always expressed in relation to their natural goodness. They remain to *κατὰ φύσιν* that is according to the nature aiming at and doing what is good or they freely fall to *παρὰ φύσιν* that is against the nature distorting it⁶⁸. Man was created so as to aim at the *κατὰ φύσιν* that is, according to the nature, good, which is an object of desire due to the same nature of beings. It's noteworthy the interpretive approach with reference to the origin of the word *ἀγαθόν* that is good in *Κατὰ Μανιχαίων*. It derives from the «ἄγαν θεῖν», namely «πάντα πρὸς αὐτό, ὃ καὶ φύσει ἐστὶν ἐραστὸν καὶ ἐφετόν, οὗ φυσικῶς πάντα ἐφίεται»⁶⁹. However, although man is affirmative to the desire of good, still the necessary condition to attain it is God. Without the cooperation and help of God man is unable to desire and do the good⁷⁰. This cooperation always presupposes and demands the human freedom through the constant judgement and use of the sovereign: «διὰ τὸ αὐτεξούσιον καὶ τὸ ἀβίαστον εἶναι τὸ καλόν»⁷¹.

The knowledge of good as opposed to evil is interpreted accordingly. Epistemologically the demonstrative argumentation of saint John Damascene is based on the truth of beings: «Ἡ ἀλήθεια τῶν ὄντων ἐστὶ γνῶσις, τὸ ψεῦδος μὴ ὄντος γνῶσις· τὸ γὰρ μὴ ὄν οὐ γινώσκεται»⁷². Knowledge is related to beings, that is the existing truth. The un-truth is wandering in the space of the imaginary and of the non-existent. The attempt to describe it is a relativistic approach. Man describes evil as evil, because he has the experience of good.

68. See *ibid.*, p. 388 (69): 17-30.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 383 (64): 1-2.

70. See Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής, Kotter II, p. 103 (44): 9-11. Cf. C. N. Tsirpanlis, "The Problem of Free Will and Evil in St. John of Damascus", *Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς Φάρος / Ecclesiastikos Pharos* 59 (1977), p. 270.

71. Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής, Kotter II, p. 218 (92): 20.

72. *Κατὰ Μανιχαίων*, Kotter IV, p. 351 (1): 8-9.

The empirical experience of the perversion of good⁷³, of evil, of sin traces back to the sovereign intention devil's⁷⁴. According to N. Matsouka, although evil appeared because of the sovereign of devil, it derives first from the alterability of beings and secondly from the free will of rational beings itself, who turn either to the good or to the evil change⁷⁵. «Ἀποκτᾶ ὕπαρξη στὰ αὐτεξούσια ὄντα ποὺ ἐγκαταλείπουν τὸ ἀγαθόν»⁷⁶. On the other hand, as we have previously noticed, we would have inclined, out of necessity, to two ontological origins of the world the one of good and that of evil⁷⁷. Such a consent would have had a disastrous impact on the salvation of man, for it would personify evil and its perpetration, which would have been considered as a natural need and not as a voluntary choice. On the contrary, because evil is an unsubstantial incident, it appears as «ἀπογενόμενον» of good on the analogy of the relationship which exists between the eye and the vision. The blindness is the loss of sight⁷⁸. The wickedness is neither a substance, nor an attribute of substance, but *an unsubstantial incident*, according to holy Damascene⁷⁹, voluntary deviation from the *κατὰ φύσιν* στὸ *παρὰ φύσιν*⁸⁰. Evil is not identified with the non-being but with the unsubstantial. Saint John clearly discerns between the non-being and the unsubstantial: «Ἀνυπόστατόν ἐστιν οὐχὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν ἀλλὰ τὸ μὴ γενόμενον ὡς τὸ σκότος. Ἀνυπόστατόν ἐστι πᾶν τὸ μὴ ἐκ Θεοῦ γεγονὸς ἀλλ' ἐν ἀπουσίᾳ τοῦ κρείττονος ἰστάμενον ὥσανεὶ

73. See A. Theodorou, «Ὅψεις τινὲς τῆς περὶ κακοῦ, θεώσεως τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ ἱερῶν εἰκόνων διδασκαλίας τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Δαμασκηνοῦ», *Θεολογία / Theologia* 43, 1-2 (1972), pp. 81-82.

74. See *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής*, Kotter II, p. 221 (93): 34-35.

75. See N. Matsoukas (text-interp.-intr.-comments), John Damascene, *Ἡ Κατὰ Μανιχαίων Διάλογος* II. *Πρὸς τοὺς Διαβάλλοντας τὰς ἀγίας Εἰκόνας Λόγοι τρεῖς*, ΦΘΒ 8, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1988, p. 15.

76. G. Mantzaridis, *Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθική*, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1995, p. 95. Cf. N. Matsoukas, *Ἱστορία τῆς Φιλοσοφίας μὲ σύντομη εἰσαγωγή στὴ Φιλοσοφία*, ΦΘΒ 6, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1984, p. 275.

77. The Fathers of the Church have tried in every way to exclude evil from the region of real: βλ. A. Theodorou, «Ὅψεις τινὲς τῆς περὶ κακοῦ...», op.cit., p. 59.

78. See *Κατὰ Μανιχαίων*, Kotter IV, p. 358 (14): 16-20.

79. See *Φιλόσοφα κεφάλαια*, Kotter I, p. 110 (κθ') μστ': 2-4.

80. See *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής*, Kotter II, p. 221 (93): 31-33.

τὸ σκότος ἢ νόσος ἢ ἁμαρτία ἢ θάνατος»⁸¹. Since evil exists because of the being, that which we finally outline as evil is the perversion of good, that is the failure, the false use of the true, of the being. Practically knowledge of evil as evil is impossible to exist, for it does not exist by itself. In the epistemological definition of beings it is not attested any kind of selective rivalry, since knowledge is related exclusively to the being, the good.

However, although evil is perceived as an incident, in human beings is an empirical experience. Its' appearance, because of the existence of good, is not a characteristic of weakness of the Triune God, but an expression of goodness and power. If God, however, prevented the beings, who have been created out of His goodness, from coming into existence, because they have been led to wickedness due to their free will, then evil would have prevailed over His goodness⁸². At the same time man is called through the right use of the free will to be preoccupied with the *κατὰ φύσιν* according to the nature dominating over the variform evil⁸³, and to make himself receptive to the divine attribute of God by the holy grace. Therefore, the time that was given to man until his biological death defines the limits within which the human freedom is expressed and as a result receives intensively a soteriological content.

The particular perspective of free will, as a function of choice between the natural good and the voluntary evil, reassures the fullness of human freedom, since it does not restrict the human independence. It's a cause of salvation or condemnation through the «ἀγαθοπραγεῖν» or «κακοπραγεῖν»⁸⁴. Besides «θελήματος νόσος ἢ ἁμαρτία»⁸⁵. It is on the basis of the above mentioned that God's attitude towards evil should be understood. Since evil is unsubstantial, because it appears from the perversion of good, due to the free will of the rational beings, the goodness of the Triune God allows its experiential experience, for

81. *Φιλόσοφα*, Kotter I, p. 165 (12): 17-20.

82. See *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής*, Kotter II, pp. 221-22 (94): 5-9.

83. See *Περὶ δύο θελημάτων*, Kotter IV, p. 203 (19): 33-42.

84. See *Διάλογος Σαρακηνοῦ καὶ Χριστιανοῦ*, Kotter IV, p. 427 (1): 10-14.

85. *Περὶ δύο θελημάτων*, Kotter IV, p. 230 (44): 9. Cf. *Κατὰ Μανιχαίων*, Kotter IV, p. 359 (14): 27-32.

on other occasion He should have abolished the free will, destroying the most essential structural element of the *κατ' εἰκόνα*, in the image.

The effects of human deeds, which aim at the commission of evil, are impregnated with destruction and death. Evil is destruction for the person at which it aims, although for itself is good, since it forms its existence. On other occasion it would contradict itself: «Τὸ κακόν, εἰ μὲν ἄλλοις κακόν, ἑαυτῷ δὲ ἀγαθόν, συνιστᾷ μὲν ἑαυτό, οὐ παντελῶς δὲ κακόν· συνιστᾷ γὰρ ἑαυτό, καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἔστι κακόν. Εἰ δὲ παντελῶς κακόν, καὶ ἑαυτῷ κακὸν καὶ ἑαυτοῦ ἀναιρετικὸν καὶ ἀνύπαρκτον»⁸⁶. The passage just quoted reveals the relativity of evil. For instance, we could mention the form destruction-birth. Human's birth is a consequence of God's original command. The corporal death is a later product of evil because of the transgression. However, it is only this way that evil is restricted and is not perpetuated in the face of every man.

Man's fall was practically experienced with sin and death. As evil likewise the sin is not a natural state⁸⁷, but fruit of the free will: «Αὕτη [means the sin] οὐ φυσική ἐστὶν οὐδὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ ἡμῖν ἐνσπαρεῖσα, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῆς τοῦ διαβόλου ἐπιπορεύσεως ἐν τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ αὐτεξουσίᾳ προαιρέσει ἐκουσίως συνισταμένη»⁸⁸. Subsequently the way of committing evil is also compared with the committing of sin from man. Their identification is related to the commission of all these that are opposite to virtue and to the will of God. Sin is the «ἀντιστράτευση» opposition of the irrational side of the soul and of the desires of the body to the law of the mind, namely the consciousness⁸⁹.

A later product of sin is the intrusion of destruction on the human race. Practically it ends up in the death of the body⁹⁰. 'OFather G. Florofskyhy, interpreting aptly one of the hymns of the service for the

86. *Op.cit.*, Kotter IV, p. 378 (57): 1-4.

87. See *Περὶ δύο θελημάτων*, Kotter IV, p. 181 (6): 19-21.

88. *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβής*, Kotter II, p. 162 (64): 4-6.

89. See *ibid.*, p. 223 (95): 19-22: «Ὁ νόμος τῆς ἀμαρτίας ἦτοι ἡ προσβολὴ διὰ τοῦ νόμου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἦτοι τῆς τοῦ σώματος ἐπιθυμίας καὶ ῥοπῆς καὶ κινήσεως καὶ τοῦ ἀλόγου μέρους τῆς ψυχῆς ἀντιστρατεύεται τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου, τουτέστι τῇ συνειδήσει».

90. See *ibid.*, p. 107 (45): 19.

departed (which is written by St. John Damascene), attests that the death of the body is also a «ἕνα εἶδος ἀμαυρώσεως τῆς “εἰκόνας τοῦ Θεοῦ” στὸν ἄνθρωπο»⁹¹. At the same time death preserves the destruction. The destruction is not natural⁹², it does not belong to the essence of the creation. Its’ origin proceeds from man’s will⁹³. Death, the utmost threat of man’s disobedience is, just as evil is, unsubstantial. It accomplishes the temporary separation soul’s from body. In his anthropology, saint John Damascene does not adopt the death of the soul. Particularly in chapter 100, verses 27-66 of the *Ἑκδοσις ἀκριβῆς*, lots of passages from the Old Testament are quoted so as to prove that the resurrection is exclusively for the bodies, since the intellectual nature of souls is immortal⁹⁴. Although death is experienced negatively, there is a positive side in it, since it reassures the interruption of the perpetuation of evil, whereas life continues its’ course through the birth of new people. The providence of the Triune God sustains beings into being even after the fall of Adam and the intrusion of sin on creation. Time therefore has a dynamic perspective, as it bears soteriological and eschatological attributes. However, of great importance is the chapter of the dogmatic theology of saint John Damascene, as well as of all the Fathers, concerning the doctrine of the mysteries and especially of the baptism and of the Holy Eucharist, whereas the references to the repentance and to the presupposed participation of the believer in the mystery of confession are numerous. Man becomes member of the Church, matures

91. «Ἀπολύτρωση», *ibid.*, p. 129.

92. For the different kinds of destruction in the works of holy John Damascene see G. Florofsky, *ibid.*, pp.158-159.

93. See *Ἑκδοσις ἀκριβῆς*, Kotter II, p. 99 (42): 5-8.

94. Significantly see *ibid.*, p. 235 (100): 36-39. This positiveness is attested to the texts of many modern Fathers and Mothers of the Church. The reverend Mother Febronia, Reverend Mother of The Holy Monastery of the Dormition of the most holy Mother of God of Panorama in one of her speeches outlines: «Ὁ χρόνος οὐσιαστικὰ εἶναι στὰ χέρια τοῦ Θεοῦ... Ἐκεῖνο ποὺ τρομάζει τὸν ἄνθρωπο εἶναι ὁ θάνατος. Ἐκεῖνο ποὺ βοηθᾷ τὸν ἄνθρωπο νὰ ζήσει σωστὰ τὸν χρόνο τῆς ζωῆς του εἶναι νὰ ξεπεράσει τὸν θάνατο. Ὅταν ξεπεράσουμε τὴν ἁμαρτία, τὰ πάθη τοῦ παλαιοῦ ἀνθρώπου, τότε ξεπερνοῦμε τὸν θάνατο, ξεπερνοῦμε τὸν χρόνο. Ὁ χρόνος δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ μᾶς γεράσει». *Ὁμιλίες στὴν Τράπεζα τῆς Μονῆς*, published by Holy Monastery of the Dormition of the most holy Mother of God, Panorama 2018, p. 43.

spiritually, and is consummated through the service of the mysteries⁹⁵.

Instead of any other conclusion we cite a concise passage from saint Silouan the Athonite, which we think expresses accurately the essence of the Orthodox theology concerning time. The saint experiencing the experiential mystery of God's union with man in Christ by the Holy Spirit, describes the ecclesiastical dimension of eternity pointing out: «Ἡ αἰωνιότης δὲν εἶναι τι τὸ ἀφηρημένον ἢ καθ' ἑαυτὸν ὑπάρχον, ἀλλ' ὁ Ἰδιος ὁ Θεὸς ἐν τῇ ὑπάρξει Αὐτοῦ. Ὅταν ὁ ἄνθρωπος κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ λαμβάνῃ τὴν δωρεὰν τῆς χάριτος, τότε, ὡς κοινωνὸς θείας ζωῆς, γίνεται οὐχὶ μόνον ἀθάνατος ἐν τῇ ἐννοίᾳ τῆς ἀτελευτήτου παρατάσεως τῆς ζωῆς αὐτοῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄναρχος, διότι ἐκεῖνη ἡ σφαῖρα τῆς θείας ὑπάρξεως, εἰς τὴν ὁποίαν εἰσῆχθη, δὲν ἔχει οὔτε ἀρχὴ οὔτε τέλος. Λέγοντες ἐνταῦθα περὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὅτι γίνεται “ἄναρχος”, δὲν ἐννοοῦμεν προὑπαρξιν τῆς ψυχῆς, οὐδὲ ἀλλαγὴν τῆς κτιστῆς ἡμῶν φύσεως εἰς ἄναρχον Θεῖαν φύσιν, ἀλλὰ κοινωνίαν τῆς ἀνάρχου Θεῖας ζωῆς, δυνάμει τῆς κατὰ χάριν θεώσεως τοῦ κτίσματος»⁹⁶.

95. Cf. K. Dyobouniotis, *Ἰωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνός*, Vlastos Publications, Athens 1903, p. 124.

96. Archim. Sophrony Sakharov (recently became saint), *Ὁ ἅγιος Σιλουανὸς ὁ Ἀθωνίτης*, Holy Monastery of Timios Prodromos Publications, Essex 2011, p. 188.