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THEOLOGICAL GROUNDS OF MAN'S LIFE IN THE BODY

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Abstract

Life is the gift of God, it is an ontological principle and a fundamental human right. Life ought to be defended in every situation; from the Christian perspective, there is no justification for suppressing it. As grounds for life we have approached the following: man - the creation of God, and the Christological, pneumatological, ecclesiological and eschatological grounds of man's life in the body. According to the definition of the Holy Fathers, man is named "crown of creation". He has the vocation of being "servant of the entire cosmos". Whether it is named "microcosmos", "macrocosmos" or "macroanthropos", the fall of man determines the fall of the entire world, as his restoration attracts with it the restoration of cosmos, understood as world, harmony. Man is made of flesh and soul, spirit and matter. The life of man, as gift from God, finds its fulfilment in the very manner in which the body collaborates with the soul in their demarche of gaining redemption. There is no permanence of one over the other. They both are equally important for life. This is why we say that man's life is an ontological fact and that man has the responsibility of defending and fulfilling his life.

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1. Introduction

Respect for man's "*personality*" is increasingly important today, it has become an ideal for each and every man. The effort of modern humanism to undermine Christianity, in the domain of human



dignity separated the concept of *person* from theology, attaching it to the idea of an autonomous ethics, even to a purely humanistic existential philosophy.

While domains such as psychology, sociology, politics etc. consider man to be an individual, attributing a certain uniqueness to him, and especially medicine - which admits the uniqueness (the DNA), the irrepeatability of each man, theology has always considered each man unique, created by God through direct participation, hence it uses not the term *individual*, which grasps the human complexity only partially, but the term *person*. The individual is a part of the species, comes out of it, although he can isolate himself from it, can oppose himself to it; he is created by a biological and generical process; he is born and he dies. What does the *person* involve? The person is not born, but is created by God, as His idea or intention since eternity; the person represents for the natural individual a task to solve, it is an axiological, assessing category. Personality is something that can be present or absent in an individual, even in the best example of the species, from a naturalistic, biological and psychological perspective.

A personality is an integrality and a unity, enjoying absolute and eternal value, whereas an individual can lack this integrality, as his unity can be destroyed and by this he can become mortal.

The person is precisely God's image in man (Berdiaev, 2004).

Man's entire complexity comes from the fact that he is at the same time an individual, namely part of the species, and a person, namely a spiritual being. Thus, Christian ethics is personalistic, yet without being individualistic. The isolation of the person in the contemporary individualism triggers man's progressive degradation and depersonalization. The casehardened ego, this product of the original sin, is not the person, because the person is manifest only precisely when the self is refounded and mastered. Today, more than ever, the individual leads a fierce fight for his affirmation, existence and prevalence; yet, this fight is not at all related to the values of the person. Because the battle fought for lifting and turning man to good value is a spiritual, not a biological fight, it is a battle supposing the communion of love with one's fellows, and its victory is assured when man finds himself under the shield and protection of the Church, as the only keeper of the Truth and of the Mysteries leading man to salvation.

The subject proposed by Theological grounds of man's life in the body is actual for the scientific research involving man's life, all the more so because from the perspective of the contemporary mainly humanistic thought, for which human person, although legally defended, is in fact the most commercial and profitable business due to the immoral neoliberalism, according to which life doesn't matter. For instance, we cannot but observe an excess of immorality and luxury, both in the real and online environments: prostitution, pornography, human and organs traffic, consumption of both illegal and light drugs, accepted for pleasure, by some countries etc. Within this frame, the Christian moral rules are denied by the horrors of a humanist secular system. This is why it is imperatively needed a favorable approach of life which to underline a series of fundamental principles that are specific for Christian moral. The theme's actuality is imposed by the postmodern world, confused as it is from religious perspective, in order to assert life in and with Christ, who brings, to the contemporary man and world, the perspectives of eternal life, a perspective that man, and the world in general, seems to have lost, exclusively interested as it is by the life's materialism and biologic.

2. Problem Statement

2.1. Man, spiritual being in the body; animated body or embodied soul

The man of the contemporary civilization endeavours to feel the earth under his feet again, to regain his impetus by finding again his own body in his dense reality. This is the only thing that he, the man full of disillusion and deceptions, has left after having exiled in heaven the One called by Nietzsche “*the moral God*” (Clement, 1996).

Innumerable techniques, most of them coming from the Far East, would want to help us be aware once again of our body in harmony with the cosmical rhythms; in front of this search, the Christians, when they do not reject them awkwardly, justly denounce their risks: to be “glamorous” in the body can be a narcissism that will make you pass by the other and by yourself.

Christianity is truly the religion of the Embodiment and of the Resurrection *of the body*. The body expresses the person; it is not just an object of this world, it is the breath that bears the thinking, it is the progress and stopover structuring time and space.

Man is made up of the “dust of the world” or “star dust” and biochemical elements, and a personal presence, uniting them. For this reason, often the Bible calls man either “animated body” or “living soul” (Clement, 1996). Man, as crown of the creation, receives “living soul” (Genesis 2: 7), is solidary with the earth, with the whole creation, just as the Creator Himself reminds, after the fall. He is not what he has become through humanization, to develop himself towards who knows what, but “earth”, called to full personalization by his relation with God, to holiness. In this context, holiness, which is not on the liking of the contemporary man, does not mean abandoning the human condition, but true humanization, in relation with God. Man is called to be neither incorporeal angel, nor terrestrial animal, but “earthly god”, profitably using all his functions, just like God, Who revealed Himself to him as sense.

Made up of soul and body, man is in the center of the whole creation, uniting in himself matter and spirit, since Christ, by Whom and “*in Whom everything was made*” (John 1: 3) is the incomprehensible, hypostatic, indivisible union, but, at the same time, non-mixed, of the uncreated divinity and of the created contingency. Thus, man forms a connection between the two creations, spiritual and material, he unites “*all nature, visible and invisible*”, as Saint Gregory of Nazianzus affirms. Saint John Chrysostom considers man composed of two substances, one visible and tangible, which is the body and the other one rational; by his body and soul, man is related to both heaven and earth, being at the same time a connective bridge between the two worlds. Hence, man, made up of a spiritual soul and a material body, is the only spiritual-material, psychosomatic being in the world, as he was created by the free will of God; it is on this combination that man’s splendor and supremacy over all the visible beings relies. Man differs from all these beings by virtue of his nature and essence, being, according to the words of the psalmist, “*a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor*” (Ps. 8: 5) (Pop-Bistrițeanul, 2001).

By the soul that transcends the materiality of the body, man has an inestimable value, manifesting himself as someone who is aware and unique. The Holy Fathers consider man as a governor and ruler of the universe. Organizing the world and uncovering its mysteries, man accomplishes one of the marks of its destiny. Man is sovereign because Christ, in whose image he was created, is Lord and King: “The fact that our nature is an image of the Nature ruling over all things – as Saint Gregory of Nyssa states – means nothing else except that since the beginning our nature was created sovereign” (St. Grigorie de Nyssa).

Man's body is the most complex system of modellable rationality, offering the adequate environment for spiritual movement, namely for the aware and free thinking and will of the soul. The human body had in him the soul inbreathed in him by God even since the beginning, thus the formation of the body is considered in the Book of Genesis a special creative act of God. Only so can one understand the maximal biological complexity of the human organism.

Man's true greatness lies not in the fact that he is the highest biological existence, a "rational" or "political" animal, but in the fact that he is a "deified animal" (Nellas, 2002), in the fact that he is a created existence who received the commandment to become god. Saint Gregory of Nyssa rhetorically asks: What does human greatness consist in?; and he answers, saying that not in man's likeness with the created world, but in the fact that man has been made in the image of the Image.

The man made up of soul and body is in the middle of creation and unites in him matter and spirit, because Christ, by means of Whom man was created, is the union not understood, hypostatic, not separated and at the same time not mixed of the uncreated Divinity and created creation, because just as his Divinity is working ... teandrically ... similarly the soul is image and likeness of the unseen Image of God, is working psychandrically, namely as soul and body at the same time, according to God's teandric model. He is at the same time person and nature, or more precisely, a person substantiating and revealing nature, because he is image of the Son Who is a distinct personal hypostasis of the unique and indivisible being, common to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit (Nellas, 2002).

The body and the soul were created simultaneously, and not at first one and then the other, as Origen mistakenly affirms (Saint Ioan Damaschinul, 1938). Man's perfection does not consist in what makes him similar to the rest of the creation but in what distinguishes him from the cosmos and makes him similar to his Creator. The Genesis teaches us that man was made in the image and the likeness of God. Thus, the creation in the image and the likeness of God involves communion with the divine being, with God. This means that communion supposes grace. Saint Gregory Palamas affirms that when man was created, the angels' eyes saw man's soul, united to the sensing organs and the body, as another god, not made just on earth, mind and body out of God's goodness, but out of God's overabundant goodness, and configured according to God's grace (*κατά θεϊαν χάριν μεμορφώμενον*), to be one body, mind and spirit and the soul to be according to the divine image and likeness. Our being is related with God by the spirit received, yet it receives the spirit because the spirit is capable of a relation with Him and, moreover, of an aware relation with God. Callistus the Patriarch relates the dialogue in love to participation and kinship, saying that to God as belover corresponds from man: *I love, therefore I am a man* (Pop-Bistrițeanul, 2001).

God, inbreathing *the breath of life* in man's biological organism, speaks with him calling him to the dialogue with himself, waiting for him to answer by love (Stăniloae, 1978). As image of God, man cannot content himself with remaining closed in a relation with the finite realities, but tends to the absolute God, the infinite personal reality, the only one who can assure an eternal and plenary existence for him in perfect communion. The Church Fathers see the image of God manifesting itself in all the functions and movements of the human being. Sometimes, God's image is likened to some quality of the soul, its simplicity or its immortality, or it is identified to the capacity of the soul to know God, to live in communion with Him in the presence of the Holy Spirit in man's soul. The image of God is often presented in two ways: as formal freedom of man, freedom of will or freedom of choice, or as "heavenly

image”, namely the positive content of God’s image. Thus, when the Holy Scripture speaks about image, it speaks about the whole human being.

In man’s being, God is the first element and man the second. In other words, man has been created as a potential human-divine being who has the duty – by letting himself led by his soul, in God’s image – to become completely like God and in this way to become a human-divine being *de facto*, namely a being in which man is perfectly united to God, realizing the likeness (Popovici 1997).

Man’s constitution is dichotomical, being made up by God out of body and soul, yet this dichotomy finds its unity in the image of God, which embraces both the soul and the body. By his dichotomical constitution, man has the role of a connective ring between the world and God, being called to advance along with the creation to the new and transfigured heaven and earth of God’s Kingdom (Popescu 2005).

Man is meant to take all the creation towards God, and this because of his situation of being mediating between two worlds and two natures. By man, the dualism matter-spirit is overcome, and the situation of being a mediator between the two worlds shows man’s unique mission of lifting the whole nature to God, a mission giving full sense to the whole creative act.

The Christian teaching affirms that man is created in God’s image and likeness. The image is God’s seal in man; the likeness is man’s work to ascend towards his Creator. If he succeeds or not depends only on man. God gives him the possibility to do this work. By the Embodiment of God’s Son, by the Passion, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, man is given the possibility to go through all these stages to reach the stature of the perfect man, Who is Jesus Christ. Mankind fell because of the forefathers’ sin; by God’s coming, man is born a second time, Jesus taking away the sins of the world. The possibility of man’s deification is generously given by the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit.

3. Research Questions

3.1. The human nature assumed in the Person of the Savior Jesus Christ, the Man-God and the God-Man

Man has the responsibility to be “image” of the Archetype Creator of the world, to gather the world in himself, but not as if it were a darkened, closed world including man in it, but as a world also able of exceeding its limits, revealing to man its transparency towards the Creator and its ability of putting man in connection with Him. Man is in the world, but must also exceed it. The world must be a useful way leading him to the light. Man is not “thrown in the world” as a convict, as Heidegger would say, but is placed in it as on a way, to draw close to God, with all the better things he learnt from it, and with the habit of not seeing the world as an ultimate end.

As man’s fall broke the balance, both in his being and in the cosmos, similarly, the Son’s Embodiment, likened with a second creation of the world, will reestablish the cosmic harmony and reunite the creation with God (Dinu, 1981). The Lord’s Embodiment lays the ontological foundations of the whole Christian reality and, by this, opens the horizon toward a correct understanding of this reality. Consequently, it also offers us the perspective needed for grasping the relation between the Church and the world. This perspective is deepened and completed by the perspective it opens on the relation between the Church and the world, and the Lord’s death and resurrection. The foundation of the Church is the

divine Logos become body, therefore the Lord's Embodiment. Out of her deep meaning in relation to the world, one can grasp the first lights for the definition of the attitude of the Church towards the world, completed by the example of the Savior's life. Then, a contemplation of the Church from the standpoint of the history of salvation - based on the Lord's Embodiment, Death and Salvation - offers us the perspective in whose light one can grasp the fundamental lines of the relation between the Church and the world. Thus, the authentic essence of the Church mission in the world is grasped and illumines from the viewpoint of the Lord's Embodiment, Death and Resurrection.

Because the truth of the Lord's Embodiment offers us the theological horizon needed for authentically grasping what the world represents in the framework of the divine plan. The Embodiment is the irrevocable self-communication of God to a man, the appearance of God under a human form, the settlement of a humanity in the person of the divine Logos. God's self-adhesion is so intensive that the Logos becomes grounds of subsistence for this humanity, He gives it His substance. Hence, it results that the Lord's Embodiment constitutes an intensive solidarization of God with the world: God's Son becomes part of mankind, of humanity. But, by this intensive solidarization with humanity, God solidarizes Himself - implicitly and definitively - to the world, giving the world the possibility of the most profound form of belonging to God; which at the same time means the possibility to freely realize his existence.

By His Embodiment, the divine Logos becomes part of the world's reality for good. From this perspective, we are advised inevitably about the world's reality and its history. It is forbidden to us to settle ourselves in an area beyond history, because Jesus Christ Himself entered the concrete form of the historical reality. Thus, from the sense of the Lord's Embodiment in relation to the world results the principle: we need to comprehend the present reality in all its nakedness and mercilessness. In Christ, mankind is fully handed over to God and God is fully handed over to mankind. Because, by this, humanity has become the organ of manifestation of the divine hypostasis and the divine hypostasis descended, making Himself the subject of the human nature. But it is precisely by this that human nature reached its supreme realization. This relation between divine and human in the framework of the miracle of the Lord's Embodiment is determining for the relation between God and the world, implicitly for the relation between the Church and the world. By the body taken by the divine Logos by the Embodiment, God accepts the world in His Son Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 1: 19). In Jesus Christ, man and his world are adopted by the eternal Word - definitively and irrevocably - in a hypostatic union. But, what is valid about the human nature adopted by Jesus Christ, is also valid in relation to the adoption of man and of his world by God. Thus, in the Embodiment, God realizes a permanent adoption of man and his world.

The Logos made Himself a body, body-God, so that God does not cease to be God, and neither does the body cease to be a body. The Logos made Himself a soul, soul-God, yet, nevertheless, God remains God and the soul remains a soul. God the Logos made Himself a body, in order to bring back the body to its initial "logosity", which is the essence of our nature, the basis of our human being, the basis of our human life and existence. The ultimate goal of the Word's Embodiment consists precisely in logosifying (making rational, filling with sense), christifying and deifying man in his entire meaning. By His Passion and His Resurrection, Christ revealed to us the whole mystery of our salvation. Salvation means assuring for the body and the soul immortality and eternal life (Popovici, 1997).

Deification is a result of the Embodiment, is an act of grace. Deification does not refer to a direct relation between the soul and God, as in the theory about the contemplation of God. Man is deified, to the

extent to which he is restored in agreement with the Image of God Who is the Word, by the descent of the Word Himself to our fallen state by the Embodiment (Louth, 2002). Man is truly man only by the Man-God and in the Man-God. By His Embodiment, God the Word lifted the mysterious organism of the human body to the rank of His Temple. Thus, man's body became God's body. This divine and holy mystery of the body was made perfect in the body of Christ the man-God and remained holy forever in the divine-human body of Christ's Church. As Church, Christ the man-God consists precisely in His divine-human body in which are united, in an organic unity, first, God and man, and then all the people who believe in Christ. The people incorporated in the divine-human body of the Church are organically connected with God and with one another (Louth, 2002).

The Lord's Embodiment strongly marks the solidarization of God with the world and with man: in Christ, humanity does not belong only to the human hypostasis who considers it primarily his, but also to the divine hypostasis embracing all the people as His beings, created according to reasons preexisting since eternity in Him. In this sense, Christ, although in a certain sense He is the central man, however He does not have Himself in view, but His interest is totally turned to his fellow men. He is by excellence "the man for men", but, in this "man for men", God Himself is oriented exclusively towards the people. If Jesus Christ is the "man for the others, then it results that being a Christian means being – together with Jesus Christ – a man for men and together with them, waging together with them the fight for social justice and for peace, for accomplishing the ultimate sense of life. Jesus Christ is the example par excellence of selfless and fruitful love for our fellow. Consequently, He is the bedrock and the foundation stone and the never-ending source of hope for the Christian in history. And we can meet Jesus Christ only if we look for God Himself in our fellows. God's proximity is revealed in the brother that comes to us. But, to act according to this principle means actively participating to a social and creative commitment.

By His embodiment, God accepts man as he actually is, with no exception, with all his state of fall and need for salvation. The fundamental law of the Embodiment - as law of the divine love – is the adaptation of the divine action to man's given situation. By His Embodiment, Christ wanted to show that He takes on all the world's and man's problems for man to be set free from evil. Hence, salvation must be accomplished inside man's historical situation, in the framework of the concrete conditions of his life. The evangelical testimony brings to the believer the true answer to his essential need, a human existence. The authentically Christian existence is realized to the extent and in the concrete way of the divine-human character of the model provided by the Savior, namely if and to the extent to which the Christian believer makes Jesus Christ actual in the world, namely in the historical-social context of the respective epoch.

Out of the deep meaning of the Lord's Embodiment, the maximum confirmation of the human body with all its needs up to the limit of sin, one can grasp the authentic theological ground of all the endeavours in the sense of meeting - in optimal conditions - the physical needs, the material wellbeing. Because the human meaning of the Lord's Embodiment teaches us that the promotion of man cannot be limited unilaterally to the boundaries of his spiritual life, but must comprise his entire person in the objective situation he is in (cf. Luke 1: 52-53). Jesus Christ Himself acts towards man as a whole and endeavours to put him in the normal conditions of the accomplishment of his sense in life. At the same time, the renewal of the entire man refers not just to the salvation of the soul, but also to the destiny of the whole mankind, because the Embodied God identified Himself with the destiny of all the people. Therefore, the deacony of the Church must be undertaken for the benefit of all the people.

While the Lord's Embodiment entrusts the Church, which is its dynamic continuation, the duty to assume the human – including the world man lives in - with all his needs and aspirations up to the limit of sin, the Lord's death puts the Church in front of the truth that man must give himself totally for the good of his fellows. Whoever takes the cross upon himself, knows that he becomes solidary with those suffering and being oppressed and - therefore - actively intervenes for a juster and better world. Because we need to follow Jesus Christ, Who made Himself a man, humbled Himself and continued His kenosis up to its end, dying for us in the most humble manner.

Actually, the starting point in the entire theology of *Fr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae* is the axiom: if Jesus Christ did not assume and transfigured in Himself the human nature, then man and the creation are condemned to remain simple creatures, limited to this century (Bria, 1994).

The Byzantine theology elaborated the teaching on enhypostatizing, and by this an asymmetrical Christology, according to the adequate expression of Father Georges Florovsky, asymmetrical in the sense that Christ's human nature was respectively not substantiated and not personified in a Logos-independent manner, because in Christ there are no two subjects, because God did not assume a man in Christ but became Himself a man. The teaching on enhypostatizing already existed implicitly in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Credo, where it is stated that Christ is "*Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten and not made, one with the Father*" and Who "*for us, men and for our salvation*" descended from heaven and made Himself a man (Felmy, 1999).

The unifying Embodiment of God's Son and Word finds its accomplishment in the unifying resurrection, understanding simultaneously both the hypostatic union of the two natures and the interior union of the human nature assumed. Thus, all the soteriological acts assumed by Christ, Baptism, Passion, Death, can be seen as progressive stages towards an ever increasingly complete inner unification or pneumatization of the human nature. Saint Gregory of Nyssa explains the way this unifying work passes from Christ's human nature into the nature of the other people, who are in relation with Him. The Saint says that this is the mystery of God's *oikonomia* as far as we are concerned, the mystery of the resurrection from the dead, that it does not prevent the body from breaking apart from the soul by death and brings them back together by the resurrection, to put Himself in the middle between death and life, settling in Himself the nature divided by death yet making Himself the beginning of the Union of the divided ones (Buchiu, 1997).

Uniting in His Hypostasis the human nature with the divine nature, Christ laid since the beginning the foundation of the resurrection, as reunion for good or as eternization of the union of the soul with the body. He united Himself with both the soul and the body. By this He united Himself as well with the movement of the soul, which wants to remain united with the body and work on a unification as complete as possible, reinforcing this movement of the soul by His divine work, but also with the movement of the body which, as a consequence of sin, tends to break itself free from the soul and decompose.

Thus, by His Embodiment, Christ highlights the value of man as a whole, body and soul, their reunification being equivalent, according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa, with the return to freedom of the divine image in man, with man's regaining his original integrity (Buchiu, 1997).

4. Purpose of the Study

4.1. The human body – temple of the Holy Spirit

In the Christian conception, the physical dimension of the human being - namely the body - is the work of God's hands. God creates man's body after the material universe was created, because it was not fit for him, who was to be the master, to come before the things that were going to be submitted to him, but only after the preparation of the domain over which he was going to rule was it fit for the master to come as well. Regarding the creation of the body, we meet a direct and extraordinary intervention of God, Who models man as if he were an inanimated statue, afterwards giving him life by His breath. The creation of the human body thus becomes the result of the divine work.

Man's life takes place in the body. As long as man is in the body, he has life on earth. Being the bearer of the human life, the body is the organ of action. The soul works by the members it is composed of, which form a complete entity (cf. Romans 12: 4; 1 Corinthians 12: 12-26). In its movement, the body must not be let at random, because on its own it cannot fight sin. If we live according to the body, we shall die; and if we kill by the spirit the acts of the body, we shall be alive (cf. Romans 8: 13). The body is the organ in which our moral conduct manifests itself. The apostle of the nations exhorts us to bring our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasant to God (cf. Romans 12: 1), "because at the judgement we shall be judged according to what we have done while in the body" (2 Corinthians 5: 10).

By the resurrection, the bodies will participate to immortality (Luke 20: 26), because the power of death will be destroyed for good simultaneously to the general resurrection (1 Corinthians 15: 26). Consequently, in the Christian teaching, the body is admitted as part and parcel or essential component of the complete human personality, moreover, the human body is considered "Temple of the Holy Spirit", as Saint Paul the Apostle teaches us.

As "*natural organ of manifestation of the soul's life in the present world*" (Mladin 2003), the body accomplishes a promise given to the whole creation. It reaches its summit in the Embodiment of the Father's Word; this body is the language of the truth and of love. Even if the sinful mankind crucifies Him, His open arms and open heart speak with supreme eloquence about the all-comprehensive and redeeming love (John 3: 16).

By His Embodiment, God-the Word lifted the mysterious organism of the human body to the rank of His Temple, to the rank of His Body. In this way, man's body became God's body. This divine and holy mystery of the body met its perfection in the body of the man-God Christ and remained holy forever in the human-divine body of Christ's Church. As Church, the man-God Christ consists precisely in His human-divine body uniting in an organic unity first God and man, and then all the people who believe in Christ. The people incorporated in the human-divine body of the Church are organically connected to God and to one another (Popovici, 1997).

The body has moral value being the action tool of the soul on the present and material world (Popovici, 1997). According to the Christian faith, the body participates to the life of the spirit, going beyond the biological and physical-chemical level. Man's body is not just matter or only modellable rationality as object; it is subjectivized matter, participating to the spirit as subject (Stăniloae, 1978).

The sense of the human body is to participate to the eternal glory of God together with the soul, because without the body the possibilities of the soul could not become actual. The destination of the

body is for the human spirit to work by it to the transfiguration or spiritualization of the whole cosmos, of the whole nature (Stăniloae, 1978). With each body, as well as with each soul, with each man in his psycho-physical entirety, God wanted to realize a special thought of His; hence, the duty not to treat our fellows as simple identical items of the same reality, each man being unique in time and space (Pop 1986).

Just as our Saviour realized the work of our salvation in His body, putting Himself in God's service, similarly our body is a vehicle for holiness and an organ of the life of grace. The body of Christ Who was resurrected and lifted to full spiritual transparency and filled with holiness in front of the Father is not just a guarantee given to us by the Father, that we shall be resurrected as well; it is also a source of divine life for us in the earthly life, a source of power, of pneumatization, for us to remain and grow in cleanliness (purification) and in the pneumatization leading to the resurrection (Stăniloae, 1978).

We know that the glory of the saints and of the righteous, which they share in with their bodies at the resurrection is the overflowed grace of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3: 7-11), but the Holy Spirit is shared to us even since now by the Holy Mysteries, because "*The mysteries are the continual respiration of the Church by which she inspires and ceaselessly pours the Holy Spirit over her members*" (Radu, 1981). By this, our body becomes the altar of the Holy Spirit, and our members become members of Christ, according to the word of Saint Paul the Apostle: "*Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit lives in you?*" (1 Corinthians 3: 16). Hence, it results that man has no right over his body; he is not allowed to do any act that could injure it, since he is only the temporary administrator of an asset that actually does not belong to him and which he must give back to God in its original entirety (Lazurca, 1996).

The body sanctified by baptism and fed on "**the bread of life**" is dedicated to God, belongs to Christ (1 Corinthians 6: 16-20). It is the seed that needs to die for the human being to put on a new state, of transfiguration. In the act of the resurrection, the soul and the body are reunited for eternity in an eschatological humanity penetrated by the energy of the uncorruptible spirit (Pop, 1986).

The perspective of the resurrection of the bodies entitles us to give special value to the human body as temple of God and sign of hope. And along with this perspective of the resurrection we receive the power to fight, in this ephemeral existence, against the sinful passions, to fight for sensitization, for communion, for the likeness with Jesus Christ "*the first raised from the dead and the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*" (1 Corinthians 15: 20).

5. Research Methods

The methods and arguments which are specific to Christian moral theology, are also applied from transdisciplinary perspective, having as objectives life's assertion and defence, considering Christian teachings and also the data offered by bioethics – modern science with multiple perspectives in approach and research, which combines medical and genetic engineering fields with Christian theology and religious thought, going all the way to the interference between theology and laic science, thus generating dialogues different scientific areas, humanist, medical and technological. Thus, the subject we chose is hopefully unique because of its scientific approach, all the more so for orthodox theology by its interdisciplinary approach in which are asserted Christian moral values and those of social ethics, but

considering bioethics data. To the defence of defending and asserting life on the edge of moral acceptability, we applied both scientific, exegetic and hermeneutic, theoretical-deductive sciences in order to express the moral truths from theology's fundamental ideas based on the Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition, and on the practical-inductive ones, based on positive and disciplinary moral dispositions of Christian life. Surely, we didn't stopped at this rigid, scholastic-casuistic level, and we focused our research and subject approach on the ascetic and spiritual method which is specific for Orthodox Moral Theology, by means of which the practical aspect of life is evidenced in the perspective of spiritual life, which involves man's perfection by: 1) freeing from sin and ardor in the same time with practicing virtues; 2) illumination or true knowledge- Christian gnosis; and 3) union with God or mystic life. In conclusion, a inter and trans disciplinary approach of this subject is direly needed, for it is a delicate, extremely actual subject, which leads to results that are meant to defend life, not to destroy it, having at its center – man, but not the usual man, but the one assumed by Jesus Christ: God-man.

6. Findings

6.1. Jesus Christ – Pantocrator of the Church

The humanity-divinity of Christ is reproduced in the mystery of the Church, in her “*all-sacredness*”. In Christ and in the Church is settled, physically, all the fullness of the Divinity (Colossians 2: 9). The word of God written in the Scriptures, the eucharistic Bread and Wine mean God's presence in the world until the end of the century. The icon manifests in forms and colors the ineffable glory and power of God. The Church is structured in the human society where she lives, without being however the same thing as the human society, being in the world but not from the world. The eternal truths are expressed in a human language, because since God created man in His image and the divine word became human word, one can speak in human language about God in truth, without circumscribing God, however, in the human words (Bobrinskoy, 2004).

The Savior Christ is the Head of the Holy Church, and the Holy Church is His body, as the Holy Scripture tells us: “*Christ is the Head of the Church, His Body, and is Himself her Savior*” (Ephesians 1: 22, 23 ; 5: 23 ; Colossians 1: 18, 20). It is therefore easy to understand that no one can partake of salvation if he is not a member of Christ's body, namely of the Church. Because Jesus Christ and His Holy Church are inseparable. Just as the Savior Christ is the only teacher of the believers, the only mediator between God and His creatures, the only “*given among men by which we must be saved*” (Acts 4: 12), similarly one can only partake of salvation by being a member of Christ's body, namely of the Holy Church. The truth of salvation in the Holy Church is great and its mystery is deep. On receiving and following it depends our very salvation. To help us understand this truth, our Savior Christ uses the likeness of the vine and its branches, saying: “*Abide in Me and I will abide in you. Just as the branch is not able to bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who abides in Me and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers*” (John 15: 4, 6). Just as the branch withers if it is torn apart from the vine, from which it receives its food by the seep, similarly the soul dies spiritually, namely loses its salvation if it breaks apart from the Holy Church, from the mysterious body of the Savior Christ, feeding it by the divine grace. The grace

in the Holy Church is like the warm blood in the living human body, feeding all the limbs of the body. If a limb breaks free from the body, then immediately it deprives itself from life, because in it no longer flows the blood and so it is to be thrown away. Similarly the believer who separates himself from the Holy Church - depository of the divine grace -, dies spiritually because he no longer has spiritual life from the mysterious body of Christ, from the Holy Church.

The feature of the Church of being one, shows the fact that one is her Head and founder, our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1: 22, 23; 5: 23; Colossians 1: 18); one is the Holy Spirit, animating her with the divine grace, one is her target of gathering together all the believers and of sanctifying them (John 9: 51, 52; 7: 11 and 20, 23); one is the true teaching and also one is the right way that leads to salvation. The Holy Church is the “body of Christ”, it is the true teaching and at the same time the right way leading to salvation. The Holy Church is “the body of Christ”, of the ever-living Christ Who is her Head (Ephesians 1: 22, 23) and in her the Holy Spirit is permanently at work by His grace, illuminating and guiding her servants ceaselessly.

The Church is Christ’s body extended in mankind. The Church unite everything that exists or is meant to unite all that exists: God and the creation. Saint Paul the Apostle shows that the Church is precisely Christ’s Body (Ephesians 1: 23; 5: 23), which has many members: *“For just as the physical body is one yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so also is the body of Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and we were all imbued with one Spirit. For indeed the body is not a single member, but many.”* (1 Corinthians 12: 12-14).

Yet each member has his honor and place in the body, without substituting itself to the whole body (1 Corinthians 12: 18) or to another member, just as the body cannot be conceived without members. The members have their identity, yet not outside the body, but because they are members of the body. For this reason, among them there should be no separation motivating that some are more honorable than the others, but “they should similarly take care of one another... And if one member suffers, all the members suffer together, and if one member is honored, all the members rejoice together”.

As body of Christ, the Church is not the numerical sum of her members, but is the universal union with Christ of the created hypostases which she creates in a new birth (the Holy Baptism), reinforces and seals with the Spirit of Christ (the Holy Oil) and unites them with His Body and Blood (the Holy Eucharist).

Christ and the humanity are so united in the Church that neither Christ nor the humanity can be seen or imagined without each other, or, in other words, they call and imply each other. For this reason, Christ is the Head of the Church, and the humanity, namely those incorporated personally in Christ, are the Church, as Christ’s body, extended over the centuries.

Christ’s special position in the Church consists essentially in that of head of the Church (Colossians 1: 18), of factor uniting the believers with Himself as His body and in quality of source of power and model guiding and filling those included in Him, who are made more and more in His image.

Christ has become the Head of the Church by the fact that the divine hypostasis of the Son took on the human image, entering therefore in relation with all the human persons hypostatizing the same human nature, and being for all the central Man implying and supporting them. And this quality becomes efficient because Christ communicates to us under a human form His divine power by the Holy Spirit.

Saint Paul the Apostle calls Christ adequately and directly Head of the Church: “Christ is the head of the body, of the Church” (Colossians 1: 18, 24).

After our Savior Christ entrusted the apostles and their successors the leadership of the Church, He is and remains the true non-visible head of His Church, animating her by One and the Same Holy Spirit, together with all the believers in an internal relation and a unity under Himself, leading them in this way to salvation (Comoroșan, 1887), to the deification of the body unto likeness with God, by means of the visible organs.

The Church is accomplishment when it has attained her calling of “accomplishment of Christ”, according to Saint John Chrysostom: “The head will be accomplished only when the body is made perfect, when we are all co-united and connected together”; by the extension of the Embodiment, Christ=Man-God, becomes Christ=Mankind-God, Church. The entire Christ, head and body, *totus Christi*, is He and us, as Blessed Augustine says, and the Church, evidently one and evidently Christ, is lived in the Eucharist: between body and head there is no distance, the slightest distance would kill us, and, on this level, all are one Christ (Evdokimov, 1996).

6.2. The deification of the body, fundamental condition for acquiring eternal life

According to the teaching of the Holy Fathers, man has to enter the framework of the Church to be reborn and so to acquire his second birth, called spiritual birth. This is realized by means of the Church Mysteries served in the framework of the Orthodox Tradition. When man is guided on the way that leads from image to likeness, he accomplishes the aim of his existence. This accomplishment of man is realized by an ascetic life supported by the Church Mysteries. Man, who was made in God’s image, needs to get united to Him to look for eternal welfare, not eternal deprivation, as Saint Maximus the Confessor states.

Asceticism is the killing of the death in us, to free nature from its dominion. Our asceticism is death of our old man, a willing extension of the Baptism, it is not just imitation of Christ, as in the West, but heroic mortification with Christ and in Christ. By asceticism, the Christian reverses the movement towards revolt and self-deification; he opposes the tendency of his nature of becoming existentially absolute, and dynamically puts his personal will into operation to restore his nature in communion with the grace of life. This restauration supposes fight in man, even against his own nature, against what his nature became since the fall.

The individual nature is what man is, yet, at the same time, it is not the essence of man. The return of man’s soul from the bad passions to the concentration on God is generally called being set free from sinful passions. The believer who is following Christ and who has mortified his will and has died according to the old man, in Christ, is aware, more clearly than other people, of the continual revolt and pride of the body (Pop-Bistrițeanul, 2001).

The man created in God’s image, meant to be deified by the realization of the divine likeness, has been drawn astray. Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, but free from the conception in sin; He reunited in His hypostasis the divine nature and the human nature. He became Jesus the man. He took upon Himself the whole mankind, being the new Adam, the *universal man*, and all His works also have a universal value; He modelled His human will according to the will of God and so lifted the humanity up to immortality, in His spiritual suffering (the garden of Gethsemane), in his physical

suffering (death on the cross), He bore all the weight of the sin of a man reproved by God, He offered the God of justice as an expiatory sacrifice, He paid for our sins and He reconciled us with God. By Him, the divine nature clothed the human nature, without destroying it, just as the fire reddens the iron; He gave man salvation, eternal life in God, even here among troubles and in the life of the century to come, in the resurrected life: because resurrecting Himself, He will resurrect in the body the whole mankind.

The salvation of all is therefore the deification of the human nature; individual salvation is acquiring this gift by a personal effort, because deification is not a physical or magical action on man, but an inner action, a work of grace in man. This work is accomplished with the collaboration of man's freedom and not against us. It is life in Christ, under the action of the Holy Spirit. Man's effort is mysteriously united to the gift of God, the gift of the divine adoption, by the power of deification. Man must be committed to this effort entirely not just by one of his aspects. The power of deification is endless as eternity (Bulgakov, 1997).

If deification in a broad sense means lifting man up to the highest level of his natural powers, or up to the full realization of man, since all this time the divine power of grace is also active in him, deification in a narrow sense includes the progress made by man beyond the limit of his natural powers, beyond the margins of his nature, on the divine level above nature. These two kinds of deification differ, yet there is, nevertheless, a continuity between them as between two stages of the same ascent, although, for the passage from the first stage to the second, a leap is needed, because in the first stage man works, too, while, in the second stage, only God does (Stăniloae, 2002).

Advancing in Christ in the communion with the others and in the endless communion with the Holy Trinity, man advances at the same time in his unity, without annulling its contrasting components. We have the supreme model of this un-mixed and un-confounded unity in Christ, in Whom the humanity is united with the divinity in a single Person, in an uncompounded manner. He is the center of attraction of the ever increasing union of the human components and of the people among themselves and with God. This is the direction of man's continual transcendence; it tends to an ever greater unity among the components of the human nature: soul and body, being created and united to the Uncreated God, person *per se* and in communion, limited and indefinite person, man and nature, a being marked by the transitory temporality and meant for eternity (Stăniloae, 1987).

For the Eastern thinking, the Fall, the Embodiment, Parousia are not just heavenly manifestations, but events meaning the passage (the Passover) of the human nature to a different state of the human nature, events mysteriously present and working in history. On the other hand, Christ did not interest the patristic thinking only under His aspect of Jesus of Nazareth, with His human actions, but the patristic reflection was directed towards the ontological change worked by His coming in the terrestrial existence. The historical, phenomenological aspect hides the noumenal reality. Parousia is already inaugurated, it is present and directs the course of history and only it allows a true reading of reality.

The words "*He has appeared once and for all*" (Hebrews 9: 26) highlight the unique, irrevocable and irreversible value of the event of the Embodiment. The Ascension to heaven introduces the human nature in the eternity of the Father's profundities, and puts its mark forever on salvation. History relies on Christ's uniqueness. Everything that was before is but "prefiguration", typology. In the Epistle to the Romans 5: 14, Adam is the image of Christ, and the Fathers decipher the sense of the historical events in the light of the same typological method. All that happened after the Embodiment is an extension of it;

the time of the Church is the time of the subjective appropriation by all and by every one in turn of the objective salvation. Thus, the Church reveals herself as a new dimension of life and a new criterion of history, because she relies on what is unique and is open to *the age of ages (eschaton)*.

The typological conception of the Old Testament, with the Fathers, shows this age as a prefiguration of the aeon that is to come in Christ, and this allows reading history in the light of this aeon. The aeon that is Christ is at the same time the eschaton: in Christ, history has been accomplished. Nothing new can happen in history anymore because nothing can go beyond Christ. The Revelation is over, because the Resurrection already inaugurates the Parousia. It is imminent, but its time is unknown, and, for this reason, according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa, history unfolds since beginnings to new beginnings through endless beginnings. According to the Fathers' teaching, Christ portrays the beginnings of the deified humanity, all the dough being sanctified by these beginnings. We actually have the eternal life, protoevangelical promise, when any human being will be given back this life, body and soul together, under the dominion of the divine vivifying Spirit. The Resurrection of the Parousia will be universal, when the soul will find again his body, a body like the one of the Resurrected Christ, imponderable and absolutely impenetrable (Stăniloae, 1987).

Finally, the earth will be spiritualized, for the righteous to have a dwelling adequate for the glory to which they have been called.

7. Conclusion

"I saw a painting somewhere: a young man in all the glory of his young limbs, dressed in the light of the sunrays, sitting on the crest of a mountain, and, at his feet, the world – his dowry, his kingdom.

It was man, the man king, the man ruler and master. This was meant to be since the beginning, because this is what He Who created man ordained".

For man were the first dawns open, for him was the first act accomplished: the creation. The creation was supposed to be the joy of man and the flowery garden of his immortality. It became its torment, instead. This is how the second great universal feat came: salvation. At the heart of salvation is man, again. It is for man that the Man-God becomes a man. It is for man that Christ makes Himself a teacher, a miracle worker, it is for man that Christ sacrifices Himself on the cross. He wants to look for the lost man. The slave of the earth and of sin needs to be freed, saved; he must become again a master of the earth and of his own being, he must become the new man.

The most significant truth for the new man is that his relation to God changed completely. The new man is the son of God, not God's slave (Romans 8: 14-17). The new man is a loving man, because love "is not sweet water, or raspberry syrup. Love is fire".

"And you have put on the new man, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of his Creator" (Colossians 3:10).

"*The new man*" springs from the soul created in God's image, and by conscience and by will, he is gradually "*renewed*" by Christ the Lord, to be created in God' image and in Christ's image. This renewal is completely natural, being realized based on the nature of man, created since the beginning in God's image. And Christ, Who is "*icon of the invisible God*" (Colossians 1:15) is precisely the prototype and Eternal Icon according to which we are renewed. After Him and by Him we re-establish God's image in

our soul. And we do not just re-establish it but we develop it further on, carried towards the endless divine perfections “until we all attain to mature adulthood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4: 13). Consequently, this renewal is nothing but our in-Christization and our Christification. Because this is also the reason of our creation and salvation: to become like our Creator and Savior – the Lord Jesus Christ. And we are becoming like Him, indeed, when we live in Him and by Him. As our ideal, Christ’s image corresponds to our nature, because we were created with soul according to God’ image.

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