

Creation and Time. Byzantine and Modern

Elena Ene Drăghici-Vasilescu

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Dr. Vasilescu has also published chapters in collective volumes; some of those are as follows: “The Last Wonderful thing. The icon of the Heavenly Ladder”, in James and A. Eastmond (eds.), *Wonderful Things. Byzantium through its Art*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2013, pp. 176-184; “Gregory of Nyssa” entry in Ph. Esler (ed.), *The Early Christian World*, Routledge, 2017 (first edition 2000), chapter 55; pp. 1072-1087.

Her articles feature in leading journals as, for instance, *Byzantinoslavica*, *The Journal of Theological Studies*, *Studia Patristica*, *Journal of Early Christian History*, and *Akropolis*. They focus on Byzantine Philosophy, Patristics, Byzantine and post-Byzantine culture, Prof. Vasilescu is a frequent speaker at national and international conferences.

Creation and Time. Byzantine and Modern

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Table of contents

Acknowledgments

Introduction

Chapter 1. Textual sources that inspired the Patristic authors who lived before the eighth century

1.1. Notable pagan sources concerning the notion of time

1.2. The main source used by the Patristic authors: The Bible

Chapter 2. The concept of time in the writings of Origen and Cyprian of Carthage

2. 1. *Kairos* and *chronos*. Cyclicity and linearity

2. 1 a) Origen about the notion of time

2. 1 b) Cyprian of Carthage about the notion of time

2. Conclusion

Chapter 3. The Cappadocian School and John Chrysostom on the notion of time

3. 1. Basil the Great/of Caesarea

3. 2. Gregory of Nyssa

3. 3. Gregory of Nazianzus

3. 4. John Chrysostom

Chapter 4. Augustine about the notion of time

Chapter 5. Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite about the concept of time

5. 1. Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite about the notion of time

5.2. How some authors understood the concept of time within the Corpus Dionysiacum

5. 3. Conclusions

Chapter 6. Maximus the Confessor on the notion of time

Chapter 7. The ‘Creation of the world’ in the texts of Byzantine and Patristic authors: The Cappadocian School and Augustine

7. 1. The seeds of creation – *logoi spermatikoi*

7. 1.1. The Stoics

7. 1.2. The Neoplatonists

7. 2. Early Christianity on the concept of *logoi spermatikoi*

7. 2. 1. The Cappadocians

7. 1. a) Basil of Caesarea

7. 2. 1. b) Gregory of Nyssa

7. 2. 1. c) Augustine

7. 2. 1. d) Maximus the Confessor

Chapter 8. Later usages of the ancient differentiation ‘*chronos-kairos*’

8. 1. Introduction

8. 2. Paul Tillich about time (and history). His view on the distinction

8. 2.2. Human Freedom

8. 2. 3. History as humankind’s maturing process

9. 2. 4. Eschatology

Chapter 9. Conclusion

Bibliography

Index

List of Abbreviations

AnBoll	Analecta Bollandiana
Bibliotheca veterum Patrum	Bibliotheca veterum Patrum antiquorumque scriptorium ecclesiasticorum graecorum, postrema Lugdunensi longe locupletior atque accuratior – Andreas Gallandi (ed.), 1765-1788 – J. B. Albritii Hieron, Venice, vols. 1-14
CCCP G/CPG	Corpus Christianorum. Clavis Patrum Graecorum
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis
CCCOGD Generaliumque Decreta	Corpus Christianorum Conciliorum Oecumenicorum
CC-PGS	Corpus Christianorum Patristic Greek Series
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum in Translation. Series Graeca
CFBS	Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium Subsidia
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium

CMP	Corpus Marianum patristicum – Sergius Alvarez Campos (ed.), Burgos, 1970-1985, vols.1-8
CPG	Clavis Patrum Graecorum: qua optimae quaeque scriptorum patrum Graecorum recensiones a primaevae saeculis usque ad octavum commode recluduntur –M. Geerard, F. Glorie; F. Winkelmann, and J. Desmet (eds.), Turnhout: Brepols, 1974-1987, vols. 1-6
DOP	Dumbarton Oaks Papers
GCS	Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
HER	English Historical Review, 1886-present
JTS	The Journal of Theological Studies
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LXX	The Septuagint
NCE	New Catholic encyclopedia
NPNF	A Selected Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers; H. Wace and P. Schaff (eds.)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NRSV 1995	The New Interpreter's Bible: general articles introduction, commentary & reflections for each book of the Bible, including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical books in twelve volumes. v. 9, [The Gospel of Luke, The Gospel of John], Nashville
NT	Novum Testamentum
Numen	Numen: International Review for the History of Religions

OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
OCP	Orientalia Christiana Periodica
ODB	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i> A. P. Kazhdan, A. M. Talbot et Alii (eds.), I-III, New-York/Oxford, 1991
ODCC	Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church
PG	Patrologia cursus completus, Series Graeca
PL	Patrologia cursus completus, Series Latina
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
SCH	Studies in Church History
Speculum	Speculum: a Journal of Medieval Studies
SVTQ	St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to my colleagues and students for our many professional exchanges during seminars and lectures in Patristics, Late Antiquity, and Byzantine Studies in Oxford. Some of their output is contained in this volume. The rest is the product of the research carried out by myself in the Bodleian library; thanks are due to the staff there for their help and for allowing me to borrow the publications needed. Theology and Religion Library as well as Christ Church, Wolfson, and Blackfriars were very instrumental from this point of view. Fiona Wilkes in Wolfson usually displays new volumes authored by the members of the college, including mine, in various cases across the institution, hence we have readers as soon as we publish; therefore she deserves a special mention. It is only because of my limitations that I left out almost half of the material collected. Hopefully, one day this will be included in another, more substantial book.

Among my colleagues Carol Harrison, Averil Cameron, Mark Edwards, and Clemena Antonova have encouraged me most. I also thank my family and friends, and especially my husband for their patience and support.

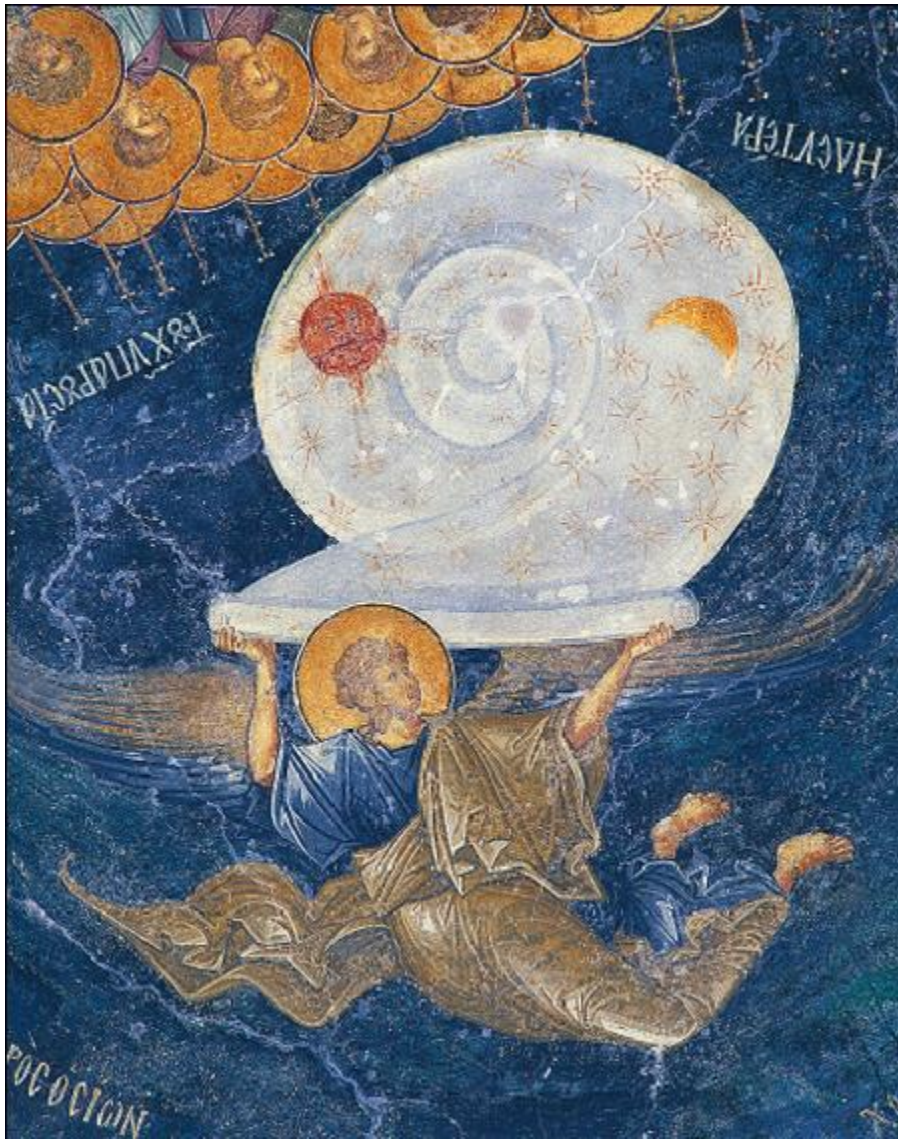




Fig. 1. a) and b). The fresco entitled ‘The Last Judgement’. The first image is from the volume published by Munemoto Jamagi; Eiichi Takahashi, Shigebumi Tsuji, and Yasushi Nagatsuka, *Byzantium*, trans. from German by Nicholas Fry, London: Cassell, 1978 (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editores S., 1976), p. 80, fig. 37. It exists also in Cyril Mango (Text), Ahmet Ertug (Photos), *Chora: the Scroll of Heaven*, Istanbul: Ertug & Kocabiyik (Borusan), 2000. The second image is the reproduction of a photograph I myself took in May 2013. Within the church of Chora/Kahriye Camii/Djami, Constantinople/Istanbul, where it is depicted, this scene is known as ‘An Angel Rolling up of the Scroll of Heaven at the End of Time’, cf. Rev. 6. 14.¹

¹ The fresco entitled ‘The Last Judgement’ in the volume written by Munemoto Jamagi; Eiichi Takahashi, Shigebumi Tsuji, and Yasushi Nagatsuka, *Byzantium*, trans. from German by Nicholas Fry, London: Cassell, 1978 (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editores S., 1976), p. 80, fig. 37. Within the church of Chora/Kahriye Camii/Djami, Constantinople/Istanbul, where it is depicted, this scene is known as ‘An Angel Rolling up of the Scroll of Heaven at the End of Time’, cf. Rev. 6. 14. In the book is specified that this piece of Palaeologian Renaissance painting dates to c. 1320. Theodore Metochites, a Byzantine dignitary, ordered the decoration of the church to be realized between 1315 and 1321. The Revelation 6:14 King James Version (KJV) states that: “And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.” The image shows the major part of the scene of the Last Judgement painted on the vaulting of

Creation and Time. Byzantine and Modern

Introduction

Time, its passing, and the beginning of the world, have preoccupied humankind from the moment it became aware of its own existence. People tried to establish when (if) the time and the world began, when (if) they finish, and sometimes if indeed time has reality. This book, concentrating on such subject-matters, is ‘technical’ in the sense that it narrows down the discussion on this topic to the understanding which a few authors have had of it through the pair of terms *chronos* and *kairos*. Even more precisely, it carries out an investigation into the concept of **time** and into ideas about the **creation of the world** as these were comprehended from the second century throughout the Byzantine age. It also shortly treats, in chapter 9, the notions of **time** and **creation** as these have been revisited by some modern and contemporary scholars, in particular Paul Tillich, because from among them he elaborated in most detail on these. Because most of the authors I mention discussed **time** in connection with the manner in which people conceived the **creation** of the world, I have also included here a long chapter about the latter.

My hypothesis regarding **time** is that in the first seven centuries of Christian era one theory about it was dominant: this asserted that God is outside of time and is continuously creating it since he also incessantly brings into being his resourceful Word and everything that exists. Time is important because in its passing people work on their salvation.

Otherwise, the early thinkers of the Patristic period considered that time (as well as space) is not essential for the existence of the earthly world, but that they are necessary conventional

the southern side-chapel. The lower part of the painting within this shrine/museum represents the so-called Deesis, with Christ enthroned in the middle and the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist on either side of him “acting as mediators between God and mankind.”

‘devices’ to ensure human functionality; what was considered crucial was the way in which time was spent. Concerning *kairos* and *chronos* they were mainly understood as, respectively, ‘a moment of great opportunity which should appropriately be acted upon’, and as ‘time measured by a chronometer/clock – divided in units’.

Our specific purpose is to reveal how Origen (c.185-c.254), Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200-258), Basil the Great/of Caesarea (330-379), Gregory of Nyssa (335-394), Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329-390),² John Chrysostom (349-407), Augustine (354-430), Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite (sixth century), and Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662) expressed and dealt with the concept of time in their texts, especially how they paid attention to *chronos* and *kairos*. Concerning the stands vis-à-vis creation I will present, in chapter 8, mainly those of Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, and Maximus the Confessor. The Patristic authors expressed the chief idea about time I put forward above in different ways; the variations consisted in the manner in which the Universe and the human history, and especially the human souls, were understood to come about and develop. These early Christians – and, as we shall see, the modern ones too – were inspired by the Bible, but also read the celebrated writings previous to and contemporary to them, even those penned by pagan authors.

The comprehension of the notion of time delineated by the above-stated focal theory can essentially be analysed from a metaphysical point of view as well as from a historical one.

These two principal standpoints include secondary ones as, *inter alia*, the following:

² Christopher A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: in Your Light We Shall See Light*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008; C.A. Beeley (ed.), *Re-reading Gregory of Nazianzus*, Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen*, introd. and commentary by Frederick W. Norris, trans. by Lionel Wickham and Frederick Williams, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*, vol 13, Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1990/1991; Richard Cross, “Divine Monarchy in Gregory of Nazianzus”, *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 14/1 (Spring 2006): 105-116; and Elena Ene D-Vasilescu, “Generation (γενεά) in Gregory Nazianzen’s poem *On the Son*”, in the journal *Akropolis*, vol. 1 (2017), pp. 169-184.

cosmological (the temporality³ of the creation and the evolution of the world until the end of times), soteriological (the history of salvation of mankind), anthropological (the temporality tailored to the dimensions of one's individual life: time of conversion, of mystical states, of remarkable accomplishments, etc.), and eschatological (the suspension of the flux of time and the timelessness of the 'heavenly city'/kingdom of God). One can also speak of linear chronological versus instantaneous, liturgical, and sensible time, timelessness/eternity, everlasting temporal duration (in Boethius' distinction, *aeternitas* and *sempiternitas* respectively; I.4.3⁴), and so on – all those are circumscribed to one of the main two categories. Nevertheless, it should not be understood that the distinction between these two stances has always been consistently exposed in an evident manner within the works of the authors who lived in the period the book principally focuses on, but intimations towards one or another –and sometimes both – exist in those writings. Therefore, throughout the monograph I shall indicate from time to time which of these positions the authors adopted, but it will not always be possible to clearly pinpoint what is 'purely' metaphysical and what 'purely' historical. The leading thread concerning the discussion about time is, as specified, the differentiation *χρόνος-καιρός/chronos-kairos*; with regard to creation it is the existence of *λόγοι σπερματικοί/logoi spermatikoi* within its constituents.

³ I use 'time' and 'temporality' interchangeably in this volume.

⁴ Anicius Manlius Severinus Boëthius/Boethius, *De consolazione philosophiae*, in *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (henceforward CSEL in footnotes), vol. 67, edited by Wilhelm Weinberger, Vienna: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1934. The quotation here is from *De consolazione philosophiae/Boethius: The consolation of philosophy*, trans. by V. E. Watts, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, I.4.3, p. 42. See also Henry Chadwick, *Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology and Philosophy*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981, and Margaret Gibson (ed.), *Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981. Additionally, *De consolazione philosophiae Consolation of Philosophy* translated by Joel Relihan, Norton: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001, and *The Theological Tractates and The Consolation of Philosophy*, translated by H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand, Cambridge: The Project Gutenberg, 2004 based on the *Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. H. F. Stewart, E. K. Rand, and S. J. Tester, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989. For Boethius, as for us today, *aeternitas*/eternity referred to something that exists outside time and thus lacks temporal duration, and *sempiternitas*/sempiternal to something that is everlasting (has infinite temporal duration); i. e. exists within time but everlastingly.

Despite the fact that there have been many attempts to define time, there are no substantial volumes on how the topic is rendered either by the Patristic authors themselves or by more recent theologians and philosophers who commented on their writings. Nevertheless, the subject was partially touched on by thinkers belonging to both these categories. Among the scholars who were preoccupied with the issue of time in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries notable are James Barr,⁵ Thorleif Boman,⁶ Oscar Cullmann,⁷ John Marsh,⁸ John A. T. Robinson,⁹ and Paul Tillich.¹⁰

Chapter 1. Textual sources about the notion of time that inspired the Patristic authors who lived before the eighth century

1. a) Notable pagan sources concerning the notion of time

Throughout this monograph, comments about writings pertaining not only to Christian, but also to pagan literature will be made for the purpose of emphasizing specific ideas by means of comparison. From among the pre-Christian authors in whose works there are references to the notion of time we shall only mention Plato and Aristotle; their *oeuvre* constituted the source for the texts of the writers who are central to this book. It is important to remark at the outset of the publication that the most instrumental works in the shaping of Patristic conceptions with respect to ‘time’ regarded it as being correlated with the notion of movement. Plato (428/427 or 424/423 - 348/347 BC), in his dialogue *Timaeus*, spoke about

⁵ James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*, London: SCM Press, 1962.

⁶ Thorleif Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, trans. Jules L. Moreau, London: SCM Press, 1960, reprint 1970.

⁷ Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Conception of Time and History*, trans. by Floyd V. Filson, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1945, reprint 1950.

⁸ John Marsh, *The Fulness of Time*, New York: Harper & Brothers; London: Nisbet & Co., 1952.

⁹ John A. T. Robinson, *In the end, God: A Study of the Christian Doctrine of the Last Things*, London: James Clarke & Co. 1968, repr. 2011 and *A Theological Wordbook of the Bible*, London: SCM, 1962.

¹⁰ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press; London: Nisbet, 1951-1963; London: SCM, 1978.

time being created by the Demiurge as a “moving image of eternity”. Aristotle (384 - 322 BC), in his *Physics*, also expressed a direct connection between the two terms. For him “time is [...] number of motion in respect of ‘before’ and ‘after’.”¹¹ The Greek philosopher thought that time does not exist if motion and change do not exist; for him time *belongs* to movement: ‘τῆς κινήσεως τι’ (*Phys.* 4.11, 219a9-10) and ‘άθος τι κινήσεως’ (*Phys.* 8.1, 251b28). He avers: “time is either movement or something that *belongs* to movement. Since then it is not a movement, it must be something that *belongs* to movement.” Therefore he, in e. g. *Phys.* 4.11, 219a8-10, denies that time is a certain kind of movement, as some later thinkers consider it to be (Eunomius, for instance, is one of those who *identified* time with a certain kind of movement).¹² When treating specific issues in later chapters we shall return to these philosophers and their ideas. The fact that they conceived time and movement as linked realities should not come as a surprise because, according to various modern scholars – among them James Barr in the book *Biblical Words for Time*¹³ – in both Indo-European and Semitic languages the two terms have a common root.¹⁴ Thus Barr confirms what Conrad von Orelli, who studied the development of temporal words from those denoting movement,

¹¹ Aristotle, *Φυσικά/Physics* 219b 1: “τοῦτο νάρ ἐστν ὁ χρόνος [...] ἀριθμὸς κινήσεως [...] χρόνον τοῦτο νάρ ἐνσιν ὁ χρόνος ὡς πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον ἐν τῇ κινήσει ἢ ὡς τὸ αὐτὸ μὲν πρότερου δὲ καὶ ὕστερον τινός, οὐ δοκεῖ χρόνος γεγοῦναι οὐδοκεῖς, ὅτι οὐδὲ κίγησις. ὅταν δὲ τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον, τότε λέγομεν χρόνον...”. The entire quotation is: “καὶ ὕστερον, τότε λέγομεν χρόνον τοῦτο νάρ ἐνσιν ὁ χρόνος ὡς πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον ἐν τῇ κινήσει ἢ ὡς τὸ αὐτὸ μὲν πρότερου δὲ καὶ ὕστερον τινός, οὐ δοκεῖ χρόνος γεγοῦναι οὐδοκεῖς, ὅτι οὐδὲ κίγησις. ὅταν δὲ τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον, τότε λέγομεν χρόνον. τοῦτο νάρ ἐστν ὁ χρόνος, χρόνον. ἀριθμὸς κινήσεως κατὰ τὸ προτερον καὶ ὕστερον. οὐκ ἄρα κίνησις ὁ χρόνος ἀλλ ἢ ἀλαττον δ’ ἀριθμὸς ἐστν δχχῶς (καὶ γάρ τὸ ἀριθμοῦμενον καὶ τὸ ἀριθμητὸν ἀριθμὸν λέρομεν, καὶ ᾧ ἀριθμοῦμενον), ὁ δὲ χρόνος ἐστν τὸ ἀριθμοῦμενον καὶ οὐχ ᾧ ἀριθμοῦμενον”, in Aristotle, *Physics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, edited by William David Ross, revised edition, 1963, on-line edition 2020; *Physics* is abbreviated henceforth as *Phys.* See also Aristotle, *The Works of Aristotle*, edited by W. D. Ross, *Physics*, Book IV. 8, trans. by R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, Clarendon Press, p. 708 (vols. 1-12; 1908-1952). And Robert Mayhew (ed.), *Aristotle*, vol. 1: *Problems*, Books 1-19. Loeb classical library 316, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011; Aristotle/Aristotelis *Physica*, Oxonii: e typographeo Clarendoniano, 1956, and Aristotelis/Aristotle, *Physica*, trans. by Iacobus Veneticus in the twelfth century (translatio ‘uetus’/the ‘old’ translation); (TAGL.7.1), liber 1, chap. 2, pag. 11, linea 4 (Bekker: 185a), s. 12 p. C. Also Aristotle, *Aristoteles Latinus*, VII.1, fasc. secundus, edited by F. Bossier et J. Brams: *Summa formarum* 53042; *Summa formarum dissimilium* 3953; *Media uerborum longitudo* 5,13; 1990, pp. 7-340. Permalink: <http://ezproxyprd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2361/ALD/pages/TextSearch.aspx?key=MIV11PHYS>.

¹² Aristotle, *Phys.* 4.11, 219a9-10, ‘τῆς κινήσεως τι’; and *Phys.* 8.1, 251b28 ‘άθος τι κινήσεως’.

¹³ J. Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*, London: SCM Press, 1962, reprinted Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1969.

¹⁴ See my article on this topic, “Early Christianity about the notion of time and the redemption of the soul”, *Studia Patristica*, vol. XCI/17 (2017): 167-183.

elaborates in his *Die hebraischen Synonima der Zeit und Ewigkeit genetisch und sprachvergleichend dargestellt*.¹⁵ The Italian scholar indicates that in the family of the languages mentioned above many terms which refer to time are derived from words connected to movement. Within the former, they originate in the simple root *i* ‘go’; within the latter (Semitic) there exists a large variety of terms taken from different kinds of motion: fast and slow, sudden and abrupt, agitated, circular and so on.¹⁶ He also wrote that alongside this group of expressions which represent time as a phenomenon affecting human beings, there is another cluster in which time is presented as being fixed, determined, or ordained.¹⁷ The Hebrew genealogy of the crucial terms in the context of the book is thus: ‘time’ comes from ‘*Et*’ and ‘eternity’ from ‘*Olam* and *neš ah*’. In the chapter (no 9) dedicated to later employments of the terms *chronos-kairos* for the notion of time we shall introduce more of Barr’s ideas.

1 b) The main source used by the Patristic authors: The Bible

There are more than 2,000 words and expressions that refer to the notion of time within the Bible which, as is to be expected, was the main source for the Early Christians thinkers. Some of these terms refer to events that take place during a year, some to the period that has passed from a person’s birth, some to days and nights, etc. The most frequent of those deployed to express the notion of time in Scripture are *καιρός* and *χρόνος*. While an Old Testament piece as the Deuteronomy (D 32. 35) mentions *καιρός* (‘the appropriate time for something’) in ambivalent terms – both a moment of vengeance and of recompense –

¹⁵ Conrad von Orelli, *Die hebraischen Synonima der Zeit und Ewigkeit genetisch und sprachvergleichend dargestellt* [Hebrew Synonyms of time and eternity genetically and linguistically comparative], Leipzig, 1871.

¹⁶ C. von Orelli, in *Die hebraischen Synonima der Zeit*, p. 45.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

generally the concept has a positive connotation, as in Is 49: 8 (where it appears as ‘acceptable time’). In the New Testament *καιρός* occurs many times and here it also means ‘acceptable’ as well as ‘accepted’ time (the latter term occurs, for instance, in 2 Cor 6: 2a). A related meaning is found in Mark 1.15 where it is said that “time is fulfilled/i.e. *καιρός* is happening”. The same meaning of the word was peculiar to a liturgical context: during the Service of the Eucharist within the Byzantine/Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches the expression for ‘time’ used to be *καιρός*; that emphasized the fact that the time of the Liturgy was (and still is) considered to intersect Eternity. In regard to the term *χρόνος*, of which there are 54 instances in the Christian Scriptures, it refers to a specific amount of time (month, day, hour, etc.); its engagement as such is to be found for example in Acts 13.18, 27.9.

It is useful to underline that the manner in which the holy book renders ‘time’ allows for multiple interpretations. It is well known that the fragment par excellence concerned with temporality, the Apocalypse of John, is particularly susceptible to a multi-faceted reading.¹⁸

Among the authors of whose works I shall discuss, particularly Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite draws our attention to how time is presented in the Holy Book.

¹⁸Among the newest editions of the Apocalypses of John is that by Caesarius Arelatensis, *Expositio de Apocalypsi sancti Iohannis*, edited by Roger Gryson, in *Corpus Christiaorul Series Latina 105*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2019; Caesarius Arelatensis of Chalon [Gaul] lived in 468/470-542 AD.

Chapter 2. The concept of time in the writings of Origen and Cyprian of Carthage

2. 1. Kairos and chronos. Linearity and cyclicity of time

Before analyzing the conception of each author about linearity and cyclicity, I have to explain their meaning. Cyclical time is the view that prior to this universe there have been multiple universes. Each universe exists successively: one universe comes to an end, and then another universe comes into existence. Linear time is the view that God created one universe, and that He will bring His purposes to completion for that one universe.

2.1 a). Origen about the notion of time

From among the Patristic authors, Origen (c.185–c. 254) is the first to offer extensive intimations about the notion of time in the texts he authored. Even though he does not use the word *kairos*, he spoke extensively about *apokatastasis* (PG 11 165A-166A; the word only appears once within the Bible, in Acts 3: 21), which marks the completion and the renewal of creation, hence can be considered the supreme *kairos*. The time that runs towards that ultimate happening is *chronos*. The Alexandrian also speaks about the cyclicity of time. That while Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200-253) suggests that time flows in only one direction. In fact, what the latter describes are also temporary cycles within a general linear course of both cosmic and human existence. Because I appreciate the contributions of the two Church Fathers to the notion of time to complement one another, I treat their works within the same chapter.

I continue now with some thoughts about the manner in which Origen conceives a beginning and an end to temporality and sees the latter as being characterized by a cyclical course within these sequential ‘brackets’. In *On First Principles* Origen affirms that for Christians this world, “which is itself called an ‘age’, is said to be the conclusion of many ages”; *De Princ.* 2. 3. 5.¹⁹ (The “ages” are understood to be, as we shall see, what other Patristic authors call “aeons”). And, he resumes, “The World was made and began to exist at a definite time and as a result of the consummation of the age to which all things are subject; it must be dissolved through its own corruption” (*De Princ.* 3.5. 1).²⁰ The scriptural testimonies he adduces in support of his view refer to Jacob, Moses, and David; for the faithful the existence of these men constitute *kairoi*. On the same line Origen states further that: “God did not begin to work for the first time when he made this visible world, but just as after the dissolution of this world there will be another one, so also we believe that there were others before this one existed” (*De Princ.* 3. 5. 3).²¹ Paul’s letters to the Hebrews (Heb. ix. 26) and the Ephesians (Eph. ii. 7) are quoted as providing support for this, and he also mentions Isaiah 65. 17 (*De Princ.* 3. 5. 3),²² and Isaiah 4 (*De Princ.* 1. 5).²³ But the Alexandrian also reveals his struggle to understand how the content of such a statement ties up with other fragments within the Bible, as in the following: “these things will not only come to pass but will come to pass by his own intercession, when he deigns to make this

¹⁹ Origen, *On first principles* [henceforth *De Princ.* in the body of the text], Book II, chapter III. 5/2. 3.5, p. 88. See “Peri archon”/ *De Principiis*, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus Series Graeca*, J.-P. Migne (ed.), Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1857, vol. 11, cols. 115A-414A. Of course, this is abbreviated ‘PG’ as *Patrologia Latina* is ‘PL’. For the translation I shall use *On first principles*, translation and notes, George William Butterworth, Introduction to the TORCH edition by Henri de Lubac, London, New York: Harper and Row, 1973; Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith Publishers, 1973. See also Origen, *On First Principles*, translator John Behr (from the Rufinus trans.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019; and Phillip Schaff (ed.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4: Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second (ANF04), Edinburg: T&T Clark, originally published in 1885; there is a new edition (on line) of it thus: “Complete Ante-Nicene & Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers” by Catholic Way Publishing, 2016.

²⁰ Origen, *On first principles*, Book III, chapter V. 3; ed. Butterworth, p. 237.

²¹ Idem, Book III, chapter V. 3; pp. 238-239.

²² Idem, Book III, chapter V. 3, p. 239.

²³ Idem, Book I, chapter V, cf. PG 165C, footnote 39, not in Butterworth’s edition.

request to the Father for his disciples: ‘Father, I will that, where I am, they also may be with me’, and, ‘as I and thou art one, so they may be one in us’ [because] in the consummation or end God is ‘all in all’” (*De Princ.* 3. 6. 1).²⁴ I shall comment later on Origen’s eschatology as suggested by the latest quotation; for the moment I emphasize again his belief in a temporal cyclicity, which he presents as a succession of ‘ages’. The conviction that time and, generally, the existence of the universe runs in cycles was also peculiar to some pagan thinkers as we shall see in the next paragraphs. Origen managed to Christianise this worldview. He considers that a “renewal of heaven and earth” is permanently been “prepared” for those walking on the way of righteousness, and in long term, for everyone since eventually God will ‘fill’ everything. It is also important to underscore that, as we have just observed, for him the multiple worlds (“aeons”) exist in succession not in parallel. I am stating this also because not all researchers read the Alexandrian’s *De principiis* in this light. For instance, Paul Plass affirms that in Origen’s work “events that we experience successively stand together simultaneously”.²⁵ When referring to aeons, Adamantius conceives them, to use again Plass’s expression, as being “strung together into vast stretches”. In this context we have to mention that the American professor considers that Origen is “in the first instance working with a new scale rather than a new mode of time.”²⁶ The Alexandrian also upholds the idea of a “timeless intelligible motion” that keeps the universe in equilibrium. He explains that the end of ‘consumation’, i.e. of the cosmos as it is known to us, will come when all people are faced with their sins and absolved from them through God’s grace as manifested in Christ (*De Princ.* 1, 6. 1);²⁷ such a formulation is the expression of his famous thesis vis-a-vis the universal redemption of the human souls and of

²⁴ Idem, Book III, chapter 6. 1, p. 246.

²⁵ Paul Plass, “The concept of eternity in patristic theology”, *Studia Theologica - Nordic Journal of Theology*, 36:1, 1982, p. 15 [11-25].

²⁶ P. Plass, “The concept of eternity in patristic theology”, p. 14.

²⁷ Origen, *On first principles*, Book 1, chapter 6. 1; ed. Butterworth, p. 52.

the entire creation – the above-mentioned *apokatastasis*. Origen distinguishes between “typological” and “true events” within the human history, and comments about them thus: “One must not think that historical events are types of other historical events . . . they are types of intelligible realities”.²⁸ This classification in itself suggests the Biblical distinction *chronos* – *kairos*. Plass seems to confirm my opinion on this when he characterises the above-mentioned realities presented by the Alexandrian as follows: “The former are historical, the latter timeless.”²⁹

Going back to the notion of temporal cycles, this was not new in Origen’s lifetime. Pagan eastern cultures had it and the Greeks borrowed it from them. Before Adamantius, it was propagated, among others, by Hesiod (active 750 and 650 BC), Heraclitus (c. 535 – c. 475 BC),³⁰ Plato (427–348/347 BC),³¹ and the Stoics (the early third century BC). For instance, in his well-known “Five Ages of Man”, which is a section within *Works and Days*, Hesiod indicates the successive ages of humanity thus: the ages of gold, silver, bronze, the age of heroes, and the iron age, the one in which he thought he lived in.³² After he deplors the condition of humanity in the iron age, the poet writes that he wishes he had died before it,

²⁸ Origen, “Commentariorum in Evangelium Secundum Joannem. Tomus X”, in *Commentaria in Evangelium Joannes*, PG. 14, 339A [cols. 305-398; Comment. in Joann. 21A-832B]. See also Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Books 13-32*, edited and translated by Ronald E. Heine, Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1993. Also Paul B. Decock, “Origen’s theological and mystical approach to the Scriptures in the introduction to his commentary on John’s Gospel”, *In die Skriflig*, 01 June 2011, vol. 45(2-3), pp.673-688; Ronald E. Heine, “A note on the text of Origen: commentary on John, 19: III: 16”, *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Oct, 1991, vol. 42(2), pp. 596-598; and Catherine M. Chin, “Origen and Christian Naming: Textual Exhaustion and the Boundaries of Gentility in Commentary on John 1”, *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 2006, vol.14 (4), pp. 407-436.

²⁹ Plass, “The concept of eternity in patristic theology”, p. 15.

³⁰ Conf. Stobaeus/Ioannis Stobaei, *Eclogarum physicarum et ethicarum/Ecl. Phys. i* [Extracts about Physics and Ethics], edited by August Meineke, Lipsiae: B. G. Teubner, 1860, vol. 1.

³¹ Plato, *Complete Works*, edited by John M. Cooper, Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997, pp. 971-1224. Here, as shown below, the dialogues where Plato deals with these aspects of time are included. They are “*Timaeus/Timaeos*”, “*Republic*”, and “*Symposium*”.

³² Hesiod, “Five Ages of Man”, lines 109-201, in *Theogony, Works and Days, Testimonia*, edited and trans. Glenn W. Most, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1988, pp. 96-105. A new edition of Hesiod’s work has been published as Hesiod, *The poems of Hesiod: Theogony, Works and Days, and the Shield of Herakles*, trans. Barry B. Powell, Oakland: University of California Press, 2017.

or that he had been born after it.³³ This was a popular formulation also with the Stoics, as just suggested;³⁴ their view in regard to the concept of historical time was that the society declined from a golden age to one of iron.³⁵ Their main proponent, Zeno of Citium (died c. 262 BC³⁶) believed in the alternation of moments of creativity and annihilation throughout the human history;³⁷ his view has similarities with that of Hesiod, but is more refined. Heraclitus believed that the Universe undergoes regular periods of formation and destruction.³⁸ (Even Pythagoras, c. 570–c. 495 BC, felt the need to mention temporal cycles – but only those in a human life – and to describe the manner in which they connect with the

³³ Hesiod, “Five Ages of Man”, line 174, in *Theogony, Works and Days, Testimonia*, edited and trans. G. W. Most, Loeb Classical Library, pp. 100-101.

³⁴ One of the most recent publications that refers to this topic is Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium. The Historical evolution of the Hellenistic Age*, Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990, esp. pages 185-186. See also R. W. Sharples, *Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Sceptics*, London: Routledge, 1996, 2014, p. 67.

³⁵ On the Stoic determinism and its implications for nature and society see J. M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969, pp. 175-85; A. A. Long, *Stoic Studies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 40-44; and Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, *The Mysteries of Scripture: Allegorical Exegesis and the Heritage of Stoicism, Philo, and Pantaenus*, in Veronika Černušková, Judith L. Kovacs, and Jana Plátová, with Vít Hušek (eds.), *Clement’s biblical exegesis: proceedings of the second colloquium on Clement of Alexandria* (Olomouc, May 29-31, 2014), Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2016/2017, pp. 80-110.

In addition to Zeno’s remarks collected by Diogenes Laërtius, *De vita & moribus philosophorum/Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, edited and translated by Tiziano Dorandi, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013 [in Book vii (23)], see also Stobaeus/Joannis Stobaei, *Eclogarum physicarum et ethicarum* [Physical and Moral Extracts], ii. 77, edited by Augustus Meineke, vol. 1, Lipsiae: B. G. Teubner, 1860, p. 23; *Iōannou Stobaiou Anthologion – Ioannis Stobaei Florilegium* I, ed. by Thomas Gaisford, Oxford: Clarendon, 1823, vol. 1.

³⁶ The dates for Zeno’s life are controversial. According to Persaeus, Zeno lived for 72 years. A plausible chronology is as follows: he was born 334/3 BC in Elea and came to Athens in 312/11 BC at the age of 22 (Diogenes Laërtius, *De vita* (vii. 28), London: Bohn’s Classical Library, 1853. The newest translation in English is Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of eminent philosophers*, edited by Jim Miller, trans. Pamela Mensch, New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. Zeno studied philosophy for about 10 years (Laërtius, vii. 2); opened his own school during Clearchus’ archonship in 301/300 BC, was the head of the school for 39 years and 3 months (Philodemus, *On the Stoics*, col. 4), and died in 262/1 BC. For more information about Zeno and the Stoics see Jed W. Atkins, “Plato’s Laws, and the Early Development of Stoic Natural Law Theory”; *Polis: The Journal for Ancient Greek Political Thought*, 05/05/2015, vol. 32(1), pp.166-190; Robert Bees, *Zenon’s Politeia*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011; Malcolm Schofield, *The Stoic Idea of the City*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, and Tiziano Dorandi, *Chronology*, in K. Algra et al. (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 3.

³⁷ Zeno, Περὶ τοῦ ὄλου/*On the Universe; Περὶ οὐσίας/On Being*. See Stobaeus/Joannis Stobaei, *Eclogarum physicarum et ethicarum* I (Extracts about Physics and Ethics), edited by A. Meineke, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck et Ruprecht, vol. 1, 1855; also Thomas Gaisford (ed.), *Iōannou Stobaiou Anthologion – Ioannis Stobaei Florilegium*, Oxford: Clarendon, vol. 1, 1823. Zeno also wrote Πολιτεία –*The Republic*.

³⁸ Heraclitus, *Fragments*, edited by Charles H. Kahn, Toronto, London: University of Toronto Press, 1987. See also Heraclitus of Ephesus, *Fragments: the collected wisdom of Heraclitus*, ed. by Brooks Haxton, New York: Viking, 2001, and also Charles H. Kahn (ed.), *The art and thought of Heraclitus. An edition of the fragments with translation and commentary*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979; on line 2010.

seasons³⁹). The famous historians of antiquity, Herodotus (c. 484 – c. 425 BC),⁴⁰ Thucydides (c. 460–c. 400BC),⁴¹ and Polybius (c. 208 – c. 125 BC)⁴² implied in their works the notion of cyclical time.

With respect to Plato (c. 428 - c. 348 BC) as a source for Origen’s thought, in addition to what was mentioned earlier, one can say that in the dialogues *Republic* and *Timaeus* he expresses the view that time is cyclical. The philosopher contrasts time and eternity⁴³ and implies a decline in the universe, but sees it as being followed, through a process of internal motion, by a new cycle of development. The human souls are, of course, a part of this dynamics. In the former dialogue Plato elaborates on the souls’ “journey from here to there [the world of the gods] and back again”.⁴⁴ It is known that Origen also believed that they will go back to their initial state, when they were “close to God”; in this belief he might have been inspired by the Greek thinker. Furthermore, Plato conceives shorter cycles within the universal one. In *Timaeos* he affirms that ‘*Was* and *will be*’ as ‘motions’ are “forms of time that have come to be – time that imitates eternity and circles according to number”.⁴⁵ But it seems that despite the fact that Plato aligns himself to the ideological fashion of his day – the belief in a cyclical progression – that is not of crucial importance for him. What is essential is

³⁹ Diogenes Laërtius, “The Life of Pythagoras”, *De vita & moribus philosophorum*, Book viii. 10, London: Bohn’s Classical Library, 1853, p. 342. The newest translation in English is Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of eminent philosophers*, Book 8. 10, ed. by Jim Miller, trans. Pamela Mensch, New York: Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 398.

⁴⁰ The latest editions are the following: Herodotus, *The Histories*, edited by Carolyn Dewald, trans. by Robin Waterfield, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008; and Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. by Tom Holland; Introduction by Paul Cartledge, London: Penguin Classics, 2013.

⁴¹ The latest editions are the following: Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. by Martin Hammond; Introduction and notes by P. J. Rhodes, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009; Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. by M.I. Finley, London: Penguin Classics; and Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. by Richard Crawley, London: Penguin Classics, 2008.

⁴² Polybius, *Histories*, ed. and trans. by Brian C. McGing, Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

⁴³ Plato “Timaeus” 37D, in *Complete Works*, ed. J. M. Cooper, p. 1241 [1225-1291].

⁴⁴ Plato “Republic”, Book x, 619E, in *Complete Works*, ed. Cooper, p. 1222. See also Jeffrey Henderson (ed. and trans.), Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 2012, vol. 2, and Alfred Edward Taylor, *A commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928, reprinted in 1987.

⁴⁵ Plato, “Timaeus”, in *Plato. Complete Works*, Cambridge, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997, p. 1241. [1225-1291]

the endeavour of the human mind to apprehend the Nous (expressed in various forms – beauty, and also love, goodness, and virtue in general), which can be equalled with the Christian idea of the timeless effort of human souls to draw nearer to God. I have elaborated on this somewhere else;⁴⁶ for now I shall point out Benjamin Jowett’s comment on this aspect of the philosopher’s work: “no one prior to Plato had advanced the conception of a God whose very nature leads him to work for the perfection of other beings beneath him.”⁴⁷ Probably here is the place to mention, albeit in passing, what the Neoplatonists thought about time. I do it through the words of their most representative thinker, Plotinus (204/5-270 AD), whose ideas we shall be able to recognize in Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine’s writings that will be presented in chapters 3-4. He opposes ‘time’ to ‘eternity’ because one belongs to “the everlasting”, and the other to “the realm of Process, in our Universe” and famously established time to be the “representation in image” of Eternity (III. 7. 11.20).⁴⁸ Another way of expressing this reality is to say that this philosopher refers to time in its eternal hypostasis and that for him eternity is a “timeless present” or “duration”. For him, the creator of time is the “Soul” of the World. Plotinus’s view on the notion of time was consistent with the Neoplatonic principle of **relative infinity** according to which the infinite is finite to itself, and is infinite only to lower orders.⁴⁹ According to Michael F. Wagner, Plotinus’s today interpreters do not adequately understand the methodology he adopted and are not always

⁴⁶ E. Ene D-Vasilescu, “‘Love never fails’. Gregory of Nyssa on *Theôsis*”, in Mark Edwards and Elena Ene D-Vasilescu (eds.), *Visions of God and ideas on divinization in Patristic thought*, London: Routledge, 2016/17, pp. 55-73, esp. 56-57.

⁴⁷ Benjamin Jowett (trans. and ed.), in “Introduction”, *The Works of Plato*, New York: Random House, 1928, XVII.

⁴⁸ Plotinus, “On Eternity and Time” (III. 7. 11.20; Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. S. MacKenna, London: Faber and Faber, 1969, p. 222. See also Plotinus, *The Enneads*, edited by Lloyd P. Gerson, and translated by George Boys-Stones, John M. Dillon, Lloyd P. Gerson, R.A. King, Andrew Smith and James Wilberding, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

⁴⁹ John Whittaker, “Philological comments on the Neo Platonic Notion of Infinity”, in R. Baine Harris (ed.), *The Significance of Neo Platonism*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1976, p. 162 [pp. 155-173].

able to locate his philosophy “in the Classical tradition of Greek naturalism, where time is real if and only if the natural universe is in reality a (the) temporal universe.”⁵⁰

A conclusion on the relationship between Plato and Origen can be drawn at this point on the basis of various opinions expressed by scholars. For instance, Mark Edwards⁵¹ and John David Dawson⁵² assert that Origen was not a Platonist to the extent usually assumed and sometimes openly expressed. An opposite view has been articulated for instance, by scholars like Daniel Boyarin from the University of Berkley.⁵³ I concur with Edwards that indeed Origen was more ‘biblical’ than ‘Platonist’ and also agree with Plato’s best known editor about the philosopher’s ‘Christianity’; I stated this once in an article published in 2017.⁵⁴

A more general conclusion is that the expectation of a better age after the current one is often present in Greek culture, and so is the idea that time is cyclical; this by contrast to that of it having a linear course, more specific to Hebrew and Christian thought. In his seminal article “La gnose et le temps” H.C. Puech, *inter alia*, elaborated on the contrast between the linear notion of time as understood by Christians and the cyclical time of the pre-Christian Greeks.⁵⁵

2. 1 b) Cyprian of Carthage about the notion of time

Nevertheless, Christianity has only seriously engaged with the linearity of time through **Cyprian of Carthage** (c. 200/210-258). In the work of the Carthaginian bishop some

⁵⁰ Michael F. Wagner, *The enigmatic reality of time. Aristotle, Plotinus, and today*, Leiden: Brill, Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the platonic tradition 7, 2008, p. 12.

⁵¹ Mark Julian Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2002.

⁵² John David Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

⁵³ Daniel Boyarin, “By way of apology: Dawson, Edwards, Origen”, *The Studia Philonica Annual*, XVI, 2004, pp. 188-217.

⁵⁴ E. Ene D-Vasilescu, “Early Christianity about the notions of time and the redemption of the soul”, *Studia Patristica* 91/17 (2017): 167-183.

⁵⁵ Henri-Charles Puech, “La gnose et le temps”, in *Eranos - Jahrbuch*, Bd. XX, Zürich (1951): 57-113.

echoes of Origen’s ideas about the subject we discuss in this volume can be recognised. He never mentions cycles of time, but declares that the temporal course is linear. Even if Cyprian does not make a strong case for his conviction and one can identify cycles in his narrative concerning the notion under consideration, the manner in which he refers to the possibility of time to ‘function’ in accord to these is different from that of the Alexandrian: it suggests a type of spiralled cyclicality.⁵⁶ In his *Liber ad Demetrianum* (Book to Demetrian) he imagined a linear, progressive evolution of the universe whose end (*senectutem mundi* / “the old age of the world”; PL 547A) will be marked by cataclysms.⁵⁷ (Cyprian believed that both the earth and human bodies are reflections of nature on its largest scale – *genuinum situ materiae naturalis*). He maintained that cosmos and society naturally regress and renew (experience *kairoi*) periodically. Nevertheless, he still considered that this process happens in a linear fashion, because, he explained, the final goal of history (the ultimate *kairos*) is Christ’s second coming, which is the consequence of a linear progression (PL 4. 564A). His

⁵⁶ Cyprian of Carthage, “Liber ad Demetrianum”, PL4. 543-564B; “Ad Demetrianum”, in Manlio Simonetti (ed.), *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1976, part II, pp. 33-51; and St. Cyprian of Carthage, “To Demetrian”, in Allen Brent (ed., trans., introduction, and commentary), *On the Church: selected treatises*, Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2006; see also Cyprian of Carthage, “De mortalitate”, PL4, 581A-602D’, and Cyprian of Carthage, “About Death”, in A. Brent, *On the Church: selected treatises*, St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 2006; Cyprian of Carthage, “Cyprianus. The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage”, edited by Graeme Wilber Clarke, in *Ancient Christian Writers*, Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, vol. 3, 1986, especially “Letter 56. To Fortunatus, Ahymmus, Optatus, Privatinus, Donatulus, and Felix”, pp. 53-55. See also Michael M. Sage, *Cyprian*, Cambridge, M.A.: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975.

⁵⁷ Cyprian’s expression is: “senectutem mundi/the old age of the world “senectutem mundi, qui iam uergebat ad finem;” Cyprian of Carthage, “Liber ad Demetrianum”, PL 4 547B [cols. 543-564B]; M. Simonetti (ed.), *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*, p. 34. In translation, Cyprian of Carthage, “To Demetrian”, *On the Church: selected treatises*, edited and trans. by Allen Brent, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2006; pp. 67-98. Some implications especially with reference to the salvation and the immortality of the soul are also in his “Ad Donatum”, in *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (CCSL), vol. 3.1: *Opera Omnia I* edited by Weber et al., Turnhout: Brepols, MCMLXXV/1975; pp. 1-13; trans. St. Cyprian of Carthage, “To Donatus”, *On the Church: selected treatises*, edited and trans. by A. Brent, pp. 47-67. In footnote 2 on p. 50 Brent comments on the Stoic expression “persistent decay from the golden age”), p. 50. See also Cyprian of Carthage, “De mortalitate”, PL 4, 603-625, in Cyprian of Carthage, “About Death” *On the Church: selected treatises*, ed. by A. Brent, St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2006, and Graeme Wilber Clarke (ed.), “Cyprianus. The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage”, in *Ancient Christian Writers*, vol. 3, Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1986, especially “Letter 56. To Fortunatus, Ahymmus, Optatus, Privatinus, Donatulus, and Felix”, pp. 53-55.

reflections have similarities not only with Origen's thoughts, but also with those of Plato and also the Stoics.⁵⁸

The work of the African is an expression of the concerns of his time – the belief in the imminent end of the world announced/experienced by/as a series of earthquakes, droughts, wars, fires, pandemics, etc. These natural occurrences were supposed to be the manifestation of the Roman deities' anger due to the fact that Christians refused to offer sacrifices to them, especially after the edict issued by Decius in 250 to this effect. These sacrifices were “on behalf of” (*pro*) the Emperor, not *to* the Emperor, since a living ruler was not considered divine. They were required not only from lay Christians, but also from their bishops and officials of the church. According to David Stone Potter, by issuing this decree Decius probably attempted to legitimize his position and to respond to a general unease provoked by the passing of the Roman millennium rather than trying to impose the superiority of the Roman pantheon over any other gods.⁵⁹ It may have been intended as a way of reaffirming the Emperor's conservative vision of the *Pax Romana* and of reassuring Rome's citizens that the empire was still secure. But the release of this document triggered a crisis of authority, and that made Cyprian's intervention necessary and useful.

Through his writings the bishop gave voice to the contemporary view that the end of the world was near and were to be marked by cataclysms – it was supposed to be that of a cycle before a ‘renewal’. As we have seen, he managed to do so while rejecting the idea that the signs announcing such a completion are the consequence of Christians' acts. He could

⁵⁸ On the Stoic determinism and its implications for nature and society, in addition to the information in ft. 57, see J. M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1969, pp. 175-185 and A. A. Long, *Stoic Studies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 40-44.

⁵⁹ David Stone Potter shows that “All the inhabitants of the empire were required to sacrifice before the magistrates of their community ‘for the safety of the empire’ by a certain day (the date would vary from place to place and the order may have been that the sacrifice had to be completed within a specified period after a community received the edict). When they sacrificed they would obtain a certificate (*libellus*) recording the fact that they had complied with the order. That is, the certificate would testify the sacrificant's loyalty to the ancestral gods and to the consumption of sacrificial food and drink as well as the names of the officials who were overseeing the sacrifice”; David Stone Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay. AD 180-395*, London: Routledge, 2004, p. 241.

obviously not agree with his coeval pagans that the accompanying events of the imminent end are retaliation for anything people did; he thought that they are a part of the ‘usual’ run of history (and – had human intervention been allowed – it “Was Rather the Heathens Themselves Who Were the Cause of Such Mischiefs, Because They Did Not Worship God, and, Moreover, Were Distressing the Christians with Unjust Persecutions” – as the subtitle of his Treatises V to Demetrianus states).

2. 2. Conclusion

We may conclude this chapter that comprises a substantial part dedicated to temporal cyclicity and linearity by mentioning Thorleif Boman’s ideas on the matter because he attempted to generalise the situation in Late Antiquity with respect to the notion of time employing the two terms. Simplifying to a certain extent, one can summarize the conclusion of the Norwegian scholar by saying that in his understanding time was linear and flowed in one direction only for the ancient Hebrews, but that it was cyclical for the Greeks.⁶⁰ In this context he reiterates the theory that there is a link between the language specific to a culture and the way people think. Concerning *chronos* and *kairos*, we close this part of the book by stating that suggestions as to their meaning exist in both Origen and Cyprian’s treatises: *chronos* was understood to be the ‘daily’ time, whatever direction it follows, and *kairos* was the culmination of every temporal cycle.

⁶⁰ T. Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*.

Chapter 3. The Cappadocian School and John Chrysostom on the notion of time

3. 1. Basil the Great/of Caesarea (329/330-379)

Basil the Great/of Caesarea is another Early Christian author who was preoccupied with the notion of time and with the manner in which it is understood by people.

He elaborates on this topic especially in the collection of homilies assembled under the title *Hexaemeron* (delivered at the place of his episcopal See in mid 378 during Lent⁶¹ in three consecutive days⁶²). Among the recognizable sources, or rather readings, of Basil's ideas is Plato's *oeuvre*.⁶³ I. e. the Cappadocian touches on common topics and sometimes uses Platonic terminology, but he does not share Plato's position on everything; I shall indicate the places where their differences are substantive. The Greek philosopher conceived time as being a function of planetary movements: for him time is both **identified** with and **caused** by those;⁶⁴ he elaborates on this subject in the dialogue *Timaeus*, especially in *Tim.* 37c-39e. Plato states that "time is really the wanderings of these bodies, bewilderingly numerous as they are and astonishingly variegated" (*Tim.* 39d1-2). Basil does not conceive the notion of time in connection to such a phenomenon. Among his opinions on the subject, one very important is that a particular moment of beginning exists – one in which the cosmos was created. Another source for Basil's series of commentaries is Philo's *De Opificio Mundi*. In this text the Alexandrian indicates that days and nights, months, and years *show* (ἔδειξαν)

⁶¹ N. J. Torchia, "Sympatheia in Basil of Caesarea's 'Hexaemeron': A Plotinian hypothesis", in *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 1996, Fall, vol. 4 (3), p. 359 [pp. 359-378].

⁶² R. Lim, "The Politics of Interpretation in Basil of Caesarea's Hexaemeron", in *Vigiliae Christianae*, 1990, vol. 44(4), p. 351 [pp. 351-370].

⁶³ Plato, 428/427 BC - 348/347BC, in *Complete Works*, ed. Cooper.

⁶⁴ Mark DelCogliano, "Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato", *Vigiliae Christianae*, volume 68/Issue 5, 2014, p. 501 [498-532].

“the nature of the measurement of time;”⁶⁵ (*Aet. mundi* 19). By stating this he makes clear that he elaborated his conception on the notion of time around Genesis 1:14 (“And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years’”). Philo (c. 20 BC- c. 50 CE) does not understand these temporal units to be *parts* of time, but *measures* in the sense that they evaluate the extension of the movement within the cosmos. Through these “Moses does not indicate a space of time in which the world was made, but the principles of order and productivity which governed its making.”⁶⁶ Since for Philo *Genesis* does not refer to a temporal origin of the world, when he uses the phrase “*in the beginning*” he thinks about this ordered framework in which the Good is fulfilled; (*Hom. Opif.* VII.26–27). As we shall see, Basil also follows Origen’s line of thought as many theologians before him did, but he – as them – does so only partially. Adamantius opines that “Scripture does not speak here of a temporal beginning” (*Hom. in Gen.* 91C-93 B)⁶⁷ when it indicates that *in the beginning God made heaven and earth*. The Holy Book indicates rather that the true beginning must be traced to the Divine Word who was with God before the creation of the visible universe. Here is where Basil meets Origen.

As just mentioned above, the Cappadocian understands time to be independent of the movements of planets, sun, or any heavenly body because this is not how the Bible explains this notion. A duration – “an age” – implies extension. For Basil “Common usage classifies every interval under time or age, for that which is time among the sensory realities

⁶⁵ Philo of Alexandria, *On the eternity of the world/De aeternitate mundi*, in *Works*, Loeb Classical Library, edited and translated by Francis Henry Colson by George Herbert Whitaker, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, London: William Heinemann, copyright 1929, various reprints, the latest 1981, 2014, vol. IX.

⁶⁶ G. H. Whitaker, “Analytical Introduction” to Philo, “On the Account of the World’s Creation given by Moses (De Opificio Mundi)”, in *Works*, Loeb Classical Library, edited and translated by Francis Henry Colson by George Herbert Whitaker, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, London: William Heinemann, copyright 1929, various reprints, the latest 1981, 2014, vol. 1, p. 3.

⁶⁷ In ‘Homily in Genesis’ 91C-93 B Origen comments on Gen. I.11; Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Also Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, translated by Ronald E. Heine, Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982, p. 47.

corresponds to the nature of age among the supercosmic realities.”⁶⁸ The bishop’s comprehension of time as an extension of eternity (*Hex.* 2.8) is consistent with his view of creation as an orderly arrangement of parts which contribute to the goodness of all things.⁶⁹ As shown, Basil thought that the world has a beginning according to time; for him this is what the book of Genesis refers to when stating that God created *in the beginning*. He seems to intimate a double creation: one of the spiritual reality, which is invisible and outside time (or rather eternal), and one empirical, visible, and functioning within the limits of time, and where people ‘train’ to contemplate the first. All of this came about (and still does so?) from an instantaneous act of God.

Basil never openly declared in his work that time moves in cycles – as Origen did. There are intimations within his writings with respect to a linear ‘ascension’ in the way time runs. The Cappadocian was convinced that we experience Divinity ever more perfectly in each successive moment through a gradual process, and that this will be so in eternity. That reminds us of similar thoughts in Plato’s *Phaedo* where the soul “arrives at that which is invisible, which is similar to it, and that which is divine and immortal and wise, and arriving there it falls to it to be happy...[and] truly to spend the rest of time with gods.”⁷⁰ In this dialogue known also as “On the Soul”, the philosopher avers that the human souls are immortal and engaged in a process of incessant perfection that continues even in the afterlife. Nevertheless, he also says that they must exist in the other world because otherwise “how

⁶⁸ “ἡ μὲν γὰρ κοινὴ συνήθεια ἢ χρόνοις ἢ αἰῶσιν ἄ<αν διάστημα ὑ<οβάλλει• ἐ<ειδὴ ὄ<ερ ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς ὁ χρόνος, τοῦτο ἐν τοῖς ὑ<ερκοσνίοις ἢ τοῦ αἰῶνος φύσις ἐστίν”; Basil, *Contra Eunomium/Eun.* 2.13, 19-22, vol. 2, p. 48, in Bernard Sesbouïé et al. (eds.), *Basil de Césarée. Contre Eunome*, Sources Chrétiennes, two volumes: 299 & 305, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1982. Translation from Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz: *Basil of Caesarea: Against Eunomius*, The Fathers of the Church 122, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011, p. 147. See also Richard Paul Vaggione, *Eunomius: The Extant Works*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, pp. 34-159. Vaggione’s edition includes an English translation of the *Apologia*. For an English translation of *Contra Eunomium*, see M. DelCogliano and A. Radde-Gallwitz: *Basil of Caesarea: Against Eunomius*.

⁶⁹ Natale Joseph Torchia, “Sympatheia in Basil of Caesarea’s ‘Hexameron’: A Plotinian hypothesis”, in *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 1996, Fall, vol. 4 (3), p. 362 [pp. 359-378].

⁷⁰ Plato, “Phaedo”, 81a, cf. 69c, 111a-c in Plato, in *Complete Works*, ed. Cooper.

could they have been born again?”⁷¹ The latter statement implies cyclicity but, as just mentioned, Basil himself does not seem to have consistently embraced this notion specific to Platonic philosophy. As is known and has already been pointed out in this volume, generally speaking, Plato’s theory of the Forms having the supreme immovable Good/Beauty in the centre resembles the Christian doctrine about the Divine where God is characterized by what Andrew Radde-Gallwitz calls ‘simplicity’.⁷²

Basil does not name *chronos* and *kairos*, but from what is said above it is clear that when he speaks about the fact that the human souls continuously attempt to be in ‘God’s company’ they asymptotically strive to a paradisiac state, a *kairos*. The idea of the soul constant progressive movement towards God, *ἐπέκτασις/epektasis*, is particularly developed in Nyssen’s work, and well established by now. (Cappadocians are not the only theologians to have transformed ideas borrowed from pagan philosophy [in this case, Plato] into Christian notions – we have exposed above how Origen effected a similar reassignment). Another way in which Basil touches on the concept of time is *via* his analysis of the Trinity. In the treatise “On the Holy Spirit”, by emphasizing the uniqueness of each divine person within the triune God despite of them having the same essence, the Cappadocian affirms that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct in their eternal relation. They are outside of time and the created order (PG 32. 68A-73C, especially 73A-C).⁷³ The eternal character of this

⁷¹ Some aspects of this discussion are in John Rist, “Basil’s Neoplatonism: Its Background and Nature,” in P. J. Fedwick (ed.), *Basil of Caesarea: Christian Humanist, Ascetic*, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Biblical Studies, 1981, 137-220.

⁷² Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

⁷³ St. Basil the Great/of Caesarea, “Liber de Spiritu Sancto”, in PG 32, 68A-73C; [J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Cursus Completus Patrologia Graecae*, Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, vol. 32, 1857 (henceforward PG in footnotes)]; my translation. See also Basil of Caesarea, “Treatise on the Spirit. Letter to Amphilochius of Iconium. Letters and Select Works”, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (eds. and trans.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, (henceforth NPNF), series 2, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1893; Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., vol. 8, 1895; pp. 29-30, 62-63, 72-73. And see Basil of Caesarea, edited and trans. by David Anderson, Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980, and John Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, Formation of Christian Theology, vol. 2: *The Nicene Faith*, part 2, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011, pp. 305-318.

relationship means that there are no temporal gaps among the members of this unit that manifests itself in three hypostases. Each of them has a ‘function’ to fulfil: the first ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325) established that the Son is begotten by the uncreated Father, and that the Holy Spirit ‘proceeds’ from the Father – therefore is not begotten. Nevertheless, none of the three can properly be conceived of without the others – much less as existing in a temporal succession. For Christians the Incarnation and its ‘reiteration’ through the Liturgy is the only ‘event’ (*kairos*) that marks an intersection between the reality of the divine Trinity and the earthly world (with its own time, *chronos*). In order to strengthen his ideas about the notion of time Basil emphasized John the Evangelist’s puzzling statement in John 1.1 about how Creation came into being: “in the *beginning* was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”. The Cappadocian comments on this biblical fragment by saying that human thought can neither reach beyond that “*was*”, nor imagine beyond that “*beginning*”.⁷⁴ Christianity teaches people to think of the Father with the Son (and the Holy Spirit).⁷⁵ Generally speaking, Basil considers that human beings eternally advance in their mystical knowledge. In this not only that he follows Origen and Philo of Alexandria’s line of thought, but he also prefigures that of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite.

⁷⁴ Basil of Caesarea, “Homiliae in Hexaameron”, in PG 29, cols. 3A-208C. The translation of the fragments here is from Ph. Schaff and H. Wace (eds.), NPNF, second Series, vol. 8, Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895 (NPNF2-08), pp. 181-190, respectively 215-224; NPNF2-08 revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/32015.htm>, copyright 2020; sometimes I have slightly modified the translation in NPNF2-08. There is an Anglo-Saxon version of the Hexameron or *Be Godes six daga weorcum* (and also the Anglo-Saxon remains of St. Basil’s *Admonitio ad filium spiritualem. Now first printed from mss. in the Bodleian Library, with a translation, notes, and an account of the presumed author, Aelfric* by the Rev. Henry W. Norman). See also Basil of Caesarea/Basile de Césarée, *Homélie sur l’Hexaéméron*, ed. and trans. Stanislas Giet, in *Sources chrétiennes* 26 bis, Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2e edition revised and expanded, 1968. For comments of various aspects of the *Hexameron* see, for example, N. J. Torchia, “Sympatheia in Basil of Caesarea’s ‘Hexameron’”, pp. 359-378; Eugène Fialon (ed.), Paris: Ernest Thorin, 1869; Richard Lim, “The Politics of Interpretation in Basil of Caesarea’s Hexameron”, in *Vigiliae Christianae*, 1990, vol. 44 (4), pp. 351-370; and Monique Alexandre, “La théorie de l’exégèse dans le de Hominis Opificio et l’In Hexaameron”, in Marguerite Harl (ed.), *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse: Actes Du Colloque De Chevetogne*, Leiden: Brill, 1977, pp. 87-110.

⁷⁵ Basil of Caesarea, “Liber de Spiritu sancto”, PG 32. 67A-219C (1857); translation “On the Spirit”, in Basil of Caesarea, “Treatise on the Spirit. Letter to Amphilocheus of Iconium”; “On the Spirit”, NPNF2-08, pp. 102-175. See also Johannes Zachhuber, “Basil and the Three-Hypostases-Tradition. Reconsidering the Origins of Cappadocian Theology”, in *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*, 5 (2001), 65-85; St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, edited by C. F. H. Johnston, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892, and J. Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 305-318.

The Cappadocian emphasizes that people's comprehension of God is and will always be imperfect; as Richard Sorabji underlines when commenting on how this issue is reflected in Basil's thought, "otherwise God will be finite".⁷⁶

3. 2. Gregory of Nyssa (c. 332 - after 385⁷⁷)

Gregory of Nyssa shared some of his brother's ideas about the notion of time, but also had his own. He elaborated on the concept discussed in the book [that of time] in, among other works, *The Life of Moses* (written in 391-392⁷⁸), where he cited the prophet as speaking about "the beginning of all things".⁷⁹ In another of his treatises, *On the Making of Man* [i.e. *Humankind*], Nyssen affirms that, "for he who does admit a beginning of motion surely does not doubt as to it also having an end";⁸⁰ he also asserts that everything, including temporality,

⁷⁶ Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum. Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, London: Duckworth, 2002; Chicago: University of Chicago Press (pbk. ed.), 2006, p. 151.

⁷⁷ Gregory attended a council of Constantinople in 394; his name appears there between that of the metropolitans of Caesarea and Iconium. After that event there are no records concerning him; information in Ph. Schaff and H. Wace (eds.), NPNF, second series, vol. 5. *Dogmatic Treatises, etc.*, translated by William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, T&T Clark, Edinburg and WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1893, p. 10. See also E. Ene D-Vasilescu, "Gregory of Nyssa", in Ph. F. Esler (ed.), *The Early Christian World*, Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2017 (first edition 2000), p. 1079, fn. 1 [chapter 55, pp. 1072-1987]; Pierre Maraval, "La date de la mort de Basile de Cesaree", *Revue d'études augustiniennes*, 1988, pp. 25-38; Gregory of Nyssa, *The Letters: Introduction, translation and commentary*, by Anna M. Silvas, *Vigiliae Christianae*, Supplements 83, Leiden Boston: Brill, 2007, pp 1 and 57; and Raymon Van Dam, *Families and Friends in Late Roman Cappadocia*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003, p. 1.

⁷⁸ E. Ene D-Vasilescu, "Gregory of Nyssa", p. 1073.

⁷⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio*, in PG 44. 128A [124D-258C]; forthcoming dialogue in GNO edited by Ekkehard Mülenberg and Giulio Maspero; trans. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man* [NB *Humankind*], in NPNF2-05, p. 389; he speaks about the topic of time again in this treatise and in others, e.g. "De Vita Moysis. De perfectione vitae ex praescriptio virtutis institutae", PG 44. 298-434; "De vita Moysis" 2, edited by Herbert Musurillo, *Opera exegetica: De Vita Moysis*, GNO-7/1:4-5, Leiden: Brill, 1964, reprint 1991; Gregorius Nyssenus/*Gregorii Nysseni opera dogmatica minora: pars II* edited by J Kenneth Downing and Jacobus A MacDonough, S.J., Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987; and "De vita Moysis pentecosten"/"Opera exegetica. De vita Moysis", *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online*, edited by Werner Jaeger/Ekkehard Mülenberg and Giulio Maspero, vol. 25, consulted online on 25 September 2019 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-8728_gnoo_aGNO_25_t. For the English version see Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, edited and trans. by Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson, *The Classics of Western Spirituality*, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1991, e.g. p. 101. For Nyssen's further treatment of this topic see Gregory of Nyssa, "Hexameron explicatio apologetica", PG 44. 61-124, and Hadwiga Horner (ed.), "Hexameron", *Gregorii Nysseni Opera. Supplementum: Auctorum Incertorum, Sermones de Creatione Hominis, Sermo de Paradiso*, Leiden: Brill, vol. 8, 1972. Among the interpretations of Gregory's work on this topic Hans Boersma's "Overcoming Time and Space: Gregory of Nyssa's Anagogical Theology", *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 20/4, (Winter 2012), pp. 575-612 is commendable.

⁸⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, "De hominis opificio", in PG 44. 209 B; *On the Making...*, p. 413.

is a combination of movement and the cessation of it (*stasis*): “all things that are seen in the creation are the offspring of rest and motion, brought into being by the Divine will.”⁸¹ That is very obvious in Gregory’s work with regard to the ascent of the soul towards God, which happens in the following manner: “[its] progress is a standing still, for it says, *You must stand on the rock*. This is the most marvelous thing of all: how the same thing is both a standing still and a moving one (*στάσις* and *κίνησις*). For he who ascends certainly does not stand still, and he who stands still does not move upwards. But here the ascent takes place by means of the standing. I mean by this that the firmer and more immovable one remains in the Good, the more he progresses in the course of virtue” (PG 44. 405 B-C; see also 405 A-B, 405 D, and 408A-C).⁸² The life of people here on Earth is a linear progressive pursuit into spiritual integrity; as such it is a part of the eternal process of perfection.

The familiarity of Gregory’s thoughts with those of Plato about the rest-motion sequence as it unfolds in a continuous mode – especially with those from the dialogue *Timaeus* – is evident; in that text the notion of time created by the Demiurge as a “moving image of eternity” and

⁸¹ Gregory of Nyssa, “De hominis opificio”, in PG 44. 133 C-D; *On the Making...*, p. 389.

⁸² Gregory of Nyssa, “De vita Moysis”. The text deals substantially with the connection between time, space, and the progress of the soul through its steadiness. I include here some of the most representative fragments from it in order to illustrate Nyssen’s thoughts on these, in addition to 405 B-C, thus: “The thought harmonizes readily with what has been contemplated before. In speaking of <place> he does not limit the place indicated by anything quantitative (for to something unquantitative there is no measure). On the contrary, by the use of the analogy of a measurable surface he leads the hearer **to the unlimited and infinite**. The text seems to signify some such understanding: ‘Whereas, Moses, your desire for *what is still to come* has expanded and you have not reached satisfaction in your progress and whereas you do not see any limit to the Good, but your yearning always looks for more, the place with me is so great that the one running in it is never able to cease from his progress.’”; PG 44. 405 A-B. In another Scriptural passage the progress is a standing still, for it says, “*You must stand on the rock*. This is the most marvelous thing of all: how the same thing is both a standing still and a moving. For he **who ascends certainly does not stand still, and he who stands still does not move upwards. But here the ascent takes place by means of the standing. I mean by this that the firmer and more immovable one remains in the Good, the more he progresses in the course of virtue**. The man who in his reasonings is uncertain and liable to slip, since he has no firm grounding in the Good but *is tossed one way and another and carried along* (as the Apostle says) and is doubtful and wavers in his opinions concerning reality, would never attain to the height of virtue”; PG 44. 405 B-C. And further: “He is like those who toil endlessly as they climb uphill in sand: Even though they take long steps, their footing in the sand always slips downhill, so that, although there is much motion, no progress results from it. But if someone, as the Psalmist says, should pull his feet up from the mud of the pit and plant them upon the rock (the rock is Christ who is absolute virtue), then the more *steadfast and unmoveable* (according to the advice of Paul) he becomes in the Good the faster he completes the course. It is like using the standing still as if it were a wing while the heart flies upward through its stability in the good”; Gregory of Nyssa, “De vita Moysis”, PG 44. 405 D and 408A-C; PG 44. 405 A-B, respectively 405 D and 408A-C; trans. *The Life of Moses*, A. J. Malherbe and E. Ferguson, pp. 117-118; italics in the translation, my emphasis in bold letters.

the story of the fall and return of the human soul are essential. Nyssen envisions this continual engagement of the soul in an ascendant motion as leading to a state similar to that from the beginning of its and of the universal creation. Anthony Meredith comments on a similar idea within the dialogue *Symposium* and emphasizes that, “Underlying and enabling the upward movement in Plato’s *Symposium* is the unsatisfied desire to behold unlimited beauty.”⁸³ Therefore, it is not surprising that the Middle Platonists read the oeuvre of the Greek philosopher in a ‘metaphysical’ and ‘religious,’ even a ‘theistic’ note.⁸⁴ And as we have seen, among the works of other Patristic authors, those of Basil of Caesarea maintain that the soul of the Christians acts in the same manner vis-à-vis God, who is Beauty, Truth, and Goodness. As we have noticed, Nyssen wrote along the same lines.⁸⁵ Gregory also demonstrates that he knew Aristotle’s work as well when he affirms that virtue can be experienced “according to [a] measure”;⁸⁶ the Aristotelian “mean” (τὸ μέσον) is to be

⁸³ Anthony Meredith, *The Cappadocians*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1995, p. 55.

⁸⁴ Cornelia J. de Vogel, “What was God for Plato?”, in C. J. De Vogel (ed.), *Philosophia*, Assen, 1970, pp. 210-242.

⁸⁵ For the Neoplatonic influence on Gregory of Nyssa see, for instance, Enrico Peroli, “Gregory of Nyssa and the Neoplatonic Doctrine of the Soul,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 51 (1997): 117-139; Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981, pp. 18-19; and John Peter Kenney, “Mystical Monotheism: A Study in Ancient Platonic Theology”, Eugene, O.R.: Wipf and Stock, 2010, previously published by Brown University Press, 1991, pp. 54-56.

⁸⁶ Gregory of Nyssa in, for example, “De vita Moysis”, PG 44. 300C; Gregory of Nyssa, “De vita Moysis pentecosten”, in W. Jaeger/E. Mülenberg and G. Maspero (eds.), Leiden: Brill, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online*, vol. 25; consulted online on 25 September 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-8728_gnoo_aGNO_25_t, copyright 2019; and Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, edited and trans. by Malherbe and Ferguson. Also in “In Ecclesiasten salomonis”, PG 44, e.g. 628A-B [cols. 615-755]; “Hom. 1–8 in Eccl.”, GNO 5.375. For the translation see Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on Ecclesiastes: An English Version with Supporting Studies*; proceedings of the Seventh International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (St. Andrews, Scotland), 5-10 September 1990, edited by Stuart George Hall, translated by Stuart George Hall and Rachel Moriarty, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993, p. 100. See also Gregory of Nyssa, *In inscriptiones Psalmorum; In sextum Psalmum; In Ecclesiasten homiliae* edited by Jacobus McDonough and Paulus Alexander, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1962, p. 101; a reprint was accomplished in 2019. Also Gregory of Nyssa, “In Ecclesiasten homiliae”, edited by Paul Alexander; general editor W. Jaeger, *Gregorii Nysseni opera*, Leiden: Brill, Leiden: Brill, 1986, and *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online*, vol. 23, edited by Jaeger, Mülenberg, and Maspero, Leiden: Brill; consulted online on 21 September 2019 “In Ecclesiasten homiliae”, in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-8728_gnoo_aGNO_23_t; Leiden: Brill, c. 2019. For the dating of Gregory’s eight homilies on Ecclesiastes, see Pierre Maraval, “Chronology of Works”, in Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco and Giulio Maspero (eds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, trans. Seth Cherney, Leiden: Brill, 2009. Gregory of Nyssa deals with keeping the virtuous ‘right measure’ in “De Anima et Resurrectione inscribitur Macrinia dialogus” in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online*, vol. 15, edited by Jaeger/Mülenberg and Maspero, *Gregorii Nysseni opera*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-8728_gnoo_aGNO_15_t; consulted online on 21 September 2019, Leiden: Brill, c. 2019; and PG 46, 1863, cols. 11-161. Also in “De vita Moysis” as well as in *De officio hominis*. Comments on ‘measure’ and ‘virtue’ in Nyssen’s work in Boersma, “Overcoming Time and Space”, p. 580.

followed by people in order to conduct their lives virtuously. As we know, the Greek philosopher defines ‘the good’, *εὐδαιμονία/eudaimonia*, as “an activity of the soul in accord with virtue” (Aristotle, *Ethics* I.7.1098A 16–17).⁸⁷ Michael F. Wagner believes that for Aristotle “time is real in some intermediate sort of way;” he conceives it neither quite real nor unreal. In the opinion of this researcher the commentators of the work of the Greek philosopher have not noticed this.⁸⁸ Wagner’s own stance is that time is real despite of being “existentially dependent” on humans, who are “temporarily aware beings.”⁸⁹ Before Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, in addition to Plato, Philo of Alexandria, for example, draws attention to the never-ending movement of the soul that is “perpetually in movement and can turn ten thousand different ways.”⁹⁰ Martin S. Laird points out the similarity between Philo and Nyssen from the point of view of how they conceive this motion: “Though the theme of perpetual movement is something of a hallmark of Gregory’s thought, it is good to note that it is not a concept unique to him. Indeed there are noteworthy adumbrations of Gregory’s *leitmotif* in the Alexandrine tradition to which he was heir”.⁹¹ (Philo also speaks about ‘the movement of the mind’).

The contradiction – or at least apparent contradiction – between motion and rest is questioned by Gregory himself in terms of linguistics. His *On the Making of Humankind* treats the dynamic movement-rest in the creation of things.⁹² He captures the seemingly

⁸⁷ Aristotle, *Ethics*, edited and translated by John Warrington, London: Dent; New York: Dutton, second edition 1975. See also the chapters dedicated to Aristotle’s *Ethics* in Roger Crisp (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Also Aristotle, *Nicomachean ethics*, edited and translated by Roger Crisp, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

⁸⁸ M. F. Wagner, *The enigmatic reality of time*, p. 8.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁹⁰ Philo of Alexandria, “On the Creation. Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis” (*Legum Allegoria/Leg. All.*) II and III, trans. by F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, LCL 226, London: Heinemann; New York: Putnam; 1929-1962; various reprints – the latest 2001; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014, version on line 2014, *Leg. All.* iii 234, vol. I, p. 459. See also Philo of Alexandria, *The works of Philo: complete and unabridged*, edited by Ch. D. Yonge, new updated ed., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers Inc; 1987, revised ed. 1993.

⁹¹ Martin S. Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith: Union, Knowledge, and Divine Presence*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 37-38.

⁹² Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio*, in PG 44. 128D-129D; Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man* [NB *Humankind*], in NPNF2-05, p. 389.

paradoxical reality of an ever-moving repose through the above-mentioned notion of *epektasis*.⁹³ As Origen and Basil, Nyssen tried to express the journey from our fallen state of sinfulness to the transcendence of God through that concept. He writes that *ἐπέκτασις* culminates in *apokatastasis* (the “summer” of “the gathering of the crops”⁹⁴), i.e. the process of the universal salvation of humans and of the universe itself (two ‘events’ which, naturally, take place simultaneously; they constitute, in fact, two aspects of the same process).⁹⁵ This is the final restoration and reintegration of everything into a perfected ‘new world’ that retains similarities with the original one – the quintessential *kairos* for both the divine and human history. In Nyssen’s view *apokatastasis* also marks a “sudden stoppage of time” and a “change of the things that are now moving on back to the opposite end”, towards the paradise, and the initial image of God in people.⁹⁶ Some modern theories of time have employed this idea; a notable case from this point of view is Mircea Eliade’s philosophy. The system of thought he constructed focuses on *The Myth of the Eternal Return*;⁹⁷ given Eliade’s erudition, he might have been familiar with concepts peculiar to the Cappadocian School.

⁹³ Gregory of Nyssa, for instance, *De hominis opificio*, PG 44. 205C; trans. *On the Making...*, in NPNF2-05, pp. 411-413. Nyssen touches on these issues in many of his works, e.g. “De perfectione”, in W. Jaeger, J. P. Cavanaugh and V. W. Callahan (eds.), *Opera ascetica: De perfectione*, Leiden: Brill, GNO-8, 1986, p. 214; see also Mülenberg, Maspero, and Jaeger (eds.), “De perfectione”, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online*, vol. 30; consulted online on 14 December 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-8728_gnoo_aGNO_30_t. Also Nyssen’s treatise “De vita Moysis” elaborates on the concept of *epektasis*, without always naming it as such; see Gregory of Nyssa, “De vita Moysis” 2, edited by Musurillo, pp. 110-120, and “De vita Moysis pentecosten”, https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/gregorii-nysseni-opera/de-vita-moysis-pentecosten-aGNO_25_t. The same is the case with Gregory of Nyssa, *In Cant.* 6; Hermann Langerbeck (ed.), *In Canticum canticorum*, Leiden: Brill, GNO-6, 1960, e.g. pp. 174-175. For a commentary on Gregory’s concept of *epektasis* see, among others, my forthcoming article “The *epektasis* [ἐπέκτασις] and the exploits of the soul (ἡ ψυχή) in Gregory of Nyssa’s *De anima et resurrectione*”, the *Journal of Early Christian History*, forthcoming, and my chapter “The notion of progress in patristic thought”, in E. Ene D-Vasilescu (ed.), *A Journey along the Christian way. Festschrift for the Right Rev. Kallistos Ware on his 85th anniversary* (ed.), Scholars’ Press, 2018, pp. 26-38.

⁹⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, for instance, *De hominis opificio*, PG 44. 205 C; *On the Making...*, in NPNF2-05, p. 413.

⁹⁵ For instance, in *De hominis opificio*, PG 44. 205C; *On the Making...*, in NPNF2-05, p. 413. But also within *De Vita Moysis* there are many references to *apokatastasis*; see PG 44. e.g. 300A-D [297-434]; Gregory of Nyssa, “De vita Moysis”, edited by Musurillo (ed.), *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*/GNO 7/1; Gregory of Nyssa, “De vita Moysis pentecosten”, in Jaeger/Mülenberg and Maspero (eds.), *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online*, vol. 25; consulted online on 25 September 2019 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-8728_gnoo_aGNO_25_t. For the English translation see Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, edited and trans. by Malherbe and Ferguson.

⁹⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio*, PG 44. 203A; see also 201 A-D, 204A-D; *On the Making...*, in NPNF2-05, p. 412; also, among others pp. 389, 393, and 400.

⁹⁷ Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, especially the chapter “The Symbolism of the Center”, trans. Williard R. Trask, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1955, pp. 6-12.

Going back to Gregory, the same notion of *epektasis* is the most instrumental in his explanation of timelessness. According to him, even in the afterlife *epektasis* ‘functions’ via the same continual ‘moving repose’/‘ever-moving rest’. Often Gregory underlined that while the human souls will be ‘unmoved’ (i.e. at peace), they will still be striving towards holiness, i. e. perfection (*τελειότης*; Matt. 5. 48). The latter (divine) quality is something that human beings cannot completely attain; what they can do is to incessantly endeavour towards it through the way of virtue. Related to this issue, Gregory comments in *The Life of Moses*: “[T]he perfection (*τελειότης*) of human nature consists perhaps in its very growth in goodness (*ἀεὶ ἐθέλειν ἐν τῷ καλῷ τὸ πλεόν*).”⁹⁸ (As Boersma indicates, another appropriate term for this ‘growth’ in Nyssen’s work is ‘anagogy’⁹⁹). The unfolding of *epektasis* allows for the transcendence of the kingdom of God, which the transfigured souls will eventually reach. Furthermore, because Gregory speaks about *apokatastasis* as consisting in a return of the creation to its initial state, one can say that implications regarding the notion of cycles might also be found in his work. Additionally, Nyssen refers to time in *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, where he speaks about the pre-existence of the souls and about the humans’ “coming into being by generations”. He also says that “our nature proceeds in a certain order and series according to the periodic movement of time”.¹⁰⁰ Gregory offers an explanation concerning the existence of temporal cycles: they occur because of variations in the intensity with which the divine “energies”, “powers”, or “activities”¹⁰¹ manifest themselves.

⁹⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, “De vita Moysis”, PG 44. 300A-C; “De vita Moysis pentecosten”, in GNO, vol. 25, https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/gregorii-nysseni-opera/de-vita-moysis-pentecosten-aGNO_25_t; and the bibliography mentioned above (fn. 75).

⁹⁹ Boersma, “Overcoming Time and Space”, pp. 580, 590, 609.

¹⁰⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, “De anima et resurrectione”, PG 46. 93 B-C; *Gregorii Nysseni opera*, vol. 15, “De Anima et Resurrectione”, in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online*, edited by Ekkehard Mülenberg and Giulio Maspero/ Werner Jaeger; consulted online on 13 December 2019 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-8728_gnoo_aGNO_15_t; NPNF2-05, p. 102.

¹⁰¹All three Cappadocians speak about God’s energies and powers. After them, among others, Maximus the Confessor, for instance, mentions energies in “Ambigorum liber 7”, in PG 91. 1076A-1077B; 1256D-1257C (in the latter, about both energies and *logoi*). For the translation, see Maximus the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers. The Ambigua*, ed. and trans. Nicholas Constas, vol. 1, “Ambiguum 7”, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 2014. Also Pseudo-Dionysius has a

Throughout *Contra Eunomium* (written between 378 and 384¹⁰²) Gregory, like Basil, elaborates on the fact that Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit share in eternity and explains that time is a characteristic of all things that exist and of their “common measure”.¹⁰³ Within the first oration that this work contains, Gregory points out, as might be expected, that the concept of measure cannot be applied to the divine nature. He explains that this is so because the divine is the origin and the cause of time and not vice-versa.¹⁰⁴ In this protest against the Arians the Cappadocian warns that “He who asserts that the Father is ‘prior’ to the Son with

chapter (XI) entitled “Why all the Celestial Hierarchies in common are called Celestial Powers” in his *Celestial Hierarchy*. ‘Activities’ have sometimes also been translated as ‘operations’.

¹⁰² Gregory of Nyssa, “Contra Eunomium I”, in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online*, edited by Jaeger/Mülenberg and Maspero; Leiden: Brill, consulted online on 17 December 2019 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-8728_gnoo_aGNO_1_t1; “Contra Eunomium Liber II”, in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online*, Werner Jaeger. Consulted online on 17 December 2019 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-8728_gnoo_aGNO_1_t2; and “Contra Eunomium Liber III”, in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online*, Werner Jaeger. Consulted online on 17 December 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-8728_gnoo_aGNO_1_t3>. In the previous edition of GNO edited by Jaeger, vol. 1 contains *Contra Eunomium libri I*; vol. 2 contains *Contra Eunomium liber III*, Leiden: Brill, 2002. For the English version of *Contra Eunomium I: An English Translation with Supporting Studies*, edited by Miguel Brugarolas, Series *Vigiliae Christianae*, Supplements, volume 148, 2018 and, of course, Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, in NPNF2-05 (1893, pp. 46-463).

See also Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium II. An English Version with Supporting Studies - Proceedings of the 10th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa* (Olomouc, September 15-18, 2004), edited by Lenka Karfíková, Scot Douglass and Johannes Zachhuber, *Vigiliae Christianae*, Supplements, volume 82, 2007. This contains a chapter by Morwenna Ludlow, “Divine Infinity and Eschatology: The Limits and Dynamics of Human Knowledge According to Gregory of Nyssa (Ce II 67-170)”, pp. 217-238.

Concerning the date when the treatise *Contra Eunomium* was written see Gregory of Nyssa, *The Letters*, Introduction, Translation, and Commentary by A. M. Silvas, pp. 49-53. Silvas dates *Contra Eunomium II* to the year 382, *Contra Eunomium III* between 382-383, and *Contra Eunomium IV* between 383 and 384. Cassin dates *Contra Eunomium I* to 378, 2014: 3; he attributes the other books of *Contra Eunomium* to dates close to those proposed by Silva in Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium III. An English Translation with Commentary and Supporting Studies*, edited by Johan Leemans and Matthieu Cassin, Proceedings of the 12th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Leuven, 14-17 September 2010), Series: *Vigiliae Christianae*, Supplements, , Leiden: Brill volume 124, 2014, pp. 3-4.

¹⁰³ Gregory of Nyssa, “Contra Eunomium I”, Jaeger (ed.), GNO VIII/1, 299, 13; 302, 19; Leiden: Brill, 1986; see also “Contra Eunomium I”, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online*, edited by Jaeger/Mülenberg and Maspero; Leiden: Brill, consulted online on 17 December 2019 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-8728_gnoo_aGNO_1_t1; and *Contra Eunomium I: An English Translation...*, by M. Brugarolas.

¹⁰⁴ Gregory of Nyssa/Gregorii Nysseni, “Contra Eunomium Liber I”, GNO I. 135, 1; cf. 79, 2, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online*, edited by Jaeger/Mülenberg and Maspero, consulted online on 14 August 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-8728_gnoo_aGNO_1_t1, copyright 2019; *Contra Eunomium I: An English Translation...*, by M. Brugarolas, and Gregory of Nyssa, “Against Eunomius”, NPNF2-05, pp. 67-68.

any thought of an interval must perforce allow that even the Father is not without beginning,”¹⁰⁵ an idea which he obviously disallowed.

It is within the treatise *Against Eunomius* that Gregory discussed eternity extensively in terms of *aiōn*; according to David L. Balás the Cappadocian bishop was the first to have done so.¹⁰⁶ In his article about the notion of progress, Paul M. Blowers discusses how the treatise *Contra Eunomium* deals with the concept of time. There he concludes that for Gregory this term represents “an open field of action, of eternal movement and self-realization.”¹⁰⁷ Plass comments on the Cappadocian’s notion of temporality and speaks about a ‘transcendent time’ which is to be found in his writings. This “combines the absence of succession in eternity with the serial order of time.”¹⁰⁸ The contemporary researcher also interprets the bishop’s understanding of temporality through the concept of *διάστημα* [extension]. This notion can be defined thus: “Diastēma [...] is the ontological ‘field’ for

¹⁰⁵ Gregory of Nyssa/Gregorii Nysseni, “Contra Eunomium Liber I”, in GNO 1. 152, 3 in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online, Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online*, edited by Jaeger/Mülenberg and Maspero, consulted online on 14 August 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-8728_gnoo_aGNO_1_t1; “Against Eunomius”, NPNF2-05, p. 93 (1893 edition, p. 68 in other editions). I am including here the titles of some paragraphs that refer to the notion of time in William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson’s translation (Schaff and Wace, ed. Gregory of Nyssa, “Against Eunomius”, NPNF2-05) because this rendering captures well ideas essential to it. Those illustrate the struggle Nyssen had with various aspects of it via crucial theological notions (and in his argument with the “anomoean” Arians, especially with Eunomius): “It will not do to apply this conception, as drawn out above, of the Father and Son to the Creation, as they [the Arians] insist on doing: but we must contemplate the Son apart with the Father, and believe that the Creation had its origin from a definite point”, p. 95 (1893 edition, p. 69 in other editions) and “Explanation of ‘Ungenerate’ and a ‘study’ of Eternity”, p. 135 (1893 edition, p. 98 in other editions); see also “He does wrong in making the being of the Father alone proper and supreme, implying by his omission of the Son and the Spirit that theirs is improperly spoken of, and is inferior”, p. 71 (1893 edition, p. 51 in other editions), and “Answer to the question he is always asking, Can He who is be begotten?”, p. 128 (1893 edition, p. 93 in other editions).

¹⁰⁶ David L. Balás, “Eternity and Time in Gregory of Nyssa’s *Contra Eunomium*,” in Heinrich Dörrie, Margarete Altenburger, and Uta Schramm (eds.), *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie: Zweites internationales Kolloquium über Gregor von Nyssa*; Freckenhorst bei Münster 18–23 September 1972, Leiden: Brill, 1976, 128-155.

¹⁰⁷ Paul M. Blowers’s “Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Concept of ‘Perpetual Progress’”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 46, 1992, p. 152. See also Ekkehard Mülenberg, “Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa” [The infinity of God in Gregory of Nyssa [’s work], *Forschungen zur Kirchen und Dogmengeschichte* 16, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966, and Charles Kannengiesser, “L’infinité divine chez Grégoire de Nyssa”, *Recherches de science religieuse* 55, 1967.

¹⁰⁸ Paul Plass, “Transcendent Time and Eternity in Gregory of Nyssa“, *Vigiliae Christianae* 34 (1980): 180[pp. 180-192]. See also his article, “The concept of eternity in patristic theology”, *Studia Theologica - Nordic Journal of Theology*, 36/1 (1982): 11-25.

created beings including both temporal and quasi-timeless regions.”¹⁰⁹ Obviously, as Gregory underlines again within the “In Ecclesiasten homiliae”, since God cannot be subjected to any measurement¹¹⁰ it is not correct to conceive him even from the perspective of extension – he is adiaSTEMIC. Because Hans Boersma does not interpret the writings of the bishop as texts which affirm the progression of the soul in the afterlife, he cannot accept that the Cappadocian ever thought about *διάστημα/diastēma*.¹¹¹ He justifies his conviction by arguing that despite the fact that the continuous upwards movement of the soul in Gregory’s work seems to us diastemic, actually when speaking about God Nyssen does not anywhere use such a term. That is true, but even though this word does not appear in Gregory’s treatises, his concept *ἐπέκτασις* suggests a movement towards God **without any hiatus**. In any case, to me (as also to Boersma), it is obvious that for the Cappadocian temporality is something to be overcome and is not essential for the development of human nature. Nyssen believed that time – as well as space – serves a limited purpose in the earthly life, therefore what is important vis-à-vis it/those is the manner in which we make use of it/them in our mundane existence. What is essential for Gregory is how people spend their given temporality: they are supposed to do so in contemplation of God and in relationship with others. David Brown endorses such an interpretation when he connects the notion [of temporality] with the fact that Nyssen takes into consideration the reality that humans are social beings – they belong to groups; the researcher thinks that for the bishop this is the most important endowment people

¹⁰⁹ P. Plass, “Transcendent Time and Eternity in Gregory of Nyssa“, p. 186; *διάστημα/diastēma* is ‘extension’ as well as a hiatus in an orderly succession of events. This author elaborates at length on this concept in “The concept of eternity in patristic theology”. Brooks Otis touches on the issue of *diastēma* in “Gregory of Nyssa and the Cappadocian Conception of Time,” *Studia patristica*, vol. 14, part 3, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag (1976), p. 71 [pp. 336–357].

¹¹⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, “In Ecclesiasten homiliae”, e.g. 440.3-7; *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online*, vol. 23, edited by Jaeger, Mühlberg, and Maspero, Leiden: Brill; consulted online on 21 September 2019 “In Ecclesiasten homiliae”, in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-8728_gnoo_aGNO_23_t; Leiden: Brill, c. 2019. Albert-Kees Geljon speaks about it in “Divine Infinity in Gregory of Nyssa and Philo of Alexandria”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 59/2 (May, 2005):152-177. For more bibliography concerning the “Ecclesiastes” in Gregory of Nyssa’s work, see see ft. 77.

¹¹¹ Boersma, “Overcoming Time and Space“.

receive at birth. Brown considers that “social relationships” and “progression” as explained by Gregory are “integral to who we are”, to “human identity.”¹¹² The categories of time and space do not apply to God; neither do they apply to the human soul after the physical death of the body that hosts it – these concepts have no validity within the kingdom of God.

In addition to the terms mentioned above as defining the notion of time, when referring to it, Nyssen also operates with the ancient distinction *χρόνος* and *καιρός*, which he reads from a Christian angle. As well as offering intimations about these concepts in *The Life of Moses*, he elaborates about them at length in the *Homilies on Ecclesiastes*.¹¹³ In these writings he explains that the conventional everyday time (*χρόνος*) and the “proper time” (*καιρός*) mentioned in Eccl 3.1 are references to “measure” (τὸ σύμμετρόν) and “timeliness” (τὸ εὐκαιρον), respectively.¹¹⁴ As already suggested, Gregory considers that the latter two terms represent “criteria for the good”, i. e. they are principles that aid people in conducting virtuous lives. With regard to this particular aspect, Besterman emphasizes that in Nyssen’s work “Both the moderation of the virtuous act (to which the bishop believes *χρόνος* refers) and its propitious timing (which he sees in the mentioning of *καιρός*) contribute to [it]. The important thing, Gregory maintains, is that the measurement (*μέτρον*) and timeliness (*εὐκαιρία*) should go hand in hand.”¹¹⁵ Later the Dutch/Canadian theologian relates the argument within his article quoted above, “Overcoming Time and Space: Gregory of Nyssa’s Anagogical Theology”, with a further thought he has about the connection the bishop makes vis-à-vis the nexus “time–virtue”: “According to Nyssen, the first two chapters of

¹¹² David Brown, *Discipleship and Imagination: Christian Tradition and Truth*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000, p. 122. Brown also gives a second reason for Gregory’s preference for a dynamic model of the after-life over a static one: human identity is shaped in this dynamic manner by the context in which people live.

¹¹³ Gregory of Nyssa, “In Ecclesiasten homiliae”, in Gregorii Nysseni, Hom. 1–8 in Eccl, GNO 5, trans. Hall and Moriarty, Gregorii Nysseni, “In Ecclesiasten homiliae”, Jacobus McDonough and Paulus Alexander (eds.), *In inscriptiones Psalmorum; In sextum Psalmum; In Ecclesiasten homiliae*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1962; *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online*, vol. 23, edited by Jaeger, Mülenberg, and Maspero, Leiden: Brill; consulted online on 21 September 2019 “In Ecclesiasten homiliae”, in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Online*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-8728_gnoo_aGNO_23_t; Leiden: Brill, c. 2019.

¹¹⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, Hom. 1–8 in Eccl, GNO 5. 282; trans. Hall and Moriarty, p. 100.

¹¹⁵ Boersma, “Overcoming Time and Space”, pp. 585-586.

Ecclesiastes discuss the futility of temporal enjoyments. [...] The diastemic character of temporal existence makes ascent through a life of virtues difficult. [...] Nyssen regards the life of virtue as a movement away from the futility of measured bodies to the joy of eternal life itself.”¹¹⁶ Indeed, as suggested earlier, for Gregory of Nyssa the main concept discussed in the ancient book is the duration spent by people in pursuits that are pleased to God, i. e. the manner in which people live this kind of ‘quality time’. When thinking about this, the Cappadocian has in mind the interval which encompasses the souls’ journey from an ontological state characterised by the limitations of time and space to the Kingdom of God where these no longer exist. Throughout Gregory’s work it is implied that the human soul has the capacity to transcend historical time and to experience the metaphysical dimension of temporality, and thus to bridge the mundane and supernal worlds. Christians believe that the action of the Holy Spirit and their participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ ensure the successful completion of the spiritual voyage just described. The conclusion regarding the implications of Nyssen’s theology vis-à-vis the issue of temporality is that, while for him the Kingdom of God is beyond time and therefore cannot be defined in terms of linearity and progression, the human efforts towards it can be easily conceived as linear and progressive endeavours.

Among the literature that evaluates Gregory of Nyssa’s understanding of the notion of time, additionally to that quoted above, the works of the following authors are the most

¹¹⁶ H. Boersma, *Embodiment and Virtue in Gregory of Nyssa. An Anagogical Approach*, Oxford Early Christian Studies, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 211.

known: Lewis Ayres,¹¹⁷ Paul M. Blowers,¹¹⁸ Sarah Coakley,¹¹⁹ Elena Ene D-Vasilescu,¹²⁰ Charles Kannengiesser,¹²¹ Morwenna Ludlow,¹²² Ekkehard Mülenberg,¹²³ Paul Plass,¹²⁴ Andrew Radde-Gallwitz,¹²⁵ Charles M. Stang,¹²⁶ and Johannes Zachhuber.¹²⁷ For instance, Blowers reviews the controversies that involve the notion of infinity in Gregory's work. In this context, as mentioned, he brings into discussion *Contra Eunomium*, which is not usually taken into consideration in the literature that treats the divine infinity and the infinity of human ascent to God in Nyssen's corpus.¹²⁸ Plass introduces some notions connected to *χρόνος* and *καιρός* as comprehended by Gregory, especially in their significance to human lives. The professor from the University of Wisconsin–Madison speaks about a 'transcendent

¹¹⁷ Lewis Ayres, "On not three people: The Fundamental Themes of Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology as seen in To Ablabius: On Not Three Gods", in Sarah Coakley(ed.), *Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2003, pp. 1-13, originally published in *Modern Theology*, 18: 4 (2002):15-45. For the Neoplatonic influence on Gregory of Nyssa see Enrico Peroli, "Gregory of Nyssa and the Neoplatonic Doctrine of the Soul," *Vigiliae Christianae* 51 (1997):117-139.

¹¹⁸ Paul M. Blowers, "Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Concept of 'Perpetual Progress', *Vigiliae Christianae* 46, 1992, pp. 151-171.

¹¹⁹ Sarah Coakley(ed.), *Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, Malden, M.A.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2003; part Of *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (2004), vol. 55/2.

¹²⁰ E. Ene D-Vasilescu, complementary to the entry on Gregory of Nyssa in the above-mentioned book edited by Esler, *The Early Christian World*, and (partially) "Early Christianity about the notions of time", see also the article "How would Gregory of Nyssa have understood evolutionism?", *Studia Patristica* 67/15 (2013): 151-169.

¹²¹ Charles Kannengiesser, "L'infinité divine chez Grégoire de Nysse", *Recherches de science religieuse* 55/1, (January-March 1967): 55-65.

¹²² Morwenna Ludlow, *Universal salvation: eschatology in the thought of Gregory of Nyssa and Karl Rahner*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003 and *Gregory of Nyssa, Ancient and (Post)modern*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

¹²³ Ekkehard Mülenberg's, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Forschungen zur Kirchen und Dogmengeschichte 16, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966.

¹²⁴ Paul Plass, "Transcendent Time and Eternity in Gregory of Nyssa", *Vigiliae Christianae* 34 (1980): 180-192.

¹²⁵ Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

¹²⁶ Charles M. Stang, *Apophysis and pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012; and "Negative Theology from Gregory of Nyssa to Dionysius the Areopagite", in Julia Lamm (ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

¹²⁷ Johannes Zachhuber, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa. Philosophical Background and Theological Significance*, Leiden: Brill, 1999; "Once Again: Gregory of Nyssa on Universals", in *Journal of Theological Studies*, 56 (2005), pp. 75-98; "Gregory of Nyssa: *Contra Eunomium* III/4, in J. Leemans and M. Cassin (eds.), *Contra Eunomium III. Proceedings of the 12th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden: Brill, 2014, pp. 313-334; "Christological Titles-Conceptually Applied? *Contra Eunomium* II 294-358", in L. Karfiková, S. Douglass, and J. Zachhuber, *Gregory of Nyssa, Contra Eunomium: An English Version with Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the 10th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa*, Leiden: Brill, 2007, pp. 257-278 "Nochmals: Der "38. Brief" des Basilius von Cäsarea als Werk des Gregor von Nyssa", in *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 7 (2003): 3-90.

¹²⁸ P. M. Blowers, "Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Concept of 'Perpetual Progress', *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992): 152.

time' in the work of Nyssen, which "combines the absence of succession in eternity with the serial order of time."¹²⁹ Morwenna Ludlow elaborates on the progression of the souls in eternity as understood by the bishop, and on the concept of time within the framework of eschatology as presented by him.¹³⁰ She appreciates that the fourth century bishop really believed that *apokastasis* refers to universal salvation. Ludlow struggles – as I also do – to elucidate whether Nyssen thought that the universe undergoes cycles; as we have noticed, he seems to vacillate on this.

If one is to examine in more detail what Gregory thought about time 'on a horizontal plane,' i.e. about human history, we can find suggestions in his work that lead us to understand that for him this is a consequence of the Fall – it represents a regression from the original state of humankind. It can be implied from this that people must sometimes move backwards in order to remedy negative states of affairs that exist as the result of past actions. It would be the same on the path of virtue: sometimes one must reverse the sequence of events to keep progressing along it.¹³¹ Nevertheless Nyssen is always quick to declare that the historical drive is generally 'positive' or progressive since *Apokatastasis* (that is the absolute *kairos*) takes place and universal harmony is eventually reinstated.

¹²⁹ Paul Plass, "Transcendent Time and Eternity in Gregory of Nyssa", *Vigiliae Christianae* 34 (1980): 180.

¹³⁰ Morwenna Ludlow, *Universal salvation: eschatology in the thought of Gregory of Nyssa and Karl Rahner*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

¹³¹ Gregory of Nyssa, "On Virginity", GNO VIII/1, 299,13; 302, 19. See more on this in Morwenna Ludlow, *Gregory of Nyssa, Ancient and (Post)modern*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007; D. L. Balás, "Eternity and Time in Gregory of Nyssa's *Contra Eunomium*", pp. 128-155; Alden A. Mosshammer, *The Easter Computus and the Origins of the Christian Era*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford Early Christian Studies, 2008; David Balas, "Eternity and Time in Gregory of Nyssa's *Contra Eunomium*", in Heinrich Dörrie; Margarete Altenburger, and Uta Schramm (eds.), *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie*, Leiden: Brill, 1976, pp. 128-155; and Brian Leftow, "Eternity and Immutability", in William E. Mann (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Religion*, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005, pp. 48-77.

3.3. Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329-390)

The other fourth-century Cappadocian thinker, **Gregory of Nazianzus**, needed to deal with the problem of time especially when referring to the generation of the Son from God the Father and to the process of deification. The Theologian gave expression to the paradox concerning how it is conceivable for humans – who have a temporary, limited existence – to join the unlimited God/Christ, i.e. to undergo *theôsis*, the supreme *kairos*, as follows: “If he did not exist from the beginning, he has the same rank as I have, though with a slight priority – we are both separated from God by time. If he has the same rank as I have, how can he make me God, how can he link me with deity?”¹³² The question was rhetorical because the bishop was familiar with the answer from Paul; the Apostle knew how and why: it is possible for humans to attain deification because God broke into their history – thus ‘short-circuiting’ time – took flesh, and lived among them. Obviously, he implied this before Athanasius, who wrote extensively about Christ’s incarnation.¹³³ A scriptural place where the idea above is also clearly presented is John 10: 34: “Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?” KJV; as we know, this is a paraphrase of Psalm 82:6.¹³⁴ And perhaps it is useful to remind the readers here with Nazianzen that what Paul (or Pseudo-Paul, if we follow the theory that the epistle to the Colossians was not written by the Apostle) predicates of ‘God’ he ‘assigns clearly to Christ’;¹³⁵ one instance in which this happens is *Col. 3:11*:

¹³² Gregory of Nazianzus, “Oratio XXXI. Theologica quinta. Περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος/De Spiritu Sancto”, in PG 36: 137A-B; Gregory of Nazianzus, “The Fifth Theological Oration. Oratio 31. On the Holy Spirit” 31. 4, in *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen*, introd. and commentary by Frederick W. Norris, trans. by Lionel Wickham and Frederick Williams, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*, vol 13, Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1990/1991, p. 280.

¹³³ Saint Athanasius, “On the Incarnation of God the Word”, in *Corpus Patrum Graecorum (CPG) 3365*, edited by Robert W. Thomson, *Athanasiana Syriaca*, Leuven: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, vol. 3 in 8, 1965-1977; Saint Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, Introduction, edited and translated by J. Behr, Preface C. S. (Clive Staples) Lewis, Yonkers, N.Y.: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011.

¹³⁴ More on this in Mark Edwards, “Growing like God: some thoughts on Irineus of Lyons”, in M. Edwards and E. Ene D-Vasilescu (eds.), *Visions of God*, p. 37.

¹³⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus, “Oration 30. On the Son”, “Oratio XXX. Theologica quinta. Περὶ Υἱοῦ/De Filii”, in PG 36: 113B; Gregory of Nazianzus, “The Fourth Theological Oration. On the Son”, 4.8, in Norris (ed.), *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*, p. 266.

“Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ *is* all, and in all”; KJV.

In the poem *On the Son*, Gregory of Nazianzus details the begetting of the divine Son from God as having the temporal aspect central to it, thus: “οὐδὲν γὰρ θεότητος ἔην πελας, ἀλλὰ τόδ’ ἔμπης πᾶσιν ὁμῶς μερόπεσσι ἀριφραδῆς ὡσπερ ἐμοί γε. οὐδὲν ἐμῆς θέμις ἔστι φέρειν θεότετι γενέθλης, οὐ ῥύσιν, οὐδὲ τομὲν κακοαισχέα. εἰ γὰρ ἔγωγε οὐκ ἀπαθῆς γενέτωρ (καὶ γὰρ δετός), οὐτι παθετός ὅς τις πάμπαν ἄπηκτος ἀσώματος.”/ “When there existed the Father who is without beginning, the Father who left nothing beyond his Godhead, then there also existed the Son of the Father, having that Father as his timeless beginning.”¹³⁶ In the stanza form this excerpt looks as follows:

Before the Great Father/there existed nothing at all,
for he holds all things within himself/and nothing is greater than he.

...

Time may be prior to me/But time is not prior to the Word
whose Father is the Timeless One.¹³⁷

In my own translation:

Nothing at all existed before the Great Father
for he contains all things within himself
And thus nothing is more than he is.

....

If time is prior to me/It is not erstwhile to the Word/
whose Father has neither beginning nor end.

The content of this fragment means that in Gregory’s (as in other Nicaeans’) opinion the Son did not come into existence after a time, nor was he born later, but come into being before the creation of the world. As the Father is from eternity the Son who is from him, as well as the Holy Spirit, are also from eternity.

¹³⁶St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Poemata Arcana*, edited with textual introduction by Claudio Moreschini; introduction, translation with commentary Donald Armstrong Sykes; English translation of textual introduction by Leofranc Holford-Strevens, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, p. 7.

¹³⁷ John McGuckin, *Selected Poems*, Oxford: SLG Press/Fairacres Publications, 2004, pp. 1-2.

Also Nazianzen's concept of Trinity clarified in his dispute with the Arians, in particular with Eunomius, leads him to the same understanding of the relationship between God and time: time is a creation of God, who is atemporal. Gregory read Eunomius's lines that the Son did not exist "before his own coming to be",¹³⁸ and he thought that for the bishop of Cyzicus they have the following meaning: the Son was created in a certain moment by the Father, who is *οὐκ ἀκτιστον* – uncreated. Nazianzen questions the Anomoean's view and points out its dangerous implications: "If there was [a time] when the Father did not exist, there was [a time] when the Son did not exist".¹³⁹ Since he believed that ideas peculiar to the Arian bring temporality into the realm of the divine, in Gregory's view Eunomius's Trinitarian theology becomes not only subordinationist, but also mythological. Nazianzen's suspicion was also based on Eunomius's comment vis-à-vis *Luke 2: 52* to the effect that the Father, being in need of nothing, does not grow, while "The Son is said to have 'grown in wisdom'", i.e. to have been subjected to *chronos*, to the time that characterizes the mundane world.¹⁴⁰ That could imply that the Son is not equal with his Creator. But for Gregory the Son is not just any *ποίημα* (creation), but the most perfect of them and, even more importantly, He is the Only-begotten God. The Theologian knew, as did John Chrysostom (347- 407¹⁴¹), that Arius and his disciples (as, for instance, Eusebius of Nicomedia,¹⁴² Paulinus of Tyre,¹⁴³ and

¹³⁸ Eunomius, *Apology* 12, 10-12, in *Eunomius. The Extant Works*, ed. and trans by Richard Paul Vaggione, Oxford: Clarendon Press, (Oxford Early Christian Texts), 1987, pp. 45-46. See also R. P. Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution*, New York, Oxford University Press 2000.

¹³⁹ Gregory of Nazianzus, "Oratio 31. On the Holy Spirit" 31. 4, in *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*, ed. Norris, p. 280.

¹⁴⁰ Eunomius, *Fragmenta. Assertion xxviii* (from the Thesaurus of Cyril of Alexandria), 421D - 424A, in Vaggione (ed.), *Eunomius. The Extant Works*, p. 185.

¹⁴¹ John Chrysostom/S. Joannis Chrysostomi, Archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani, *Homilias contra Anomoeos* i-xii; among them *Homilia De Christi Divinitate*, PG 48, cols. 801-811; *Homilia De Christi Precibus*, PG 48, cols. 783-795; *Homilia De Consubstantiali*, PG 48, cols. 755-768; and *Homilia Constantinopoli Habita*, PG 48, cols. 795-802.

¹⁴² Eusebius of Nicomedia (d. 341) was the priest who baptised Constantine the Great. He was initially bishop of Berytus (modern day Beirut) in Phoenicia. He later became Bishop of Nicomedia before finally becoming Archbishop of Constantinople. He had a strong influence among the members of the family of Constantine the Great.

¹⁴³ Paulinus, Bishop of Tyre and then, Patriarch of Antioch (d. ca. 324).

Euzoïus¹⁴⁴) recognised formally Christ's status as the Son,¹⁴⁵ but that he and the others thought this sonship to be only by adoption. In the above-mentioned controversy Nazianzen's part also consisted in reflexions about the hierarchy of the three essences crucial to Christianity: the unbegotten God, his Son of whom He is the 'cause', and Christ. The Neo-Platonists intensely debated the temporal aspect in Christology, and Markus Vinzent has very well summarized their exchanges.¹⁴⁶ Today the discussions on Trinity, Christology, and time continue, and some still focus on the relationship Nicene-Arian theology. In this context we may indicate that Franz Xaver Risch opines that actually Eunomius himself was trying to prove that the Father and the Son are equal and coeternal. He concludes that for the Anomoean "The father is the divine being, and the Son is the form of this being."¹⁴⁷ Richard P. Vaggione also considers that the Arians recognised the status of the Son to be that of a "proper offspring".¹⁴⁸ Other contemporary scholars, like Cristopher Stead for instance, explained that in fact "Arius does not think it would degrade the Son by reducing him to an impersonal quality, but rather that it would honor him unduly by promoting him to equality

¹⁴⁴ Euzoïus, Bishop of Antioch and friend of Arius from childhood; they were deposed together in c. 320; See Socr. *H. E.* i. 6; Soz. *H. E.* i. 15; Theod. *H. E.* i. 4, ii. 311; Athan. *de Syn.*, 907. The letter to Emperor Constantine was signed by Arius together with Euzoïus; William G. Rusch, 'Letter to the Emperor Constantine', *Trinitarian Controversy*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980, pp. 53-54.

¹⁴⁵ Philip R. Amidon, *The Church History of Rufinus of Aquileia: Books 10 and 11*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997; William Bright, *The Age of the Fathers*, New York: AMS Press 1970; Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society. From Galilee to Gregory the Great*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), and H. Chadwick, *The Early Church*, London, New York: Penguin Books, 1993; Harold A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of intolerance*, Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000; Mark Ellingsen, *Reclaiming Our Roots: An Inclusive Introduction to Church History, I, The Late First Century to the Eve of the Reformation*, Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1999; Jean Guitton, *Great Heresies and Church councils*, New York: Harper & Row, 1965; Arnold Hugh Martin Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978; Richard Lim, *Public Disputation, power, and social order in late antiquity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995; Johannes Roldanus, *The Church in the Age of Constantine: the Theological Challenges* London: Routledge, 2006); and Frances Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.

¹⁴⁶ Markus Vinzent, "Pseudo-Athanasius, Contra Arianos IV", *Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae* 36, Leiden: Brill (1996): 90-104; Markus Vinzent, "Introduction", *Asterius von Kappadokien. Die theologischen Fragmente, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae* 20, Leiden: Brill, 1993, pp. 42-48.

¹⁴⁷ Franz Xaver Risch, "Pseudo-Basilus, Adversus Eunomium IV-V", *Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae* 16, (1992):197. See also *Eunomius. The Extant Works*, ed. Vaggione; and Reinhard M. Hübner, "Der Author von Ps-Basilus, Adversus Eunomium IV-V – Apolinarius von Laodicea?", *The Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Patristic Studies*, 1983.

¹⁴⁸ R. P. Vaggione, "Οὐκ ὡς ἐν τῶν γεννημάτων: Some Aspects of Dogmatic Formulae in the Arian Controversy", *Studia Patristica* 17 (1982): 181-187.

with the Father”.¹⁴⁹ There are various other analytical endeavours concerning the notion of temporality in the work of the Nazianzen, especially as he presented it when speaking about the divine generation. Some of those have been carried out by C.A. Beeley,¹⁵⁰ P.

Bouteneff,¹⁵¹ R. Cross,¹⁵² B. E. Daley,¹⁵³ F. Damgaard,¹⁵⁴ E. Ene D-Vasilescu,¹⁵⁵ B.

Fulford,¹⁵⁶ F.W. Norris,¹⁵⁷ V.E.F. Harrison,¹⁵⁸ A. Hofer,¹⁵⁹ A. Richard,¹⁶⁰ and Bradley K.

Storin.¹⁶¹

At the close of this section, we shall retain that Gregory of Nazianzus decisively contended in his work that the heavenly Father and Son are coeval. Also that the notion of ‘generation’ does not signify a succession of actions (as in the earthly world), but a perpetual

¹⁴⁹ Christopher Stead, “Was Arius a Neoplatonist?”, in Elizabeth A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica*, Peeters, Leuven, xxxii (1997): 42, [pp. 39-53], and “Homousios (ὁμοούσιος)”, *RAC* 16 (1992): 364-433.

¹⁵⁰ Christopher A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: in Your Light We Shall See Light*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008; Also, C.A. Beeley (ed.), *Re-reading Gregory of Nazianzus*, Washington, D.C.: Beeley, C.A. (ed.), *Re-reading Gregory of Nazianzus*, Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012.

¹⁵¹ Peter C. Bouteneff, “St. Gregory Nazianzen and Two Nature Christology”, *St. Vladimir Seminary's Quarterly* 38 (1994): 255-270, and *The theological Value of Christ's Human Soul in the Cappadocian Fathers*, doctoral dissertation, Oxford, 1997.

¹⁵² Richard Cross, “Divine Monarchy in Gregory of Nazianzus”, *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 14/1 (Spring 2006): 105-116.

¹⁵³ Brian E. Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, New York, London: Routledge, 2006.

¹⁵⁴ Finn Damgaard, *The Figure of Moses in Gregory of Nazianzus' Autobiographical Remarks in his Orations and Poems*, in Markus Vinzent (ed.), *Studia Patristica*, Papers presented at the Sixteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2011, LXVII, no. 15: *Cappadocian Writers The Second Half of the Fourth Century*, Leuven: Leuven University Press (2013): 179-187.

¹⁵⁵ E. Ene D-Vasilescu, “Generation (γενεά) in Gregory Nazianzen's poem *On the Son*”, pp. 169-184.

¹⁵⁶ Ben Fulford, “One Commixture of Light’: Rethinking some Modern Uses and Critiques of Gregory of Nazianzus on the Unity and Equality of the Divine Persons”, *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, II/2 (April 2009), 172-189.

¹⁵⁷ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*, and *Gregory Nazianzen's Doctrine of Jesus Christ*, doctoral dissertation, New Haven: Conn.: Yale University Press, 1970; this is still significant and pertinent, even though, as Peter C. Bouteneff observed in his article ‘St. Gregory Nazianzen and Two Nature Christology’, p. 255, n. 3, it did not concentrate on Christological questions.

¹⁵⁸ Verna (Nonna) E. F. Harrison, “Illuminated from all sides by the Trinity: Neglected Themes in Gregory's Trinitarian Theology”, in C. A. Beeley (ed.), *Re-reading Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 13-30.

¹⁵⁹ Andrew Hofer, *Christ in the Life and Teaching of Gregory of Nazianzus*, Oxford Early Christian Studies Series, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

¹⁶⁰ Anne Richard, *Cosmologie and théologie chez Grégoire de Nazianze*, Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 2003.

¹⁶¹ Bradley K. Storin, *Self-Portrait in Three Colors. Gregory of Nazianzus's Epistolary Autobiography*, Oakland, California: Univ of California Press, 2019.

process of creating reality. On the specific matter of *chronos* and *kairos* (words that he did not use) we conclude that the intimations towards their meaning within Gregory of Nazianzus's texts are for the first to denote the temporarily experienced by Christ, and for the second the 'duration' eternally experienced by people upon reaching *theôsis*. On a more general note, we have the opportunity to observe here that the three famous representatives of the Cappadocian School did not agree on everything; in some instances they held distinct positions and expressed those in dissimilar ways. That is to be expected since Basil and the two Gregories had different personalities. I state this because the common perception of this fourth century theological movement is that its representatives had common ideas on everything.

3. 4. John Chrysostom (c. 349-407)

John Chrysostom to whose writings we move now, prefers *χρόνος* and *καιρός* from among the words for temporality within the Bible.¹⁶² For him *chronos* is the measured time and *kairos* constitutes a time for God to intervene positively in people's undertakings; the most obvious employment of this meaning is within his "Ordo Divini Sacrificii" where before the Liturgy begins the Deacon addresses the Priest thus: "Καιρός του ποιήσα τω Κυρίω"/It is time [kairos] for the Lord to act!"¹⁶³ John usage of this concept as one representing an instance of opportunities and "of harvest", as we can see, is similar to that from pre-Christian times. Concerning *χρόνος*, John understood by it (as both pagans and the Cappadocians/Early Christians did) the humanly measured temporal course. The Liturgist's thinking and elaboration on these two terms helped him – as it did in the case of Nyssen – to apprehend the 'authentic' time specific to the human souls as being that 'spent' in the divine spatio-temporal dimension, i. e. 'passed with God' in prayer, contemplation,¹⁶⁴ and helping others (we shall

¹⁶² Saint John Chrysostom, in "The Early Church Fathers", Ph. Schaff, NPNF, New York: Scribner, v. 1, 1907 [the entire collection 1898-1909]; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, first series; first edition 1994; 2nd edition, 1996.

¹⁶³ John Chrysostom, "Ordo Divini Sacrificii. Liturgia", PG. 63. 903 [901-923]; *The Divine Liturgy of our Father among the saints John Chrysostom*, edited and translated by a committee appointed by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I and Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain (in Greek and English), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, p. 11. See also John Chrysostom, "La Divine liturgie de saint Jean Chrysostome" edited by a collective of scholars in *Sources Chrétiennes*, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1986 (in the original with facing French translation).

¹⁶⁴ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis*, edited by R. C. Hill, Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1-17; 18-45, and 46-67, 1986, 1990, respectively 1992 (first edition 1958), Fathers of the Church Series, vols. 74, 82, and 87. See also St. John Chrysostom, "Ab Athanasio ad Chrysostomum", in M. Geerard (ed.), *Clavis Patrum Graecorum (CCCPG)/CPG 2*, vol. 2 (out of 5), Turnhout: Brepols, 1974. And St. John Chrysostom/Jean Chrysostome, *La Virginité*, edited by H. Musurillo and B. Grillet, SC 125, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1966. Also, in addition to the volumes from *Patrologiae Graeca* (49-64) Ph. Schaff, NPNF, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, first series; first new edition 1994; second new edition, 1996 (original edition London and New York: MacMillan, 1889-1890), vols. 9-14, see also Sancti Joannis Chrysostomi/ St. John Chrysostom, "De creatione mundi III", in Bernard de Montfaucon (ed.), *Opera Omnia quae extant*, 1835, vol. 6, 535. The most recent research on the saint is that undertaken within the project 'The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity from its origins to circa AD 700 across the entire Christian world' (CSLA) led by Prof. Bryan Ward-Perkins, University of Oxford, 2014-2018; records about various saints created by Efthymios Rizos, Gesa Schenke, Robert Wiśniewski, Sergey Minov, Marta Tycner, Nikoloz Aleksidze *et alii*. Concerning John Chrysostom see records/database; [csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid= S00779](http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=S00779); <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E02400>; and other entries, for instance CPG 4360=BH967=CSLA – E02544.

remember, for example, Homily 1 on the Statues in which Timothy’s virtue and Paul’s care are appreciated).¹⁶⁵ Therefore, Chrysostom is another Christian author who adapted *καιρός* in such a manner as to relate to the history of salvation. He also spoke about the subjectivity and relativity of time in the “New Homily No. 1”, where he said that those moved by “spiritual joy” do not feel the passing of time, and that those who “observe night-long vigils render the night day” (PG 63. 470).¹⁶⁶ In another text, “A Homily on Martyrs”, John alludes to the same characteristics of temporality when he avers that the person who conducts a virtuous life “celebrates a festival every day” and “is constantly observing a holy day” (PG. 50. 662).¹⁶⁷

With respect to the distinction concerning the two types of temporality, and especially regarding the understanding of *καιρός*, the Liturgist might have been inspired by, among others, the biblical quotation Deuteronomy 32. 35, where it is ‘time fit for something’, thus: “[God says] To me *belongeth* vengeance and recompense; their foot shall slide in *due* time: for the day of their calamity *is* at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste”; Deut. 32. 35.¹⁶⁸ Or John, as a bishop, might have also found inspiration in Isaiah and 2 Corinthians: “Thus saith the Lord. In an acceptable time [*καιρός*] have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages”; Is 49: 8.¹⁶⁹ Additionally, the above-mentioned source from the New Testament (*Cor.*) uses *καιρός* thus: “For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I

¹⁶⁵ John Chrysostom, “Homily 1” 8; in John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Statues* (21 homilies), edited by Philip Schaff, trans. by W.R.W. Stephens, NPNF1-09, Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1889; revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1901.htm>>.

¹⁶⁶ John Chrysostom, “Homily Delivered after the remains of the martyrs, etc. New Homily No. 1”, PG. 63. 470 [cols. 467-472]; its translation is in Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen (eds., trans.), *John Chrysostom*, London: Routledge, 2000, p 88-89.

¹⁶⁷ John Chrysostom, “A Homily on Martyrs”, PG 50, col. 663 [cols. 661-666]; W. Mayer and P. Allen (eds., trans.), *John Chrysostom*, London: Routledge, 2000, pp. 94.

¹⁶⁸ Deuteronomy 32: 35; The Bible; King James Version, Thomas Nelson, 1970, p. 193.

¹⁶⁹ Isaiah- Is 49: 8, The Bible; King James Version, Thomas Nelson, 1970, pp. 600-601.

succoured thee: behold, *now is* the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”; 2 Cor 6: 2a.¹⁷⁰

Additionally to the texts mentioned above, others where the Liturgist touches on the notion of time are the twelve homilies in the series *Peri Akatalēptou* / “On the Incomprehensible nature of God”,¹⁷¹ especially Homily 5 where, in his dispute with the Anomoneans, he speaks, as Nazianzen did, about ‘generation’. Nevertheless, John does not explicitly focus here on the distinction between the two terms that are central to our analysis, but elaborates on the co-eternity of the Father and the Son, as he does in other of his works.¹⁷² We shall see now how Augustine treated the notion of time.

¹⁷⁰ 2 Corinthians 6: 2a: “For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, *now is* the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”; The Bible, King James Version, Thomas Nelson, 1970, p. 167.

¹⁷¹ John Chrysostom, *On the Incomprehensible nature of God*, trans. by Paul W. Harkins, Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982.

¹⁷² For instance, John Chrysostom, *The Homilies on Various Epistles*, Altenmünster, Germany: Jazzybee Verlag, 2012.

Chapter 4. Augustine (354 -430) about the notion of time

Augustine approached the concept of time from both a historical and a metaphysical perspective. The bishop expressed a **sense of history** in the treatise *De Ciuitate Dei Contra Paganos/On the city of God against the pagans* (written in 426 AD).¹⁷³ He affirms that Christianity needs to be concerned with the mystical City of God that should and would ultimately triumph (*kairos*); he calls it the New Jerusalem.¹⁷⁴ He believed that those inhabiting it have left aside earthly pleasure to dedicate themselves to the eternal truths of God revealed fully in the Christian faith. He states that “the joys of the saints in that Sabbath shall be spiritual, and consequent on the presence of God”.¹⁷⁵ He spoke in these terms under very difficult circumstances for the earthly Roman Empire; its very existence was at risk under the attacks of the Visigoths who, under Alaric, conquered its capital in 410. For many the event constituted the beginning of the Empire’s disintegration in the West. Some understood it as a punishment for the fact that a number of its citizens abandoned the worship of traditional Roman gods moving their allegiance to Christ. Despite this situation, Augustine

¹⁷³ St. Augustine, “De civitate Dei Contra Paganos”, in CSEL 40/2, edited by Emanuel Hoffmann, Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften/Austrian Academy of Sciences, 1899/1900. I have used the updated edition, which does not totally coincide from the point of view of the division of chapters with, vol. 41, 1864, cols. 13-805; when I introduce quotations I shall indicate the fragments from both sources. The editorial divisions within CSEL coincide with those in Augustinus, “De civitate dei”, edited by Bernhard Dombart and Alfons Kalb, Turnhout: Brepolis Publications, 1955, reprint 2010. The volume includes the complete text of Augustine's *De civitate dei* as published in *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, volumes 47 and 48 (vol. 47, libri I-X, MCMLV/1955; vol. 48, libri XI-XXII, MCMLV/1955 Turnhout: Brepolis). For translation I have used Augustine, *City of God*, NPNF1-02, edited and translated by M. Dods, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, vol. 2, 1871; “The Early Church Fathers”, Ph. Schaff (ed.), NPNF 1-02: City of God, Christian Doctrine, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers; first new edition 1994; second edition, 1996, vol. 2. See also Augustine, *De civitate Dei/City of God*, trans. by Henry Bettenson, Introduction, John O’Meara, Penguin Classics, London: Penguin Classics, 1995, reprint 2003 with a new introduction by G. R. Evans, London: Penguin Classics; also Augustine of Hippo, “De civitate Dei”, translators William McAllen Green; William Chase Greene; Philip Levine, George Englert McCracken; Eva Matthews; David S. Wiesen, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

¹⁷⁴ For example in St. Augustine, “De civitate Dei”, in CSEL, vol. 40/2; both the heavenly and earthly Jerusalem are mentioned, for instance, in book 17, 3. 1-29, p. 208; book 18, ch. 10. 5-14, p. 389, cf. CSEL; book 17. 2, col. 526; book 17. chap. 31, col. 510; and book 17, chap. 36, col. 550, cf. PG 41; some of those in NPNF1-02, pp. 339, 350, 436. Augustine’s position on the topic is similar to that of Tertullian/Tertullianus (c. 155-240 AD).

¹⁷⁵ St. Augustine, “De Civitate Dei”, CSEL 40/2, Book 20. 7. 5-15, p. 440; PG 41, Book 20. 7, col. 668; NPNF1-02, p. 511.

wanted his book *The City of God* to convey a spiritual message rather than a political one, and to affirm the victory of Christianity and of the heavenly kingdom.

Concerning peoples, the bishop describes them as “embodied souls” that pass through time; references to this exist, for instance, in book IV, iv (7); xii (19-20); xvi (31).¹⁷⁶ When speaking about their salvation he states that they will undergo two resurrections or ‘regenerations’ (*kairoi*), thus: “one after the faith, which even now comes about through baptism; the other after the flesh, which is to come about in its exemption from decay and death through the great and last judgement”.¹⁷⁷ According to the bishop these two resurrections can be explained in the following terms: the first, of the soul, which is happening now, while being subject to what Augustine terms ‘the transience of time’ (an expression that denotes *chronos*), is the way of virtue and prevents us from coming into the second death; the second – to take place at the end of the world – is “not of the soul but of the body, and which by the last judgement will send some into the second death and others into that life which has no death.”¹⁷⁸ For the bishop the first resurrection has already taken place in the conversion of sinners to Christ, and is still taking place for those who live righteously.¹⁷⁹ Augustine was not only assuring himself and the Christians when writing these, but was also conversing with the Millenarians (or the Chiliasts, in their Greek designation), who believed that the kingdom is a **future** reign of Christ in the world (*kairos*).

¹⁷⁶ Augustine, “Confessiones”, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (CCSL) 27, ed. Luc Verheijen, Turnhout: Brepols, 1981; book IV, iv (7); xii (19-20); xvi (31); Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford World’s Classics, 1991 (repr. 1998, 2008), pp. 57, 64-65, 70-71. See also Augustine, “Confessiones”/Confessions, CSEL 33, edited by P. Knöll, Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften/Austrian Academy of Sciences, 1896, and Augustine, in “The Early Church Fathers”, Philip Schaff, Augustine: NPNF1-01. Prolegomena, Confessions, Letters, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, first series 1886; first new edition 1994; second new edition, 1996

¹⁷⁷ St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*, CSEL 40/2, book XX: vi (9-16), and PL 41, col. 666, NPNF1-02, p. 426.

¹⁷⁸ St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, CSEL 40/2, book XX: vi (4-7); PL 41, col. 665, NPNF1-02, pp. 425-426.

¹⁷⁹ Augustine, “Confessiones”, CCSL 27; for instance, xxxix (40-41); St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book XII, trans. H. Chadwick, pp. 269-270.

He was trying to convince them that this is the present dominion of the Church. In his defence of Christianity Augustine argued for its truth over that of other religions and philosophies and stated that it was not to be blamed for the downfall of the Romans, but that on the contrary, it was to be commended for its heavenly success because the City of God was the Kingdom. These are metaphysical considerations and perhaps one can interpret the eternal coming of the kingdom as a cyclical view about time. Such a stance will imply that an opportunity to clarify and resolve what was not fulfilled in the pasts (of individuals or groups – perhaps for generations) always exists/remains possible in the future.

Also, in his *Confessions* Augustine refers to the **metaphysics of time**, and makes clear that for him (i.e. from the human point of view) the main characteristic of temporality (*chronos*) is transience. This is so because, by contrast to the eternity of God, creation resides in time. In Book XI of his *Confessions* the bishop of Hippo goes into detail regarding the manner in which ‘time’ is a creation of God, who being eternal, is outside temporality;¹⁸⁰ there he also proposes a definition of ‘time’ as a “*distentio animi*” (a spasm of the soul). In this text one can identify a Neoplatonic influence; the antecedent of Book 11 of *Confessions* in Plotinus’s *Enneads* 3.7 is obvious. We know that Plotinus (204/5-270) connects time with movement –more precisely, with the movement of the soul: “You must relate the body, carried forward during a given period of Time, to a certain quantity of Movement causing the progress and to the Time it takes, and that again to the Movement, equal in extension, within the man’s soul. But the Movement within the Soul – to what are you to refer that? Let your choice fall where it may, from this point there is nothing but the unextended: and this is the

¹⁸⁰ Augustine, “Lord, eternity is yours [...]. Your vision of occurrences in time is not temporarily conditioned”, *The Confessions*, Book XI, i (i); CCSL 27, 1983; Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Chadwick, Book XI (“Time and Eternity”), p. 221. See also Book vii. xv (21) “each thing is harmonious not only with its place but with its time, and that you alone are eternal and did not first begin to work after innumerable periods of time. For all periods of time both past and future neither pass away nor come except because you bring that about, and you yourself permanently abide”, p. 126. Obviously, it was unavoidably that books 12-13 of *Confessions* that analyses Genesis to also touch on the notion of time.

primarily existent, the container to all else, having himself no container, brooking none. And, as with Man's Soul, so with the Soul of the All. Is **Time, then, within ourselves as well?**

Time is in every Soul of the order of the All-Soul, present in like form in all; for all the Souls are the one Soul. And this is why Time can never be broken apart, any more than Eternity which, similarly, under diverse manifestations, has its Being as an integral constituent of all eternal Existences."¹⁸¹ As we can see, supplementary to connecting time

with movement, Plotinus defined it by opposition to eternity; he further explained that the former has "its being in the everlasting Kind", and the latter "in the realm of Process, in our own Universe".¹⁸² He initially analyses Eternity and Time from the perspective of those who "casually" differentiate between them. From this angle time "**is understood to be [...] representation in image" of Eternity** or an "image to Eternity";¹⁸³ i.e. it is something observable through the fact that its passing is 'filled' with various realities. The definition of Eternity according to Plotinus is that it is the "radiation" in perpetuity of the fundamental "Substratum" of the cosmos, i.e. "the Divine or Intellectual Principle".¹⁸⁴ In his own words: "it exists as the announcement of the Identity in the Divine, of that state – of being thus and not otherwise – which characterizes what has no futurity but eternally is."¹⁸⁵

Plotinus also elaborates on the relation between time and the human soul. In this context he affirms: "we treat the Cosmic Movement as overarched by that of the Soul and bring it under Time; yet we do not set under Time that Soul-Movement itself with all its endless progression: what is our explanation of this paradox? Simply. That the Soul-Movement has for its Prior (not Time but) Eternity which knows neither its progression nor its extension. The descent towards Time begins with this Soul-Movement; it made Time and

¹⁸¹ Plotinus, "Ennead 3. Time and Eternity". 7.13, in *Enneads*, trans. S. MacKenna, London: Faber and Faber, 1969, p. 238; my emphasis.

¹⁸² Plotinus, "Ennead 3". 7. 1 in *Enneads*, p. 222.

¹⁸³ Plotinus, "Ennead 3". 7. 1, in *Enneads*, pp. 222-223; my emphasis.

¹⁸⁴ Idem, 7. 3, p. 224.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

harbours Time as a concomitant to its Act. And this is how Time is omnipresent: that Soul is absent from no fragment of Cosmos just as our Soul is absent from no particle of ourselves. As for those who pronounce Time a thing of no substantial existence, of no reality, they clearly believe God Himself whenever they say ‘He was’ or ‘He will be’: for the existence indicated by the ‘was’ and ‘will be’ can have only such reality as belongs to that in which it is said to be situated.”¹⁸⁶ We can see that Plotinus struggled to conceptualise time, and the same is the case with Augustine. The bishop gives expression to the difficulty of elucidating the nature of time when he states that: “Provided that no one asks me, I know. If I want to explain it to an inquirer, I do not know. But I confidently affirm myself to know that if nothing passes away, there is no past time, and if nothing arrives, there is no future time, and if nothing existed there would be no present time”.¹⁸⁷ As mentioned, he approaches the notion of time in various ways. For instance, in his interpretation of *Genesis* he affirms that the Supreme Being did not create in a particular moment since for Him there is no time. His act of bringing the world into being is both instantaneous and eternal.¹⁸⁸ He might have been influenced on this point by Basil of Caesarea; he certainly knew *Against Eunomius* 1.21 (where time is considered “coexistent with the existence of the cosmos”¹⁸⁹), so it is likely that he was familiar with other texts from the Cappadocian school.¹⁹⁰ Even though Augustine did not know Greek until very late in life, thought the intellectual milieu of his time, and

¹⁸⁶ Plotinus, “Ennead 3” 7. 13, p. 238.

¹⁸⁷ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, CCSL 27, Book XI (“No Time Before Creation”), xiv (17), 1983; Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, edited and translated by Henry Chadwick, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991 (repr. 1998, 2008), p. 230.

¹⁸⁸ Augustine, “De Genesi Ad Litteram liber imperfectus”, CSEL 28/1, edited and translated by Joseph Zycha, Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften/Austrian Academy of Sciences, 1894, new edition Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015; *De Genesi ad litteram*, PL 34 cols. 245-485; and in English, St. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, edited and trans. by John Hammond Taylor, New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, vol. 1, Ancient Christian Writers Series, nos. 41-42; both volumes were published in 1982; Henry Woods, S. J., *Augustine and Evolution. A Study in the saint's De Genesi ad litteram and De Trinitate*, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009.

¹⁸⁹ Basil of Caesarea, *Against Eunomius* 1.21 (PG 29.560B); the English version, Basil of Caesarea, *Against Eunomius*, translated by Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011, p. 122.

¹⁹⁰ John F. Callahan, “Basil of Caesarea, a New Source for St. Augustine’s Theory of Time”, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, vol. 63, 1958, pp. 437-454.

especially through his mentor, Ambrose of Milan (c. 340-397), who read Greek and was in correspondence with Basil,¹⁹¹ the future bishop of Hippo was exposed to the ideas upheld by the Cappadocian School.

Continuing now with Augustine's previous source, Plotinus, we have to indicate that his concern with the paradox of an eternal and immutable God who produced a world that is temporal and constantly in a state of flux seems to have led him to a solution implying the following: God generated a Son that manifests himself in both realms. He creates the world by his Logos, which makes sensible the eternal Ideas (*formae*) and reasons (*rationes aeternae*) that exist in His mind. Since this is the case and, as emphasized above, we cannot 'capture' the past (for it has no existence), when speaking about time we can only take into consideration the memories of the images or sensations we had in the past. Augustine seems to suggest that time is something that we measure within our own memory, so is thus not a feature or property of the world, but one peculiar to the human mind. This view, connected with that stated above (i.e. time is an expression of the soul), defines the special type of interiority the bishop of Hippo constructed. Andrea Wilson Nightingale's phrases "earthly time" and "psychic time"¹⁹² appropriately denote this fact. The researcher considers that in the work of the African Doctor of the Church, the human body is subject to the former, and the mind to the later, and that people live both in and out of nature; while the body is present in the here and now, the psyche cannot be reflexive of itself and of its presence. I think the most important question that remains in connection to Augustine's work regarding the notion of time is whether all people live in an everlasting present.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ Basil of Caesarea to Ambrose, "Letter 197", PG32. 709B-714A; Ph. Schaff and Henry Wace (eds.), *NPNF. Letters*, translated by Blomfield Jackson, T&T Clark, Edinburgh; Grand Rapids, Mich.: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1894; on-line edition 2012.

¹⁹² Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Once Out of Nature: Augustine on Time and the Body*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011, p. 9.

¹⁹³ For more on this topic see, for example, Ilaria Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena*, Leiden: Brill, 2013.

The bishop does not directly operate with the terms *kairos* and *chronos* – as observed, he learnt Greek late in life – but when speaking about the triumph of the New Jerusalem he is, in fact, describing a collective *kairos*, one referring to the entirety of humankind. Unsurprisingly, he is doing the same when referring to the genesis of the world (for instance, in *Confessions*, XI, vi. 8¹⁹⁴). Similarly, when expounding on the moment of his baptism (*Confessions*, IX, vi. 14¹⁹⁵) or speaks about one concerning an intimate revelation (*Confessions*, XI, ix. 11¹⁹⁶) he is referring to a personal *kairos*, a moment of fulfilment that was beneficial to him. Andrew Louth comments on Augustine’s mystical experience (which was shared by the future bishop with Monica) and notices that the “final beatitude” as a social happening was important for the saint; that is especially discussed in *The City of God*. That particular moment, which I identify with *kairos*, has a “social nature” for the ancient thinker.¹⁹⁷ According to Louth, the societal aspect of Augustine’s path to salvation is an important “strand” in the creation of the bishop of Hippo. This is because: “how could the City of God [...] begins at the start or progress in its course or reach its appointed goal, if the life of the saints were not social.”¹⁹⁸ Louth discussed about this when querying if Augustine conceived his salvation to be a solitary experience (as in the case of the pagan Plotinus, who was concerned about his own ‘meeting’ with ‘the One’) or one taking place among companions and friends; he decided that Augustine did not give a conclusive answer to this. But Gerhart B. Ladner is certain that throughout his entire life Augustine was looking for a perfect communal Christian way (one as that which existed in the days of his conversion in

¹⁹⁴ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, CCSL 27, Book XI, vi (8), 1983; Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Chadwick, p. 225.

¹⁹⁵ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, CCSL 27, Book IX, vi (14); Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Chadwick, pp. 163-164.

¹⁹⁶ Idem, Book IX, vi (14); Saint Augustine, trans. Chadwick, *Confessions*, p. 227.

¹⁹⁷ A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 2007, p. 132.

¹⁹⁸ St. Augustine, “De Civitate Dei”, CSEL 40/2, Book 19. 5, p. 380; PG 41, col. 632; also in CCSL 48, p. 669; Augustine, *City of God*, trans. H. Bettenson, 2003. See also Saint Augustine, *City of God*, NPNF1-02, edited and translated by M. Dods, vol. 2, p. 307; Augustinus, “De civitate dei”, edited by B. Dombart and A. Kalb, 2010; and Augustine, “*De civitate dei*”, CCSL, vols. 47-48.

the house of Verecundus at Cassiciacum).¹⁹⁹ I shall introduce more of Augustine's ideas about time in chapter 8 that focusses on the creation of the world; the beginning of the cosmos is obviously connected with the notion of time and the bishop of Hippo had something to say about it.

¹⁹⁹ Gerhart Burian Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: its impact on Christian thought and action in the Age of the Fathers*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1959, p. 282.

Chapter 5. Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite about the concept of time²⁰⁰

5.1. Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite about the concept of time

Another thinker who wrote about the concept of time was Dionysius the Areopagite (sixth century). He expounds his view on this topic around the idea that God “is the Eternity of all things”, that he is “of their Time” [DN 937B],²⁰¹ and also that, in virtue of participation, all things have their ultimate and timeless being in Him. He is the “subsistence of absolute peace”; “a unity beyond all conceptions” [DN 949C],²⁰² and the “Super-Essence” (as implied in DN 936D²⁰³ as well as in DN 937A²⁰⁴). God is anterior to Days, to Eternity, and to Time. Obviously that is also valid for Christ and subsequently an event as fundamental for Christians as His Crucifixion denotes, “in a Divine sense” [DN 937]²⁰⁵ the beginning of their world as well as its centre. In the same sense, the terms “Time”, “Day”, “Season”, and “Eternity” are applied to Him and are supposed to convey the following: he is the “One Who is utterly incapable of all change and movement and, in his eternal motion, remains at rest; and Who is the Cause whence Eternity, Time, and Days are derived. [...] Wherefore, in the

²⁰⁰ Technically the correct name for this author should be Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite because, as the latest scholarship have agreed, he might have been a Dionysius, but certainly was not an ‘Areopagite’. Nevertheless, for reasons of style (i.e. to avoid repetitions), throughout the book I will call him alternatively Dionysius, Pseudo-Dionysius, Dionysius the Areopagite, and Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite.

²⁰¹ Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, in Dionysius the Areopagite, *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (“De divinis nominibus”), ed. Beate Regina Suchla, Series Patristische Texte und Studien, Bd. 33, Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1990, p. 215 (henceforward Suchla, ed., CD I in footnotes); Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, edited by Paul Rorem, trans. Colm Luibhéid, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987, p. 120 (henceforward Rorem, ed., *Complete Works* in footnotes). See also *The Divine Names & Mystical Theology*, trans. C. E. Rolt, London: SPSK, 1983; and David Newheiser, “Time and the Responsibilities of Reading: Revisiting Derrida and Dionysius”, in Scot Douglass and Morwenna Ludlow (eds.), *Reading the Church Fathers*, London, T&T Clark, 2011, pp. 23-43; “Eschatology and the Areopagite: Interpreting the Dionysian Hierarchies in Terms of Time”, in *Studia Patristica* LXVIII (2013): 215-221; and “Ambivalence in Dionysius the Areopagite: The Limitations of a Liturgical Reading”, *Studia patristica* 48 (2010): 211-216.

²⁰² Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, Suchla (ed.), CD I, pp. 218-219; Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, p. 120.

²⁰³ Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names” 936 D; 936 D exists only in J.-P. Migne (ed.) PG 3. B. R. Suchla has not translated this fragment in her edition of Dionysius the Areopagite; she skips it and jumps from 934D to 937A on p. 214.

²⁰⁴ Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, in Suchla (ed.), CD I, p. 214; Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, in Pseudo-Dionysius, Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, pp. 119-120.

²⁰⁵ Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, in Dionysius the Areopagite, Suchla (ed.), CD I, pp. 214-216; Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, pp. 119-120.

Sacred Theophanies revealed in mystic visions He is described as Ancient and yet as Young; the former title signifies that He is the Primal Being, existent from the beginning, and the later that He grows no old” [DN 937B].²⁰⁶ In connection to time Dionysius also elaborates on the apparent paradox of God being eternal (‘the Ancient of Days’; DN 936D,²⁰⁷ 937B,²⁰⁸ 940A²⁰⁹) while also having a human nature and living (albeit temporarily) in the mundane world as Jesus (subjected to time as *chronos*, while marking the ultimate *kairos* through his existence). The Syrian clarifies that, in fact, there is no conundrum in this because God is and can be anything and exist in whatever state he chooses – hence there should be no surprise that he is concomitantly eternal and ‘of Time’ (*chronos*).

Pseudo-Areopagite draws our attention to the fact that the things which are called eternal in the Bible “must not be imagined that [...] are simply co-eternal with God, who precedes eternity” (DN 940A) but, following the text accurately, we shall better understand the intended meaning of the words “Eternal” and “Temporal.” I.e. we should regard the reality which “shares partly in eternity and partly in time as being somehow midway between things which are and things which are coming-to-be” (DN 940A),²¹⁰ or rather between the Supreme Being and the creation. With regard to people, Dionysius upholds that they live in eschatological hope because they ‘participate’ in God’s Being. Their souls undergo the process of *henosis* – the term this ancient author uses for the process of union with God, i.e. deification (this is the case for instance in DN 948D²¹¹). It seems obvious that the Syrian,

²⁰⁶ Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, in Dionysius the Areopagite, Suchla (ed.), CD I, p. 215; Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, p. 120.

²⁰⁷ Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names” 936 D; 936 D exists only in PG 3; my trans.; as mentioned above (in ft. 187) Suchla has not translated this fragment in her edition of Dionysius the Areopagite, Suchla (ed.), CD I; she skips it and jumps from 934D to 937A on p. 214.

²⁰⁸ Dionysius the Areopagite, Suchla (ed.), CD I, p. 215.

²⁰⁹ Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, Suchla (ed.), CD I, pp. 216-217; Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works* p. 121.

²¹⁰ Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, p. 121.

²¹¹ Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, in Dionysius the Areopagite, Suchla (ed.), CD I, p. 217; Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, p. 121. On this topic in the work of Pseudo-Dionysius see Ysabel de Andia, *Henosis. L’union à Dieu chez Denys l’Aréopagite*, Leiden, New York, Kölln,

who does not use these terms as such, would have agreed that *henosis* is for human souls the moment of the supreme *kairos*; and the rest of time constitutes *chronos*.

Dionysius holds that earthly reality “comes into existence through participation in the Essential Principle of all things [...] for the ‘to be’ of all things is the Divinity above Being Itself, the true life. Living things participate in Its life-giving Power above all life; rational things participate in Its perfection and in Its great Wisdom above all reason and intellect [CH 187A-D;²¹² see also DN 644A-B²¹³]. For the Areopagite the degree of participation (*μετοχής*) depends on the faculty/readiness to experience, change, and receive illumination. For instance, in explaining why and how the “superior intelligences” participate in the Divine he says: “They are ‘perfect’, then, not because of an enlightened understanding which enables them to analyze the many sacred things, but rather because of a primary and supreme deification, a transcendent and angelic understanding of God’s work. They have been led hierarchically not through other holy beings but directly by God himself, and they have achieved this thanks to the capacity they have to be raised up straight to him, a capacity which compared to others is the mark of their superior power and their superior order. Hence they are founded next to perfect and unfailing purity, and are led as much as humanly possible into contemplation regarding the immaterial and intellectual splendour. As those who are the first around God and who are hierarchically directed in a supreme way, they are initiated into the understandable explanations of the divine works by the very source of perfection” (CH 208C-208D²¹⁴). This source “can **enlighten us** only by being upliftingly

1996, and also Bernard McGinn, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*, New York: Crossroads, 1994.

²¹² Pseudo-Dionysius, “Celestial Hierarchy” 4, 187A-D, in Migne (ed.) PG 3. The fragment has not been included either in Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Corpus Dionysiacum* II, “De coelesti hierarchia de mystica theologia epistulae”, edited by Günter Heil and Adolf Martin Ritter, Series Patristische Texte und Studien, Bd. 36, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991 (henceforward “Celestial Hierarchy”, Heil and Ritter, eds. CD II) or in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*.

²¹³ Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names” 2, 644A-B, in Suchla (ed.), CD I, pp. 128-129; Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, pp. 62-63.

²¹⁴ Pseudo-Dionysius, “Celestial Hierarchy” CH 208C-208D, Heil and Ritter (eds.), CD II, p. 29.

concealed in a variety of **sacred veils** which the Providence of the Father **adapts to our nature as human beings**. [...] [T]he sacred institution and source of perfection established our most pious hierarchy. He modelled it on the hierarchies of heaven, and clothed these immaterial hierarchies in numerous material figures and forms so that, **in a way appropriate to our nature, we might be uplifted from these most venerable images to interpretations which are simple and inexpressible**. For it is quite impossible that we, humans, should, in any immaterial way, rise up to imitate and to contemplate the heavenly hierarchies without **the aid of those material means capable of guiding us as our nature requires**. Hence, any thinking person realizes that the **appearances of beauty are signs of an invisible loveliness**"; CH 121B-121D.²¹⁵ Simply said, in the process of deification – participation in the Divine virtue – we are conducted not only according to our measure, but also hierarchically; this is clearly stated, for instance, in CH 124A.²¹⁶

Participation happens at God's initiative because he, as the ultimate Cause of everything, has a communal nature; according to this, he invites all things to participate in Him.²¹⁷ He calls people to uplift themselves through symbols²¹⁸ and they respond to this. Stephen Gersh refers to this co-operation as to a "downward and upward process".²¹⁹ The scholar does so when referring to a similar dynamic in the works of the Neoplatonists, but the

²¹⁵ Pseudo-Dionysius, CH, ch.1: CH 121B-121D, Heil and Ritter (eds.), CD II, pp. 8-9; Pseudo-Dionysius, "The Celestial Hierarchy", in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, p. 146; my emphasis.

²¹⁶ Pseudo-Dionysius, CH, ch.1, in Heil and Ritter (eds.), CD II, p. 9; Pseudo-Dionysius, "The Celestial Hierarchy", in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, p. 147.

²¹⁷ Pseudo-Dionysius, CH 177C-D, Heil and Ritter (eds.), CD II, p. 20; Pseudo-Dionysius, "The Celestial Hierarchy", in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, p. 156.

²¹⁸ The expression "lifting up" is to be found, for instance, in Pseudo-Dionysius, "Celestial Hierarchy", Heil and Ritter (eds.), CD II, CH 121B, p. 8, 137A, pp. 10-11, CH 241C-D, pp. 33-34, CH 257B, p. 36, CH 257C, p. 37, 260B, p. 40, CH 293B, p. 43; "The Celestial Hierarchy", in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, p. 79, and also 146, p. 147, 169, 170, 171, and 176. Also in the "Ecclesiastical Hierarchy", 372B, Heil and Ritter (eds.), CD II, p. 65; in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, p. 196, and in DN 708A, Pseudo-Dionysius, "The Divine Names", in CD I, Suchla (ed.), p. 155; in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, p. 79. Concerning symbols, see P. Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis*, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984, pp. 99, 105; also Paul Rorem and John C. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998.

²¹⁹ Stephen Gersh, *From Iambicus to Eurigena. An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition*, Leiden: Brill, 1978; also *A Study of Spiritual Motion in the Philosophy of Proclus*, Leiden: Brill, 1973, pp. 50 f.

expression represents equally well what is at work in Dionysius's writings. For the ancient theologian, there is no distinction between 'uplifting' (ἀγάγω) and 'return' (ἐπιστροφή). Within his texts both 'return' and 'uplifting' refer to the same movement towards the one God.²²⁰ (It is important to underline this with Rorem because Proclus regarded the two terms as being in opposition²²¹). Also Gersh describes the manner in which the Syrian utilises the concept of "uplifting" and its cognate notions in order to underline the dynamics of the soul's activity in time. Such an enterprise on the part of Dionysius is consistent with his stance regarding the divine procession "from simplicity to trinity", and "from the created word to its governance".²²² The description of this state of affairs and the above considerations imply a cycle; all the 'motions' involved in the development of the soul (like Augustine's *distentio*) happen periodically and in some kind of temporality, a subjective one; this is not only the 'usual' *chronos*, even though the latter is also a factor within the process. I would say that for Pseudo-Dionysius this cyclicity (that, as we shall see, is at work also in the case of 'intelligible beings') is 'reinforced' by eternity, which is linear. The Syrian theologian emphasizes that the incarnation of Christ 'triggered' the 'course' of salvation, and that salvation itself is a revelatory succession of happenings that mark the evolvement of human nature. All of this is summarised in the Eucharistic prayers. Rorem underscores the fact that a physical/sensible language is employed in the explanation of *henosis/theôsis* within the work of the Syrian despite the fact that "neither spatial nor even temporal movements"²²³ are of significance in its unfolding.

Pseudo-Dionysius indicates that the union with God is the final goal not only of the human soul, but **of every element of creation**. He says this a few times with reference to the

²²⁰ Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis*, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984, p. 100; especially chapter 7 of this book elaborate on "the uplifting and return to God".

²²¹ Proclus/Dodds, *Elements*, no. 158, p. 138.

²²² Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols*, p. 99.

²²³ Idem, p. 59.

celestial powers (the various categories of angels); additionally to being engaged in achieving their own *theôsis*, these are instrumental in the deification of people (who need to undergo a process of purification in order to be able to participate in the divine being). The heavenly entities intercede as part of this process because they can better be ‘heard’ by God due to their greater closeness to him: “Similarly, it seems to me, the immediate participation in God of those angels first raised up to him is more direct than that of those perfected through a mediator. Consequently – to use the terminology handed down to us – the first intelligences perfect, illuminate, and purify those of inferior status in such a fashion than the latter, **having been lifted up** through them to the universal and transcendent source [...] acquire their due share of the purification, illumination, and perfection of the One who is the source of all perfection (CH 240C-D).²²⁴ The *Celestial Hierarchy* is the treatise in which Dionysius particularly refers to the ‘divine intelligences’ as they “lift up” or move “upwards” toward God.²²⁵ Concerning the “return” of the soul towards “that principle which is above all principles” (CH 257B²²⁶) a direct reference to it is made, for instance, in DN 705A,²²⁷ and CH 293B.²²⁸ The Syrian concludes that “all being drives from, exists in, and is returned towards the Beautiful and the Good” (DN 705D²²⁹). The return always brings an improvement or a ‘progressive’ restoration, as he illustrates via the following example that

²²⁴ Pseudo-Dionysius, CH 240C-D, Heil and Ritter (eds.), CD II, pp. 33-34; Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Celestial Hierarchy”, in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works* (in ft. 209 abbreviated as CW), p. 168; emphasis added.

²²⁵ The expression “Moving ‘upwards’ toward God”, is to be found, for instance, in the following fragments: CH 121B, Heil and Ritter (eds.), CD II, p. 8; Rorem, CW, p. 146 - see also footnotes 7 and 8 on that page; 137C, in CD II, pp. 10-11; Rorem, CW, p. 148; 237C, in CD II, pp. 32-33; Rorem, CW, p. 166-167; 240A-B, in CD II, pp. 33-34; Rorem, CW, p. 167 as well as 260B-C, in CD II, pp. 37-38; Rorem, CW, p. 171; 261A, in in CD II, p. 38; Rorem, CW, pp. 171-172; 273A, in CD II, p. 40; Rorem, CW, p. 173; and 273C, in in CD II, pp. 40-41; Rorem, CW, p. 174.

²²⁶ Pseudo-Dionysius, CH 257B, Heil and Ritter (eds.), CD II, p. 36; Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Celestial Hierarchy”, Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, pp. 169-170.

²²⁷ Pseudo-Dionysius, DN 705A, in Suchla (ed.), CD I, p. 153; Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names” in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, p. 78.

²²⁸ Pseudo-Dionysius, CH 293B, in Heil and Ritter (eds.), CD II, p. 43; Pseudo-Dionysius, “Celestial Hierarchy”, in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, p. 176.

²²⁹ Pseudo-Dionysius, DN 705D, in Suchla (ed.), CD I, p. 154; Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, p. 79.

refers to the “return” of Israel (i.e. of any human being) to God (CH 261C²³⁰); an explanation is also provided for this state of affairs: “Now God, out of his fatherly love for humanity, chastised Israel so as **to return it to the road of sacred salvation**. In order to cause a change of heart he handed Israel over to the vengeance of barbaric nations. This was **to ensure that the men who were under his special providence would be transformed for the better**. Later, in his kindness, he released Israel from captivity and **restored it to its former state of contentment** (CH 240D-241A).²³¹ Throughout his work, Dionysius also holds that the return is the movement from the perceptual to the conceptual and, finally, beyond the conceptual, to unknowing and silence.

The idea of ‘return’, which is expressed in various ways in the *Corpus dionysiacum*, is Neoplatonic and has both ontological as well as epistemological connotations. Ontologically speaking, the ‘plurality’ of the world – its differentiation in various entities – goes back to oneness, to ‘that which truly is’. From the epistemological perspective this constitutes also a progression because it is a return “from numerous false notions [...] to the single, true, pure, and coherent knowledge.” In all the forms in which the notion is exploited by the Syrian, the return is oriented to the highest principle of existence. The *thearchia* (the divine source) “overflows” (i. e. flows out of itself) to be united with the community and the community turns toward the One; [for this discussion see DN 952B,²³² DN 980A-C²³³]. As Rorem explains, “Emanation and return describe respectively divine and human ecstasy”.²³⁴ The difference between Plato and Dionysius’s concept of return consists in the fact that the Greek

²³⁰ Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Celestial Hierarchy”, in Heil and Ritter (eds.), CD II, p. 39; Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Celestial Hierarchy”, in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, p. 172.

²³¹ Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Celestial Hierarchy”, in Heil and Ritter (eds.), CD II, p. 34; Pseudo-Dionysius, “Celestial Hierarchy”, in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, p. 168; emphases added.

²³² Dionysius the Areopagite, “The Divine Names”, in Suchla (ed.), CD I, pp. 219-220; Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, p. 123.

²³³ Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names”, in Suchla (ed.), CD I, pp. 227-229; Pseudo-Dionysius, Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, pp. 128-129.

²³⁴ Pseudo-Dionysius, Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, fn. 266, p. 130.

philosopher connects it with the epistemological problem of knowing God,²³⁵ while for Dionysius it is a matter of ontology; here is where the notion of time is considered. For the latter, God moves into creation (time and space) through *eros*, therefore the return and union with God happens through the movement (diffusion) of love (DN 708C-716A²³⁶). This course of action takes place on a vertical axis – an aspect that is peculiar to the Dionysian theology; according to it, the concept of hierarchy itself points out towards such a reality. The approach of the Syrian differs from that of Maximus the Confessor for whom, as we shall see in the next chapter, the deification involves prominently (even though not exclusively) a horizontal motion. Dionysius argues that *eros*, or ‘yearning’ as it is translated by Luibhéid, is as legitimate a term for divine love as *agape* is. That varies somehow, but not radically, from what we noticed in Plato’s dialogues, where the ontological ground of return is the identification of the transcendent One with the Good²³⁷ and with its concrete manifestations in time and space. According to Raoul Mortley, “This is the Greek view of the generation of reality which underpins the development of negative theology.” For this researcher, “The ‘descent’ of essence into material reality eventually leads to its concealment: the knowledge of essence [...] becomes a matter of difficulty”.²³⁸ His discussion about ‘negative theology’ makes us remember how important this was for Dionysius, who dedicated a substantial part of his “Mystical Theology” to it as well as to the terms ‘affirmation’ and ‘negation’.²³⁹ When operating with the latter notions within this framework, the question of ‘time’ comes into discussion again. Ferdinand Edward Cranz elaborates on the relationship ‘time – affirmation/negation’ in the writings of the Syrian, thus: “Dionysius’s *kataphasis*

²³⁵ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 39, edited, transl., Introduction and commentary by E.R. Dodds, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.

²³⁶ Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names” DN 708C-716A, in Suchla (ed.), CD I, pp. 156-163; Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Divine Names” in Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, pp. 80-84.

²³⁷ Plato, *Republic* 509b; Plotinus, *Ennead* V, 5.13; Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop.8.

²³⁸ Raoul Mortley, “The Fundamentals of the Via Negativa”, *The American Journal of Philology*, vol. 103, no. 4 (1982): 436.

²³⁹ Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Mystical Theology”, e.g. 1000C in Heil and Ritter (eds.), CD II, pp. 143-144; Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*, p. 136; emphases added.

(affirmation) and *apophasis* (negation) are not distinct moments in time, or two aspects of a linear process. For him, as for the neoplatonic philosophy which inspired him, they are simultaneous. But – commented by Eriugena – the Areopagite adapted these aspects of his theology to fit a historical model of creation (*kataphasis*) and salvation (*apophasis*).²⁴⁰ Indeed, in his *On the Division of Nature*, conceived as a dialogue between a Master and a Disciple, John Scotus Eriugena (c. 810-c. 877, Dionysius’s most known Latin translator, indicates the manner in which these two concepts are instrumental within the system outlined by the Pseudo-Areopagite: in knowing God our negations are more “correct” than our affirmations, and the only affirmation one can make with certainty is that strictly speaking nothing can be predicated about the Deity.²⁴¹ Because, as Rolt phrases it, “For whatever you deny concerning Him you deny correctly, whereas the same cannot be said of what you may affirm”.²⁴² Cranz also explains that the notions of affirmation and negation aid in the understanding of the continuous alternance of emanation and return vis-à-vis God in Dionysius’s texts.

²⁴⁰ Ferdinand Edward Cranz, “The (Concept of the) Beyond in Proclus, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Cusanus”, in T. Izbici and G. Christianson (eds.), *Nicholas of Cusa and the Renaissance*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000, pp. 102-103.

²⁴¹ John/Johannes Scotus Eriugena, *On the Division of Nature/Periphyseon [De divisione naturae]*, edited by John J. O’Meara and translated by Inglis Sheldon-Williams, Montreal: Bellarmin: Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1987. The Irish theologian and philosopher was Dionysius’s most known translator, commentator, and popularizer in the Latin West.

²⁴² William John Sparrow-Simpson, “The influence of Dionysius in Religious History”, in Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names and The Mystical Theology*, edited translated and ‘Introduction’ by Clarence Edwin Rolt, London: SPCK, 1979, [pp. 202-219], pp. 206-207.

5. 2. How some authors understood the concept of time within the *Corpus Dionysiacum*

Dionysius's treatises and letters have enjoyed considerable attention throughout the ages.

Among the early scholars who were preoccupied with those or who had echoes of the

Syrian's ideas in their own writings are Boethius (sixth century),²⁴³ Maximus the Confessor

(c. 580-662),²⁴⁴ St. John of Damascus (c. 645-749),²⁴⁵ Thomas Gallus (ca. 1200-1246),²⁴⁶

Robert Grosseteste (1175-1253),²⁴⁷ Albertus Magnus (before 1200-1280),²⁴⁸ Thomas Aquinas

(1225-1274),²⁴⁹ Meister Eckhart (1260-1327),²⁵⁰ the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*

²⁴³ Boethius, "De consolatione philosophiae", in CSEL 67, edited by Wilhelm Weinberger, Vienna: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1934. See also Henry Chadwick, *Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology and Philosophy*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981; and Margaret Gibson (ed.), *Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981.

²⁴⁴ Maximus the Confessor, "Ambigorum Liber", in PG 91 (1865); the fragments concerning Dionysius (and Gregory Nazianzen) are in cols. 1031A-1418 C. See also Maximus the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers. The Ambigua*, edited and translated by Nicholas Constas, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, vol. 1, 2014, and also Maximus the Confessor, St., *Quaestiones ad Thalassium/On Difficulties in Sacred Scripture: Responses to the Questions of Thalassios*, edited with Introduction to the English translation by Maximus Constas, Fathers of the Church Patristic Series, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, vol. 136, 2018, and Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, London: Routledge, 2013.

²⁴⁵ St. John of Damascus, in his work *Στις Θεία Εικόνες/On the Divine Images*, quotes Dionysius's treatises and his *Letter to Titus* (IX) in order to explain how God, out of love, provided mental images and how they have helped people to fashion material images. Damascene found Dionysius's ideas, especially his notion of symbol, useful. See *Letter to Titus* ii 24-25, *On the Divine names*, chapter 1, ii 26-27, and *On the Ecclesiastic History* ii 28, iii 44, ii29, iii 45, in John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, edited by Andrew Louth, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003, pp. 40-41.

²⁴⁶ Thomas Gallus, *Grand commentaire sur la Théologie Mystique*, edited by G. Thery, Paris: Haloua, 1934; see also Robert Grosseteste, *Mystical Theology: The Glosses by Thomas Gallus and the Commentary of Robert Grosseteste on "De Mystica Theologia"* edited by J. McEvoy, Leuven: Peeters, 2003.

²⁴⁷ Robert Grosseteste, *Mystical Theology: The Glosses by Thomas Gallus and the Commentary of Robert Grosseteste on "De Mystica Theologia"*, edited by J. McEvoy, Leuven: Peeters, 2003.

²⁴⁸ Albert the Great, "Super Dionysium de divinis nominibus", in *Opera omnia*, ed. P. Simon, vol. 37, part 1, Munster: Aschendorff, 1972.

²⁴⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *In librum beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio*, ed. C. Pera, Turin: Marietti, 1950 (Aquinas made an important commentary to the treatise *The divine names* and his *Summa Theologia* was influenced by Dionysius's ideas).

²⁵⁰ Meister Eckhart, *Sermons and Treatises*, trans. by M. O'C. Walshe, London: Watkins, 1979-1981, vols. 1-3; the latter was printed at Longmead, Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element Books, 1979-1990), and published again as *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, edited and translated by M. O'C. Walshe, revised by Bernard McGinn, New York: Crossroads Herder, 2009. See also *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, Herausgegeben im Auftrage der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft, Stuttgart and Berlin: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 11 vols., 1936-1940. See also R. Woods, "Meister Eckhart and the Neoplatonic Heritage: The Thinker's Way to God", in *The Thomist* 54, 1990, pp. 609-639.

(fourteenth century),²⁵¹ Gregory Palamas (d. 1359),²⁵² Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457),²⁵³ and Nicholas of Cusa (d. 1464).²⁵⁴ Among the many editions and translations of the *Corpus* the most known are those by John of Scythopolis (ca. 536-550),²⁵⁵ John Scotus Eriugena (c. 810-c. 877),²⁵⁶ John Sarracenus (twelfth-century),²⁵⁷ Hugh of St. Victor (c.1220-1230),²⁵⁸ and

²⁵¹ The anonymous author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* made an expanded Middle English translation of Dionysius' *Mystical Theology*, but also comments on the work. He (she?) is influenced by Dionysius's notion of *agnosia* or unknowingness.

²⁵² Gregory Palamas, "Τριάδες", in PG, vols. 150-151; "Triads For The Defense of Those Who Practice Sacred Quietude", edited by John Meyendorff, trans. N. Gendel, Preface J. Pelikan, Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1983. See also Gregory Palamas, "Capita physica, theologica, moralia et practica"/"The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters", edited and trans. by R. E. Sinkewicz, in *Studies and Texts* 83, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1988.

²⁵³ Lorenzo Valla, *Collatio Novi Testamenti*, edited by A. Perosa, Florence: Sansoni, 1970.

²⁵⁴ Nicholas of Cusa, *On Learned Ignorance. A Translation and an Appraisal of De Docta Ignorantia*, edited by Jasper Hopkins, Minneapolis, Minn.: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 1981; also Jasper Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism: Text, Translation, and Interpretive Study of De Visione Dei*, Jasper Hopkins, Minneapolis, Minn.: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 1983.

²⁵⁵ Maximus the Confessor and John of Scythopolis, *Scholia* concerning Dionysius the Areopagite's *Corpus* (also Giorgios' Pachymeres paraphrase of his speeches), ed. Balthasar Corderii/Corderius, PG 4 (1857); for scholia regarding I *Corpus Dionysiacum IV/I: Ioannis Scythopolitani Prologus et Scholia in Dionysii Areopagitae Librum De Divinis Nominibus cum Additamentis Interpretum Aliorum*, edited by Beate Regina Suchla, Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 2011. See also P. Rorem and J. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus*.

²⁵⁶ Johannos Scoti Eriugena/John Scottus Eriugena, "Iohannis Scoti Eriugena Expositiones in Ierarchiam Coelestem", *Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis* 31, edited by Jeanne Barbet, Turnhout: Brepols, 1975. It contains also the Latin translation of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite *De coelesti hierarchia* made by Eriugena. This Exposition on the *Celestial Hierarchy* of the Syrian is dated to 864-870. Also *A Thirteenth-Century Textbook of Mystical Theology at the University of Paris*, edited, translated, and introduction by L. Michael Harrington, Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2004. This contains T/mhe *Mystical Theology* of Dionysius the Areopagite in Eriugena's Latin translation, with the scholia translated by Anastasius the Librarian, and excerpts from Eriugena's *Periphyseon/On the Division of Nature* [De divisione naturae]. See also Johannis, Scotti seu Eriugena, *Periphyseon, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1996, and Johannis Scoti, "De Diuina Praedestinatone, Enumeratio Formarum", in *Corpus Christianorum. Instrumenta Lexicologica Latina* 4, Turnhout: Brepols, 1982.

Among the rich secondary sources to also be consulted: James McEvoy and Michael Dunn (eds.), *History and eschatology in John Scottus Eriugena and his time*, Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, Series 1, De Wulf-Mansion Centre, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002; Donald F. Duclow, "Isaiah meets the seraph: Breaking ranks in Dionysius and Eriugena?", in *Eriugena: East and West*, Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1994, pp. 233-252; and René Roques (ed.), *Jean Scot Érigène et l'histoire de la philosophie*, Laon 7-12 Juillet 1975, Colloques internationaux du CNRS 561 Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1977, pp. 277-288. Eriugena was not the first to translate Pseudo-Dionysius's texts. An earlier similar work was produced in c. 832 by Hilduin (d. 840), abbot of St. Denis, who had been educated at the Carolingian school by Alcuin (d. 840). But Eriugena's translations were much more influential.

²⁵⁷ Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Hierarchis Coelestis In Latinum Translata*, trans. John Sarracenus, editor (compiler) Hugh of Saint-Victor, *Codices Vaticani Latini*, 103301-10700 – 1920 (in the Schoenberg database of manuscripts it is no. 89647).

²⁵⁸ Hugh of St. Victor, "Commentariorum in Hierarchiam Coelestem Sancti Dionysii Areopagitae", PL 175. 925B-1154C.

Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499).²⁵⁹ In their own category are Thomas Taylor (1758-1835),²⁶⁰ Josef Stiglmayr (1851-1934),²⁶¹ and Hugo Koch's works (the latter lived in 1869-1940).²⁶² Taylor proved in 1833 that the writings of Dionysius could not have been composed before the sixth century, as the Syrian wanted us to believe, and scholars before the nineteenth century really did. Until now Stiglmayr and Koch were credited with this discovery because, researching independently, they reached the same conclusion in 1895.²⁶³

²⁵⁹ Dionysii Areopagitae, *De Mystica Theologia* and *De Divinis Nominibus*, translated by Marsilio Ficino in 1496, Florence; the latest imprint was edited Pietro Antonio Podolak, Napoli: M. D'Auria, 2011. The details of Ficino's work in English are thus: Michael J. B. Allen (ed. and trans.). *On Dionysius the Areopagite. Mystical Theology and The Divine Names*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, The Tatti Renaissance Library 66, vols. 1-2, 2015.

²⁶⁰ Thomas Taylor published *Two Treatises of Proclus, the Platonic Successor: the former consisting of ten Doubts concerning Providence, and a Solution of those Doubts, and the latter containing a Development of the Nature of Evil*, London: W. Pickering (Printed for the translator and sold by this publisher), 1833. Because this publication should be considered the first to date Pseudo-Dionysius's work, I provide some details about it: it consists in the first English translation of Proclus's "De malorum subsistentia". In note 'a' on p. 102 Taylor indicates that, in *De Divinis Nominibus* (c. iv, sections 19-35), the Syrian borrowed from Proclus. This is a part of his comment: "What the Pseudo Dionysius says in that part of his treatise on the Divine Names in which he shows that there is no such thing as evil itself, is wholly derived from this treatise of Proclus, as will be evident by comparing the one with the other. I give the following extract from that work, as an obvious proof that what is said by Proclus in this place, was taken from thence by Dionysius: <Hence, neither is evil in angels; unless it should be said that they are evil because they punish offenders. But if this be admitted, the castigators of all those who act erroneously will be evil; and consequently, this will be the case with those who exclude the profane from the inspection of divine mysteries. It is not, however, evil to punish those that deserve to be punished, but it is evil to deserve punishment. Nor is it evil to be deservedly excluded from sacred mysteries, but to become defiled and profane, and unadapted to the participation of what is pure.>

The learned reader will find, on perusing the whole of what is said by this Dionysius concerning evil, in the above-mentioned treatise, that the greater part of it is derived from the present work of Proclus."

²⁶¹ Josef Stiglmayr, "Der Neuplatoniker Proclus als Vorlage des sogen. Dionysius Areopagiten in der Lehre vom Ubel", in *Historisches Jahrbuch der Gorres-Gesellschaft* 16 (1895), pp. 253-273 and 721-748; *Das Aufkommen der pseudo-dionysischen Schriften und ihr Eindringen in die christliche Literatur bis zum Laterankonzil*, Feldkirch, Austria, 1895; and "Der sogenannte Dionysios A. und Severus von Antiochen", *Scholastik*, 3, 1928. See also J. Stiglmayr's entry about Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909.

²⁶² Hugo Koch, "Der pseudepigraphische Charakter der dionysischen Schriften", in *Theol. Quartalschrift*, Tübingen, 1895, pp. 353-420; *Proklus, als Quelle des Pseudo-Dionysius, Areop. in der Lehrer vom Bosen in Philologus* (1895), pp. 438-454. See also Koch's *Ps.-Dionysius Areop. in seinen Beziehungen zum Neoplatonismus und Mysterienwesen*, Mainz: Franz Kirchheim, 1900, and his articles about Dionysius in the *Patrologie* of Bardenhewer, Freiburg, 1901, in the *Realencyk. für prot. Theol.*, and in the *Dict. of Christian Biography*. For a discussion on Koch's contribution to the dating of *Corpus Dionysiacum* see William P. Franke (ed.), *On What Cannot Be Said. Apophatic Discourses in Philosophy, Religion, Literature, and the Arts*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, vol. 1, 2007, p. 158.

²⁶³ Their arguments were as follows: in order to express his ideas regarding theodicy in Chapter 4 (sections 19-35) of *The Divine Names*, Pseudo-Dionysius used Proclus's neo-Platonic text "De malorum subsistentia". (This treatise has survived in the Latin translation of William of Moerbeke/Morbeka, edited by V. Cousin, Paris, 1864). A careful analysis brought to light a remarkable similarity of these two works in arrangement, sequence of thought, examples, figures, and expressions. It is easy to point out many parallelisms from other and later writings of Proclus (d. 485), e.g. from his "Institutio theologica", "theologia Platonica", and his commentary on Plato's "Parmenides", "Alcibiades I", and "Timaeus" (these five having been written after 462). Furthermore,

As noticed, also many contemporary researchers have written about Pseudo-Dionysius's treatises.²⁶⁴ Additionally to the outstanding effort of Paul Rorem to publish the entire Dionysian creation,²⁶⁵ the edition of *Corpus Dionysiacum* published in Germany in two volumes edited by B. R. Suchla, G. Heil, and A. M. Ritter,²⁶⁶ and that by M. de Gandillac in

Pseudo-Dionysius introduced the Creed in the Liturgy (and this was not part of the Eucharistic service before the fourth century).

As known, the writings of the Syrian are not mentioned before the fifth century. The Christological teaching within these reflects post-Chalcedonian doctrine such as that of the *Henotikon* (482), and the first indisputable citation from the treatises written by the Syrian is made by Severus of Antioch/Gaza between 518 and 528. (Severus was a Patriarch who was opposed to the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon, 451). All these helped in revealing that Dionysius was a sixth century thinker, not a contemporary of Paul the Apostle.

(Concerning the *Henotikon*, in which composition Proclus was instrumental, was a christological document issued by the Byzantine emperor Zeno in an unsuccessful attempt to reconcile the differences between the supporters of the Council of Chalcedon and their opponents. In 451, the above-mentioned Council settled christological disputes by condemning both Monophysitism, held by Eutyches, and Nestorianism. However, large sections of the Eastern Roman Empire, especially in Egypt, but also in Palestine and Syria, held monophysite (or, more strictly, miaphysite) views. In order to restore unity, the Patriarch of Constantinople, Acacius, conceived an appeasing formula meant to pacify all parts involved in the dispute. Emperor Zeno promulgated it without the approval of the Bishop of Rome or of any official gathering of bishops. The *Henotikon* endorsed the condemnations of Eutyches and Nestorius made at Chalcedon and explicitly approved the twelve anathemas of Cyril of Alexandria, but avoided any definitive statement on whether Christ had one or two natures, attempting without success to satisfy both sides of the dispute. All sides took offence at the Emperor openly dictating church doctrine, although the Patriarch of Antioch was pressured into subscribing to the *Henotikon*).

²⁶⁴ In addition to what is mentioned within the text of the book, A. Boër Sr. re-published John Parker's translation of the works in 2013, Beate Regine Suchla published for instance, "Wahrheit über jeder Wahrheit: Zur philosophischen Absicht der Schrift 'De Divinis Nominibus' des Dionysius Areopagita", *Theologische Quartalschrift* 176, 1996, 205-217; Eugenio Corsini, *Il trattato 'De divinis nominibus' dello Pseudo-Dionigi e i commenti neoplatonici al Parmenide*, Torino: Giappichelli, 1962; Naomi Janowitz, "Theories of Divine Names in Origen and Pseudo-Dionysius," *History of Religions*, 30.4, May 1991, pp. 359-372; Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski, "Das Corpus Areopagiticum, seine Bedeutung für die Ekklesiologie und die Theologie des Priestertums" ["The Corpus Areopagiticum, its importance to the ecclesiology and the theology of the priesthood"], in P. Collins, W. Klausnitzer & W. Sparr (eds.), *Authority in the Church*, Sankt Michaelsbund: Verlag, 2010, pp.174-192; and J. D. Jones as well, cf. footnote 203, C. E. Rolt, published other editions with commentaries. Also scholars of the Middle East brought to light editions in Armenian and Syriac. There exist two anonymous Sets of Scholia on Dionysius the Areopagite's *Heavenly Hierarchy* edited and translated by S. La Porta, two by R. W. Thomson, and a new edition in Syriac edited and translated by E. Fiori came out in *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* series (CSCO) thus: Dionysius the Areopagite, *Nomi Divini, Theologia Mistica, Epistole*, La versione Syriaca di Sergio di Rēš'saynā (VI secolo), ed. and transl. Emiliano Fiori, Consilio Universitatis Catholicae Americae et Universitatis Catholicae Lovaniensis, Peeters, 2014, CSCO, vol. 657, Scriptorum Syri, Tomus 253.

²⁶⁵ Pseudo-Dionysius, Rorem (ed.), *Complete Works*; P. Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the texts and an Introduction to their Influence*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, as well as Rorem and Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

²⁶⁶ Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, "De divinis nominibus", Suchla (ed.), CD I; and "De coelesti hierarchia de mystica theologia epistulae", Heil and Ritter (eds.), CD II. See also *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita. Die Namen Gottes*, trans. B. R. Suchla, Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1988; *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita. Über die mystische Theologie und Briefe*, Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1994; *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita. Über die himmlische Hierarchie. Über die Kirchliche Hierarchie*, trans. G. Heil, Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1986.

French are to be commended.²⁶⁷ Among other authors who contributed to the study of Pseudo-Dionysius's *oeuvre* are Lisa Marie Esposito Buckley,²⁶⁸ John Dillon and S. Klitenic,²⁶⁹ E. Ene D-Vasilescu,²⁷⁰ Stephen Gersh,²⁷¹ Alexander Golitzin,²⁷² Wayne J. Hankey,²⁷³ Ronald F. Hathaway,²⁷⁴ Andrew Louth,²⁷⁵ Eric D. Perl,²⁷⁶ John M. Rist,²⁷⁷ Henri-Dominique Saffrey,²⁷⁸ and Keneth Paul Wesche.²⁷⁹ Some of them have touched on the issue of time. For instance, Gersh's book *A Study of Spiritual Motion in the Philosophy of Proclus* offers some intimations that are useful for the understanding of the concept of time in Dionysius's treatises.

²⁶⁷ Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite, *Oeuvres complètes*, edited and translated, Preface and notes by Maurice de Gandillac, Paris: Aubier, éditions Montaigne, 1980.

²⁶⁸ Lisa Marie Esposito Buckley, "Ecstatic and Emanating, Providential and Unifying: A Study of Pseudo-Dionysian and Plotinian Concepts of Eros," in *The Journal of Neoplatonic Studies*, vol. 1, No. 1, Fall 1992.

²⁶⁹ John Dillon and S. Klitenic, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Athenian School of Neoplatonism*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. In this volume the authors have dealt with various aspects of Dionysian writings and with what may be inferred about the life of the Syrian's from the historical context in which he lived.

²⁷⁰ E. Ene D-Vasilescu, "'If you wish to contemplate God': Pseudo-Dionysius on the notion of human will", *Studia Patristica*, (2020), vol. C (100): 257-265 (based on the paper given at the Sixth British Patristics Conference, 5th-7th September 2016, Birmingham, UK); and "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Concept of Beauty", *International Journal of Orthodox Theology*, vol. 10/1 (2019), pp. 72-117.

²⁷¹ Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena. An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition*, Leiden: Brill, 1978, and *A Study of Spiritual Motion in the Philosophy of Proclus*, Leiden: Brill, 1973.

²⁷² Alexander Golitzin, "'Suddenly, Christ': The Place of Negative Theology in the Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagites", in Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard (eds.), *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003; and A. Golitzin, *Et introibo ad altare dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita*, Thessaloniki: George Dedousis Publisher, Patriachal Institute/Patriarchikon Idroma Paterikon Meleton, 1994.

²⁷³ Wayne J. Hankey, "'Ad intellectum rationcinatio': Three Procline logics, *The Divine Names* of Pseudo-Dionysius, Eriugena's *Periphyseon*, and Boethius' *Consolatione philosophiae*", in *Patristic Studies*, vol. 24, 1997.

²⁷⁴ Ronald F. Hathaway, *Hierarchy and the Definitions of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969.

²⁷⁵ Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite*, London: Continuum, 1989, 2001.

²⁷⁶ Eric D. Perl, "The Metaphysics of Love in Dionysius the Areopagite", *The Journal of Neoplatonic Studies*, vol. 6, No. 1, Fall 1997.

²⁷⁷ John M. Rist, "A note on Eros and Agape in Pseudo-Dionysius", *Virgiliae Christianae*, 20, 1966; 235-243.

²⁷⁸ Henri-Dominique Saffrey, "New Objective Links between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus", in E.J. O'Meara (ed.); *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, 1982.

²⁷⁹ Keneth Paul Wesche, "Christological Doctrine and Liturgical Interpretation in Pseudo-Dionysius", *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 33, 1989, 53-73.

5. 3. Conclusion

But, as I have already indicated, especially Rorem's elaboration on "procession" and "return" in his *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols* contributes to the idea of time; in that source the professor from Princeton also offers an explanation about how symbols work "temporarily" in the Syrian's system of thought. Additionally, within the volume *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the texts and an Introduction to their Influence*, Rorem brings new elements into the discussion about temporality as Dionysius comprehended it. I consider his emphasis that within the *Corpus Dionysiacum* the human perception about time constitute the beginning of knowledge in general and of understanding of divine things in particular crucially important. This is what Rorem says: "Our context within this created world of space and time means that we humans are dependent upon sense perception, upon the plurality implied in our awareness of extension in space and of sequence in time as the starting point for knowledge."²⁸⁰ And further, "Accommodating itself to this context, the divine message deigns to be clothed in the garb of perceptible symbols, for our sake, that we might start with them and ascend through them to higher things."²⁸¹ (I touch myself on the topic from this perspective in an article/ paper delivered at the Sixth British Patristics Conference in Birmingham, UK²⁸²).

These lines best summarize, in my opinion, the key arguments in Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite's view regarding the concept of time. I would add to it a concluding remark that concerns the relationship between the linearity and the cyclicity of time: in *Corpus Dionysiacum* eternity is linear and the 'time' (as both a subjective reality and as *chronos*) is cyclical.

²⁸⁰ Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A commentary on the texts and an introduction to their influence*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 94.

²⁸¹ P. Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A commentary...*, pp. 94-95.

²⁸² Ene D-Vasilescu, "If you wish to contemplate God", pp. 257-266.

Chapter 6. Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662) on the concept of time

Another important theologian of the period analysed in this volume, **Maximus the Confessor** (580-662), correlates the concept of time with that of motion, as others authors before him that we have noted did, among them Plato, Aristotle and various Christians. His system of thought is constructed around three temporal categories: time as χρόνος (conventionally measured), as *aeon* (αἰών, which refers to a particular mode of eternity), and as “ever-moving repose” (στάσις ἀεικίνητος) or “stationary movement”.²⁸³ (The latter captures the temporal aspects involved within the dynamics that keeps people straight on their way to salvation: holding firm to their convictions while spiritually advancing). The Constantinopolitan underscores that everything that is created, both sensible and intelligible, is subject to *nature* and *temporality*: “to the one on account of its existence, and to the other on account of its motion” [*Ambigua ad Johannem*, 1397A-B].²⁸⁴ In its form χρόνος time is characterized by Maximus as “described’ motion”,²⁸⁵ and also as a quantifiable sequence of fleeting instances: “time, measuring the motion, is circumscribed by number”.²⁸⁶ As we have observed above, this is also the definition Aristotle gives to ‘time’.²⁸⁷ The Confessor adopts it as a starting point for his own theory on the subject but ‘re-locates’ to an ecclesiastical context some of the elements that constitute the designation of this concept by the Greek

²⁸³ Maximi Confessoris/Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium II: Quaestiones LVI–LXV una cum latina interpretatione Iohannis Scotti Eriugena*, CCSG, vol. 22 [henceforward *Ad Thalassium* in footnotes], edited by Carl Laga and Carlos Steel, Turnhout: Brepols; Leuven: University Press, 1990, 65.544-546: ἐν τῷ θεῷ γινομένη[...]στάσις ἀεικίνητος ἔξει καὶ στάσιμον ταυτοκινήσιον, περὶ τὸ ταῦτον καὶ ἐνκαὶ μόνον ἀἰδίως γινομένην. See also St. Maximos the Confessor, *On Difficulties in Sacred Scripture: Responses to the Questions of Thalassios*, edited with Introduction to the English translation by Maximos Conostas Maximos the Confessor, Fathers of the Church Patristic Series (Book 136), Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018.

²⁸⁴ Maximus the Confessor, e.g. *Ambigua ad Johannem*, PG 91. 1397A-B; my translation. See also “Ambigua ad Iohannem I. Prologus et Ambigua I-V”, edited by Carl Laga, in CCSG 84, 2016 /2017; and also Maximus the Confessor, “The Ambigua to John”, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers. The Ambigua*, ed. and trans. Nicholas Conostas/Fr. Maximus, vol. 1: Ambiguum 7, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 29, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014, p. 81.

²⁸⁵ Maximus, “Ad Thalassium II”, CCSG 22, 65.533-534.

²⁸⁶ Maximus, “Capita theologica”, PG 90. 1085A.

²⁸⁷ Aristotle, *Physics*, 219b 1.

philosopher. He does this, for example, when speaking about the moving repose (στάσις ἀεκίνητος), the Aeon and its nature, etc. A framework in which Maximus has the opportunity to elaborate on the subject of time as it connects with motion is his treatise *Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν/Ambigua*, and in more detail “Ambiguum 7”, where he expresses his view on the creation of the Cosmos.²⁸⁸ There the monk states that the “coming into being (genesis)” of things “is conceived before their motion (κίνησις), for motion cannot precede coming into being” [*Ambiguum 7*, 1072 A].²⁸⁹ He then goes on to particularize that “the motion of intelligible beings is an intelligible motion, whereas that of sensible beings is a sense-perceptible motion”²⁹⁰ [*Ambiguum 7*, PG 91. 1072 A]. Nevertheless, intimations regarding ‘time’ exist within his other writings.²⁹¹

In Maximus’s *oeuvre* a summary of the previous conceptions of time can be found: for him it moves both in a linear and circular manner. Time and space are completely interconnected; he reminds his readers that we cannot imagine one without the other because the two notions form a space-time continuum, a coherent spatiotemporality. In the Confessor’s words, “space cannot be thought of, separate from and deprived of time.”²⁹² The created beings (be they sensible or intelligible) exist necessarily within a particular time

²⁸⁸ Maximus the Confessor, “*Περὶ διαφορῶν ἀποριῶν/Ambigua*”, PG vol. 91, especially “Ambiguum 7”, e.g. 1072B, 1077C; 1256D-1257C. See also Maximus the Confessor, “*Ambigua ad Thomam una cum Epistula secunda ad eundem*”, *Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca*, vol. 48, edited by Bart Janssens, Turnhout: Brepols, 2002; and *Corpus Christianorum in Translation (CCT) 2* edited, Introduction, trans. and notes, by Joshua Lollar, Turnhout: Brepols, 2010. Also see the excellent translation Maximus the Confessor, “Ambiguum 7”, in *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers. The Ambigua*, ed. and trans. Nicholas Conostas, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 29, Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 2014, vol. 1.

²⁸⁹ Maximus, “Ambiguum 7”, PG 91. 1072A-1077A. See also Maximus the Confessor, “Ambiguum 7”, in *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers. The Ambigua*, ed. and trans. Nicholas Conostas (Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 29), Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014, vol. 1, p. 81.

²⁹⁰ Maximus, “Ambiguum 7”, PG 91. 1072 A; in Maximus the Confessor, “Ambiguum 7”, Nicholas Conostas/Fr. Maximus (ed., trans.), p. 81.

²⁹¹ See for example, Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogia/Mystagogy; Expositio orationis dominicae/Commentary on the Lord’s Prayer; Expositio in Psalmum LIX /Commentary on Psalm 59; and Liber Asceticus/On the Ascetic Life*. Comments on this in, for instance, Paul M. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016 (especially its second part), and Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

²⁹² Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua ad Johannem*, PG 91. 1180B.

interval and in a specific place “in a concomitant way”. Pascal Mueller-Jourdan considers that “such a status conferred on ‘being-when’ and ‘being-where’ is extremely rare in the Judeo-Christian tradition”,²⁹³ but I don’t think this is the case; certainly a similar idea is found in Pseudo-Dionysius’s writings, as we have observed.

Maximus also distinguishes between the ‘ages of activity’ and ‘ages of passivity’, and between those of ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’, i.e. ‘the ages of deification’ (e.g. in *Ad Thalassium I*).²⁹⁴ He assumes in various texts that these differences existed in the heavenly pre-cosmic plan. Blowers reiterates the latter division operated by the Confessor and the manner in which it is accompanied by its biblical sources. He comments: “1 Cor 10-11 indicates that the ‘ages of incarnation’ have already reached their conclusion (πέρας) for us in the coming of Jesus Christ, while Eph. 2:7 signals the future ‘ages of deification’ that have not yet arrived, when God will finish the work of his incarnation by elevating and divinizing humanity by grace.”²⁹⁵

When elaborating on his three chief modes of temporality, the Constantinopolitan also allows intimations about the distinction *chronos-kairos*. As has been shown, for him *chronos* is the conventionally measured time. Eternity becomes time during *eons*, when major events – like Christ’s incarnation or the ‘creation’ of particular saints (i.e. their acknowledgment as such), take place; the moments when such events occur constitute *kairoi*. We can illustrate why this is so by considering the saints as an example: these have reached the maximum of divine life which was given to them on Earth (their personal *kairos*). Nevertheless, they are still subjected to the conventional *chronos*, hence to the ‘standard’ dynamics of human life.

²⁹³ Pascal Mueller-Jourdan, “Where and When as Metaphysical Prerequisites for Creation in Ambiguum 10”, in *Knowing the Purpose of Creation through the Resurrection*, Proceedings of the Symposium on St. Maximus the Confessor, Belgrade, October 18-21, 2012, edited by Maxim Vasiljević, Los Angeles, CA.: Sebastian Press & The Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade, 2013, p. 289.

²⁹⁴ Maximus, “Ad Thalassium I”, CCSG 7, 1. 2.2, trans. Nicholas Constatas, in St. Maximus, *On Difficulties in Sacred Scriptures. The Responses to Thalassios*; Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018, pp. 73-74.

²⁹⁵ Paul M. Blowers, “Realized Eschatology in Maximus the Confessor, Ad Thalassium 22”, *Studia Patristica* 32 (1997): 258-263.

Concerning an *aeon*, one of the Maximian designations for it is the following: “Aeon is time when its motion ceases, and time is the Aeon when [it is] measured in its motion. So the Aeon, to formulate a definition, is time deprived of motion, and time is the Aeon when it is measured while in motion”²⁹⁶ [*Ambigua* 7, PG 91. 1164 B-C]; χρόνος is also defined in this text]. Apart from this primary significance of αἰών, Maximus also understood the concept to denote the temporality specific to the intelligible domain (νοητὰ, νοητῆ κτίσις) – the world of substances, qualities, etc., as opposed to the created sensible world (αἰσθητὰ).²⁹⁷ The *intelligible* sphere is not characterised by a spatiality like that encountered within the latter realm. The mode of ‘time’ peculiar to it is called by the monk eternity, but the meaning he attributes to this word in the context under discussion here differs from the eternity as “transcendent time”²⁹⁸ wherein God dwells: for ‘intelligible time’ the sense he employs is that of “an unlimited duration”; he introduces it as such, for example, in *Ad Thalassium I*, 38.52,²⁹⁹ and *Ambigua ad Johannem*, 1252 B.³⁰⁰ Among other meanings the Confessor ascribes to an *aeon* are the following: the universal history, a great amount of time/a century³⁰¹ and, often, God’s temporality in contrast to the historical one.³⁰² This latter sense becomes quite pronounced in instances where Maximus employs the word ‘aeon’ in its plural form – αἰῶνες/the ages.³⁰³ After the completion of an aeon, a new creation comes into being through the effective actions of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit; this marks the beginning of another temporal sequence. Therefore, the monk believes in cycles of time. Within *Ad Thalassium* he speaks about completed and future aeons. His understanding of time as

²⁹⁶ Maximus, *Ambigua ad Johannem*, PG 91.1164 BC. Note the similarity especially with Plato’s *Τίμαιος* 37d, i.e. time as a “moving image of eternity”.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 1153 A.

²⁹⁸ Details on this notion in P. Plass, “Transcendent Time in Maximus the Confessor”, in *The Thomist* 44:2 1980, 259-277.

²⁹⁹ E.g. Maximus, “Ad Thalassium I”, CCSG 7, 38.52.

³⁰⁰ Maximus, “Ad Thalassium I”, CCSG 7, 38. 52; *Ambigua ad Johannem*, PG 91, 1252 B.

³⁰¹ E.g. Maximus, “Ad Thalassium II”, CCSG 22, 56.140-142.

³⁰² Maximus, “Ambigua ad Johannem”, PG 91. 1188B.

³⁰³ E.g. Maximus, “Ambigua ad Johannem”, PG 91. 1252 B.

accomplished *aeons* informs his view on eschatology, which he connects with deification. The Confessor envisions the final ‘destination’ of human souls in their union with God that happens both personally and universally in the eschaton, i. e. in the kingdom of God – which is near or already ‘within’ these souls. Within this reality time is of no relevance, hence it is correct to infer that for the Confessor, as for Augustine, the main characteristic of time is transience; so far, no researcher has made a connection between the two thinkers from this perspective, but I believe it to be legitimate.

Maximus analyses both “protologically and teleologically”³⁰⁴ the divine economy (of salvation) by referring not only to the dynamics between time and movement but also to that concerning the link sacred knowledge-ontology: “God not only knows before the ages the things that are, since they are in Him, in the Truth itself, but even if all these same things, both the things that are and those that shall be, did not receive simultaneously being known and actual beings on their own, but each received being at the proper time – for it is impossible for the infinite to exist simultaneously with things finite – nevertheless the goal of the disposition of each occurs according to movement. For there is neither time nor age separating this movement from God. For nothing in Him is recent, but the future things are as the present, and the ‘times’ and the ‘ages’ indicate the things that are in God, not for God, but for us” (*Questiones et Dubia* 121).³⁰⁵ Maximus’s reasoning about the fact that the end of the world is already present in its beginning by divine design perfectly aligns it with what Patristic theology before him created on this theme. The *Ambigua* reflects best the

³⁰⁴ Paul M. Blowers, *Drama of the Divine Economy: Creator and Creation in Early Christian Theology and Piety*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

³⁰⁵ Maximus the Confessor, “Questiones et Dubia 121”; CCSG vol. 10, p. 89; trans into English, *Maximus the Confessor’s Questions and Doubts*, trans. Despina D. Prassas, DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010, p. 106 (translation modified by David Bradshaw; emphasis added by myself).

Confessor's standpoint concerning the 'end' of time to which he refers to as "realized eschatology"³⁰⁶, which is in fact *kairos*.

Another element from the Maximian Corpus needs to be included in the discussion about time and the knowledge of God. This is the concept of human free will. *Ambiguum 10* especially deals with it when stating that people can attain to God solely by means of "reason" and "contemplation", and also by non-excluding the human body and matter in general from this process (as many of the thinkers who lived before him thought to be necessary). My understanding is that for Maximus the most important factor in approaching God is the will of the person who does so. The Constantinopolitan believes that God is always aware of people's free choices – he 'foresees' them from eternity – but does not determine them. Instead, I understand, he co-operates with people (through his will) in the fulfilment of what their free will chooses as its objective. This is so because the *logoi*, after an initial stage in which they "embody simply the divine intent", come to be "embodied in the lives of the faithful", thus "re-entering into eternity". David Bradshaw emphasizes strongly that, in the work of the monk, the two stages in the activity of the *logoi* should not be understood chronologically, but conceptually; he avers the following: "from a point of view within time, the *logoi* are always already at the latter stage."³⁰⁷

If we focus again more directly on Maximus's eschatology, supplementary to what has already been said, we can add that in his work the issue is connected with the distinction between *καιρός* and *χρόνος* as this author understood it to be. We have already suggested that in regard to *kairos* he would operate especially with the sense 'appropriateness' (i.e. the

³⁰⁶ Maximus, "Ambiguum 7", PG 91. 1072C. For commentaries on this topic in Maximus the Confessor's work see Paul M. Blowers, "Realized Eschatology in Maximus the Confessor, Ad Thalassium 22", *Studia Patristica* 32 (1997): 258-263. C. H. Dodd (1884-1973) holds that the eschatological passages in the New Testament do not refer to the future, but instead refer to the ministry of Jesus and his lasting legacy.

³⁰⁷ David Bradshaw, "St. Maximus on Time, Eternity, and Divine Knowledge", Paper presented at the Seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford University, England, August 2015. Thanks to Prof. Bradshaw for sharing this material.

‘right’ or the most important moment for an action to take place). From this perspective the monk asserts: “time and the ages show us each thing wisely being created at the proper, predetermined moment – at which point it is brought into being – just as the divine apostle says concerning Levi, namely that ‘he was still in the loins of his ancestor’ (Heb. 7: 10) before he came into being. When the perfect time arrived, the one who existed potentially within patriarch Abraham was brought into actual being through conception, and thus in order and sequence, according to the ineffable wisdom of God, we have been led to understand and believe that all things are brought into being at a time that has been foreknown” [*Ambiguum* 42; PG 91: 1328 C-D]. As already mentioned, Maximus keeps the meaning of *chronos* employed by the authors considered earlier in the book – that which denotes the temporal sequence of events as measured by various devices.

We have to indicate that Maximus worked through the *απορίεις* in the Bible simultaneously dialectically and analogically. For instance, with regard to the subject of our book, time, in response to Thalassius’s query concerning its nature, he answered not only by underlining the importance of the above-mentioned difference between completed and future aeons, but also by offering in parallel more hermeneutical alternatives to the puzzle that time is a ‘moving rest’ and not declaring any of them all-inclusive. This manner of resolving conundrums is typical of Maximus’s exegesis. Another instance where originality is evident from this perspective is in his response to the Libyan presbyter to a question about what *aeons* are: the monk states that these are ages not as we usually conceive them, but purposed “for the outworking of the mystery of God’s embodiment” (*Ad Thalassium* 22. 137. 23-

27).³⁰⁸ This response also shows us that Maximus explored time in a mystagogical way, i. e. from the point of view of someone who is initiated in the sacred mysteries.³⁰⁹

The recent explosion of interest in Maximus compels us to flag out some literature that refers to the notion of time as presented in his writings: P. M. Blowers's recent *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World*, and especially his *Drama of the Divine Economy: Creator and Creation in Early Christian Theology and Piety* which, without expressly concentrating on the notion of time, deals considerably and pertinently with it,³¹⁰ are highly commendable. Among others, very important are Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil (eds. and trans.), *The Life of Maximos the Confessor* and, by the same editors, *Maximos the Confessor and His Companions: Documents from Exile*, as well as *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*.³¹¹ Equally significant are Andrew Louth's *Maximus the Confessor*,³¹² and Pascal Mueller-Jourdan's monograph *Typologie Spatio-Temporelle de l'Ecclesia Byzantine: La Mystagogie de Maxime le Confesseur*.³¹³ The latter publication remarks on time and space in the context of the liturgy as presented by the Constantinopolitan in his *Mystagogia*. The admirable work of editing and translating carried out by Nicholas/Maximos Constas: *On Difficulties in Sacred Scriptures. The Responses*

³⁰⁸ Maximos the Confessor, "Quaestiones ad Thalassium", in C. Laga and C. Steel (eds.), *Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca* (CCSG) 7. 137, 23-27. St. Maximos the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium/On Difficulties in Sacred Scripture: Responses to the Questions of Thalassios*, edited with Introduction to the English translation by Maximos Constas; Maximos the Confessor, *Fathers of the Church Patristic Series* (Book 136), Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018; see also Paul M. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, esp. pp. 140-141.

³⁰⁹ Andreas Andreopoulos, "Eschatology of Maximus the Confessor", in Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015, p. 324. See also Hans Schwarz, *Eschatology*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wn. B. Eerdmans, 2000.

³¹⁰ Paul M. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor. Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018; here he speaks about human history. From the book *Drama of the Divine Economy: Creator and Creation in Early Christian Theology and Piety*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, especially chapter 6 is significant to our topic.

³¹¹ Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil (eds. and trans.), *The Life of Maximos the Confessor: Recension 3* (the Greek text), Strathfield: St. Paul's, 2003; *Maximos the Confessor and His Companions: Documents from Exile*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, and *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

³¹² Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, London: Routledge, 1996.

³¹³ Pascal Mueller-Jourdan's monograph *Typologie Spatio-Temporelle de l'Ecclesia Byzantine: La Mystagogie de Maxime le Confesseur*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005.

to *Thalassios*, and *Difficulties in the Church Fathers. The Ambigua* are valuable contributions to the field of Patristics.³¹⁴ Among the articles that have come out, we can reference again that by Paul Plass, which deals with the Confessor's idea concerning "transcendent time", and another one by him about *στάσις ἀεικίνητος*;³¹⁵ also Paul M. Blowers's "Realized Eschatology in Maximos the Confessor, Ad Thalassium 22",³¹⁶ and Conostas's "St. Maximus the Confessor: The Reception of his Thought in East and West" are useful.³¹⁷

To conclude the stance of the Confessor with respect to the notion of time, we have seen that he not only repeated the claims of other representatives of primeval Christianity who thought of time as being related to movement, but builds upon those and takes the discussion to a higher level of abstraction; he reframes the questions in connection to this concept. Maximus's *oeuvre* reveals a unique comprehension of the nature of time on the basis of the above-mentioned categories of temporality and on the distinction he operated between the end of ages in potency and the end of ages in actuality.

³¹⁴ Maximus the Confessor, *On Difficulties in Sacred Scriptures. The Responses to Thalassios*, edited and translated by Nicholas/Fr. Maximos, Conostas, Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018, and *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers. The Ambigua*, edited and trans. Nicholas/Fr. Maximos Conostas, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014, vols. 1-2.

³¹⁵ P. Plass, "Transcendent Time in Maximus the Confessor", in *The Thomist* 44: 2 (1980), pp. 259-277; Plass, "Moving Rest' in Maximus the Confessor", in *Classica et Mediaevalia* 35, 1984, pp. 177-190.

³¹⁶ P. M. Blowers, "Realized Eschatology in Maximos the Confessor, Ad Thalassium 22", *Studia Patristica* 32, (1997): 258-263.

³¹⁷ Nicholas Conostas/Fr. Maximos, "St. Maximus the Confessor: The Reception of his Thought in East and West", in Bishop Maxim Vasilevic (ed.), *Knowing the Purpose of Creation through the Resurrection*, Proceedings of the Symposium on St. Maximus the Confessor, Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, and Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade, 2013, 25-53.

Chapter 7. The ‘Creation of the world’ in the texts of Byzantine and Patristic authors: The Cappadocian School and Augustine



As we have noticed, the discussion about temporality, that involves the notion of the ‘beginning’, is connected to that of the creation of the world. Therefore, I felt that a chapter on this topic is necessary in a volume that focusses on the concept of time. Again, as mentioned in the Introduction to the book, I shall concentrate of the most relevant authors whose texts refer to the notion of creation: Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, St. Augustine, and Maximus the Confessor.

The representatives of the Cappadocian School, St. Augustine, and Maximus the Confessor were the most speculative Byzantine, respectively Christian minds of their age, and they have been hugely influential in the formulation of later theologies about creation in both Eastern and Western parts of the Roman Empire. These thinkers continued the dialogue with the Hellenist culture and were open to various ideas – even those from the science of their time – as long as these did not contradict their belief, in line with the biblical account, in a universe created by God. In explaining how the world came into being the Cappadocians,

Augustine, and Maximus were inspired by the Stoic notion of *logoi spermatikoi*, as we shall see further.

7. 1. The seeds of creation - *logoi spermatikoi*

7. 1. 1. The Stoics

The Stoics believed that individual souls can be “transmuted and diffused, assuming a fiery nature”, and that after the death of their earthly “owners” they go back to the universe.³¹⁸ The existence of the latter, which was conceived as being material, is guided by the *seminal reason* (“logos spermatikos”) or the active reason³¹⁹ which is able to ‘function’ also vis-a-vis inanimate matter.³²⁰ According to the representatives of this school of thought the *logos* is the active reason or *anima mundi* that pervades the entire Universe and acts as the law of generation within it. Susanna Åkerman renders it thus:

The Soul of the World seems to me to be composed of mind and light & insofar as it animates the world, through a Material Spirit which mediates ...I define it thus: The Soul of the World is the Mind’s Light governing of the World vitally and reigning. Or, it is the Mind’s Light ascending in Mundane bodies. Or, as an act of Light and Mind, etc.

³¹⁸ Perhaps it is important to remind the readers that Stoicism is a philosophy of personal ethics informed by its system of logic and its views on the natural world. As shown in chapter 1 their school was founded by Zeno of Citium, in Athens, in the early third century BC. Among Zeno’s texts, there are: *Περὶ τοῦ ὅλου/On the Universe* (where the Universe is God); *Περὶ οὐσίας/On Being*, and *Πολιτεία/Republic*. Among Zeno’s cosmological remarks, one is thus: “the world itself is merely a temporal manifestation of the primary fire” (NB that activate a passive matter), in Zeno and Cleanthes (ed.), “Fragments of Zeno”, in *Fragments of Zeno and Cleanthes*, edited by C. J. Clay and Sons, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891, *Physica/Physics* 35, pp. 86-87. The divine fire (or aether), passes through the stage of air, and then becomes water: the thicker portion becoming earth, and the thinner portion becoming air again, and then rarefying back into fire.

³¹⁹ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, iv. 21; Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations with Selected Correspondence*, edited and translated by Robin Hard, with an introduction and commentary by Christopher Gill, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 2016. In this book the term is translated as “the generative principle of the universe”.

³²⁰ Antonia Tripolitris, *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001, pp. 37-38.

This is what the *Stoics* call fire; fecund seminal reasons.³²¹

Concerning humans, each possess a portion of the universal *logos*. The current Universe is a phase in the present cycle, preceded by an infinite number of universes, doomed to be destroyed (to undergo “ekpyrōsis”, *conflagration*) and afterwards re-created; logically, ours will be followed by an infinite number of other universes.³²² Therefore, the Stoics do not speak about a beginning and an end to reality, but consider all existence as cyclical since the cosmos is eternally creating and destroying itself.³²³ The representatives of this group believed that *λόγοι σπερματικοὶ* (*rationes seminales* in Latin), i. e. the seminal reasons/causal principles, exist inside the elements of creation as ‘seeds’ that ensure their self-development. They are within human beings, plants, and animals.³²⁴ Marcus Aurelius (121-180 AD), one of the most illustrious Stoics, thought that due to these generative principles not only humans have evolved to undertake practical activities and have a moral sense, but that the latter have done the same:

107] . . . They apply the term ‘duty’ (καθήκον) to an action that, when done, can be defended on reasonable grounds, such as its consistency with life; and this extends to plants and animals as well. For ‘duties’ (καθήκοντα) can also be discerned with respect to plants and animals.

And then he explain what type of duties, coming from morality, all of these beings possess:

³²¹ Susanna Åkerman, “Stiernhielm Pythagorizans and the Unveiling of Isis”, in James Force and David S. Katz (eds.), *Everything Connects: in Conference with Richard H. Popkin: Essays in His Honor*, Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History, volume: 91, Leiden: Brill, 1999, p.11 [pp. 1-19]. In footnote 33 on that page Åkerman gives the quotation in Latin: “Anima Mundi mihi videtur Composita esse ex mente et Luce & quatenus Mundum animat...Eam sid definitio: Anima mundi est Lux Mente gubernata Mundum vivicans & regens, vel. Est Lux Mente accensa in corpora Mundano, vel: actus Lucis, et Mentis: etc. Ea est quem ignem vocant Stoici, ratioe Seminale foecundum.” I have kept the original lettering and punctuation. See also Christoph Helmig, *Forms and Concepts: Concept Formation in the Platonic Tradition*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012, p. 194.

³²² Michael Lapidge, *Stoic Cosmology*, in John M. Rist, *The Stoics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. 182-183.

³²³ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1993:Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, third edition, 2003, p. 368.

³²⁴ P. A. Meijer, *Stoic Theology: Proofs for the Existence of the Cosmic God and of the Traditional Gods*, Delft: Elburon Uitgeverij B.V., 2007.

[109] Actions belonging to duty are those that reason prescribes our doing, as is the case with honoring one's parents, brothers, country, and spending time with one's friends. Actions contrary to duty are those that reason forbids, for example, neglecting one's parents, ignoring one's brothers, being out of sympathy with one's friends, disregarding one's country, and the like. Actions neither belonging to duty, nor contrary to it, are those that reason neither prescribes our doing nor forbids, such as picking up a twig, holding a stylus or a scraper, and the like.³²⁵

It is surprising and remarkable that in the second century of our era a philosopher attributes such high moral values to all those categories of beings. Modern³²⁶ and contemporary³²⁷ scholars have thought about some of them – they even queried whether animals possess any rudiment of these when discussing the undirected theory of evolution conceived by Charles Darwin³²⁸ and the progressive goal-directed orthogenesis (those models were circumscribed to the controversy regarding the transmutation of species). Both theories imply an inner principle of things that ensures their development. The biological model of ancient animals representing ancestors of contemporary ones and of humans having their origins in some fossil beings or in amoebas has been discarded.³²⁹ However, the notion of progress in biology as a series of sequences from “lower” to “higher” is still current.³³⁰ While not expanding on those issues within the book I will make some references to modern and contemporary theories from time to time.

³²⁵ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, iv. 21.

³²⁶ For instance, Frank O’Gorman and Diana Donald, *Ordering the World in the Eighteenth Century*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp. 63-82.

³²⁷ For example, Michael Ruse, *Monad to man: the Concept of Progress in Evolutionary Biology*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996.

³²⁸ Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, on the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, John Murray, 1859; London: Penguin Classics, 1982.

³²⁹ Ernst Haeckel, *Kunstformen der Natur/Art forms of Nature*, Leipzig, 1904; repr. Bremer: Dogma, 2013; and Ernst Haeckel, *Die Welträthse*, 1895/1899; in English, *The Riddle of the Universe. At the Close of the Nineteenth Century*, translated by Joseph McCabe, New York, London: Harper and Brothers, 1901.

³³⁰ For instance, among the newest books, Rosemary Lynn Hopcroft (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Evolution, Biology, and Society*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2018, especially chapter 29, “Evolution and Human Reproduction”, by Rosemary L. Hopcroft, Martin Fieder, Susanne Huber.

7. 1. 2. The Neoplatonists

I move now to the next school of thought, the Neoplatonism, which, in addition to early Christianity and inspiring it, mentained the concept of *ratione seminale*, even though in the case of its representatives we would stretch the truth somewhat if we state that their entire system is built around the expression *λόγοι σπερματικοί*. Yet, at least some of the Neoplatonists claim the existence of an inherent formative principle within the constituents of the Universe; we shall see this further in the book.³³¹ As known, among the most eminent of its members, in addition to Ammonius Saccas (175-242 AD), Plotinus (c. 204/5-270 AD), and his student Porphyry (c. 234 - c. 305 AD),³³² are Iamblichus (245 - c. 325 AD; the latter's pupil), Plutarch of Athens (c. 350-430 AD), Syrianus (died c. 437 AD), Proclus (412-485 AD), Simplicius (490-560 AD), Damascius (c. 458-after 538 AD), Ammonius Hermeiou (c. 440- c. 520), John Philoponus (490-570 AD), Olympiodorus (495-570 AD), and Stephanus of Alexandria (c. 550/555- c. 622 AD). Plotinus, the most acknowledged of them, to whom we shall refer most often in this volume, was inspired, *inter alia*, by Aristotle's *Methaphysics* and Plato's *Timaeus*. He differed from the latter author³³³ because for him the present world is the 'place' where both this and the life within Divinity happens.³³⁴ (For Plato the soul,

³³¹ Neoplatonism is a strand of Platonic philosophy that emerged in the third century AD against the background of Hellenism; more on this school of thought, for example, in Christoph Helmig, *Forms and Concepts: Concept Formation in the Platonic Tradition*, Berlin, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012.

³³² Andrew Smith, *Porphyry's Place in the Neoplatonic Tradition: A Study in Post-Plotinian Neoplatonism*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974, page 58; and Andrew Smith, *Porphyrian Studies since 1913*, ANRW II 36, 2. (1987).

³³³ David Sedley, "'Becoming like God' in the *Timaeus* and Aristotle", in T. Calvo and Land L. Brisson (eds.), *Interpreting the Timaeus- Critias: Proceedings of the IV Symposium Platonicum*, Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1997, pp. 327-339, and David Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness ", in Gail Fine (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Philosophy: Plato*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, vol. 2, pp. 309-328.

³³⁴ Plotinus, *The Enneads*, especially the iv and v Enneads; revised by B. S. Page, edited (revised), and trans. by Stephen MacKenna, the fourth edition, with Foreword by E. R. Dodds; Introduction by Paul Henry, London: Faber and Faber, 1969.

which is “released in a natural way...takes its fight”;³³⁵ it is to be understood that it goes back to the realm of the Good and Beautiful). Neoplatonists believed that the emanation of the perceptible world from the One, i.e. from the first principle that is an unmovable unity, has been happening from eternity through the dialectics of “procession and return” (*πρόδος/prohodos* and *απόδοσις/epistrophê*). This state of affairs will continue in eternity since for the Neoplatonists the world is being continuously made anew.

They operated a distinction between the *nous*, the Demiurge as creator of cosmos (i. e. the energy that organizes the material world into everything we see), and the One, the supreme God, which is beyond being (*ousia*), and identified with the Supreme reality within the world of Ideal forms.³³⁶ The *nous* that, according to Plotinus, is the highest sphere accessible to the human *mind* while is concomitantly pure *intellect*,³³⁷ manifest itself through the soul of the world, as well as through the human soul; the latter, in the opinion of the same thinker, is identical in character with the *nous* (they are immaterial). The relation between the soul of the world and the *nous* is the same as that of the *nous* to the One since it stands between the *nous* and the phenomenal world. For the Neoplatonists the souls pre-exist, and after the bodies that host them complete their existence, go back to re-join the One; hence they are immortal.³³⁸ Here a connexion with Plato’s *Timaeus* is to be noticed.³³⁹

The representatives of the Neoplatonism speak about an outer and an inner activity of every element of creation; the latter is an expression of the former. Any inner activity foreshadows the character and the nature of its outer effect. Thus there is nothing on the lower ontological levels within the chains of causality that is not somehow prefigured in the

³³⁵ Plato, *Timaeus*, 81d-e, *Complete Works*, ed. Cooper, trans. Donald J. Zeyl, p. 1281.

³³⁶ Richard T. Wallis and Jay Bregman, *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992, pp. 18-19.

³³⁷ Plotinus, *The Enneads*, V, revised by B. S. Page, edited (revised), and trans. by Stephen MacKenna, the fourth edition, with Foreword by E. R. Dodds; Introduction by Paul Henry, London: Faber and Faber, 1969.

³³⁸ Plotinus, *The Enneads*, IV, especially vii, pp. 342-357.

³³⁹ Plato’s *Timaeus*, 41d and 44e in *Complete Works*, ed. Cooper, trans. D. J. Zeyl, pp. 1247-1248.

corresponding higher levels. In general, no property emerges unless it is already in some way pre-formed and pre-existent in its cause. Therefore, the Neoplatonists were creationists in another manner than the members of the subsequent Christian schools were; they did not hold ideas about a creation in time/at the very beginning of time.

We shall see now how the Neoplatonists as a group sustained the existence of an internal growth seed within each element of nature.³⁴⁰ In order to do so I need to introduce an idea by Proclus (412-485AD), who is in agreement with Iamblichus (c. 245 - c. 325AD) on this. He affirms, “It is not by an act of discovery, not by the activity proper to their beings that individual things are united with the One” but, I infer from above, this happens by the action of what Proclus calls “potency” and “unified potency”. Earlier Plotinus elaborated on a similar notion – that of “potentiality” – which is peculiar to every element of nature, including the human soul; he defined that as “a thrust forward to what is to come into existence”.³⁴¹ He also says that “Certainly Soul itself is one Reason-Principle, the chief of the Reason-Principles, and these are its acts as it functions in accordance with its essential being; this essential being, on the other hand, is the potentiality of the Reason-Principle.”³⁴² Proclus explains that “a potency as it becomes manifest loses that likeness to the One which caused it”.³⁴³ Nevertheless, in the context of our book, what is important is that it ‘acts’ in the manner mentioned above. Eric R. Dodds believes the act of unification to be the manifestation of “occult ‘symbols’” engaged in a “mysterious operation,”³⁴⁴ and expounds that they “reside” in “stones, herbs, and animals”.³⁴⁵ Their operations are similar to those peculiar to

³⁴⁰ Pauliina Remes, *Neoplatonism*, Berkely: University of California Press, and and Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008.

³⁴¹ Ploninus, *The Enneads*, II. v. 5; revised by B. S. Page, edited (revised), and trans. by Stephen MacKenna, the fourth edition, with Foreword by E. R. Dodds; Introduction by Paul Henry, London: Faber and Faber, 1969, pp. 118-123; quotation from p. 122.

³⁴² Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. and trans. Eric R. Dodds, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963, VI. ii.5, p. 475.

³⁴³ Proclus, *The Elements...*, II. vi. 95, p. 85.

³⁴⁴ Eric R. Dodds, “Introduction” to Proclus, *The Elements...*, pp. xxii-xxiii. See also R. T. Wallis and J. Bregman, *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 19.

³⁴⁵ E. R. Dodds, “Introduction” to Proclus, *The Elements...*, p. xxiii. See also Wallis and Bregman, *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 19.

the Stoics' *λόγοι*, therefore my interpretation of Proclus and Plotinus' "potentialities" as generative principles is reinforced by the explanation offered by Dodds. A particular statement from Iamblichus' *De mysteriis*: "the soul can know the *logoi* of the world soul"³⁴⁶ constitutes a further and more direct proof regarding Neoplatonism's conviction about the existence and the role in the development of the world of these seminal reasons. (The later Neoplatonists questioned whether human souls could be reincarnated within animals³⁴⁷). I move now to specify how the Early Christians borrowed the concept of generative principles from the Stoics and Neoplatonics.

³⁴⁶ Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 9. 6, in Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, Writings from the Greco-Roman World, Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004; also *De mysteriis* translated with an Introduction and Notes by Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon & Jackson P. Hershbell, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

³⁴⁷ See more about this in Andrew Smith, *Porphyrion Studies since 1913*, ANRW II 36, 2. (1987), pp. 717- 773.

7. 2. Early Christianity on the concept of *logoi spermatikoi*

7. 2. 1. The Cappadocians

The first Christian authors also taught that God created the world with certain potentialities that become manifest over time; what appears to be change around us is their realization. These theologians reconceptualised the doctrine that has this notion at its heart, but still without systematically organising its elements in a system. Nevertheless, they dealt with it in such a manner as to conciliate their belief in the God of Scripture with the idea that matter was and is being endowed with creative energies to perpetuate itself. This is obvious in the writings of authors such as Athenagoras of Athens (133-190 AD),³⁴⁸ Tertullian (c.155- c.240 AD),³⁴⁹ Basil of Caesarea (c. 329-379 AD),³⁵⁰ Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335- c.395

³⁴⁸ Philip Schaff (ed. and translator), and Alexander Roberts (ed.), Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. II: *Writings of Athenagoras. A Plea for the Christians*, retrieved 2012 -11-06; David Runia, Philo in Early Christian Literature, Fortress Press, 1993, esp. pp. 105-109; David Rankin, Athenagoras: Philosopher and Theologian, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009; reprint London, New York: Routledge, 2016.

³⁴⁹ *Quinti Septimii Florentis Tertulliani Adversus Hermogenem liber quem ad fidem codicum recensuit*, edited by Jan Hendrik Waszink, Ultraieci: in aedibus Spectrum, Westminster, Md.: Newman Press; London: Longmans, Green, 1956; Tertullian, *Adversus Hermogenem*, Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010; and *The writings of Quintus Sept. Flor. Tertullianus*, edited and translated by Algernon Sydney Thelwall, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, vols. 1-3, 1872-1874. See also Q. Septimii Florentis Tertulliani, *De Carne Christi/ Tertullian's Treatise on the Incarnation* (in Latin and English), edited with an introduction, translation and commentary by Ernest Evans, London: SPCK, 1956; Tertullian, *De carne Christi*, Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010. Tertullian believed in creation *ex nihilo*. See also, for example, Geoffrey D. Dunn, *Tertullian*, London: Routledge, 2004; Susan Ratcliffe, entry in *Tertullian*, Oxford University Press, Oxford Essential Quotations series, 2012, 2014. See also R.E. Roberts, "Tertullian on creation", pp. 140-148; this is a part of The Tertullian Project. *A collection of material ancient and modern about the ancient Christian Latin writer Tertullian and his writings*; last updated 26th January 2018.

³⁵⁰ Basil of Caesarea, "Homiliae in Hexaemeron", PG 29. 3A-208C; especially Homilia I (In principio fecit Deus coelum et terram"), cols. 3A-28B, and Homilia V (De germinatione terrae), cols. 93A-148D; "The Hexameron", NPNF2-08. See also Torchia, "Sympatheia in Basil of Caesarea's 'Hexameron'", pp. 359-378; R. Lim, "The Politics of Interpretation in Basil of Caesarea's Hexameron", pp. 351-370; M. Alexandre, "La théorie de l'exégèse dans le de Hominis Opificio et l'in Hexaemeron", in M. Harl (ed.), *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Gregoire de Nysse*.

AD),³⁵¹ Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD),³⁵² and Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662 AD). Later Bonaventure (1221-1274³⁵³), Albertus Magnus (before 1200-1280³⁵⁴), and Roger Bacon (1214-1292³⁵⁵) had the same thoughts, but the volume does not concentrate on those latter theologians.

7. 2. 1 a. Basil of Caesarea (c. 329-379)

From the first group, I will refer to some length to **Basil of Caesarea** because he wrote about *λόγοι σπερματικοί*. In his above-mentioned collection of homilies *Hexaemeron*³⁵⁶ he stressed that the created Earth has itself the capacity to generate, i.e. to create life (plants and new species of animals). He says: “The earth germinates. It does not, however, sprout

³⁵¹ Gregory of Nyssa, “De opificio hominis”, PG. 44. 124D-256C; *On the Making of Man* [N.B. Human Beings], in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera/GNO*, Leiden: Brill, forthcoming; H. Wace and P. Schaff (eds.), NPNF5, 1893; “Sermones de Creatione Hominis”, in *Opera supplementum*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1972. See also, for example, Ene D-Vasilescu, “How would Gregory of Nyssa have understood evolutionism?”, *Studia Patristica* 67/15 (2013): 151-169; John Behr “The Rational Animal: A Re-reading of Gregory of Nyssa’s De Homini opificio”, in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7/2 (1999): 219-247, and Martin S. Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the grasp of faith [electronic resource]: union, knowledge, and divine presence*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

³⁵² Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, ed. John Hammond Taylor, Paulist Press, New York, Mahwah, vol. 1 (Books 1-6), Ancient Christian Writers. The works of the Fathers in Translation, edited by J. Quasten, W. J. Burghardt, Th. Comerford Lawler, No. 41; St. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, ed. John Hammond Taylor, The Newman Press, New York, Mahwah, vol. 2 (Books 7-12), Ancient Christian Writers. The works of the Fathers in Translation, edited by J. Quasten, W. J. Burghardt, Th. Comerford Lawler, no. 42; H. Woods, S. J., *Augustine and Evolution. A Study in the saint’s De Genesi ad litteram and De Trinitate*, University of Santa Clara, Calif., the Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1924, reprint 2017. See also Augustine, “Confessiones”, *CCSL* 27; Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Chadwick; book IV, iv (7); xii (19-20); xvi (31); respectively pp. 57, 64-65, 70-71. And CSEL 33; NPNF1-01. Books 11-13 of *Confessions* constitute an exegesis, principally allegorical, of Genesis 1: 1-31.

³⁵³ Bonaventure, *Commentaria in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum*, Ex typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1934; reprint *Opera omnia*, vols. 1-4, Ad Claras aquas (Quaricchi), 1882; for instance, *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, (written in 1273), paragraph 15: “The earth brought forth vegetation, every kind of seed bearing plant’ (Gen 1:12)... In the seeds is shown a kind of infinity in the heavenly theories that are pointed to by these same seeds... As in the seeds there is multiplication to infinity, so also are the theories multiplied... The two Testaments shed light on each other, so that man be transformed from ‘glory to glory’ (2 Cor 3:18). But this germination of the seeds procures the understanding of the different theories through adaptation to the different times; and the man who overlooks the times cannot know the theories.”

³⁵⁴ Albertus Magnus, *Liber aggregationis. De mirabilibus mundi* (The book of everything. The wonderful world), Venice: Bonelli, Manfredo, 1496.

³⁵⁵ Roger Bacon, *De Multiplicatione Specierum* (On the Multiplication of Species), 1250s or early 1260s; and *Opus Maius* (The most important works; based on the former).

³⁵⁶ Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron*, PG 29. 3A-208C.

that which it has, but transforms [...] as much as God gives to it the strength to act;”³⁵⁷ (*Hex.* I. 5C-8C). That is a paraphrase of Genesis 1. 11 “Let the earth bring forth grass!” (Gen. 1. 11³⁵⁸); the importance of this statement in the context of the discussion carried out within our book is that the Bible **does not state** “God created grass”, but that **he made the Earth, which in its turn produces grass**. It means that the earth, and matter in general, was endowed with creativity. Within the *Hexaemeron* Basil also comments on same details concerning the manner in which God brought the universe about and expresses his belief that Creation is an ongoing process. In Homily V of the same series he avers: “It was deep wisdom that commanded the earth, when it rested after discharging the weight of the waters, first to bring forth grass, then wood as we still see it doing at this time. For the voice that was then heard and this command **were as a natural and permanent law for it; it gave fertility and the power to produce fruit for all ages to come**; the production of vegetables shows first germination. When the germs begin to sprout they form grass; **this develops** and becomes a plant, which insensibly receives its different articulations, and reaches its maturity in the seed. Thus all things which sprout and are green are developed. **Let the earth bring forth by itself without having any need of help from without.**” (*Hom.* V. 93A-96B).³⁵⁹

This inner capacity of development constitutes for the Cappadocian *logos spermatikos*. Nevertheless, as we shall see further, this entire process does not diminish in any way the role of the active power the Word of God has because it is this which underlines every creative

³⁵⁷ Basil, Homily I (“On how God created the Heaven and the Earth”/In principio fecit Deus coelum et terram”), *Hexaemeron* PG 29. I. 5C-8C; emphasis added.

³⁵⁸ “And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.” Gen. 1. 11, King James version of the Bible.

³⁵⁹ Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron*, Homily V (The Germination of the Earth/De Germinatione Terrae), in PG 29. V. 93A-96B; my emphasis. This reminds us of Darwin’s similar account: “There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been **originally breathed into a few forms or into one**; and that, whilst this planet has gone on cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful **have been, and are being, evolved.**”, Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species by natural selection or The preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life*, edited with an Introduction by John Wyon Burrow, London: Penguin Books, c. 1968, many prints, the latest 2009; the quotation is from the edition printed in 1985, pp. 459-460; my emphasis.

happening. Earth is unable to be fertile by itself whatever important it is. Because in his meditations on the topic this chapter discusses, Basil only focuses on Genesis 1. 1 he was able without much difficulty to declare that Creation happens *ex nihilo*. Genesis leaves no doubt that God is the ultimate Cause of everything which exists, and Basil emphasizes this. As Natale Joseph Torchia states, for the Cappadocian: “the teaching of Genesis clearly affirmed that the world is causally dependent upon God for its beginning, its intelligibility, and its goodness.”³⁶⁰

Basil was inspired by Aristotle’s writings that refer to the cosmos and the natural order,³⁶¹ by the Stoics (according to Stanislas Giet, Basil took from them his entire conception about universal order and eschatology³⁶²), and certainly by the manner in which Plato, in his dialogue *Timaeus*, conceived the creation of the world. In Basil’s *Hexameron* some influences from Philo of Alexandria’s *De Opificio Mundi*³⁶³ as well as from Plotinus’ *Enneads*³⁶⁴ can also be recognized. Philo (c. 20 BC- c. 50 CE) denies that Genesis teaches a temporal origin of the world. For him the phrase ‘in the beginning’ does not refer to chronology, but rather to an order established by God for the realization of the Good (*Hom.*

³⁶⁰ Torchia, “Sympatheia in Basil of Caesarea’s ‘Hexameron’, p. 362.

³⁶¹ Aristotle, *Physics* (Aristotle, *Physics*, edited by W. D. Ross and other editions; see footnote 11 for details). Aristotle, *De Caelo et Mundo* 1.9, 278b16-18 (henceforth *Cael.*); also Aristotle, “On the Heavens”, *The Complete Work of Aristotle*; the revised Oxford translation, edited by J. Barnes, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984; Theokritos Kouremenos, *Aristotle’s de Caelo gamma: introduction, translation and commentary*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2013; Andrea Falcon and Ron Polansky, “New Perspectives on Aristotle’s *De caelo*”, in *Ancient Philosophy*, 2015, vol. 35(2), pp. 464-467. Also Edward Grant, “Commentaries on Aristotle’s *De Caelo*”, in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy*, Palgrave, on-line version, 2019; Aristotle, *On the Heavens*, Book 1. 9. trans. by John Leofric Stocks in Loeb classical library 316, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952, repr. 2011, on line 2020. Aristotle discusses cosmogony also in his *Metaphysics*: Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, edited by William David Ross, revised edition, vols. 1-2, 1997, on-line edition 2020.

³⁶² Stanislas Giet indicates that the ancient thinker also borrowed the notion of *sympatheia* from Stoicism. S. Giet, “Introduction” to Basile de Césaire, *Homelies Sur L’Hexaéméron*, edited and translated by Stanislas Giet (Sources chrétiennes, 26) Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1968.

³⁶³ Philo of Alexandria, “On the Account of the World’s Creation given by Moses (De Opificio Mundi)”, in *Works*, Loeb Classical Library, edited and translated by Francis Henry Colson by George Herbert Whitaker, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, London: William Heinemann, copyright 1929, reprint 2014, vol. 1; henceforth *Hom. Opif.* See also Philo of Alexandria, *The works of Philo: complete and unabridged*, edited and translated by Charles Duke Yonge, New updated edition, Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1993.

³⁶⁴ Torchia, “Sympatheia in Basil of Caesarea’s ‘Hexameron’, pp. 359-378.

Opif. VII.26-27).³⁶⁵ Within *De Opificio* Moses is made to explain how the world was created in six days by the unoriginated Maker. These temporal units should not be conceived as representing a spaced duration but “the principles of order and productivity”³⁶⁶ under which the universe appeared. Philo believes in a double creation: he explain that firstly the incorporeal world came about in the Divine Word or Reason, and then that the material world occurred. The Word is God’s image and the Goodness is the “efficient” cause and the purpose of the Universe.³⁶⁷

I find here a similarity with Basil’s *Hexaemeron* because the opening phrase within this text by the Cappadocian is thus: “The creation of heaven and earth [...] was not spontaneous, as some have imagined, but drew its origin from God;” (*Hex.* 1.1). And other two assertions within the same texts are thus: “In the beginning God created, it is to teach us that at the will of God the world arose in **less than an instant**, and it is to convey this meaning more clearly that other interpreters have said: God made summarily that is to say all **at once and in a moment;**” (*Hex.* I.6; my emphasis).³⁶⁸ And “[A]fter the invisible and intellectual world, the visible world, the world of the senses, began to exist. The first movement is called beginning.” [...] Perhaps these words ‘In the beginning God created’ signify **the rapid and imperceptible moment of creation. The beginning**, in effect, is indivisible and **instantaneous;**” (*Hex.* I. 4, my emphasis).

As I said, to me these statements convey a similar meaning with that expressed by Philo’s ideas just mentioned. Also I need to add that I do not see any contradiction between an instantaneous creation and the fact that it had its source in God. What the problem might

³⁶⁵ Torchia, “Sympatheia in Basil of Caesarea’s ‘Hexameron’”, p. 362, ft. 14 [pp. 359-378]. See also Torrey Seland (ed.), *Reading Philo: A Handbook to Philo of Alexandria*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmanns, 2014.

³⁶⁶ G. H. Whitaker, “Analytical Introduction” to Philo of Alexandria, *Hom. Opif.*, vol. 1, p. 3.

³⁶⁷ As known, Philo wrote his systematic work *De Opificio Mundi* about Moses and his laws. He believed that creation is the basis for the Mosaic legislation, which is in complete harmony with nature (*Hom. Opif.* 1); Philo of Alexandria, *Hom. Opif.*, vol. 1, p. 7.

³⁶⁸ Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron*, 1.6 [PG 29:16C-17A].

be is that this “instantaneous” act is sometimes intimated by Basil to be an unfolding process, i.e. something which is still happening; as we have noticed in the fragments above, he says that creation “was not spontaneous [...] but drew its origin from God”, and also that in the ‘spontaneous’ moment it only “**began** to exist”; i.e. it is still developing. The bishop also affirms that earth produces **incessantly** a variety of entities. I think that the solution to this apparent conundrum is the fact that Basil was specifically preoccupied to emphasize that everything originates in God and that the temporal aspect is not essential in the economy of the universe. Another possible and simpler interpretation is that for Basil the creative act of each day manifested itself instantaneously.

Concerning the influence of Plotinus’s work on that of Basil, some of its elements are as follows: a) Plotinus was of the conviction that the One, or the All-Soul, the Good, the expression of the Logos,³⁶⁹ and of the Intellectual Principle (all names for the supreme reality) is transcendent, but graspable by the philosopher’s mind. In Christianity while God is also transcendent, the capacity of humans to obtain knowledge about Him is a subject of dispute; it is considered existent in some writings. Basil and the other two members of the Capadocian School do not believe that the human mind can comprehend God, but Eunomius, for example, did think that possible.³⁷⁰ In any case, Basil – as well as Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory Nazianzen – struggle with this issue at length. We indicate further other common elements peculiar to both the Neoplatonist and Basil’s systems: b) for Plotinus there is a Divine within people (and an individual soul) as well as a “Divine in the All”³⁷¹ (as well as a World-Soul, i.e. a Soul within the All). He expounds at length on the manner in which

³⁶⁹ Plotinus, *The Enneads*, revised by B. S. Page, edited (revised), and trans. by Stephen MacKenna, the fourth edition, with Foreword by E. R. Dodds; Introduction by Paul Henry, London: Faber and Faber, 1969, p. 264.

³⁷⁰ Basil of Caesarea, *Against Eunomius*, translated by Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011. See also my chapter “Gregory of Nyssa” in Philip F. Esler (ed.), *The Early Christian World*, Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2017, chapter 55, p. 1076 [pp. 1072-1987].

³⁷¹ Porphyry, “Introduction”, to Plotinus, *The Enneads*, p. 2

“All-Soul has produced a Cosmos” (*Enn.* IV.3.6)³⁷² and on the fact that everything is “brought to culmination in unity” (*Enn.*, IV.4. 39).³⁷³ Basil’s texts affirm that God created the Universe, including human beings with their souls. c) Plotinus also spoke, as we have already seen that Basil did, about the **“Reason-Principles inherent in the seed of things (Spermatik Reasons)”** (*Enn.*, IV.4. 39)³⁷⁴ and about the primal ones of which content “is more primal than that of the principles in the seed;” (*Enn.*, IV.4. 39).³⁷⁵ The topics compared above (a, b, and c) are dealt with, among other places, within Plotinus’ *Enneads* IV.3–4, the texts which N.J. Torchia affirms that “were known to the Cappadocian circle.”³⁷⁶ This researcher remarks a very clear connection between these and Basil’s *Hexaemeron* and brings another element into discussion to reinforce it: the employment by Plotinus of the concept ‘sympatheia’, which in his opinion reveals certain metaphysical presuppositions regarding creation which are more akin to what we find in *Enneads* IV.3–4 than any other source [...] In the final analysis, *Hexaemeron* 2.2 can be viewed as a highly illuminating passage for probing the scope and extent of Basil’s receptivity to Plotinus. A Plotinian reading of Basil’s commentary on the creation account of Genesis can open the way for a richer appreciation of the understanding of reality that emerges throughout the Basilian *corpus*. In a very real sense, then, this passage provides a window into Basil’s writings which reveals a marked Plotinian dimension in his discussions of the harmony, order, and unity of the cosmos.³⁷⁷

Having exposed some of the influences on Basil’s *oeuvre* we survey now the view of the Cappadocian about eschatology and his description of a few ‘details’ regarding the process of creation as presented in the *Hexaemeron*: the world (“heaven and earth”) created “in the beginning” by God has an end: “For the fashion of this world passes away’

³⁷² Plotinus, *The Enneads*, p. 264.

³⁷³ Idem, p. 322.

³⁷⁴ Ibid; my emphases.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Torchia, “Sympatheia in Basil of Caesarea’s ‘Hexameron’: p. 375.

³⁷⁷ Idem, p. 377.

(1 Corinthians 7:31) and ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away (Matthew 24:35’). And “That which was begun in time is condemned to come to an end in time. If there has been a beginning do not doubt of the end;” [*Hex.* I. 3]. Concerning the “created”³⁷⁸ universe, this contains specific elements which have a particular function to fulfil individually:

Moses almost shows us the finger of the supreme artisan taking possession of the substance of the universe, forming the different parts in one perfect accord, and making a harmonious symphony result from the whole. [...] Thus, although there is no mention of the elements, fire, water and air, imagine that they were all compounded together, and you will find water, air and fire, in the earth. For fire leaps out from stones; iron which is dug from the **earth produces under friction fire** in plentiful measure;” (*Hex.* 1.7; my emphasis], and “celestial bodies move in a circular course” (*Hex.* 1.2).

7. 2. 1 b). Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335- c. 395 AD)

Basil’s stance on creation as an unfolding process was strengthened by that of his brother, **Gregory of Nyssa** and later became one of the tenets of Byzantine natural theology. Nyssen, in the same manner Basil did and for the same reasons, affirms that creation was both an instantenous process and one that lasted six days; (*Apol. Hex.* [PG 44:69A-71B]).³⁷⁹ These days of creation were necessary – as in the case of Philo *Hom. Opif.* 3³⁸⁰ – not because God needed a length of time to bring all elements of the universe into being (he creates things simultaneously), but because order was necessary within it, and this involves numbers.

³⁷⁸ “created” is the verb which, in Basil’s text, Moses uses; there is a mention there that it was chosen on purpose as opposed to “formed” or “worked”; *Hex.* 1.7.

³⁷⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Apology in Hexameron*, PG 44:69A-71B; reproduced in “Introduction”, Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, translated with an introduction and notes by Richard A. Norris Jr., in John T. Fitzgerald (gen. ed.), *Writings from the Greco-Roman World*, vol. 13, The Society of Biblical Literature, 2012, Atlanta, GA, p. xxxix; henceforth *Apol. Hex.*

³⁸⁰ Philo, *Hom. Opif.* 3, p. 13.

Basil and Gregory sourced some of their ideas within Origen's texts. Adamantius' *On First Principles* remarks that the Holy Spirit enables people and creation in general to fulfil their potential;³⁸¹ such a theory can be understood as subsuming the notion of *logoi spermatikoi*. He also directly mentions the terms as such in *Comment. in Joan. X*, 337D.³⁸² Origen affirms that these 'seeds' within nature, including in the human beings, are the chief object of natural contemplation. In that book the Alexandrian questions a few realities: whether the current world is a part of a succession of worlds, the causes of the universe, and the moment when it began. He says: "It remains to inquire [...] whether there was another world before the one which now exists; and if there was, whether it was of the same kind as the present world, or slightly different or inferior."³⁸³ Then he expresses his definite belief in 'a sequence of universes' (the title of chapter 5 of book iii in his major *oeuvre* consists in these three words), thus: "God did not begin to work for the first time when he made this visible world, but just as after the dissolution of this world there will be another one, so also we believe that there were others before this one existed."³⁸⁴ In *Commentary on John* Origen explains that the previous world was better than the current one, and that St. Paul and a few others came to guide people of the present times.³⁸⁵ He (as Plato in *Timaeus*) considers that the planets, the sun, and the moon are alive ('living beings') not only with bodies, but also with souls that will be released back into cosmos upon the disappearance of the physical entities containing them. His explanation, in line with his Christian worldview, is that it is so because these astral corpora "are said to receive commands from God; for commands are not usually

³⁸¹ Origen, *Peri archon/De principiis*, PG 11. cols. 115A-414A; Origen, *On First Principles*, ed. Butterworth; *On First Principles*, Behr.

³⁸² Origen, "Commentarium in Evangelium Secundum Joannem. Tomus X", in *Commentaria in Evangelium Joannes*, PG. 14, 337D.

³⁸³ Origen, *On First Principles*, II.iii. 1, ed. Butterworth, p. 83 (the chapter pp. 83-95).

³⁸⁴ Idem, III.v.3, ed. Butterworth, pp. 238-239.

³⁸⁵ Origen "Commentary on John", XVII. 24; PG 14 [13A-740A].

given to any but living and rational creatures.”³⁸⁶ His doctrine of creation in two stages was embraced by Gregory of Nyssa.

Adding his own ideas to what he learnt from Origen and Basil, Nyssen, in *Apologia in Hexameron*³⁸⁷ and *On the Making of Human Beings*³⁸⁸ uses the metaphor of the growth of a plant to expound his theory concerning *λόγοι σπερματικοί*: much like a planted seed eventually develops into a tree, so when God created the world he planted *rationes seminales*, from which all life sprung. His model is intended to reconcile the belief that God created all things with the evident fact that new things are constantly developing.³⁸⁹ I have discussed in detail aspects of it in my article “How would Gregory of Nyssa have understood evolutionism?” According to Gregory (and Basil, as we noticed), creation came into being through an act of God’s will. The creative process is still happening in the mind of the Creator until the fullness concerning the number of souls (*pleroma*) is reached. The bishop is especially famous for his notion of *epektasis*, i.e. perpetual progress of everything that exists; his main concern was the manner in which it manifests itself in the case of the human soul. Yet, he still trusted that the kingdom of God is transcendent and at the same time ‘at hand’.

³⁸⁶ Origen, *On First Principles*; Origen made his statements about creation, for instance in I. vii. 3, ed. Butterworth, p. 61. (Book I, chapter vii, paragraph 3), and in the fragments of his work quoted further here. See also Origen, *Ordo Rerum*, PG 11. 115A-1632C; *Commentariorum in Genesis*, PG 12, cols. 41A-144D; *Homiliae in Genesim*, cols. 145A-218B.

³⁸⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *Hexameron liber* [Apologia in Hexaemeron], PG 44. 77D [61A-123C].

³⁸⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, “De opificio hominis”; *On the Making of Man* [N.B. Human Beings]; “Sermones de Creatione Hominis”. Also Behr “The Rational Animal”, pp. 219-247, and M. S. Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the grasp of faith*.

³⁸⁹ E. Ene D-Vasilescu, “How would Gregory of Nyssa have understood evolutionism?”, pp. 151-169.

7. 2. 1 c. Augustine (354-430 AD)

Augustine appreciated the usefulness of *rationes seminales* in accounting for the development of life after God's initial intervention. He makes this clear in his numerous commentaries on Genesis: *Contra Manichaeos*,³⁹⁰ *Imperfectus*,³⁹¹ *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*,³⁹² *Confessiones*³⁹³, the *Contra epistulam Manichaei quam uocant fundamenti*,³⁹⁴ the *De Natura Boni*,³⁹⁵ and the *Contra Faustum*.³⁹⁶ For instance, in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, the Doctor of the Church says:

If the day which God first made is rightly understood as spiritual and intellectual [...] could that be that when God made man to His image on the sixth day, He placed in this spiritual and intellectual creation **the causal reason** of the soul which was to be made later? Thus He would have created in advance the cause and formative principle by which He would make man after seven days, and this would mean that He created **the causal reason** of man's body in the earth and **the causal reason** of his soul in the creation of the first day; *Gen. lit.* 7, 23. 34.³⁹⁷

By causal reason the bishop understands providential and creative action. What he says here would imply that God created some 'forms' as seeds, which when activated 'function' in

³⁹⁰ Augustine, *On Genesis, two books: On Genesis against the Manichees; and, On the literal interpretation of Genesis: an unfinished book*, edited and translated by Roland J. Teske, Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, c1991, reprint 2001.

³⁹¹ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber*, CSEL 28:1. 459-503, edited by Joseph Zycha, Vienna: University of Vienna Press, 1894; in English, *On Genesis, two books: On Genesis against the Manichees; and On the literal interpretation of Genesis: an unfinished book*, edited and translated by Roland J. Teske, Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, c1991, 2001.

³⁹² Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim (The Literal Meaning of Genesis in twelve books)*, CPL 266/CSEL, vol. 28:1, edited by Joseph Zycha, Vienna: University of Vienna Press, 1894; Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2010; in the English version, Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis (De Genesis ad litteram)*, vol. 1: Books 1-6, and vol. 2: Books 7-12, edited and translated by John Hammond Taylor, Mahwah, N. Y.: Paulist Press, Ancient Christian Writers. The works of the Fathers in Translation, edited by J. Quasten, W. J. Burghardt, Th. Comerford Lawler, Nos. 41 and 42, 1982; henceforth *Gen. litt.*

³⁹³ Augustine, *Confessiones*, "Confessiones", CCSL 27, book xii (19-20); Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. H. Chadwick, books xi, xii, and xiii.

³⁹⁴ Augustine, *Contra epistulam Manichaei quam uocant fundamenti (Against the Epistle of Manichaeus called fundamental; 397 AD)*, especially chapters 12, 24, 28, 33; CSEL 25/1.

³⁹⁵ Augustine, *De natura boni*, Turnhout: Brepols; 2010, based on CSEL 25 edited by J. Zycha, 1891, pp. 855-889.

³⁹⁶ Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2010.

³⁹⁷ Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, vol. 2: Books 7-12, p. 25; my emphases.

perpetuity. Augustine, as Basil and Nyssen, employed the notion of *rationes seminales* to argue that everything in the universe was created by God in both ‘six days’ and ‘the same instant’ (Gen. 523. 45). The ‘six days’ are supposed to represent the continuous interaction between God and his work because each ‘thing’ within it is not only a totality of natural qualities, but also one of possibilities that become actual, dependent on historical context, and on God’s intention *vis-à-vis* them (Gen. litt. 6.14.25 emphasizes that this state of affairs explains why miracles are not to be conceived as against nature, but as a part of it).³⁹⁸ The similarity here with some of Basil’s ideas should not surprise us; as we have already observed, one of Augustine’s sources were texts by this Cappadocian author – in J. F. Callahan’s opinion³⁹⁹ certainly *Against Eunomius* 1.21 informed him.⁴⁰⁰ The future bishop of Hippo also listened to the homilies on the *Hexameron* delivered by his mentor, Ambrose of Milan (339 - 397), who upheld that God the Creator does not have a bodily nature, and that he created out of nothing.⁴⁰¹ In connection to Augustine’s sources, N. J. Torchia makes a cursory remark that “Augustine had a rich patristic heritage at his disposal”.⁴⁰²

All the thinkers before the scholastic period agreed that for this Doctor of the Church the seminal reasons created by God in the beginning of time are neither material nor passive, but effective under appropriate circumstances.⁴⁰³ Only in the sixteenth century, through

³⁹⁸ Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, ed. John Hammond Taylor, New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, vol. 1 (Books 1-6), Ancient Christian Writers. The works of the Fathers in Translation, edited by J. Quasten, W. J. Burghardt, Th. Comerford Lawler, No. 41; Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, ed. John Hammond Taylor, The Newman Press, New York, Mahwah, vol. 2 (Books 7-12), Ancient Christian Writers. The works of the Fathers in Translation, edited by J. Quasten, W. J. Burghardt, Th. Comerford Lawler, No. 42.

³⁹⁹ J. F. Callahan, “Basil of Caesarea, a New Source for St. Augustine’s Theory of Time”, pp. 437-454.

⁴⁰⁰ Basil of Caesarea, *Against Eunomius* 1. 21 (PG 29.560B); Basil of Caesarea, *Against Eunomius*, translated by M. DelCogliano and A. Radde-Gallwitz, p. 122.

⁴⁰¹ Ambrose of Milan, *Hexameron*, Cologne: Johann Guldenschaff, 1480. The Wellcome Library in London has a copy, and the book can be read via ProQuest LLC., c. 2017. See also Alexander H. Pierce, “Reconsidering Ambrose’s Reception of Basil’s Homiliae in Hexaameron: The Lasting Legacy of Origen”, *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum / Journal of Ancient Christianity*, De Gruyter, vol. 23(3), 2019, pp.414-444.

⁴⁰² Torchia, *Creatio ex nihilo and the Theology of St. Augustine: The Anti-Manichaean Polemic and Beyond*, Oxford, New York, Peter Lang, 1999, new edition 2012, pp. 37-38.

⁴⁰³ On this and more, see Henry Woods, S. J., *Augustine and Evolution. A Study in the saint’s De Genesi ad litteram and De Trinitate*, Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009 (originally University of Santa Clara, Calif., The Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1924).

theologians like Francesco Suárez, an interpretation of Augustine’s work through the doctrine of these inner potentialities began to be challenged.⁴⁰⁴ Obviously, for the bishop *rationes seminales* manifest themselves through divine intervention, but once they become active, especially in people, God allows ‘freedom’ for them and the entities that ‘contain’ them. He, like Ambrose, upheld what was later labelled as the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*.⁴⁰⁵ This helped Augustine in his controversy with the Manichaeists, especially in regard to their materialism, because it affirmed that not everything which exists has a material nature. He also connected the seminal reasons with numbers, stability, harmony, and made them instrumental in people’s attainment of their goals. For the bishop of Hippo not only that God did not rely on anything when creating, but he did not and does not do it out of any compulsion either (not even that coming from its own nature, as the Neoplatonists believed).

Would Cappadocians and Augustine’s theories been able to accommodate the explanation of evolutionary processes proposed by the twentieth and twenty-first century thinkers? It is difficult to answer such a question. As it is to answer the following: What are the implications – as regarded today– of the fact that new life always occurs? Some scholars still believe that it happens as the result of God’s will (so, they offer a ‘metaphysical’ interpretation) while others that this is an immanent natural process; the latter are usually

⁴⁰⁴ Francesco Suárez, S.J., *On the Works of Each of the Six Days and on the Seventh Day’s Rest*, in F. Suárez, *Opera Omnia* (based on *Disputationes Metaphysicae*), *Opera Omnia*, edited by M. André, C. Berton, A. Duval, Paris: apud Ludovicum Vivès, 1856-78; new edition *Opera Omnia*, Charlottesville, Virginia, USA: InteLex Corporation, 2017, vol. 25 (*Disputationes Metaphysicae*), pp. 139-141. See also Francesco Suárez, “juxta editionem venetianam XXIII tomos in-^o continentem, accurate recognita, reverendissimo ill. domino Sergenti ... ab editore dicata”, edited by Michel André [28 volumes in 30, 1803-1878], Parisii: Apud Ludovicum Editio nova, 1856-1878; and Francisco Suárez (1548-1617), *Disputaciones metafísicas*, edited and translated by Sergio Rábade Romeo, Salvador Caballero Sánchez, and Antonio Puigcerver Zanón, Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1960-1966. Also Karla Pollmann, Willemien Otten (eds.), *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

⁴⁰⁵ The pronouncement ‘creation *ex nihilo*’ was declared a dogma of the Church at the Council Lateran IV in 1215. Among the literature on this topic see Gert Melville and Johannes Helmrath (eds.), *The fourth Lateran council: institutional reform and spiritual renewal. Proceedings of the conference marking the eight hundredth anniversary of the council, organized by the Pontificio comitato de scienze storiche*, Rome, 15-17 October 2015, Affalterbach: Didymos-Verlag, 2017; also Christopher M Bellitto, *The general councils: a history of the twenty-one church councils from Nicaea to Vatican II*, New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2002.

specialists who work in physics and biology, disciplines that present things in a self-explanatory manner. But I do not consider that the two positions should be seen as being in contradiction because a transcendent God can work and does work *via* the laws of nature.

7. 2. 1 d. Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662 AD)

The notion of *λόγοι σπερματικοὶ* was further refined by Maximus the Confessor. According to him, the development through time of the elements of cosmos in virtue of the seminal reasons implanted within them unfolds in a way that is not entirely independent from God's action because all *logoi* are reunited into the Logos of God (the eternal *λόγοι*)⁴⁰⁶ that impresses a teleological progression. Maximus expresses his ideas about the *logoi* of the creation by saying that they constitute traces of the “glory of God” that enable people's *nous* to ascend to God; here we find Neoplatonic ‘echoes’. Also in the Christianity which the monk represented, the Divine Logos, i. e. Christ, and the ‘operations’ manifested within him activate the *logoi* within the components of the universe. After all, Maximus was one of the central figures at the Lateran Synod of 649 and there he defended *inter alia* such an idea (this is the synod that rejected the Monothelite doctrine that Christ has only one will).⁴⁰⁷ This is how the monk describes the *logoi*:

The knowledge of all that has come to be through [the Lord] is naturally and properly made known together with Him. For just as with the rising of the sensible sun all bodies are made known, so it is with God, the intelligible sun of righteousness, rising in the mind: although He is known to be separate from the created order, he wishes the true *logoi* of everything, whether intelligible

⁴⁰⁶ Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 10. 1164B; “Difficulty 10”, and the chapter “Cosmical theology” (ch. 5 of the Introduction), in *Maximus the Confessor*, translated and edited by Andrew Louth, London: Routledge, p. 128, respectively p. 62 [[61-74].

⁴⁰⁷ Richard Price, Phil Booth, and Catherine Cubitt (trans. and eds.), *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014.

or sensible, to be made known together with Himself. And this is shown on the mount of the Transfiguration of the Lord when both the brightness of his garments and the light of His face made Him known, and drew to God the knowledge of those who were after Him and around Him.⁴⁰⁸

Maximum, as Nyssen, speaks about the first creation – that of the souls – and the second: that of created and uncreated things, intelligible and sensible domains, heaven and earth, paradise and universe, male and female.⁴⁰⁹ But he is against Origen’s doctrine which upholds that the material world exists as a result of the lapse of the pre-existent intellects (souls) that were initially in a state of bliss and rest, contemplating God, and then reached one of satiety, thus ‘resolving’ to descent into the created order. To Adamantius’ conception that human beings did not have a material body, the monk opposes the notion that the latter was more spiritualized than it is now and less physical, but nonetheless, made of matter. This was of the same kind that Christ’s body had after the Resurrection: it allowed him to eat, but at the same time to go through walls. The discussion about the creative energies with which God endowed creation and that allows it to develop in time by its own devices is connected to the fact that the human being, with God’s image within, it is a microcosmos that reproduces on a smaller scale the entire macrocosmos.⁴¹⁰ Maximus understood the latter to function, in turn, as a (an enlarged) human being itself⁴¹¹ (i. e. to be a *makranthropos*): “the whole world, made up of visible and invisible things is man, and conversely [...] man made up of body and soul is a world [...] Intelligible things display the meaning of the soul, as the soul does that of intelligible things, and [...] sensible things display the place of the body as the body does that

⁴⁰⁸ Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 10.1156B; “Difficulty 10”, in *Maximus the Confessor*, p. 125.

⁴⁰⁹ Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 41. 1305B; “Difficulty 41”, in *Maximus the Confessor*, and “Cosmical theology”, pp. 154-155, respectively pp. 61-74.

⁴¹⁰ Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 41.1312A, “Difficulty 41”, in *idem*, p. 158, respectively p. 70.

⁴¹¹ Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 41.1312A–B; “Difficulty 41”, in *idem*, p. 158, respectively pp. 61-62. Also Maximus the Confessor, “The Church’s Mystagogy”, in George C. Berthold (trans. and ed.), *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings*, New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985, p. 196.

of sensible things.”⁴¹² The Incarnation of the Supreme *Logos* enable the salvation of people through the *logoi* within their souls. For Maximus this process is much broader than the liberation from sin and death, but is about God’s eternal plan for mankind, regardless of the Fall.

To conclude with Lars Thunberg the section on Maximus and the *logoi* within the constituents of creation we shall emphasize that “His system of theology was in fact a spiritual vision of the **cosmos**, of human life within that **cosmos**, and therefore of **the economy of salvation**, the salvific interplay between the human and the divine.”⁴¹³

⁴¹² Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum 41*, 1305 A-B; “Difficulty 41”, in *Maximus the Confessor*, pp. 154-155, respectively, pp. 61-62.

⁴¹³ Lars Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos: Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor*, Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985, p. 31.

Chapter 8. Later usages of the ancient differentiation ‘*chronos-kairos*’

8. 1. Introduction

The distinction between *chronos* and *kairos* was pervasive within the culture of the Eastern Roman Empire or, more correctly phrased, the two terms were largely deployed. Evidence of this is, for instance, the fact that Emperor Justinian (483-565 AD; reigned in 527-565) uses it in his famous Code of Laws (conceived between 529 and 534). Within this collection of regulations especially the meaning of *καιρός* is emphasized: it denotes an ‘acceptable’ time in the sense of it being ‘appropriate’ for a particular action. The document states that the law conditions the fulfilment of people’s achievements upon their acting in auspicious moments (*καιροί*); if the members of the society become aware of these they can use them fittingly. In the Codex the phrase deployed to refer to this state of affairs is the following: “if God should be propitious” something desirable happens.⁴¹⁴

Surprisingly perhaps, the two terms have been re-employed by modern thinkers –most often with their ancient meaning, but at times with new nuances added to it. As we indicated at the outset of the book, among the contemporary authors (those who lived or are still alive in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries) that referred to *καιρός* and *χρόνος*, Paul Tillich

⁴¹⁴ Justinian, *Code of Law*, in Samuel Parsons Scott (ed. and trans.), “Concerning the Configuration of the Code of Justinian”, in *The Civil law, including the twelve tables: the Institutes of Gaius, the Rules of Ulpian, the Opinions of Paulus, the Enactments of Justinian, and the Constitutions of Leo*; 1532/1533-1595. Samuel Parsons Scott (1846-1929), translated from the original Latin, edited, and compared the document with all accessible systems of jurisprudence ancient and modern; Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1922 [c. 1932?], vol. 12, Second Preface, p. 4. Scott’s edition is based on that of Henricus Agylaeus (1532/1533-1595) that has an identical title. The entire quotation on p. 4 is: “the maintenance of the integrity of the government depends upon two things, namely, the force of arms and the observance of the laws: and, for this reason, the fortunate race of the Romans obtained power and precedence over all other nations in former times, and will do so forever, if God should be propitious.” (Paul Krüger edited the first modern, standard version of the Codex in 1877). *Codex Iuris Civilis Justinian* has four parts; one added after the death of the Emperor.

(1886-1965),⁴¹⁵ Thorleif Boman (1894-1978),⁴¹⁶ John A. T. Robinson (1919-1983),⁴¹⁷ John Marsh (1904-1994),⁴¹⁸ James Barr (1924-2006),⁴¹⁹ and much more recently, in 2004, Frederick Erickson⁴²⁰ are to be mentioned. We shall concentrate in this chapter on Tillich's reflections about the two notions because he is the author who elaborated on them in detail; he not only dedicated a section to these in volume 3 of his *Systematic Theology* entitled "Life and the Spirit: History and the Kingdom of God", but also offered suggestions in the subsequent ones about how the two can be 'followed' throughout human history.

Before moving on to that endeavour we shortly introduce what the other modern authors just mentioned thought with regard to the two terms that feature in the title of our chapter. We shall begin with their definition offered by John A. T. Robinson in its own chapter entitled "*Kairos and Chronos*" within his book *In the End, God. A Study of the Christian Doctrine of the Last Things*; the fact that in that part he directly and concisely focused on the two notions allows him to capture what is essential about them. The Anglican bishop defined *kairos* as "time considered in relation to personal action, determined by reference to ends to be achieved in it. *Cronos* is the time abstracted from such a relation [...] time, as it were, that ticks on objectively and impersonally [...] it is time measured up by the chronometer not by purpose, momentarily rather than momentous."⁴²¹ He explains further that *cronos* is "duration" and *kairos* "time for decision,"⁴²² and also speaks about the "decisiveness of *kairos* translated into the immediacy of *chronos*."⁴²³ He indicates that, however, in some cases the two words are interchangeable – as, for instance, when someone

⁴¹⁵ P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3.

⁴¹⁶ T. Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*.

⁴¹⁷ J. A. T. Robinson, *In the end, God: A Study of the Christian Doctrine of the Last Things*; and also *A Theological Wordbook of the Bible*.

⁴¹⁸ J. Marsh, *The Fulness of Time*.

⁴¹⁹ J. Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*.

⁴²⁰ Frederick Erickson, *Talk and Social Theory: Ecologies of speaking and listening in everyday life*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004.

⁴²¹ Robinson, *In the end, God*, p. 39.

⁴²² Robinson, *In the end, God*, p. 39.

⁴²³ Idem, p. 45.

speaks about “a season”,⁴²⁴ which can be understood as both *kairos* (a decisive moment) and as time measured by a device. Robinson emphasizes that *kairos* is to be understood from the “proper standpoint”⁴²⁵, i.e. with its meaning as introduced by the Scripture. He concluded that the eschatological character of the “finalizing *kairos*, the moral *telos*” is not governed by its temporal finality.⁴²⁶ It means that what is ultimate in significance from a moral point of view is not necessarily also the temporal end of a situation; life is full of crucial moments and people move naturally from one to the next. The deeper implication of his theory and his view about the ‘ultimate’ with reference to humankind is that even when people will be morally absolved – their sins forgotten – that will not necessary mean the physical end of humankind. This understanding constitutes a part of how Robinson conceives eschatology. For him this, as a branch of theology which is preoccupied with ‘the last things’, is not assumed to study the realities that come after everything else, but rather to focus on the relation of all components of creation to these ‘last things’, and on the ‘lastness’ of all things. I agree with this and with Robinson’s consideration that in fact, the two terms should not be seen as being in a contradictory relationship; measuring time in order to carry out daily activities does not prevent one adopting the stance that human history is marked by moments of crucial importance (*kairoi*) – those which Christians see as ‘breakings’ of the divine reality into their history.

Another source that treats the two terms under discussion, the volume *Biblical Words for Time* written by James Barr, reveals that its author surveyed many positions vis-a-vis the notion of time, among them those of Ammonius (ca. 435/445–517/526) and Augustine. He draws evidence both for and against the usage of *καιρός* and *χρόνος* distinction largely from the Bible and classical sources; for instance he mentions the sense John Chrysostom

⁴²⁴ Idem, p. 46.

⁴²⁵ Idem, p. 39.

⁴²⁶ Idem, p. 45.

attributes to *kairos*, which we discussed in chapter 3.⁴²⁷ After expressing his inclination to believe that generally the Old Testament is accurate in dating events, Barr concluded that a “chronological scheme” is fundamental for understanding the Scripture in Late Judaism and Early Christianity.⁴²⁸ He addresses the distinction between “time as chronological and time as opportunity” [for humankind], and explains that the chronological approach refers to time merely as something measured but with no reference to what happens in the time so measured; it is implied here that the other kind of time refers to moments of special significance.⁴²⁹ The meaning of the word time and the differentiation *καιρός-χρόνος* was particularly important for millenarians, as both Robinson and Barr remarked. This is because this movement expected that the major *kairos* common to both human and divine existence take place during their lifetime.

John Marsh also pays attention to the distinction between the two Greek terms, and also to the concept ‘*aeon*’. But additionally, he examines what he calls “realistic” time.⁴³⁰ For him the ‘realistic’ form of temporality refers to the opportune circumstances and unfolding of actions (a close, but as we shall see further, not identical meaning to that of *kairos*).⁴³¹ The author typifies the notion of time as ‘realistic’ as follows: it is about “doing things ‘at the right’ moment [...] If a Bible writer speaks of ‘the time of harvest he thinks rather of all the activity, agricultural, social, and religious that constitutes the harvest, not of the month itself’.”⁴³² Marsh believes that this temporal mode is about the fact that people are able to discern when an opportunity is created by God for them and to respond to it with “appropriate action.”⁴³³ He considers that the Old Testament, despite recognizing days, weeks, and months

⁴²⁷ Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*, ft. 1 on p. 51.

⁴²⁸ On this, see especially chapter 2 in Barr’s book.

⁴²⁹ Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*, p. 10.

⁴³⁰ Marsh, *The Fulness of Time*, p. 19.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Idem, p. 21.

⁴³³ Idem, pp. 20-21

as units of measurement and having words for them, does not have one for ‘chronological time’.⁴³⁴ Marsh, like the other mentioned authors, speaks about *chronos* as “the measured time”. He believes that the human way of thinking about time is chronological and that the Bible itself recognizes this. While it cannot use the word *chronos* with the meaning the Greeks attributed to it, the Scripture has a multitude of words to express ‘realistic time’. He explains: “The chief of these is ‘*eth*’, and this word refers not only to a time’s chronological position, but to itself as distinguished by its content”.⁴³⁵ Others lexes to express the ‘realistic’ type of temporality within the Bible are, for example, *Ziv*=flowers; *Abib*= ripening ears; *bul*=rain, and *Ethanim*=perennial stream;⁴³⁶ Marsh considers that the Holy Book contains a multitude of these.⁴³⁷ Concerning the term *kairos*, for the scholar this “is not simply charged with Old Testament meanings, but consciously indicate their fulfilment; it represents the fact that “once and for all man’s destiny is to be decided.”⁴³⁸ That is consistent with the aspiration of the Jews who “always anticipated a time when a new Messiah would finally deliver and restore them.”⁴³⁹ With respect to the historical aspect of time, Marsh most clearly refers to it when stating that Christianity is a historical religion.⁴⁴⁰ As we can see, Marsh’s position differs from that of Barr for whom the words for the notion of time which he most substantially expounds upon do not concern its content, but the fact that it can be ‘measured’. In fact, if we compare the two authors we can say that the variance between the manner in which they discuss the concept of time is rather a matter of emphasis: while both of them operate with ‘momentous’ and ‘chronological’ aspects of time, Barr underscores the importance of chronology, and Marsh that of content. As we have observed, in the same way

⁴³⁴ Idem, p. 20.

⁴³⁵ Idem, p. 19.

⁴³⁶ These examples are provided by Marsh in footnote 1 on p. 21.

⁴³⁷ Marsh, *The Fulness of Time*, p. 20.

⁴³⁸ Idem, p. 77.

⁴³⁹ Idem, p. 75.

⁴⁴⁰ Idem, p. 35.

the latter did, Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostom selected from the words for time within the Bible those that focus on its content – mainly those representing time as being filled with virtuous pursuits. Complementary to the expressions for ‘time’ discussed so far, Marsh also speaks about *aeon*, but he defines it in a different way than Maximus does. For the English author it represents not only “life, generation, age”, but also “the new life of God’s people inaugurated by the events of the coming of Christ, his Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Reign.”⁴⁴¹ Marsh also emphasized that the New Testament recognizes *chronos* to be measured time, as well as *kairos* in its accepted sense, to which, he said, Tillich, “gave a new currency”.⁴⁴² We shall reveal in the next paragraph how the German theologian did so; before that we introduce another view – a contemporary one – on the narrow subject of this chapter: that of Prof. Frederick Erickson from the University of California. This scholar refers to *chronos* and *kairos* when he enumerates the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of time. He reminisces that for the Greeks *chronos* is about its quantitative aspect – its continuity and measurability (“clock time and calendar time”). Erickson opines that “History (at least according to the modernist world-view) unfolds in *kronos* time”.⁴⁴³ That while *kairos* is about discontinuity and the qualitative aspect of time because the content of this notion “differs in kind from one moment to the next”.⁴⁴⁴ He mentions that Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8 communicates the sense of *kairos* as ‘time of harvest’ and of joy, and then adds that it is “the time of tactical appropriateness, of shifting priorities and objects of attention from one qualitatively differing moment to the next. This is time as humanly experienced; ‘in the fullness of time’ the emergent ‘not quite yet’, the ‘now’ that once arrived, feels right. It is a brief strip of right time, marked at its beginning and end by turning points. It is not simply a particular duration in clock time.” Then the American

⁴⁴¹ Marsh, *Idem*, p. 77.

⁴⁴² Marsh, *Idem*, p. 20.

⁴⁴³ F. Erickson, *Talk and Social Theory*, p. 6.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Professor adds a phrase that brings an original idea into discussion: “Yet, **every *kairos* strip of time has a location in *kronos* time.**”⁴⁴⁵ What he avers, as we shall notice, is evocative of Tillich’s view that *kairos* is the moment when the sacred reality ‘breaks’ into the mundane world, i.e. into human history with its *chronos* time. As announced, we turn now to present in some detail Tillich’s thoughts on the concept of time, and on the manner in which it was expressed through *chronos* and *kairos*.

8. 2. Paul Tillich (1886-1965) about time (and history). His view on the distinction *καιρός- χρόνος*

Paul Tillich’s conception about time, both historical and metaphysical, is formulated via his stance regarding human existence and development. He speaks in parallel about events that take place within “the history of salvation” (*Heilsgeschichte*) and those that happen in “world history” (history as the result of human creativity), and about how they intersect one another. Concerning the distinction *kairos-chronos*, the German theologian conceived *καιροί* as designating the moments of historical crises that generate an opportunity for and require an existential decision by people, and *χρόνος* as signifying the measured time. Tillich’s position with respect to ‘cosmic’ history is based on a distinction which he deals with particularly in the chapter “The Kingdom of God within history” from his *Systematic Theology*, vol. III. It refers to what this theologian called “the history of revelation” and “the history of salvation”. While his first impulse was to discuss about them as different ‘domains’, he soon realized that in fact the two are facets of the same sacred reality. As he explained, “the history of salvation” is about “the Spiritual Presence” with its manifestations, and “the history of

⁴⁴⁵ Erickson, *Talk and Social Theory*, p. 7; my emphasis.

revelation” concerns the grace that is always being bestowed upon people by God. And further, “The history of revelation and the history of salvation are the same history” because “Revelation can be received only in the presence of salvation, and salvation can occur only within a correlation of revelation”.⁴⁴⁶ As soon as one is subject to a revelation that person also experiences salvation: “[N]o one can receive revelation except through the divine Spirit and [...]. [I]f someone is grasped by the divine Spirit, the centre of his personality is transformed; he has received saving power”.⁴⁴⁷ The German scholar explains further that in order to have a moment of revelation one has to be prepared; salvation begins with the process of this preparation: “Moses must remove his shoes before he can walk on the holy ground of the revelatory situation,” says Tillich.⁴⁴⁸



Fig. 2. Moses removing his sandals in front of the burning bush. The main church within the Monastery of St.Catherine, Mount Sinai. <http://vrc.princeton.edu/sinai/items/show/7137>, *The Sinai Icon Collection*, accessed February 1, 2018; Princeton Index of images is open and free access; nevertheless, I let Fr. Justin at the monastery know that I am using this image.

⁴⁴⁶ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, p. 144.

⁴⁴⁷ Idem, p. 146.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 144.

When referring to the relationship between the ‘history of salvation’ and world history, the theologian posits that, given the fact that the former “breaks” into human history, it can, sometimes, be seen as a part of it (the son of God lived among humans for a while). The consequence of this situation is that the history of salvation can be referred to in terms of definite space, measured time, and historical causality. Tillich asserts that one of the differences between the history of salvation and world history is that the latter “involves many ambiguities”. In any case, the relationship between them is very complex; it is so especially because it touches on human freedom, and also because:

...although it [history of salvation] is within history, it manifests something which is not from history [...] It is sacred and secular in the same series of events. In it history shows its self-transcending character, its striving toward ultimate fulfillment.⁴⁴⁹

8. 2. 1. Human Freedom

The effect of this state of affairs for human freedom is explained by Tillich as follows: since human history is a combination of ‘real’ objective and subjective elements, in so far as a human being is able to “transcend the given situation, leaving the real for the sake of the possible” and to set and pursue “purposes”⁴⁵⁰ that person is free. Caught between destiny and freedom, a person can produce something new. However, for Tillich historical activity cannot by itself ensure any kind of glimpse to the heavenly kingdom: “History is valued merely as an important element in man’s earthly life; it is a finite texture within which the individual must

⁴⁴⁹ Idem, vol. 3, p. 363.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 303.

make decisions relevant to his own salvation, but irrelevant for the Kingdom of God above history.⁴⁵¹

In order to avoid any confusion between the history of salvation with its paradox of the “ultimate appearance” within mundane realm (that of Christ as Jesus), and supernaturalism, which could lead to the idea that the two “histories” are disconnected, Tillich often calls the history of salvation “the life within the Kingdom of God”. He deals with the question of whether there are patterns within the manifestations of this sacred domain in people’s lives and concludes that the answer is culturally determined: it is decided by the theological system in which a religious group has the revelatory experience of perceiving and receiving what Tillich names “the centre of history”, i.e. that reality through which, according to him, the saving power comes into the world. What constitutes such a reality? He avers: “The metaphor ‘centre’ expresses a moment in history for which everything before and after is both preparation and reception. As such it is both criterion and source of the saving power in history.”⁴⁵² The theologian points out that the centre of history must be understood neither in terms of quantity, nor as a midpoint between past and future, nor as a certain historical moment, but as something that makes the manifestation of the Kingdom of God within humanity’s earthly existence coherent. It can be inferred from Tillich’s writings that such centres of history do not appear in accordance with any regular pattern, but only when “the time is fulfilled” (*kairos*) for a particular culture. One can discern the moment at which the fulfilment occurs and acquires a universal character, i.e. when it becomes “the centre of history”: it happens when a person, a small group, or a nation are grasped by the “Spiritual Presence”. For Christianity “the centre of history” is the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth as Christ. Tillich also considers other major religions and decides that

⁴⁵¹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, p. 397.

⁴⁵² Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, p. 364. This issue is detailed by Mircea Eliade in his own book *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (especially within the chapter “The Symbolism of the Center”), trans. Williard R. Trask, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1955, pp. 6-12.

only the Christian “centre” has a truly universal character – i. e. has the necessary criterion for an authentic *kairos*. We will elaborate further on this.

8. 2. 2. History as humankind’s maturing process

Tillich believed that the “world history” is a continuous process of maturing for humanity in order for it to be able to perceive a *kairos* when it occurs. He says that the end of this development is of great importance for the following reason (and here he provides a recapitulation of almost everything we know with respect to the two main terms in our book):

We spoke of the moment at which history, in terms of a concrete situation, had matured to the point of being able to receive the breakthrough of the central manifestation of the Kingdom of God. The New Testament has called this moment the “fulfillment of time”, in Greek, *kairos* [...] Its original meaning – the right time, the time in which something can be done – must be contrasted with *chronos*, measured time or clock time. The former is qualitative, the latter quantitative. Something of the qualitative character of time is expressed in the English word “timing”, and if one would speak of God’s “timing” in his providential activity, this term would come near to the meaning of *kairos*... It is used by both John the Baptist and Jesus when they announce the fulfilment of time with respect to the Kingdom of God which is ‘at hand’.⁴⁵³

This interpretation of human history as a gradual course of maturation towards welcoming God within opposes relativism. Also it can be perceived as contradictory to some “progressive” conceptions about the evolution of the humankind. For, according to Tillich, we cannot speak about progress beyond what constitutes “the centre of history”; the progress which can be seen around us is determined by the Kingdom of God (i.e. it exists because this Kingdom “erupts” into human history in various ways: by providing useful ideas, geniuses, etc.). In such an understanding this notion is clearly distinct from the mundane equivalent

⁴⁵³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, p. 369.

concepts as exemplified by expressions such as “technological progress”, “progress in agriculture”, etc.

The main idea in the context of this discussion is that for Tillich the appearance of the “centre” is not dependent on the contribution of humans and is not the result of progress as this is usually understood. However, for this theologian human history is progressive in the sense that it is about the movement of humankind from immaturity to maturity. This development is essential in order for people to perceive the *kairos* as something that gives meaning to their existence, and to understand that each historical moment is at the same time an instance of either preparing for, or receiving the saving power. Tillich explains that *kairos* always appears when human realities (“temporal forms” is the expression he uses) are in need of transformation and an eternal meaning is imminent, waiting to break through in temporal fulfilment. As already remarked, in order to recognize when the time is ripe for something important to happen (the *kairos*) one must be grasped by the “Spiritual Presence”; that fact leads to an openness that enables people to see the “signs of the times” and to be ready to act upon them. Jesus knew that his enemies did not see these signs, and urged them to open themselves to God’s grace (which is especially felt during historical *kairoi*) in order to become insightful vis-à-vis what they are being ‘told’.⁴⁵⁴ Tillich states that “Awareness of a *kairos* is a matter of vision”.⁴⁵⁵

The culmination of the human maturing process according to this theologian, as indicated above, is Christianity because it is based on the advent of Christ as the final manifestation of the Kingdom of God, and as the fulfilment of time in the manner which was foreshadowed in the Old Testament. Christ’s appearance happened once in the “original revelatory and saving stretch of history”,⁴⁵⁶ but it is re-iterated again and again. An important

⁴⁵⁴ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, p. 370.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, p. 365.

aspect to which Tillich draws the reader's attention is that "Maturation means not only the ability to receive the central manifestation of the Kingdom of God, but also the power to resist it."⁴⁵⁷ It is also important to underline that for the German scholar the process of the maturing of humankind does not stop with the appearance of the "centre of history", hence not in particular with the coming of Jesus as Christ in Christianity. He knew that the trans-temporal Christ is present in any period of time (including in the hereafter), and speaks about the potential Christian presence of the "centre of history" in any moment of the mundane existence. He nicely expresses this by saying that "mankind is never left alone", and that the history of the Church demonstrates a process of continual receiving of the "Spiritual Presence" from the central manifestation of the Kingdom of God, which allows people to perceive and receive not only the *kairos*, but also the *kairoi* subsequent to it. The theologian explains that the maturation of the first Christians was ensured through them being educated in the Law of the Old Testament. He points out that for one who takes for granted what he or she has received through education, anything that comes to contradict or modify it is doubted, if not automatically rejected. That has happened with respect to the religious evolution of the Christian people: at certain moments, through John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, the Law of the first Scripture was opened up for discussion. Eventually, Christians internalized the Law and, as Tillich says, "completed" Judaism.

I have already suggested that Tillich believed that within a culture there is a difference between its great *kairos* and the ensuing *kairoi*. The "great *kairos*" is experienced repeatedly through multiple *kairoi*. Here it can be added that an individual that is subject to the 'history of revelation' is able to discern between these two types of extraordinary instances. The relation between a *kairos* and *kairoi* is the relation between the criterion and that which stands under the criterion. Human existence is determined by the combination of the great

⁴⁵⁷ Idem, p. 370.

kairos, which is unique, with the *kairoi* that, as shown, occur wherever and whenever an individual or a group receives/receive God's grace (the "Spiritual Presence"). Tillich affirms: "*Kairoi* are rare, and the great *kairos* is unique, but **together they determine the dynamics of history in its self-transcendence**".⁴⁵⁸ He offers a few examples of the former: Israel leaving Egypt and the (positive) meeting of East and West that is happening today in Japan.⁴⁵⁹

When Christianity assumes that Jesus's advent constitutes the centre of its history, it does not overlook that other interpretations of it [of history] make the same claim for other close in meaning happenings. The followers of each religion, not only those of Christianity and Judaism, believe that the foundational moment of their system of beliefs is the centre of history or *kairos*; such "centres" are also professed by the followers of Islam, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, etc. But, as affirmed, Tillich thinks that a "centre of history" needs to be universal, and considers that the historical events upon which the religions just mentioned (except, as stated, for that of Christians and Jews) are centred do not have such a character. He reasons that history did not receive a universally valid centre through the existence of the prophet Mohammed, nor is Buddha "a dividing line" between past and future.⁴⁶⁰ Tillich considers that the latter religions have not had a moment of fulfilment, while for Christianity the "centre" has already occurred. Somehow in an inconsistent manner with what he affirms most of the time, he declares that the embodiment of the Spirit of Illumination in those cultures can happen at any time. This is how Tillich summarizes his ideas about the universality criterion and the "centre of history" within Christianity; he does it within the framework of a discussion concerning what he terms the latent and the manifest Church:

⁴⁵⁸ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, p. 372; emphasis added.

⁴⁵⁹ Tillich was referring to this reality in the 60's of the twentieth century, but his assessment is still valid today.

⁴⁶⁰ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, p. 368.

...church history has one quality which no other history has: since it relates itself in all its periods and appearances to the central manifestation of the Kingdom of God in history, it has in itself the ultimate criterion against itself - the New Being in Jesus as the Christ. The presence of this criterion elevates the churches above any other religious group, not because they are “better” than others, but because they have a better criterion against themselves and, implicitly, against other groups.⁴⁶¹

A question arises in this context: “how can Christianity justify its claim to be simultaneously rooted in time and based on the universal centre of the manifestations of the Kingdom of God in history?”⁴⁶² His first response is that the claim of Christians that they are experiencing a universal event is an expression of the daring courage of their faith. I. e. the faithful uphold their belief that Christianity’s central event, the appearance of Christ, is a criterion for all other revelatory events. Tillich states that: “Faith has the courage to dare this extraordinary assertion, and it takes the risk of error.”⁴⁶³ The second response Tillich offers is that no assumed centres of history other than the coming of Christ can answer the questions implied in the ambiguities of world history.

8. 2. 3. Eschatology

Because Tillich’s life spanned the Second World War (an occurrence that forced him to emigrate to America) it was perhaps unavoidable for him to connect the history of salvation with political history. As we have noticed, this theologian considered that human existence, being self-transcendent, is not only a dynamic movement oriented forward, but also “a structured whole in which one point is the centre”.⁴⁶⁴ Nevertheless, because it goes *ad infinitum* towards the Kingdom, in fact it consists in a succession of “centres of history”, i.e. it is a cycle of ‘histories’, each with its specific crux. Therefore, one can speak about *kairoi* as

⁴⁶¹ Idem, p. 381.

⁴⁶² Idem, p. 367.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., p. 364.

⁴⁶⁴ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, p. 366.

particular centres in political history (Tillich does so). The ‘centre’ of each national history is the moment in which its vocational conscience emerges. Examples of the latter are the foundation of the city of Rome (according to legend, that happened in the year 753 BC), and the American War of Independence (1775-1783). One can also say that the movement toward its “centre” has been pivotal for the development of Western culture over more than five hundred years. Since there is a central point in each of these ‘histories’, the problem of the beginning and the end of the movement of which this point is the centre arises also in this context (that of a discussion vis-à-vis politics).

To close now the chapter and the analysis of the concept of salvation in Tillich’s theology with one more of his thoughts with respect to Christianity and the centre of history, we indicate that, consistently with his previous enquiries, he poses the question:

When did that movement start of which Christ’s appearance is the center, and when will it come to an end? The answer, of course, cannot be given in terms of numbers [...] Beginning and end in relation to the center of history can mean only the beginning and end of the manifestation of the Kingdom of God in history...⁴⁶⁵ This response is determined by the special character of the centre itself: the history of salvation begins when people have the revelation of their precarious destiny and want to overcome it. Its end comes when all humans fully receive an answer to the above query, and hence cease to interrogate God and themselves about the meaning of their existence. (This solution has similarities with the manner in which Gregory of Nyssa envisaged people’s reaction vis-à-vis the end). Phrased differently, for Tillich the cessation occurs when humanity becomes universally at one with its essence. But this is a “post-temporal” state of existence (and consciousness). If we connect the quotation that follows with Tillich’s above-mentioned idea concerning the succession of “centres of history”, we understand that the theologian intimates the existence of temporal

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

cycles. But what is more important in his work with regard to eschatology is that for him it “symbolizes the ‘transition’ from the temporal to the eternal, and this is a metaphor similar to that of the transition from the eternal to the temporal in the doctrine of creation, from essence to existence in the doctrine of fall, and from existence to essence in the doctrine of salvation.”⁴⁶⁶ Tillich says that the question concerning the end of history and of the universe has rarely been asked in the literature of the Church and, when it was, has not been seriously answered. Only late in history, because of the threat of man’s self-annihilation and the historical tragedies that took place in the twentieth century, a “passionate concern for the eschatological problem”⁴⁶⁷ became actual. I would say that this is true for the recent centuries but, as we know, eschatology was central to the theological and philosophical preoccupations of the early Christian authors.⁴⁶⁸

The German professor supposes that the end of human existence could happen in one of the following ways: either through physical extinction due to cosmic or human causes, or *via* biological and/or psychological transformations (which would annihilate the spirit which animates humankind), or via any inner deterioration which would deprive human beings of their freedom, and consequently of the possibility to further create their history. Nevertheless, as we have observed, Tillich does not concentrate especially on the beginning and end, but more on the concepts of succession of “centres”, temporal cycles, and the relation *kairos-chronos*. On the cycles of time he further affirms: “History again becomes a circle of circles in which human suffering and divine grace contend with one another, but nothing

⁴⁶⁶ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, p. 395.

⁴⁶⁷ Idem, p. 396.

⁴⁶⁸ An elaboration on this is in E. Ene D-Vasilescu, “Early Christianity about the notion of time and the redemption of the soul”, *Studia Patristica* 91, vol. 17 (2017), pp. 167-183.

fundamentally new happens”.⁴⁶⁹ For him this means that humanity, which was estranged from its essence through the fall, will finally return to its original essence.

XXX

Tillich, who in addition to being a Professor, was also a pastor and at the same time a socialist, reflected at some length on a rather surprising theme that also had personal resonances for him. He explains that after the First World War the term *kairos* was used with respect to the religious socialist movement in Germany. That mass undertaking expressed the feelings of many people in Central Europe that a new momentous period had begun, which brought with it a new conception about history and life. Tillich points out that times as those can be captured by the notion *kairos*, and rather proudly affirms that “This term has been frequently used since we introduced it into theological and philosophical discussion in connection with the religious socialist movement in Germany after the First World War”.⁴⁷⁰ He also remembers his early employment and interpretation of this word – that which immediately followed the Russian revolution of 1917:

It was then when I first used the New Testament concept of *kairos*, the fullness of time, which as a boundary concept between religion and socialism has been the hallmark of German religious socialism. The concept of the fullness of time indicates that a struggle for a new social order cannot lead to the kind of fulfillment expressed by the idea of the Kingdom of God, but that at a particular time particular tasks are demanded, as one particular aspect of the Kingdom of God becomes a demand and an expectation for us. The Kingdom of God will always remain transcendent, but it appears as a judgment on a given form of society and as a norm for a coming one. Thus, the decision to be a religious socialist may be the decision for the Kingdom of God, even though the socialist society is infinitely distant from the Kingdom of God.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁹ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, 1977, p. 103; there is a new edition of this book trans. by Franklin Sherman, Eugene, O.R.: Wipf and Stock, 2012, but my quotations are from the first.

⁴⁷⁰ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, p. 369.

⁴⁷¹ Tillich, “Between Lutheranism and Socialism”, in *On the Boundary*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966, pp. 78-79.

Tillich reminds his readers that when Jesus spoke about the fulfillment of time (the coming of the Kingdom of God), he affirmed that it is “at hand”; we noticed this above.⁴⁷² He makes a connection between the content of this statement and people’s beliefs in socialism. He underlines that the latter political system was expressed at other times by the “prophetic eschatological symbol of the ‘kingdom of God’”.⁴⁷³ John R. Stumme, the author of the Introduction to Tillich’s *The Socialist Decision*, assesses the theologian’s conception about this structure of governance, which is both religious and left-wing:

One might even say that the theological thrust of his religious socialism was to discover the concrete social and political meaning of the prayer “Thy kingdom come”. The kingdom comes in history, yet remains transcendent, the kingdom is “at hand”, but it cannot be possessed. Its character is paradoxical: the transcendent is not in an undialectical opposition to history, but shows its genuine transcendence by breaking into history, shattering and changing it.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷² Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, p. 369.

⁴⁷³ John R. Stumme, “Introduction“, to Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, p. XX.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

Chapter 9. Conclusion

We conclude this volume by indicating that the notion of time has always been perceived as an ‘image’ of motion. And also by pointing out a reality concerning the terms *chronos* and *kairos*: these have kept their main initial sense across time – the one used by both the Romans and the Bible: for *χρόνος* that of measured time and for *καιρός* a moment of significance and opportunity. To this we insert that almost every later deployment added new layers of meaning to the original one; these were imposed by the specificity of each historical epoch. Hence the definition of the two words has become richer over time.

I shall add my last thoughts on the issue of time as understood by the early Christians soon, but because some are related to a few of Origen’s, and because Adamantius has such an optimistic view about the ‘end’ of creation, I will also interject more ideas from his texts; those were borrowed by the sequent Fathers of the Church, and modified in such a manner as to suit their own conceptual systems. Of course, I will comment on these opinions expressed by the Alexandrian. In John Clark Smith’s valuation⁴⁷⁵ for Origen the consequence of the Fall meant that humans have been transformed into ‘souls’ from their initial, higher condition of ‘intellects’ equal to one another, and who knew and worshipped God, and also shared in his goodness. Being a soul implies to be always torn between rational and irrational. The process of being an “intellect” again can be reversed and the battle between the two domains resolved during the course of “perfect completion” on the path to the eschaton, i.e. to the Final “Restoration” (*Apokatastasis*). I underline that in my own view this restitution takes place continuously (through various *kairoi*), but my conviction does not exclude the ‘end’ in which Origen believes, the final *kairos*. For Smith the implications of this unfolding in Origen’s

⁴⁷⁵ John Clark Smith, *The Ancient Wisdom of Origen*, Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1992.

view consist in the possibility for humans to freely express and fulfil their will, and in the existence of a God who, rather than being a judge, is a creator of situations in which people who he has brought into being can optimally develop. Within this framework, “How each intellect directs its free will determine its eventual status.” And “the power of good and freedom remains unaffected by the evil of man’s choices”.⁴⁷⁶ A “seed” (the *logos*) was planted in people to guide them back to perfection and to their real heavenly origin via conversion/purification (that reminds us of Gregory of Nyssa’s ideas in *De hominis opificio*).⁴⁷⁷ Origen does not mention this, but actually the ‘trigger’ for the movement towards something similar to the initial order of things, i. e. towards a state identical to the pre-lapsarian bliss, is the image of God that has been bestowed on humans at their creation, and which needs to be regained through the overcoming of sin and death. The novelty Adamantius brought in by comparison to the theories of conversion/restitution elaborated before him (by Marcion, Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria), was that he generalized this process to include not only people, but everything that has been created. With respect to human beings he conceived the ‘positive return’ of their souls as happening individually at a different rate during the salvic time to which I refer throughout this volume. People are free to subject themselves to this process; God’s omniscience (hence ‘foresight’) does not become a forceful imposition of his will on theirs. This is how I interpret Origen’s *On the First Principle* 3. 1.1-23 (i. e. chapter 21 of the *Philocalia*; the part of the *Peri Archon* that has survived in Greek). Within the frame of eternity God only decides on the moment and the treatment needed by every soul to heal – upon its own wish and request for a cure. Therefore, in the redemption a *symphonia* between human will and God’s foreknowledge is at work. The path to this objective might be painful sometimes, but the suffering involved is only

⁴⁷⁶ J. C. Smith, *The Ancient Wisdom of Origen*, p. 41.

⁴⁷⁷ Smith, *The Ancient Wisdom of Origen*, p. 42.

temporary. As about the theory of general salvation Origen was criticised about – his ‘universalism’ – he was sufficiently precise in describing the consequences of people’s acts to make possible the prevention of libertinism and a total relaxation of the moral norms that lead to a good future for their souls. He repeatedly emphasized that human beings should be aware and not forget that they still need to play a positive part in their own salvation. The thought that people will choose the good after being prepared for it throughout their lives – more than a hope – pervades the entire Origenist corpus. Everything within coheres with the stance that God ‘has time’ to wait until conversion happens ‘naturally’.

Eventually, among my own closing annotations, one concerns the importance of underscoring that even though some of the the concepts involved in the discussion about time seem to be contradictory, in fact they together contribute to a Christian ‘theory’ of time. As we had hypothesised, most of both the early and later Christian thinkers paid more attention to the quality of one’s time (to the ‘content’ of time) than to any other aspect of it. In short, we may say that in their writings the arguments about time refer mainly to redemption. This statement can be ‘translated’ by explaining, as I have done myself in the book, that for them the process of salvation is at work in every moment. The individual human life and the history itself are always, from one step to the next higher one, ‘on their way’ to the eschaton (*ta eshata*). The works discussed within this volume seem to imply the following: a linear – the historical time (*chronos*) – runs its course, which represents an eschatological and soteriological movement; deification is always in view. ‘The end’ – salvation – is always ‘happening’, therefore Christians experience a continuous *kairos*. Also a new beginning is permanently taking place. The continuous flow of time makes manifest the connection between its two ‘brackets’: its first beginning and ultimate end. In this light, the claim would be that the Christian authors discussed within this publication attempt to displace or ‘subvert’ the centrality of time by deliberately collapsing together the past, the present, and the future,

and thus *chronos* and *kairos*. Because of this, for the theologians of whose *oeuvre* we have examined, the question of “when” is entirely irrelevant; the eschatology and the view about redemption do not need an answer to it. Said differently, even though eschatology creates history, paradoxically, it makes history a non-temporal reality or, to use a more provocative phrase, we can say that time is not a temporal concept neither for Early Patristic authors nor for some of later Christian theologians. This is a puzzling state of affairs in itself since eschatological thinking had been part of the Christian (as well as Jewish) system of belief from an early stage,⁴⁷⁸ and Christians lived in expectation of an imminent end from their historical beginnings; some still do so today.

To people who, like Martin Werner, believe that “the development of Christian doctrine in the first several centuries [was] essentially the by-product of a failed eschatological hope, a way of coping intellectually with the non-fulfilment of first-century apocalyptic fantasies,”⁴⁷⁹ I reply that **eschatology** might seem so when it is evaluated **solely through the lens of the temporal dimension**. But, as we have observed, the thinkers introduced in this volume did not do what Werner declares since for them ‘when’ is not important.⁴⁸⁰ I find support for my argument in, for instance, Brian E. Daley’s *The Hope of the Early Church Handbook of Patristic Eschatology*, where he explains that those who held a conviction similar to that of Werner, reverse “the order of religious priorities suggested by early Christian literature, and confirmed in our own reflective faith.”⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁸ Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus, Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, and for discussion of the differing approaches, which also depend on assessments of the Jewish apocalyptic context, see Crispin Fletcher-Louis, “Jesus and apocalypticism”, in T. Holmén and S. E. Porter (eds.), *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, Leiden: Brill, 2010, 3, pp. 2877-2909.

⁴⁷⁹ Martin Werner, *The Formation of Christian Dogma. An Historical Study of its Problems*, trans. and Introd. S. G. F. Brandon, Harper, New York, 1957, p. 125.

⁴⁸⁰ For more details of this see my article “Early Christianity about the notions of time“.

⁴⁸¹ Brian E. Daley, *The hope of the early church: a handbook of Patristic eschatology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 3; see also E. Ene D-Vasilescu, “Is there progress in the sacred world? Patristic ideas up to the seventh century AD”, in E. Ene D-Vasilescu (ed.), *A Journey along the Christian way*, pp. 26-38; and Wolfram Kinzig, *Novitas Christiana: Die Idee des Fortschritts in der Alten Kirche bis Eusebius/Novitas Christiana: The idea of progress in the early church to Eusebius*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994.

To close the book here, for Christians time began from the historical perspective with the moment of Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection (c. AD 30/33), when the perfect son of God was sacrificed and revived himself. From the metaphysical point of view the same faithful people may say that time begins for each person continuously, as they are aware of both their fragility and power to save themselves in co-operation with the Creator. A return to the state of perfection he [Christ] epitomized will take place for everyone and everything.

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INDEX

A

Albertus Magnus

Aristotle

Aquinas, Thomas

Aeons

Ages

Athanasius

Ancient Greeks

Augustine

B

Banquet, the Divine

Basil the Great; Basil of Caesarea; see also Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzen, Cappadocia, the Cappadocian School

Baptist, the; see also John the Baptist

Barr, James

Beginning of time, the; see also creation

Benedictine

Bethlehem

Bible, the; see also Scripture; the Holy Scripture; the Old Testament; the New Testament

Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice

Bishop

Boethius; see also *De consolatione philosophiae*

Book of Genesis

Bodleian Library, Oxford

Body

Boman, Thorleif

Brown, Peter

Buddhism

Byzantine Commonwealth, the

Byzantine dignitary, see also Theodore Metochites

Byzantine iconography

Byzantine written sources

Byzantium

C

Cabasilas, Nicholas

Cappadocia; La Cappadoce; see also the Cappadocian School, the Capapdocians, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzen

Cappadocian School, the; see also Cappadocia; the Capapdocians, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzen

Cappadocians, the; see also Cappadocia; see also the Cappadocian School, the Capapdocians, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzen

Capita CL; see also “The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters”, Triads (the), Gregory Palamas

Chora Monastery

Chronos; see also *kronos*; *χρόνος*

Chilandar; see also Hilandar

Cloud of Unknowing, the

Christ

Christianity

Christian Iconography; see also Iconography

Christian unity

Church

Cloud of Unknowing, the

Clement of Alexandria; see also Clementis Alexandrini and Ps. Clementis Alexandrini

Clementis Alexandrini; see also Clement of Alexandria and Ps. Clementis Alexandrini

Clerics

Code of Laws, the; see also Justinian

Communities

Communism

Corpus Dionysiacum

Christ, see also God, also Godhead

Creation, see also 'the beginning of time'

Cross

Crusade

Cult

Cycles; see also temporal cycles

Cyprian of Carthage

D

Damascene: see also John of Damascus, Saint

Dogma

Dogmatic

De consolatione philosophiae; see also Boethius

De Genesi contra Manichaeos; see also Manichaeism and Manichaeos

Demiurge, the; see also the Divine and the Divine source

De principiis, see also Origen

Desert

Devotion

Diocese

Dionysius the Areopagite, see also Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite

Distentio; see also Augustine and soul

Divine, the; see also the Divine source and the Demiurge

Divine source, the; see also the Divine

Dumbarton Oaks Papers

Dualism

E

Eckhart, Meister; see also Meister Eckhart

Ecstasy

Education

Educator

Egypt

England

Ephesians (Eph. ii. 7)

Erickson, Frederick

Eternity

Europe

F

Fresco,

G

God, see also Godhead and Christ

Godhead, see also God and Christ

Germany

Gothóni, René

Grace

Gregory of Nyssa; see also Basil the Great; Basil of Caesarea; Gregory of Nazianzen, Cappadocia, the Cappadocian School

Gregory Nazianzen; see also Basil the Great; Basil of Caesarea; Gregory of Nyssa; Cappadocia, the Cappadocian School

Gregory Palamas; see also Capita CL, Triads (the), and “The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters”

H

Heaven

Heavenly sustenance; see also Nourishment

Hebrews

Heresy

High Priest; see also ‘Priest’

Holy Spirit, the; see also Spirit, the Holy, and Godhead

Homily

I

Iconography; see also icons, Christian Iconography, and St. Catherine Monastery

Icons; see also Iconography, Christian Iconography, and St. Catherine Monastery

Image

Incarnation; see also *Oratio de Incarnatione Verbi*

Infant

Isaiah

Islam

Istanbul

Israelites

J

Japan

Jerome

John Chrysostom; see also the Liturgist

John of Damascus, Saint; see also Damascene

Jesus

Jews

Justinian, the Emperor; see also the Code of Laws

K

Kairos/καιρός

Kariye Djami

Kronos/χρόνος see also *chronos*

L

Legend

Letters

Liturgy; see also Ordo Divini Sacrificii

Liturgist, the; see also John Chrysostom

Lord, The

M

Manichaeos; see also Manichaeism and *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*

Manichaeism; see also Manichaeos and *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*

Manuscripts; see also Ms. Colbertinus 970, and also Ms. Colbertinus 1030

Marsh, John

Mary

Maximus the Confessor

Meister Eckhart; see also Meister Eckhart

Middle Ages

Migne, Jacques-Paul; see also *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*

Mind

Monastery

Monastic life

Monenergism

Monothelism

Motion; see also spiritual motion

Movement

Ms. Colbertinus 970 (identified with Parisianus gr. 768); see also Manuscript

Ms. Colbertinus 1030; see also Manuscript

N

Nature

New Testament; see also the Bible, the Scripture, the Holy Scripture

Nourishment; see also ‘heavenly sustenance’

O

Offer, offering

Old Testament; see also the Bible, the Scripture, the Holy Scripture

Orations; see also *Oratio de Incarnatione Verbi*

Origen; see also *De principiis*

Ordo Divini Sacrificii; see also Liturgy

“One Hundred and Fifty Chapters”, the; see also Capita CL, Triads, and Gregory Palamas

P

Patrologiae Cursus Completus; see also Migne, Jacques-Paul

Ps. Clementis Alexandrini; see also Clement of Alexandria and Clementis Alexandrini

Parchment

Patriarch

Person

Physics, see also Aristotle

Photios of Constantinople

Plato

Plotinus

Possinus

Power

Prayer

“Procession”; see also ‘return’ (in the works of Dionysius the Areopagite)

Procopius of Caesarea

Proclus

Priest; see also ‘the High Priest’

Progress

Psalms

Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite; see also Dionysius the Areopagite

Q

Queen

Queen of Heaven, see also the Virgin

R

Readers

Red Sea

Reinsch, D. R.

‘Return’; see also “procession” (in the works of Dionysius the Areopagite)

Reynolds, A. M.

Ritchie, R.

Rizzardi, C.

Robinson, John A. T.

Roden, F. S.

Roman Empire

S

Saints

San Marco – the basilica and the cathedral

Santa Maria Antiqua

Scandinavia

Scribes

Schools

Scholastic

Scholars

Scroll

Sermons

Société des Bollandistes

Son

Song of Songs, the

Soul; see also *distention*

Spirit, the Holy; see also the Holy Spirit

Spiritual sustenance; see also heavenly sustenance

Standard reference

St. Catherine Monastery; see also icons, iconography, Christian iconography

Supplication

Synaxarion, the

T

Table

Teaching

Thearchia

Theology

Theological perspective

Theotokos

Temple

Temporal cycles; see also 'cycles'

Tertullian

Testament; see also Old, New Testament(s)

Temporality

Temporal linearity

Theodore Metochites, see also Byzantine dignitary

Time

Tillich, Paul

Trinity, the Holy

U

Universe, the

V

Virgin, the; see also Queen of Heaven

W

Week; see also Holy Week

Wisdom

Worship

Ware, Kallistos

Z

Zizioulas, John

Zoroastrianism

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