

# Evil Appearance in World and the Problem of the “Lesser Evil”

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**Abstract:** How could the evil appear in a perfect creation? How could all the things made by God, which were *very good* (*Gen* 1, 31), turn to evil in such a way that God repented and felt regret for having them created (*Gen* 6, 6-7)? How could the Creator allow the emergence of a will contrary to His will and, in fact, how did it arise, because Blessed Augustine says that “therefore, (evil will) is the cause of all evils”<sup>2</sup>. But what is the cause of birth of this will? What exactly caused this will to change its natural purpose (made by the Creator) in this way, becoming perverted, sickened, darkened? Regarding human beings, the fall was made possible by an external temptation, but for angels the fall comes from inside, evil arises in themselves without any other mediator.

**Keywords:** Axiology, evil, virtue, problem of the “lesser evil”

## A Difficult Obstacle to Overcome

The problem of evil is the most sensitive topic of theology and philosophy. John G. Stackhouse, a Canadian scholar of religion, states in one of his articles, *Christianity Today*, that the problem of evil is “arguably the most important philosophical question of any era”<sup>3</sup>, and one of the most important Christian apologists of our time, Ravi Zacharias, in his book *Jesus Among Other gods*, comments on suffering and God as follows: “behind this question lies possibly one of the greatest barriers to belief in God”<sup>4</sup>. Approaching this aspect, there can be quoted a bunch of other Christian authors and thinkers who place the issue of

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<sup>2</sup> Dan-Robert Bișa, *Problema răului în limitele doctrine ale creștinismului tradițional* (Pitești: Paralela 45, 2018), 185; see also Magistrand Ștefan Alexe, “Concepția Fericitului Augustin despre păcat și har,” in *Studii Teologice*, the second series, no. 5-6 (1956), 332.

<sup>3</sup> John G. Stackhouse Jr., “Mind Over Skepticism,” in *Christianity Today* (11 June 2001), 74.

<sup>4</sup> Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Word Publishing, 2000), 103.

theodicy among the most thorny and difficult theological and even philosophical topics. Philosophers and theologians treated this topic extensively looking for solutions in order not to damage the image of an all-good and all-loving God, and therefore of an all-good creation, in which there is no trace of evil, but also to minimize the problem of evil, so present in the world, with a perceptible power both for man and for creation in general. “Epicurus’s old questions have still not been answered. Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then where does evil come from?”<sup>5</sup>.

### **A Brief Definition of Evil**

Evil has a broader meaning than sin. The Hebrew term comes from a root meaning “to spoil”, “to break into pieces”, “to be wicked”, hence worthless. It is basically what is unpleasant, upsetting. In the New Testament *kakos* and *ponēros* mean the quality of evil in its essential character as well as its harmful effects or influences. The words encompass both the evil deed and its consequences. Although these aspects are different, there is frequently a close relationship between them. Much physical evil is due to moral evil; suffering and sin are not necessarily linked in individual cases, but human selfishness and sin explain much of the world’s evil. Although all evil must be punished, not all physical evil represents a punishment for evil deeds (*Lk* 13, 2-4; *Jn* 9, 3)<sup>6</sup>.

The teaching of the Orthodox Church, the keeper of the tradition and vision of the Holy Fathers, delimits itself from any kind of identification of evil with God, from any kind of attribution of evil to God, from the dualistic gnosis and the heresies related to these conceptions. We will discover in the following that evil is only an “intruder” in God’s creation which, if it had been impossible to appear, it would have violated the principle of free will, “the abyss that God does not control” because “power over man is an evil and even the source of all evil”, says the Russian thinker Berdyaev<sup>8</sup>. God could prevent the appearance of evil, but any kind of “change” brought to his thinking creatures contradicted His love: “Sin arises because people deliberately violate God’s order. Of course, God could prevent this by creating human beings differently. But then we would be like

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<sup>5</sup> David Hume, *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, part 10, (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 74.

<sup>6</sup> *Dicționar Biblic*, (Oradea: Cartea Creștină, 1995), 1110.

<sup>7</sup> He doesn’t want to control him, because God can do whatever He wants, but He does not will all that He can.

<sup>8</sup> Nikolai Berdyaev, *Slavery & Freedom* (Sophia Perennis Publisher, 2009), 148.

obedient puppets or machines, incapable of experiencing the bliss that can only be reached by freely choosing the good”<sup>9</sup>.

We cannot discuss about evil without taking into consideration firstly the way that the Holy Fathers define it. Saint Basil the Great gives a simple, but comprehensive definition, seizing the essence of evil: “This is evil: alienation from God”<sup>10</sup>. Saint Maximus the Confessor states about evil that “it is the deviation of the work of the powers implanted in conscience from their purpose and nothing else”<sup>11</sup>. Saint Dionysius the Areopagite writes the following: “So evil does not exist, nor is it in things that exist. Because evil is nowhere like evil. And it is not proper for evil to be done by strength, but by weakness. And the evil in the demons is from the fall from the good things that are their own and their change is the weakness in their identity and habit, in the perfection of the angelic image due to them”<sup>12</sup>; and St. Gregory of Nyssa notes: “Evil was called evil because it is not good”<sup>13</sup>.

We understand that evil does not exist by itself, it has no support of its own, “(...) good has nature and is saved and without any other support and is good, itself by itself; and evil is not without another support which is preserved by good; (...) but it is completely non-existent and it is nowhere, no way”. “Abolish bodies and light, and there will be no shadow,” says St. Maximus<sup>14</sup>. Evil can only exist in a relationship of dependence: “If all things share in good and in all that is good, evil is evident, either it does not exist, or it is in good; (...) so evil too, if it exists, obscurely participates in good; for all that it is, remains in good; and if they don’t have anything good, they don’t even subsist, because even the will of subsisting is good participation”<sup>15</sup>.

### A Positive View of So-Called Evil

However, another issue arises that deserves to be addressed in a full study. I will only point it out and, in order to do that, I will look for a satisfying answer

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<sup>9</sup> Sundar Singh, *Wisdom of the Sadhu* (Plough Publishing House, 2011), 7.

<sup>10</sup> Saint Basil the Great, *Dumnezeu nu este autorul răului, apud* Rev. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, volume 1 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 2010), 470.

<sup>11</sup> Saint Maximus The Confessor, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, Prolog, in *Filocalia*, volume 3 (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2017), 26.

<sup>12</sup> Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, *Despre Numirile dumnezeiești*, 1, §34, in *Sfântul Dionisie Areopagitul – Opere Complete*, translation and notes by Rev. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae (Bucharest: Paideia 1996), 157.

<sup>13</sup> Saint Grigorie of Nyssa, *Marele cuvânt catehetic*, VII, translation Grigorie Teodorescu (Bucharest: Sophia, 1998), 40.

<sup>14</sup> Saint Maximus The Confessor, *Scolitiile la «Despre Numirile Dumnezeiești»*, 1, §20, in *Sfântul Dionisie Areopagitul – Opere Complete*, 199.

<sup>15</sup> Saint Maximus The Confessor, *Scolitiile la «Despre Numirile Dumnezeiești»*, 1, §20.

in the works of Maximus the Confessor. It has been stated that evil is considered a lack, a non-entity. The problem that arises next is the question of whether a lack of such power can corrupt and disharmonize on a structural and significant level. How is it possible for a non-thing to ultimately be a force acting contrary to the divine side for humanity and human beings? However, the divine side for humanity finds its ultimate expression in the incarnation of the Son of God. Therefore, regarding the fall of people, we notice that God does not cancel because of their disobedience the reasons for which they were created – or the possibilities of realizing these reasons “thought” by the Creator – but changes only the way of fulfilling these reasons. In this way, the Creator changes the negativity of the fall into the positivity of regaining the premises leading to the realization of the self.

A similar vision can be found in the work of St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, thereby fighting against the Origenist negativism which considered the body as a prison for the soul, and, in the material order, a punishment for the soul’s sin from a previous, intangible existence<sup>16</sup>. The inconstancy and irregularity which God has inserted in matter either from the beginning, foreseeing the fall of men, or from the very cause of the fall, implanting in it the will to change according to the power of the body to struggle and to endure, they have in fact the purpose of awakening man’s consciousness to move away from everything inconsistent, shaky, changeable and returning the last drop of love he is capable of to the One towards whom the whole power of love must be directed, also called eros. Instability and corruptibility have the role of guiding man’s search from the seen to what is unseen. Therefore, as father Stăniloae suggestively emphasizes, that is why God intimately linked the soul to the matter of the world and to the body, so that, suffering from this connection, it would awaken in itself the desire for the indestructible, truly valuable things<sup>17</sup>. Thus, the rationality of matter should be fully exploited and updated by the powers of the soul. It is the soul that must govern the life of the body, not the other way around. The human being must discover, through the soul, the deeper rationality of the body and the material things; he must not live exclusively at their inferior level, because they must be overcome, transfigured, which does not mean to abolish them, but using “things naturally in the service of our own aspirations towards our wisdom”, to end up obtaining “a medicine from which the bad burden of our addictions is led to the good result, known to God”<sup>18</sup>. It can be claimed that evil, more or less seeming, limited in time – the unsteadiness of the body and material things – can lead to a real good, which will extend into eternity – our spiritual strengthening. Once again, we affirm the fact that only the way of this spiritual strengthening of man

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<sup>16</sup> Idem, *Ambigua*, in *PSB 80 (Saint Maximus the Confessor)*, translation, introduction and notes by Rev. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1983), 103, footnote 77.

<sup>17</sup> Saint Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, 102, footnote 76.

<sup>18</sup> Saint Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, 102-3.

changes, because our forefathers were also addressed to the same call, they had the same vocation, that of strengthening themselves first in spirit, by respecting the only commandment given to them by God, but they preferred “spiritual beauty to the inferiority of nature seen around (them)”<sup>19</sup>. Therefore, this is the vocation human beings are called to; a continuous overcoming of nature without rejecting it, but ennobling it.

Regarding angels, however, things are different because, as Father Dumitru Stăniloae says, they “have a kind of absolute in their decision”, their choice to will good or evil is crucial, because “they live in a clearer ambience of the absolute”, so that change becomes impossible for them. When a side of the angels chose apostasy, this decision “has something of the fully conscious acceptance of the absolute”<sup>20</sup>. So not that their nature was unchangeable, because God only is unchangeable, but their decision to break away from God without any other external temptation – only this thought being born in their minds, fueled by the pride of being like God, but without God – becomes impossible to correct. Concerning their desire/will/longing to be like God, father Stăniloae, according to St. Maximus the Confessor, gives it a positive meaning, but manifested in a negative sense, because it excludes the Creator himself. He says that these created spirits, inferior to God, wanted to overcome their own condition on the basis of a trait planted by God in their nature. It is about that tendency to raise higher and higher from where they are of the lower spirits, in view of the ceaseless epektasis of which Saint Gregory of Nyssa speaks. It is therefore a matter of a positive force, but this positive significance is preserved only as long as it is put in an unceasing connection with the One towards whom it must go<sup>21</sup>.

### **“No Evil Comes from Good, nor Evil from Virtue”<sup>22</sup>**

The principle according to which God is the cause of all and evil cannot have its root in an almighty divine God has led some to assert that evil would exist from everlasting, its existence being independent of God (the gnostic dualism). However, if there was something independent of God, the question of His omnipotence, even of His deity, would be called into question. Manichaeism, however, did not put evil in an independent relationship with God, but attributed it to a Creator whose nature was inclined toward evil. “Indeed, if God does not disregard anything that happens in the world, and man leads his life in misfortunes, the theory of God’s goodness could no longer stand, if He brought

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<sup>19</sup> Saint Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, 102.

<sup>20</sup> Saint John of the Ladder, *Scala*, trans. Rev. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1992), 96, footnote 160.

<sup>21</sup> Rev. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, volume 1, 477.

<sup>22</sup> Rev. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, volume 1, 471.

into life a creature who would live in misery. So, as the Manichean says, if the accomplishment of the good is the work of the good nature, this life full of pain and transitory could no longer be attributed to the work of the Good One, then we have to find another creator of this life, a creator whose nature is inclined toward evil”<sup>23</sup>. But is pain itself bad and pleasure itself good? How do we relate to good and bad, exclusively through the lens of pleasure and pain?<sup>24</sup> St. Gregory tells us that in order to truly discern good from evil, our mind must not use as an indicator the measure of the senses, the sieve must not represent the measure of bodily pleasure. The distinction between good and evil can only be made by a mind detached from the harshness of the senses, elevated above any passionate contemplation of the nature of things, beyond any bodily manifestation, in order to be able to judge things rightly, in itself<sup>25</sup>.

Saint Maximus also speaks about this type of mind, un-subdued by the body, in the continuation of the ideas that I inserted in the previous subchapter. He speaks about the power of reason, “which prefers virtue to all”<sup>26</sup>, thus we acquire “a stability as an expression of soul strength and self-control”, completes father Stăniloae in the explanatory note<sup>27</sup>. Furthermore, Father Stăniloae develops very deeply the idea of learning the virtues, which is supported by reason. As a function of judgment, reason takes into account the reason or rationality of human nature, that is, its meaning, what makes it define itself, keep itself uncorrupted, and realize itself. Therefore, human nature has a rationality that needs to be valued through the power of reason as a judgment function.

### **The Problem of the “Lesser Evil”**

We can ask ourselves a simple question. Which would have been the greater evil, that God should have made his creature (angels and human beings) without the possibility of falling, thereby nullifying freedom, or, for the sake of freedom, God should leave this possibility so sad to the creation of His hands, to break away even from Him, the source of his life? Is the pain that man endures after separation from God a lesser evil, which He allows with a view to our return? But we see that

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<sup>23</sup> Saint Grigorie of Nyssa, *Marele cuvânt catehetic*, VII, 38.

<sup>24</sup> We see so many cases in history, even in the Old Testament, when people, because of prosperity, moved away from God. Seeing that he is in control more and more, that he is expanding his area of knowledge to include more and more levels of life, man begins to trust himself further and further, forgetting God. But this way man, in all his well-being, will inevitably move away from good, which does not consist at all in the level of material well-being. We notice, therefore, that an apparent good – well-being – can lead (although it is not necessary) to an evil that becomes a deeper and deeper alienation from God.

<sup>25</sup> Saint Grigorie of Nyssa, *Marele cuvânt catehetic*, VII, 39-40.

<sup>26</sup> Saint Maximus The Confessor, *Ambigua*, 103-4.

<sup>27</sup> Saint Maximus The Confessor, *Ambigua*, 104, footnote 79.

this lesser evil has turned into the greatest blessing for some. People who have changed, turned the meaning of the evil of this world, strengthening themselves in the small glimmers of good at the beginning, so that after a while this goodness extends to them in such a way that it covers any trace of evil. So evil disappears by being filled with good. When evil is replaced by good, it is somehow absorbed into it, its trace being lost. However, the reverse is not valid. Evil cannot entirely absorb good, because a lack cannot do so. However, Father Stăniloae notes the fact that even if all people would cease – let’s say – to be subjects of evil, it would not cease to exist, because “it would blow upon their lives from other voluntary sources above them”<sup>28</sup>. Therefore, this leads to the conclusion that evil does not have its ultimate basis in human freedom, its proportions and intensity must be sought elsewhere, in a freedom of higher, stronger beings who were good at first. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph 6, 12)*. But, no matter how much evil would blow upon human life from these sources of evil, good would never cease to make its presence felt<sup>29</sup>, because “who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (*Rom 8, 35*) St. Gregory Palamas affirms the fact that man “does not advance towards evil “uncontrollably and irreversibly”, like demons, but becomes receptive to God’s gift of freeing him ontologically”<sup>30</sup>. The resorts of good in man will never be extinguished, until the end of life, compared to the fallen angels in whom no remnant of good can be found<sup>31</sup>.

Returning to the question of the lesser evil, though called “lesser,” for it takes into account the avoidance of a greater evil, yet it remains an evil. An evil cannot even be called “lesser” if it does not aim to rescue from a greater evil<sup>32</sup>. When God expels Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden (which is considered an evil), He considers that “lest they stretch out their hand and take of the tree of life, and eat and live forever...»” (*Gen 3, 22*), which means, the state in which they had fallen to become eternal (this is the greatest evil). This is, I believe,

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<sup>28</sup> Rev. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, volume 1, 472.

<sup>29</sup> Let us think of a sinful habit. No matter how much man follows it or how much it etches deep inside us so that it becomes something natural for our nature, the conscience, however, weakened and corrupted it may become, will never cease to give man the signals to return from that sinful habit. Man does not give up on a sinful habit because he would not realize that it is immoral, since conscience informs every man about inappropriate and distorted things, but because man responds to these signals superficially, choosing a continuous tendency to hide, a continuous escape from the responsibility for his actions.

<sup>30</sup> Saint Gregory Palamas, *Homily 22*, PG 151, 289A, *apud* Dimitrios Tselenghidis, *Har și libertate în tradiția patristică a secolului al XIV-lea*, trans. Rev. Dr. Daniel Pupăză (Iași: Doxologia, 2015), 38.

<sup>31</sup> Rev. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, volume 1, 472-4.

<sup>32</sup> Prof. Dr. Sebastian Moldovan, *Note de teologie morală ortodoxă pentru uzul studenților și absolvenților* (Sibiu: “Lucian Blaga” University Publishing House, 2009), 168-9.

the greatest risk God assumes. Thus, even after the fall of the brightest angels, who were in the greatest intimacy with God, He does not give up - even when it comes to the creation of human - this wonderful gift, which is freedom, no matter of all the sacrifices it entails. In order to understand properly the price God puts on freedom, we must understand that, although he foresees the facts that will happen (the fall, the following sufferings, death - evil in themselves), he still brings man into being (the greatest gift, the greatest good we share is our own existence). Saint Gregory of Nyssa says that “no one should ask why God, although he foresaw the misfortune that would happen to man due to lack of judgment, nevertheless set out to build him, although it was perhaps better not to exist than to lead life in misfortune”. Was it better for man not to be than to be even so?<sup>33</sup> This life sprinkled with so much suffering would really be a torment, its yoke would be unbearable if there were not another yoke, which Jesus Christ tells us is good, namely His yoke (*Mt* 11, 30). If we replace the yoke of this world with the yoke of Christ, everything will change. In Christ, suffering acquires different meanings, death changes its purpose. And the great miracle is that everything He did in this world is not addressed to himself, but to us. Everything He does, for us He does. The divine foreknowledge did not only foresee the fall of man and the misfortunes immediately following, but also the Incarnation, the suffering, the passions and the death of the divine Word, the second Person of the Holy Trinity which assumes them willingly, for our sake and for our good.

I mentioned in the beginning of this subchapter the people who were open to good, were available to it. This acquisition of good represents man’s availability for God. The more man opens up, dedicating God a bigger place in his life, the better he will share. Therefore, God is the source of good, and a life “connected” to this source is the ultimate good, which never ends, on the contrary, upon reaching a peak in good, another, higher, more exciting one will always be seen. A life that “disconnects” the channels of “receiving” the divine life can no longer be called life, because it is a continuous death (“let the dead bury their dead” – *Mt* 8, 22).

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<sup>33</sup> It is a problem that philosophy tries to deal with. Why is it rather something, when it might as well be nothing? The truth is that God creates everything not out of His need, because He is above all ne He does not need the world in order to be God, as in the case of the Muslim god. Creation is actually an extension of His love, a form of this love that is meant to be shared also by other creatures. God is so good that He does not keep only for Him this love. Thus, he does not seek any forced participation in this love, he does not seek a blind or mechanical participation, but a conscious, voluntary, active one, because only through such participation not only God is value, but the creature itself. His creation is highlighted, it is left so that through efforts - certainly also supported by the power of God – it can taste the divine life. So here is the positive character of the efforts, the great divine wisdom through which He shows His even greater love for the creature, in that He leaves it the possibility to move consciously towards this love, not forcing the course of things in any way.



Man lives in vain, if he lives without God<sup>34</sup>. The image of the fountain is very suggestive. How exactly does a fountain keep its water clean, fresh, what exactly keeps it from running dry? We might think that, in order not to dry up, the water have to stay there. But if it stays there, the pipes that feed that fountain will clog. So the water must be taken constantly, so that those threads don't get clogged, no longer circulating water through them. So it is with our life. The Savior says that he came for us to have life, but not only that, but to have life in abundance. In other words, to "pour out" this life that is in us, and through this overflow, the water of the divine life will widen more and more its channels through which it comes into us, in proportion to the sharing of this life with others who may be thirst for this water of life.

### Conclusions

At the end of this paper, I want to conclude by asking a question. Why are there so few people who come to know the true life, and so many who choose another kind of life, happy in their opinion, because absolutely no man on earth want him to be unhappy. Everyone is looking for happiness, in one way or another. The Savior Jesus Christ himself tells us in the Gospel according to Luke about the two ways, the broad one, which "many find it" (*Lk* 7, 13), and the narrow one, which "a few find it" (*Lk* 7, 14). But the narrow path actually offers the greatest largeness to human nature and the broad one, paradoxically, narrows it more and more. Thus, the choice of things which promotes nature involves effort, it means skill in the virtue of which we spoke in the previous subchapter, and not all people are willing to undertake a life sprinkled with continuous endeavor. For "the kingdom of God is taken by effort and those who strive get their hands on it" (*Mt* 11, 12). What exactly is this endeavor about? It is an effort to make the transition from matter to the spiritual, to spiritualize matter (under no circumstances to remove it, because it is not bad in itself). It is an effort for man to make the transition from what is seen, from the bodily senses to other senses, namely the spiritual ones.

Saint Maximus clearly tells us that "in which things the mind dwells, in those things it expands, with those things it feeds its lust and love, either with divine and proper and intelligible things, or with the things and passions of the body"<sup>35</sup>. And the holy father continues: "if, therefore, by a prolonged exercise of

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<sup>34</sup> It is inappropriate to say that one lives without God because life is sustained by His divine grace. Nothing could live without the power of God, but man has the possibility, even while living, to close himself to the divine work that would promote his existence, and the main consequence is death, not only physical death, but a (spiritual) death of life (biological).

<sup>35</sup> Saint Maximus The Confessor, *Cele 400 de capete despre dragoste*, III, 71, in *Filocalia*, volume 2, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2017), 85.

self-mastery over pleasure and of attention to divine things we gradually break it away from such a relationship, it expands and gradually advances in divine things and recognizes its own dignity and finally transfers its whole longing onto God”<sup>36</sup>. And these words should not be addressed and read only by monks, or by a certain group of people, but they are addressed to every man who realizes his nothingness, the instability and uncertainty of things, who thinks wisely what exactly will man be left with and what exactly will he be able to take with him after his biological death. The body will return to what it was taken from and the soul to the One from whom it came into being. The body takes nothing, at that moment the one who will take everything is the soul. And the question should be very seriously asked by the man who takes into consideration only the superficial level of this world. What exactly does the soul acquire during this transitory life? Things that will make him eternally happy or eternally suffer? In the mother’s womb, the child develops some useful organs for the next life, that is the earthly one. In this ephemeral life man must develop certain limbs that will help him in the future life, like physical limbs, without which this existence becomes almost impossible. It depends on what kind of limbs the man will form in this life, some that will help him enjoy eternally, or some that or because of which he will suffer eternally. This lies in the power of his choice; this is man’s part. God will always respect His part, because “what is impossible for human beings is possible for God” (*Lk* 18, 27). The problem lies in what is possible for man, but he does not want to fulfill.

As a brief conclusion, we emphasize the fact that the appearance of evil is an accident, its existence is by no means eternal and the cause of its appearance is eventually the pride, which the Holy Fathers consider the root of all sins. The devil falls from the desire to be like God, without God, and what is interesting is that he tempts the foreparents with exactly the same bait. “No, you will not die!”, but “you will be like God...” (*Gen* 3, 4-5). Everything that breaks away from God can no longer be good, because good only comes from Him, through Him and in relationship with Him. The restoration of man’s relationship with God through Jesus Christ is the highest form of good to which man is raised, higher even than that before the fall, because in Christ humanity is raised to the highest intimacy of the intra-trinitarian love relationship. In this communion of love we are called to participate all of us who have become His brothers, and thereby sons of the Highest.

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<sup>36</sup> Saint Maximus The Confessor, *Cele 400 de capete despre dragoste*, III, 72, 86.