

# A BRIEF OUTLINE ON THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH APOLOGETICS

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## Key Words:

*Early Church, Apologetics, Holy Scripture, Holy Tradition, Fundamental Theology*

The confessional work of the Church has been from the very beginning a foundation and basis for the Divine Truth. Starting from this real necessity, the Apologetic Theology claims some important research directions, grounded on the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition. Given this historical and doctrinal context, we can highlight the next support coordinates of the Christian Apologetics background: “*the truth of God’s existence, the reality of the supernatural world and man’s immortality*. All of this are, as we can say, *the Christian specific* starting from the first ages. The truths about the divine origin of Christianity are to be found here, on the dignity of this revealed doctrine, on the divine-human character of his Founder, on the importance and necessity of Christian Church for the religious and morale life of human kind”.<sup>2</sup>

## I. Apologetics and (or) Fundamental Theology

The reason why the Church must justify her teaching in the context of her missionary activity does not rise up from inner necessity. It does more from external misconceptions. In this context we can define the main concern of apologetics as a theological discipline. On the other hand, one can discover almost the same meaning in Fundamental Theology. However, as a difference between them, Fundamental Theology is interested in the direction and bears informative message, since “it aims at basic religious principles systematic presentation, both external and internal, as well as their justification before the scientific-theological conscience of believers. Thereafter, Christianity can be considered the only true religion”.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, one can claim that the name of “*Apologetics*” rises up from the necessity that the Christian arguments must be scientifically enforced and illustrated externally. Therefore, the mission of Christian Apologetics is to reject the anti-Christian objections through the power of the theological arguments in dialogue with philosophy, culture or science. In fact,

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<sup>2</sup> Prof. N.P. ROJDESTVENSKI, *Kurs Osnovno Bogoslovia*, Sf. Petersburg, 1884, tom. 1, p. 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> Arhim. CHESARIE GHEORGHESCU, *Studii de Teologie Fundamentală și Apologetică*, p. 14.

even the object of Apologetics is "the scientific ground of Christian truths" with the purpose to "offer the Truth, reject error, and eradicate lies". In order to achieve its goal, Christian Apologetics offers us a positive method, which consists in "a logical and direct development of a certain thesis, in clarifying a certain truth, by revealing its content and the outcomes deriving from it".<sup>4</sup> Therefore, we have a very dynamic field through which this discipline comes and supports the active life of the Church. Moreover, the method of the Apologetics as a theological subject is based on a conceptual struggle, very active starting with the very first centuries of the Early Church. Due to its energetic character, Fundamental Theology won its most important place among Christian doctrines. "Through struggle, Fundamental Theology imposed itself as a theological subject and became individualised. Through struggle and only through struggle, Fundamental Theology must exist and strengthen the positions of Christianity".<sup>5</sup>

In its theologically mission, Christian Apologetics identifies and also prevents the alteration of the doctrinal truth. In this concern, it has the responsibility to enforce of believers' moral conscience in their spiritual process of development. As a subject, one can say that the mission of Apologetics is "rational, objective and represents a very important basis for the Christian truths of faith". Therefore, one can notice that the most important aspect of our subject is to enforce the Christian faith and experience through proper knowledge of the fundamental principles of the doctrine. This is the reason why we also mention Apologetics together with Fundamental Theology. However, we must highlight a few *important details regarding the sensible difference between both of the denominations*. Therefore, historically speaking, "they both arise from those who personally share Christian faith and act within the believing community and in its service. They both aim to respond to objections raised by critics and to offer a trustworthy account of main beliefs about matters as the existence of a personal God, the divine self-revelation in Jesus Christ, and the nature of faith". On the other hand, we can identify almost three important differences between Apologetics and Fundamental Theology. "*First*, a Christian apologist can simply address a question: does the existence of horrendous evil in our world rule out the existence of almighty and all-loving God? or has science caused faith in God to be demoted in the past? ... *Second*, good Apologetics has typically a sharply defined audience: Apologetics can seek, for example, to alert non-believers to the weakness of the case currently being against God and religion. But Fundamental Theology addresses to a wider range of readers ... *Third*, polemics (in the good sense of this word and not as mindless ranting) belong

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<sup>4</sup> Arhim. CHESARIE GHEORGHESCU, *Studii de Teologie Fundamentală și Apologetică*, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Pr. PETRU REZUȘ, *Axilogia Teologiei Fundamentale*, Ed. Nemira, București, 2005, p. 14-15.

to the exercise of Apologetics ... The tone of fundamental theologians, even when rebutting objections to Christian faith, is or should be more expository and less polemically inclined to illustrate defects in opposing positions”.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, we must mention that *Apologetics* can be considered as a particular subject. Although, it is similar in terms of content with Dogmatic and Philosophy through its method, our subject has its own research direction. Therefore, if Dogmatic is defined by an *expositive* and *imperative* character, Apologetics is *demonstrative* and *constraining*. In other words, dogmatic rationality, which has a subsidiary role, in Apologetics becomes primordial. In this case, “*the faith truths become truths also for the rationality and moreover, the eternal truths of the Divine Reason become constraining for the human reason, too. Truths of natural religion, which are in fact the object of the Philosophy of Religion, are conditioned in Apologetics by the Absolute Truth completed in the Christian faith*”. In all its theological and external interaction perspectives, Apologetics holds the main role to “*expose, defend and justify with rational meanings the general truths of religion*”.<sup>7</sup>

It is necessary to clear up one aspect: as subject, Apologetics is different from *Apology*. On the one hand, one can speak about the general research background and, on the other hand, one can describe a singular part of theological approach. Therefore, these two “theological sisters” are different depending on the type of approach. However, *Apology* is older than Apologetics. Among the first Christian apologists, we mention: Saint Justin the Martyr and Philosopher, Tatian, Athenagoras or Tertullien. In its current meaning, Apologetics is of a western theological origin, having its beginning in Middle Ages. Even so, its blooming age is the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the Western Catholic Church replied to the materialist and atheistic philosophy. In the Eastern Church this type of confession had a more profound theological overview, in a theonomic perspective. “*In the light of the Holy Scripture, the eastern theological thinking always shows priority to the divine Revelation in spite of the philosophical human systems and places the Creator - Logos at the basis of all creation, in the light of biblical thoughts*”.<sup>8</sup>

## **II. “Rational-spiritual Apologetics”**

Reverend Professor Dumitru Popescu, one of the most important Romanian theologians, develops the concept of “*Rational-spiritual Apologetics*”. In his theological approach, he illustrates the fact that one of the most essential part of the Church’s confessional work are the relations between rational arguments and spiritual purpose of the Christian life. In this case, we can

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<sup>6</sup> GERALD O’COLLINS, *Rethinking Fundamental Theology*, p. 4-5.

<sup>7</sup> IOAN GH. SAVIN, *Apărarea credinței. Tratat de Apologetică*, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Pr. prof. DUMITRU POPESCU, *Apologetica rațional-duhovnicească a Ortodoxiei*, p. 6.

identify two possibilities of argumentation: *rational* and *spiritual*, each of them in connection with the knowledge of God. This is in fact, the Orthodox specificity of the Apologetics, as theological subject, in contrast with the principles of western scholastic. Therefore, the most important argument, which Dumitru Popescu brings up in the support of his thesis, belongs to Saint Maximus the Confessor's theology: "*The Scripture provide a double knowledge of the divine things. One is relative and consists in its rationality and meanings, without the direct feeling of God. Through it we are guided in this life. The other one is in a true sense true and consists in leaving experience of divine grace, outside rationality and meanings, having the complete experience of God. Through it we will receive in the future life the deification*".<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, we can understand that the purpose of human rationality is not to replace the spiritual perspective, since human mind does not own the divine mystery. In this case, rationality can be useful in discovering and demonstrating the existence of God from natural realities to a point where we must assume a spiritual understanding. Consequently, in the context of human deification, the orthodox theology cannot conceive the gnoseological process in rational terms. Therefore, Rev. Dumitru Popescu carries out a dual argumentation: 1. since God is not a solitary power, but descends and interacts with man providentially (through His divine grace and energies); 2. because the created world doesn't have an independent rationality through which man can receive the possibility to reach God. Therefore, Father Professor Dumitru Popescu concludes that "the deification process is here, on the earth, a foretaste of immortality, which springs from the personal meeting of man with God".<sup>10</sup>

One of the most recent Romanian Apologetics academically approach is the book of professor Adrian Lemeni: "Truth and Demonstration". Except his very complex analysis on the interaction between theology and science, Professor Lemeni goes further and perfects Dumitru Popescu's theological view, on the "*Rational-spiritual*" character of *Orthodox Apologetics*. Therefore, he offers a very important example, starting from Saint Gregory Palamas' theological view. In his work "the authority of Patristic gnoseology" is illustrated, which is offered by the "Eternal Truth, God's Word, incarnated in the Person of Jesus Christ". "The authority of patristic gnoseology" – notes down Adrian Lemeni – "is expressed along the process for searching the truth of knowledge illustrated by deeds and life. In his debate with Varlaam from Calabria, Saint Gregory Palamas insists on the power of persuasion which arises from the Church's Tradition, biblical and patristic fundamentally. In an

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<sup>9</sup> SF. MAXIM MĂRTURISITORUL, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, în *Filocalia*, vol. III, traducere de pr. prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, Tipografia Diecezană, Sibiu, 1948, p. 329.

<sup>10</sup> Pr. prof. DUMITRU POPESCU, *Apologetica rațional-duhovnicească a Ortodoxiei*, p. 12.

ultra-confident argument, based on the autonomic logical power, we believe that one word has power over another. But Saint Gregory Palamas shows that the truth is based and validated through spiritual and ecclesiastical experience. Truth is validated by the words and deeds of the Holy Fathers, in direct connection with apostolic Tradition. Any argument can be fought against by another argument. Nevertheless, the apologetic concession based on the deeds of the saints is unbookable. This is the thesis which Saint Gregory Palamas develops in complete harmony with the patristic gnoseological Tradition”.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, we can consider that the position of the subject of Apologetics (of *Fundamental Theology*) is one of interactions. It has connections with all domains external to Theology. In this case, we can consider it sets up a dialogue or debate with philosophy, culture or science. Starting from the historical argument, this interaction between theology and other sciences has existed from the very first Christian century. Therefore, we have an apologetic literary genre starting with the first patristic writings. Including the Early Church, we can identify three important stages in terms of historical apologetics development: 1. *The Christian apologists struggle age with Judaism and paganism*; 2. *From the issue of Islam to the Middle Eve*; 3. *From the period of the Renaissance of Western sciences to the present day*.<sup>12</sup>

### **III. Jewish, Pagan and Gnostic Confluences**

This historical stage of Christian Apologetics is evaluated and described in detail by the Romanian Professor and Apologist Ioan Gh. Savin. Therefore, he argues that the first form of Christian Apologetics can be identified in “Apology”. This was the Church's particular answer to the external attacks which were aimed in particular at Christian dogma. In this case, the first enemies were: Jews, the Gentiles and the Gnostics. Their reproaches were related in particular to the Christian teaching, which they considered “*irrational, absurd, immoral, dangerous and harmful for the state and society*”. This was the first stage of Apologetics and consequently the Christian apologists formulated answers through which they demonstrated the “spirituality of doctrine, purity of the moral teaching and superiority of Christian religion, both compare the Jews, as well as the Gentiles and in the same time the Gnostics corruption”.<sup>13</sup>

From its very first ages, Christianity got into fight with Judaism tradition. The relationship between both of them was genuine, since Christian religion appeared as “a Jewish expression”. Hence, the main issue of the apologists was the Holy Scripture and the divine Revelation. Based on this,

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<sup>11</sup> ADRIAN LEMENI, *Adevăr și demonstrație. De la incompletitudinea lui Gödel la vederea mai presus de orice înțelegere a Sfântului Grigorie Palama*, Ed. Basilica, București, 2019, p. 272.

<sup>12</sup> Arhim. CHESARIE GHEORGHESCU, *Studii de Teologie Fundamentală și Apologetică*, p. 18.

<sup>13</sup> IOAN GH. SAVIN, *Curs de apologetică. Chestiuni introductive*, p. 14.

Saint Paul, the Apostle states that "Christ's Cross" was "a *folly thing to the Jews, and a foolish thing to the Gentiles*".<sup>14</sup> Therefore, if against the Jews, apologists could use biblical arguments, especially those of the messianic prophecies, against the Gentiles, they first encountered some difficulties in their speech. One of the most illustrative examples on this matter was the speech of Saint Paul the Apostle in the Athenian Areopagus.<sup>15</sup> The main argument was a rational one, because Saint Paul was the first "apologist" who understood and explained the universal character of the Church and of the Christian faith. Therefore, he illustrated the fact that the ancient philosophical tradition of the Athenians acknowledged the "unknown god," who was in fact the only God. Moreover, in terms of his general view, Saint Paul was sometimes a "polemicist." In this sense, he fought for the "purity of Christian doctrine." A clear example may be his position in the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem (49-50), where he opposed those who considered the Mosaic Law indispensable for salvation. As a result, he cleared out the fact that salvation is for all baptized Christians through faith in Jesus Christ: "*We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are. The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them*".<sup>16</sup> The liberation of Christianity from the Mosaic Law was the most important point of doctrine clarified in the Council of Jerusalem. In the same direction we have the first clear victory of the Church against the old Jewish traditions. From now on, St. Paul assumes the first disputes with Gnosticism, developed especially in the Church of the Colossians.<sup>17</sup>

From St. Paul's missionary and apologetic work, on the relationships with the Jews, the Gentiles and the Gnostics, we get to the age of the Apostolic Fathers and Apologists. One of the eldest apologies in the Early Church is the "*Epistle to Diognetus*," written by Quadratus, bishop of Athens. The following is the "*Supplicatio apologetica*" by Aristide of Athens, followed by: the two Apologies and the "*Dialogue with Tryphon*" of St. Justin the Martyr (second century); The Apology of Athenagoras (addressed to the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus), "Apologeticum ad praesides" or "Adversus Iudeos" by Tatian Assyria or "De vanitate idolorum" by St. Cyprian of Carthage.<sup>18</sup>

Christian Church early period marks the apologetic beginning of its doctrine. Generally speaking, by the end of the first century we have the New Testament almost written. However, the most important issues were related to

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<sup>14</sup> I. Cor. 1, 23.

<sup>15</sup> Acts 17, 19-34.

<sup>16</sup> Acts. 15, 11-12.

<sup>17</sup> EARLE E. CAIRNS, *Creștinismul de-a lungul secolelor. O istorie a Bisericii creștine*, Societatea Misionară Română, 1989, p. 62.

<sup>18</sup> IOAN GH. SAVIN, *Curs de apologetică ...*, p. 15-16.

the doctrine, which was still undefined. "That is why the period of the Fathers of The Church – of the first theologians, who tried to define the basic doctrines of Christianity – is so captivating. Is it a time of intellectual and spiritual discoveries, when the lines had to be drawn?"<sup>19</sup>

#### **IV. Apologetics and Polemics**

Through their work, Christian apologists have sought not only to clarify the fundamental teachings of the Church, but also to respond to public attacks and slander outside of pagan culture. It was therefore necessary to develop a documented and timely apologetic approach to the various types of allegations. In this case, the confrontation with paganism became a direct work, embodied in a series of theological masterpieces. In this regard, Reverend Professor Ghislain Lafond speaks about *a sensitive distance of Apologetics to the vulgar Christian belief*. Therefore, "Celsus (cc. 54-68) admits the existence of a single God, supreme and providential. But he also believes that His decisions and dispositions reach people through the action of an intermediary; therefore, they are written naturally and represented by images to be honoured in temples by cultic forms of religious expressions. In this way, the emperor, as a mediator between God and people, deifies himself and has the right to a religious and cultic obedience on the part of the people. Finally, Celsus speaks of a harmonious hierarchy between the spiritual and the material world, with its various components: corporeal, political, and, ultimately, mystical".<sup>20</sup> Through his philosophy, Celsus developed an opposing image of the religious importance of Christianity in contemporary Roman society and culture. Some syncretistic directions of thought grounded his arguments.

Not only Celsus was the opponent of the Christian Church in the early centuries. We also have an anti-Christian vision in the philosophy of Lucian of Samosata, Porphyry and, of course, in Julian the Apostate's writings. Each of them has his own ideological direction. Lucian of Samosata (cc. 115/120-184/200), in his writing "On the death of Peregrinus", uses negative allusions on Christian speech and especially about the Person of Christ. Porphyry (cc. 232/233-306) was a disciple of Plotinus. He wrote 15 books "Against Christianity" in which he paradoxically criticized the Christian faith and "celebrates the holiness of Christ". Last, but not least, one of the greatest opponents of the Christian faith and Early Church was the Roman emperor Julian, also called the Apostate. During his short reign (361-363), Julian tried to outlaw the Christian Church. His greatest wish was to restore polytheism. As

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<sup>19</sup> JONATHAN HILL, *Istoria gândirii creștine – istoria fascinantă a marilor gânditori creștini și contribuția lor la modelarea lumii așa cum o știm*, Casa Cărții, Oradea, 2019, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> GHISLAIN LAFONT, *O istorie teologică a Bisericii ...*, p. 62.

a result, his anti-Christian reforms are illustrated by his book "Against the Galileans". Written between 362-363, this book was later destroyed and then partially found in the Apologies of St. Gregory the Great or St. Cyril of Alexandria. Therefore, Julian's position was philosophically and legally adapted against Christ and His Church. Moreover, his anti-Christian positions multiplied in the iconoclastic period and also in contemporary materialist ideologies. Regarding the apologetic position of the Church in the context of this historical and permanent pressure, it is necessary to have a clear distinction regarding its methodological approach. Therefore, in the context of the first Christian ages, the defensive attitude of the Church developed two theological directions: Apologetics and Polemics. In a general context, both are illustrated by the patristic writings of the Christian Fathers. In this sense, for example, St. Justin the Martyr represents the apologetic part, while St. Irenaeus of Lyons represents the controversial part. The methodological difference between them is that "apologists tried to convince state leaders that Christian people did not deserve persecution because they were innocent," while "polemicists tried to fight against the heretical movements." The historical context illustrates the fact that the apologists pursued two purposes in their theological activity: I. fighting against false accusations of atheism, cannibalism, incest, intolerance and antisocial action (for example: the allegations against Celsus) and II. to create an interdisciplinary background for the Church by promoting the dialogue between philosophy, culture and science. On the other hand, the specificity of Polemics was the fight against heresies by "an aggressive denunciation of this false doctrine and its heretical teachers". Moreover, we can exemplify the fact that the work of the Church in defence of faith bears some important peculiarities in terms of Apologetics and Polemics:

1. **The apologists:** where Christians converted from pagans; faced with external persecutions; using the Old Testament as a starting point for their teachings; defended or explained the Christian faith; developed dialogue as a genre. Their apologetic subjects were: the leaders of Roman estate,<sup>21</sup> Jews<sup>22</sup> and Pagan intellectuals.<sup>23</sup>

2. **The polemicists:** where Christians were baptized; faced with heretics from within; using the New Testament as a teaching aid; they attacked heretical ideas; developed the polemical literary genre. Their polemic subjects

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<sup>21</sup> You can see here the Apology of Athenagoras, where he replied to the false accusations from estate leaders. Therefore, he underlined the moral and social qualities of Christians.

<sup>22</sup> Saint Justin the Martyr can be a good example with his apologetic work: "*Dialogue with the Jew Typhon*".

<sup>23</sup> See above the apologies against: Celsus, Porphyry, Lucian of Samosata and Julian the Apostate.

were: Pagan intellectuals (outside the Church)<sup>24</sup> and heretics (inside the Church).<sup>25</sup>

Historically speaking, we can see the very close connection between apologists and polemicists. Both are the defensive part of the Christian Church from the early centuries. Each with its own purpose, but with a single purpose, Apologetics and Polemics have developed a speculative theology, showing a high degree of attention to metaphysical problems in the West and practical and sensible issues in the East. Therefore, starting with the Early Church, we can talk about these two directions of action: repelling attacks from the outside (Apologetics) and reacting to attacks from the inside (Polemics). These two theological branches can be metaphorically assimilated as "Fighting Theology".<sup>26</sup>

## V. Relationships and Dialogues

A very important aspect of apologetics is the dialogue with **philosophy**. From the early Christian centuries, the most active relationship of the apologists was with the philosophical movements. Characterized by a high degree of complexity in terms of anthropological, physical and metaphysical perspective, these movements developed within the first philosophical schools of Antiquity. In these centres of wisdom, the most enlightened people of ancient society were concerned with the essential issues of life. In this sense, even the term "philosophy" referred to the spiritual and moral perspective of existence. In a word, ancient philosophy showed a keen interest in "virtue". Therefore, this was one of the main reasons why the early Christians "began to understand the faith as a rival to philosophy and overcame the philosopher in the first game".<sup>27</sup>

In order to strengthen our apologetic position, it is necessary to have elementary knowledge about the first schools and philosophical movements that had a direct influence and were assimilated by Christian Apologetics. The first was, of course, "Platonism" or "Platonic School". Its founder was Plato, the second ancient philosopher (after Socrates) who lived in the fourth century BC. He believed that "*the material world, which was perishable and constantly changing, could not be a perfect reality. It is instead a reflection of a higher place, of an immaterial and ideal world*". In "The Republic", his most popular philosophical writing, Plato describes in an imaginary way the image of the perfect society. In fact, in the fifth century BC, Athens was quite different from Plato's conception.<sup>28</sup> In his philosophical heritage, Plato

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<sup>24</sup> We have here also the example of the work of Origen: "*Against Celsus*".

<sup>25</sup> See: SAINT IRENAEUS, *Adv. Haer.*

<sup>26</sup> Mitropolitul IRINEU MIHĂLCESCU, *Teologia luptătoare*, p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> JONATHAN HILL, *Istoria gândirii creștine ...*, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> NIGEL Warburton, *Mică istorie a filosofiei*, traducere din limba engleză de Ana-Maria Datcu, Ed. Litera, București, 2020, p. 14-15.

developed the idea of “one divinity” and “soul”, which became in his disciples’ philosophical conceptions “The Soul of the World”. This was the platonic equivalent for the Christian God, which was the final cause of Universe.

Another important philosophical movement, also, integrated in a very popular philosophical ancient school, was the “**Stoicism**”. The founder of the Stoic school was Zeno of Citium (334-262 BC), a Greek philosopher, one of Plato’s contemporaries. The place of his interactions was "Stoa", the portico in the centre of Athens. In his philosophy we can find the idea of "virtue". In this direction, the Stoic philosophers developed the problem of human responsibility for its actions and deeds. This is how we got the collocation: "to bear with stoicism".<sup>29</sup> Moreover, they believed that human life can indeed be joyful and virtuous if "it is governed by rationality, not by emotion and passion." In a special way, Stoic philosophy develops the concept of "Logos", equivalent to "rationality, word of principle". The Stoic logos is not a material concept, but a spiritual substance that "grounds and animates the world in the same way as the Soul of the World".<sup>30</sup>

One of the most important apologists of the Early Church, **Lactantius**, in the last part of his book *Divine Institutions*, highlights the positive features of ancient philosophy influence on Christianity. In his apologetical approach, Lactantius identifies the main background of the Christian philosophy. One can find here the descriptions of the most important philosophical figures, as: Plato, Zenon or Epicure. Therefore, the prophetic role of Plato was his vision on the divine origin of the world. According to the Platonic philosophy, the Latin apologist was sure that “the existence and the government of the Universe gives proof of the contribution of an artist with the finest spirit”. Moreover, quoting the stoics, the Latin apologist states that “the reason of human creation is a divine mystery”. Hence, Zeno taught about the existence of hell and Paradise. Therefore, in Lactantius’ conception, "some of the philosophers have attained the whole truth and the whole religious mystery, but in a personal contradiction they cannot defend all this heritage".<sup>31</sup> “Some of the Greek philosophers”, Lactantius notes down, “seen and felt fractions of the Truth, but others, as Plato, Zenon, Euclid, Cicero, Seneca, stepped for a while on the Truth”.

The encounter between philosophy, rationality and religion was one of the most important issues in the early centuries. Therefore, Lactantius

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<sup>29</sup> This philosophical concept was especially promoted by another well-known stoic philosopher was Epicure. He developed the detachment of the mind from pain and sufferance. In his vision “*our thoughts depend only on us*” (NIGEL WARBURTON, *Mică istorie a filosofiei*, p. 45).

<sup>30</sup> JONATHAN HILL, *Istoria gândirii creștine ...*, p. 15.

<sup>31</sup> Pr. prof. IOAN G. COMAN, *Probleme de filosofie și literatură patristică*, p. 125.

concludes that the ideal of philosophy is the continuous relation between wisdom and religion, joined in a perfect corpus. Since only together they can form a perfect structure, religion and wisdom defined the human spiritual perspective. Therefore, a religion without rationality or wisdom is a false religion and a rationality or wisdom without religion is far from truth. In conclusion, “*wisdom and religion can be placed together only in Christianity. So, this is the only and true philosophy. A philosophy which can offer, through the power of knowledge and virtue, the unalterable immortality is the bosom of the Holy Trinity*”.<sup>32</sup>

Consistent with Lactantius's thinking, the division between philosophy and religion is, on the one hand, the "*plague of pagan thought*", and on the other hand, their unity is the "*force of the Christian faith*." In this case, the early Christian Apologies presented the danger of separation in the Church. Therefore, the Fathers who were also apologists developed a very complex argumentation, used until the XVI and XVII centuries.<sup>33</sup> We ought to mention here Saint Justin the Martyr's theological effort in the dialogue with philosophy, Saint Irenaeus of Lyon's dogmatic vision in his fight against Gnosticism and Tertulian's terminological point of view.

**Abstract:**

*The Apologetic Theology claims some important research directions, grounded on the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition. The reason why the Church must justify her teaching in the context of her missionary activity does not rise up from inner necessity. It does more from external misconceptions. In this context we can define the main concern of apologetics as a theological discipline. On the other hand, one can discover almost the same meaning in Fundamental Theology. In its theologically mission, Christian Apologetics identifies and also prevents the alteration of the doctrinal truth. In this concern, it has the responsibility to enforce of believers' moral conscience in their spiritual process of development.*

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<sup>32</sup> Pr. prof. IOAN G. COMAN, *Probleme de filosofie și literatură patristică*, p. 128.

<sup>33</sup> JACQUELINE LAGREE, *Religia naturală*, traducere din limba franceză de Ed. Pastenague, Ed. Tracus Arte, 2017, p. 30.