

**MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION
„1 DECEMBER 1918” UNIVERSITY OF ALBA IULIA
FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY**

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Summary

Scientific Coordinator:

Priest Professor PhD Emil Jurcan

PhD Student:

Ierņuan Ioan Alin

Alba Iulia

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**MARTIRHOOD IN A RELIGIOUS
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

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One of the most important religious structures which often outline the form of manifestation and underpins it is martyrdom. The importance of this issue seen from many angles is defined by at least four main . First of all martyrs represent an active model of witness and mission because they felt the urgent need to define their affiliation to a particular religious dogma by sealing it with their own blood. Most times the sacrifice of the martyrs supported forms of manifestation of certain religions by emerging this act, just in a sore spot of history, martyrs thus representing a segment of continuity.

In this context we can talk about the second major theme found in the martyrdom. Thus, in some religious views, martyrdom of some persons was necessary, becoming a majestic method of birth of a religion, because it gathered around many followers whom observing the fervor with which most believers give their lives for a certain teaching, realized that it is a valuable one, and one that is worth shedding your blood for.

The third value we can place in the extensive literature written on behalf of the martyrs, the buildings and temples built in their honor, but also the formation of a special cult. This led to a major development of religions, both domestically and especially internationally.

The last element which we will mention it is developed by the idea that even the universal history of the world, one that reminds us important elements of significant persons or events with significant value that have occurred over the years, refers to the martyrs as most often ordinary people but whom had the courage and boldness to defend their religious dogma even before the most feared rulers of the world to the amazement and astonishment of those present.

This develops two different views of interpretation: firstly, that historians present at the royal court of certain leaders, who spoke only about important situations or important personalities, placed them martyrs in this segment of history. Secondly, in their chronicles historians presented a series of events in an order somewhat subjective designed to highlight, most often, the qualities of the rulers whom they were writing about.

The theme that we analyze does not refer to all the martyrs in all existing religious consciences as the number and manner of their manifestation is huge. We start from the three fundamental characteristics of martyrdom: imitation of divinity, the connection

between heaven and earth arose from the sacrifice - a sacrifice of love and humility, apology of faith.

The purpose of this research is to discover the religion in which martyrs are the closest to the idea of martyrdom that have, in the events, the three major features mentioned above, and thus are much higher from a spiritual point of view. By discovering this segment we will recognize religious conscience which represents the full belief which worth the major sacrifice.

First, we will make an etymology of the idea of martyrdom trying to decipher the essential meaning of the term. Research method used in this context is primarily the philological, but partly deductive method is encountered.

In the second chapter we will analyze certain myths of origins showing the genesis of the universe after a primordial sacrifice. Most times, the deity who sacrifices or is sacrificed is, in this case, a giant anthropomorphic shape. This develops three different consequences. First is mentioned the sacrifice of a giant because the cosmos that would rise from his body torn is huge. Then, in another vein, most likely the sacrificed giant contains certain germ qualities as long as through its dismantling arise different parts of the world. Finally, the fact the sacrificed one has an anthropomorphic shape leads to the implementation of thinking the man is to some extent obliged to sacrifice but especially to self-sacrifice for the achievement of a great thing.

Conducting this chapter will include listed and described sacrificial cosmology considering also the religious and spiritual effects found among religions in question. A special emphasis will occupy the genesis of the universe seen through the eyes of the Christian Religion and especially the idea of re-creating the world through the work of salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ. The method used, in this chapter, is historical by briefly stating myths and deductive.

First cosmogony analyzed, Chinese, highlights some common themes found in other cosmogonies: egg, separating the world, the gods doomed to go through many trials. Pan-Ku, the giant anthropomorphic strives hard to separate forever Heaven and Earth, and thus give rise to the entire cosmos. This work was not enough as he had to sacrifice his own dismembered body to form other parts of the universe such as mountains, water, plains. An important issue arising from Chinese cosmogonic myth is in

correlation with alchemy, a science that studies the interaction of metals for religious purposes.

Next sacrificial cosmogony is meat in Hindu perimeter by the sacrifice of primordial giant Purusha. Sacrifice of this deity was so well implemented in the religious structure of Hinduism that the entire Hindu worship revolves and focuses on its performance. Even terminology of the term sacrifice, in Hindu space, leads to obligation to commit this act.

Babylonian cosmogonic myth presents another course of events in the primordial sacrifice. If until now presented gods were sacrificed following an archaic accident or from a divine counsel this time a strong conflict arises between two deities different by nature: Marduk being masculine and Tiamat feminine and by spiritual condition: Marduk is the angelic, positive god, and Tiamat is the demonic, negative god. Following this primary conflict Tiamat, although chronologically is the first god and has a large army of demons it is killed and mangled, and from her body parts emerges the universe.

An interesting aspect that we discussed throughout subchapter consists of compiling the world from a demonic force, in this respect being able to explain the evils of the world. This cosmogonic myth, according to some new interpretations can represent the birth of planets as long as the Babylonians were great astronomers a science that actually appeared later in history.

Next cosmogonic myth analyzed describes the sacrifice of Gayomart present in Zoroastrian religious consciousness. And here we find a difference of ongoing events compared to other myths in the time when has been performed the sacrifice as isn't one of primordial nature. The importance of Gayomart's sacrifice is anthropological because from his seed purified by the sun and in contact with the earth arise the first couple of people Masy and Masýane. If until now the human formation was placed secondary as it is made up of insects from the body as described in Chinese myth, from coagulated blood in the Babylonian myth in case the first pair of people arises from the "humanity of divinity". For the first time we can speak of the presence of the idea of communion among people because man represents part of the divinity body called somewhat allegorical "son of man".

Ymir, the next giant anthropomorphic sacrificed is found in Germanic myth called Edda, a cosmogonic myth composed by a Christian writer, which brings a certain shade of subjectivity. As in the example of Babylonian myth Ymir becomes the victim of younger gods: Odhin, Veli and Ve. An interesting detail in it's characterization is the theme of creation from only one entity. The Germanic people considered that this capacity is all the excellence of the God who holds it. Though killed by cowardly by young gods, Ymir remains a god worshiped in the religious consciousness of the Germanic people.

Last genesis of the universe that we have brought into question is the Christian, where God made the world, in the beginning "very good "(Gen. 1, 31) but it was perverted after the original sin committed by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The stage of fall of Man was so huge that it took the kenosis of the Son of God which was emptied itself. Jesus Christ is the new Adam, or the one from which starts new recreation of the world arose from the fact that God "loved so much the world "(John 3, 16).

The process of re-creation or salvation of the world is quite broad and includes five different aspects: Incarnation, Endure, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension. If initially the world was created as a gift for the men, as the lord of creation, this time the salvation begins in reverse from man to creation because man's task was to bring the world as God's pure sacrifice. As an analogy with what we find in the book of Genesis, in this case the New Eve is the Church arisen from the bleeding rib of the new Adam.

Through his self-sacrifice Jesus Christ was able to save the world bringing it to the state of the eighth day, the day of eternity and love. Only in the value of the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ lies the huge difference between the other set of sacrificial cosmogony and recreation of the world.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze and classify the true understanding and value of martyrdom as imitation of divinity, resulting from the sacrificial cosmogony. Research methods exposed are: the historical method by presented items from texts of various religions, deductive method and inductive method because we see the way in which each typology has appropriated this religious manifesto.

The third chapter puts in parallel martyrdom and heroes of ancient Greek mythology analyzing how the martyr stands to hero emphasizing for this purpose an

essential attribute of martyrdom: human connection with the divinity after sacrifice. For this we chose three mythological heroes, most representative, or with most well-known names: Heracles or Hercules, Orpheus and Achilles. First we talk about the nature of mythological heroes each with some earthly and celestial nature and therefore they bear the name of demigods. Thus, mythological heroes must become, at least theoretically a bridge between ordinary people and the gods of Olympus. The problem, however, isn't as simple as the hero often fights for the human, against gods by using their divine nature.

Another feature of heroes consists of important events occurred at their birth: bravery and courage acts, their appearance before the gods with most important and most feared. All these events are happening, most times, to benefit and serve people although they are almost always contrary to the plans of the gods.

Another common feature is the descent into Hell from various subjective reasons a scary place, which for ordinary people is causing horror. Although have a special power given by their divine nature, however, all three mythological heroes find their end eventually or we could say that at the end of their life the human nature prevails. However, the mythological hero lives forever gaining immortality through both rising in the midst of Olympus, and by becoming part of some heavenly constellation.

Analyzing these features we tried implementing a parallel with the life of Jesus Christ because in some way they are encountered and in his life. However, to give a correct and elevated answer must be reminded the differences. Firstly Jesus Christ is the true God, incarnate son of God. He isn't only a demigod born of a god as we find in characterization of mythological heroes. Then Jesus is really struggling with "the dragon" but not as do heroes: with weapons. His strongest weapon was humility virtue nonexistent among heroes.

Another difference is that Jesus Christ descended into hell like the other heroes but this gives rise to two distinct interpretations: Jesus Christ was in hell with the soul, but in heaven at the same time, plus the fact that Jesus Christ descended into hell not only for single person, but for to the whole human race. From the above mentioned we noticed that the similarities between Jesus Christ and mythological heroes are forced being in the best case only background. Jesus Christ, the Son of Man and Son of God continues its existence and today is present as shown in the Divine Liturgy. Mythological heroes

ultimately, remain just a beautiful legend as Heracles, Achilles or Orpheus did not even existed, they were just imagination of men.

The last part of the chapter is devoted to the differences between Christian martyrs and mythological heroes. The first and biggest difference is that the hero is separated from God, even fight against it, while the martyr is approaching God. The life of the hero, from a moral point of view morally is questionable. In the case of martyrs their lives are a result of the life of Christ. Heroes fight even against the gods to protect the people, while martyrs restore the primary connection between Heaven and Earth. Finally it should be noted that the heroes have remained in people's minds as mere myths, while martyrs have special cult, relics and churches were dedicated in their honor.

Chapter four summarizes a new feature of martyrdom: the apology faith, interpreted in a special way in Islamic fundamentalism Christian Crusades, but also in the war considered holy, held in the name of God described in the pages of the Old Testament.

In the first part of the chapter we will analyze the causes of Islamic fundamentalism as well as its effects in terms of spiritual, social, and ethnographic point of view. The premise from which we started analyzing Islamic fundamentalism was the theme of martyrdom in this context. However, in this case, or through the action of this religious consciousness, remove visibly certain mandatory features somewhat of a martyr: love, humility and even apology of faith since the action of Islamic fundamentalism means imposing faith, rather its defense. Therefore in the perimeter described we can only refer to a form of pseudo-martyrdom if not even speak of clear acts of suicide.

In the next chapter we will talk about the wars started in the name of the Cross with the Gospel in hand, called Crusades. We will analyze, from a historic and religious point of view, those who were the promoters of this historic event, and positive or negative effects they have had. Crusade was nothing more than a vicious battle for enrichment well hidden under the guise of the Gospel and the Cross. Religious consciousness was so bad that in order to obtain territory or riches were sent to the fight children who were not able even to take up arms. In this context it is difficult to bring

into question the idea of martyrdom, even though it was proposed by the Catholic Church.

Last mentioned religious conflict is the holy war, a war in which God himself fights. This factor is, often, beneficial to Israel, who gets resounding victories against enemies. Yet, the Jewish people give up the idea of theocracy and, also, holy war despite royalty. This chapter comes to discover a panorama on the idea of self-sacrifice and to what extent those who fought and died on the battlefield from religious fanaticism can be called martyrs or we speak only a pseudo – martyrdom.

Noting the spiritual superiority of the martyr to the mythic hero or pseudo-martyr killed on the battlefield for the imposition of religious dogma, in the pursuit of the next chapter we listed and analyzed certain types of martyrdom found in different religions to put them in a comparison. The aim was to determine the authentic martyrdom through three main characteristics analyzed: imitation of divinity, his sacrifice as a result of love and humility, sacrifice as apologetic expression and how they remained in the consciousness of divine worship and followers.

Earlier in the analysis we brought into discussion the theme of martyrdom present in the Jewish religion. Examples of biblical characters found within Judaism who were ready to sacrifice to God in any situation were numerous: Abel, Samson, Maccabees brothers, St. John the Baptist and Daniel which was thrown into the lions' den or the three young men from Babylon who were locked in a hot oven.

In the next section we analyzed the presence of martyrdom in Assyrian-Babylonian perimeter, in the person of Mani. This is the initiator of a new religion who bears his name which was established by self sacrifice shown by Mani. However there are some minuses in his characterization. Therefore, placing it among the martyrs is hard to accept as long as he considers himself to be the last prophet from cycle which began with Adam and continued with Zarathustra, Buddha and completed by Jesus Christ. Certainly his death gives some positive value of Manichaeism and within that religion he can be categorized as a martyr.

In Islam we meet the theme of martyrdom concentrated around Al-Hallaj who searched for union with the divinity. In the way of mystical ecstasy he must pass through several stages: asceticism, penance and repentance order to feel his heart, the most sacred

place, flooded by divine presence. His teaching quickly attracts the antipathy of conservative Muslims because they believed that human union with Allah is blasphemy. It is known that the Muslim deity, Allah is a “deus otiosus” which does not merge, in any spiritual context, with an imperfect form as man is. Because he supported with steadfastness his teachings Al-Hallaj is executed but his teaching still remains awake through his followers. His self-sacrifice may be placed, in the best case, in the area that includes mystical Muslim martyrdom, a new concept in the Islamic world.

In the political and religious history of Japan we met, somehow, the idea of martyrdom in the harakiri process promoted by the samurai. This technique, however, is nothing more than a macabre suicide with the objective of preserving military dignity. In this case we did not find any main element of the martyrdom: humility is annihilated, samurai's pride exerted during the process of suicide when it takes place a true theatrical farce; love is lacking, and freedom is questioned because the samurai is forced to die because of circumstances. Therefore, although in this case we are talking about the presence of the idea of self-sacrifice we can not categorize this technique as martyrdom. This sacrifice is placed closer to the notion of a national hero, than as a martyr.

In the area of the Sikh religion, a symbiosis of two totally different religions Hinduism and Islam, we find an example of martyrdom in the person of Guru Arjun the fifth Guru Nanak, who founded the religion. His spiritual and social life is very active, standing out through his work of adding and editing the sacred writings of the Sikhism and by building a grand temple. He was caught and killed primarily because of the jealousy of the emperor for the fame enjoyed by Guru Arjun among men but also because he would not renounce his faith. He endured all the sufferings which he was undergone without murmur until he died in the river Ravi. Through his martyrdom, Guru Arjun gave an extra chance to Sikhism and can be rightly called a true martyr of the religion.

Next typology of martyrdom we met in the religion of Dacians. In this context, one in four years a human sacrifice would take place where the victim had to purpose to give to Zalmoxis – their God the national prayers. This sacrifice can be traced to the axis of self-sacrifice because for most of the victims was a great pride to be chosen as the messenger of Zalmoxis. However this act does not develop the idea of defense of any religious concept as it didn't have to defend it against someone. However, the self-

sacrifice of divine messenger develops a theme quite important: immortality, which facilitated the penetration of Christianity in the territory of our country. So, martyrdom seen through the Dacian's religion is quite close to the true meaning. The most neuralgic point is the commitment to sacrifice for Zalmoxis - an impostor and not for Jesus Christ.

In the last chapter we talked about the Christian martyrdom, after having analyzed the positive and negative aspects of certain types of existing martyrdom in different religions. From the outset we pointed out that the number of Christian martyrs throughout history is quite large: about 70 millions of souls. For this, we segmented the stages of martyrdom to historical periods, from the first Christian martyr, to St. Archdeacon Stephen killed by stoning, then passing through the period of persecution and ending with the contemporary era. The conclusion we reached after studying the martyrs from different eras and times: martyrdom was an important segment in the linear flow of the history of Christianity, their absence could have had catastrophic situations. In this example we analyzed the example of Constantin Brancoveanu which, when it was brought before the Sultan, if he would have denied his faith, for the sake of his children, the religion of Romanians would have become Muslim and the unity of Romanian principalities already shaken would have suffered.

Analyzing the forms of martyrdom in Christianity we found several important features that martyrs have and which are superior to any manifestation of martyrdom existing in other religions: imitation of Jesus Christ and especially Its Sacrifice, love characterized by humility, freedom to choose the path of martyrdom and not the least the apology of faith. Then just within Christianity we can speak about a cult of relics of martyrs which has a special significance as long as their relics are in the most sacred place: the Holy Table.

Through the research carried out we tried to demonstrate the superiority and spiritual value of the martyrs in comparison with other prominent figures in the history such as the Greek mythological hero or fanatical pseudo-martyr fighting theoretically for a religious cause and detection of authentic martyrdom in this case the Christian to other existing forms of martyrdom in different religious conceptions.

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