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**„WITH THE HELP OF THE LORD I HAVE BROUGHT
FORTH A MAN” (Gn 4,1).
CREATION AND BIRTH**

– SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS –

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The Orthodox Christian anthropology is strongly anchored in the biblical account of anthropogenesis found in the book of Genesis 1,26-2,7, where the emphasis of the agiograph inspired by the Holy Spirit falls on the concept of *image* and *likeness*, as the fulfillment of the image and vocation of man. These two concepts, however, do not explain the way in which man is brought to life, the way a person acquires a self-contained existence, thus becoming *otherness*. When we talk about the creation of Adam from the dust of the ground (Gn 2,7) and the creation of Eve from the rib of Adam (Gn 2, 21), we encounter expressions that define the direct action of God in creation, a creative action in the most authentic way. The present paper starts from the premise presented in Gn 4,1 which presents the reader two distinct actions: *creation* and *birth* that occur when a new and unique person comes to life. Thus, during this work we will follow different interpretative perspectives on Gn 4,1 and on the parallel texts in Psalms, prophetic books and some passages of the New Testament to create a clearer picture of the relationship between creation and birth in the case of procreation, about which Gn 4,1 speaks for the first time, which relates the birth of Cain. Of course, this theme is not only relevant to the biblical study of the Old Testament, but also a concern for the age in which we live, being a major topic of bioethics. This determines us to give a brief chapter of the relationship between science and theology in the matter of procreation, with special reference to modern techniques of reproduction and respectively to their morality and their conformity with the data of Christian faith and of theological biblical anthropology.

I consider that the subject of the thesis: Creation and birth in the book of Genesis 4,1 is a starting point for a contemporary and current theme, aroused especially by the technologically advanced society in which we all live and which proposes other thinking structures, centered on capabilities and abilities of mankind to transform the genetic data of his person. I have chosen precisely this verse, the book of Genesis 4,1 because its interpretation creates two distinct, even opposite, perspectives: we could say: one that admits and proclaims the acquisition of a human being only through and from God, and another that exposes the miracle of the autonomy of the human being that is able to give life, to procreate, independently of God, to overcome the ultimate effect of falling through sin, namely, death. Of course, using different interpretative perspectives: biblical, rabbinic, patristic and scientific, we will determine whether or not there is a pre-eminence of creation or birth in Gn 4,1, which is a text with universal valences for the anthropological thinking of the Old

Testament, or whether these two notions are practically complete from the above mentioned verse.

The present work is divided into four chapters, preceded by an introductory part and the preliminary ones. In the preliminary part we have dealt with terminological concepts and keywords that we will use throughout the four chapters of the paper. The first chapter: 1. The creation of man – exegetical and theological perspective, considers the biblical anthropogenesis Gn 1,26-2,7 and exegetically analyzes the main texts regarding the notions of the image and likeness of Gn 1,26-2,7, Adam's creation from the dust of the ground (acc. Gn 2,7) and the creation of Eve from Adam's rib, as an extension of God's creation, a theme that is important in defining the relationship between the direct creation and the indirect creation of God (Gn 2,21).

The second chapter: 2. The birth of man - exegetical and theological perspective enters into the actual issue of the thesis, namely the birth of man from the biblical perspective, with a special emphasis on the text in Gn 4,1, which gives Eve's exclamation on the birth of her first son, Cain. Eve's exclamation is important because it synthesizes the two concepts: birth and creation. Beyond the different and sometimes opposite interpretive perspectives, orthodox biblical theology and patristic reflection on this text suggest synergy, together with the work of the human being with God in the creation of a Man. Gn 4,1 is a natural extension, as we will see by the exegetical analysis, of the proto-gospel in Gn 3,15 because the salvation and restoration of the human nature condemned by sin to death, will be achieved through the seed of the woman, that is through the birth of sons. Another particularly relevant text for the relationship between human birth and divine intervention in the act of procreation is Psalm 138,13: „Lord, for you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb”, which directly deals with the relationship between human creation and birth, processes in which the psalmist, with an attitude full of humility and inner shudder, notices the mysterious divine intervention, unaffected by the human mind.

The third chapter: 3. Cain - "man from God" and Elijah "man of God" - comparative analysis "goes beyond the relationship between creation and birth, emphasizing the significance of two similar but essentially different expressions. It is about *Ish et Yahve* and *Ish ha Elohim* which refers to Cain, respectively prophet Elijah. The meaning of these terms is both anthropological and typological. In the analysis of the third chapter we referred both to the similarities existing between Cain and Elijah, under the anthropological aspect of birth through the divine creative intervention present at the shaping of each human person, but also at the antithesis of the two characters, the antithesis deduced from the two *modus vivendi*.

antagonistic, one refractory to the word of the Lord, and the other, by assuming this logo, which has become of God. Also, in this chapter I made a short digression entitled "The two falls of humanity", because Cain's fratricide means nothing more than a second fall of the human nature, after the fall of the parents by disobeying the divine word.

The fourth and last chapter is entitled: "Biblical Anthropology vs. modern science: creation, evolution and birth" and represents an opening and updating of this theme of biblical theological anthropology for contemporary challenges. The chapter begins with an overview of the relationship between theology and science, of the limits of each, respectively of the openings existing between the two, openings that facilitate the dialogue we intend to talk about. The main purpose of this chapter is far from blaming or denigrating profane science as opaque and refractory to divine intervention and existence. On the contrary, in this chapter I have tried to point out that the divine intervention is not limited or obstructed even by the new techniques of reproduction and manipulation of human life.

The four chapters are followed by a series of conclusions that systematically refer to the entire thesis and how the birth creation relationship was viewed starting from the biblical account, assuming the mysterious divine presence from creation to birth in the Book of Psalms, to the relationship and antithesis between Cain and the prophet Elijah, both of whom were obtained from God, but the prophet Elijah became a man of God through the life and sacrificial service of the divine word. Of course, this biblical interpretative line is also complemented by the conclusions regarding the New Testament echoes of creation and birth, namely the reflection of Cain's personality in the epistle literature of the New Testament. And finally, we will synthesize, through the comparative approach between theology and science, the actuality and importance of understanding the relation between *creation* and *birth* for contemporaneity.

Objectives

Although the biblical fragment under attention appears clearly at first reading, without requiring many interpretations, a more detailed analysis of the textual and contextual elements reveals the opportunity for an in-depth exegesis. Therefore, in the sense of those presented above, a set of four conceptual objectives will be proposed, respecting the boundaries of the research imposed by the discipline of biblical theology.

(a) First, the phrase "With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man" will be elucidated, from a philological and theological point of view. More precisely, the semantic structures of the fragment will be analyzed, revealing its textual and contextual avatars. Thus, it will be necessary to establish who is really the author of the statement - Eve or Adam - ,

according to the grammatical analysis of the fragment, but without neglecting the symbolic dimension of the relation between the proto-parents regarding the act of "saying" or "together saying." At the same time, it will be necessary to show the place of the fragment in the episode in Gn 4,1-16, as well as in the wider context of Genesis. Also, the theological analysis of the fragment will operate in several directions, and a great exegesis in anthropological key will take place.

(b) Secondly, the linguistic parallels (from the Old and New Testaments) will be analyzed, following the various phrases used in the fragment throughout the entire Scripture. Such a task will not be confined to the formal identification of the existing correspondences, but also to the drawing of links (may they be content or context) between episodes and relevant persons. More precisely, a parallel can be revealed between Adam and Cain - both symbolizing a "fall" of man.

(c) Third, the importance of Cain - as the first human being - to be taken into account for the new state of humanity removed from Heaven, will be taken into consideration. In particular, the validity of the phrase "man of God" will be examined from the perspective of the consequences of divine participation in birth for mankind. Thus, it will have to be shown whether this expression indicates an exceptional case - a singular situation of birth through divine help - or an archetype for fallen humanity that receives continuous help from the Lord for perpetuation.

(d) Finally, in the continuation of the theme addressed in point (c), the apologetic instrumentalization of the expression "man of God" will be considered. Specifically, the statement accompanying the first birth can be used to provide an alternative or complementary explanation to classical evolutionism and contemporary neo-Darwinism. From this point of view, we will try to show that the Christian perspective on the appearance of man and the perpetuation of the species does not automatically constitute a denial of the scientific conception, but represents a metaphysical corrective. Thus, it will be continued on the line of patristic interpretation that shows that Revelation is not opposed to natural knowledge - in this case, scientific - but a complement and crowning of it by transcending the limits of empiricism.

Taking into account all the elements presented above, we consider that a double approach - hermeneutic and anthropological - of the fragment from Gn 4,1 constitutes an innovative approach, meant to bring out ignored meanings of the text. Even if the philological gear has a limited use in this case, the multitude of exegetical methods can open other valences of the fragment, subjecting it to a plural research.

Regarding the comparison of the Hebrew and Greek versions for Genesis 4,1, we have noticed a theological depth within the Hebrew version, especially by involving the word game *qanah - qain* (Cain - the acquired one). The difference between the two text variants is substantial if we consider the verb *qanah* and the phrase *et Yahve* (dia tou Theou). In short, we notice that the Hebrew text offers a perspective that engages God more in the act of procreation, He being the one who possesses, who holds in His hands man from the first moments of creation, to birth and even to death.

In addition, the lack of broader patristic references leads to a difficulty in finding the most appropriate interpretation - and the most viable dogmatically -, revealing the text as an endless network of multiple meanings. Beyond the formally delimited structures, the sense of the fragment is always superimposed on the neighboring texts and compared with other relevant episodes, deciphering its privileged position in the Scripture.

In this sense, the hermeneutic process opens the possibility of (re)discovering a direction of anthropological - but also apologetic - interpretation, transforming the fragment into an essential piece of the destiny of humanity. Therefore, it can be said that the Lord's participation in the fate of the human race is revealed both existentially, ethically, but also historically, showing that the human being is not forsaken by God in the cruelest exile. And biblical hermeneutics thus becomes the way of discovering and walking on the paths of the Lord to return home again. The exegesis marks the end of the journey.

The present paper sought the unique anthropological expression of Eve, the ancestor of the human race, by virtue of the relationship between *creation* and *birth*. The exegetical analysis itself of verse 4,1 from the book of Genesis was prefaced by an exegetical and theological digression in the two reports of the anthropogenesis of Gn 1,26-27 and Gn 2,7 to highlight the creative work of God in bringing to life and instilling man, *nephesh hayyah*. Moreover, this trip made it possible to outline the idea that although man is part of the animal kingdom and is composed of common elements of created hypostasis, from a biological point of view, from a spiritual point of view he remains unique through *the breath of life* (Gn. 2.7), which gives man the character of a human person capable of communion and understanding of deep things.

The book of Genesis 4,1 can and should be considered as a continuation of the *Proto-Gospel* of Gn 3.15, because the exclamation of Eve, never found in the Old Testament, represents the assumption and understanding by man of the plan of divine salvation for humanity, a plan that will be realized by the *seed of the woman*, that is, by the coming of the Messiah into the world. Eve's joy and acclaim, however, were not entirely fulfilled because

Cain, the first born, made a destiny outside the commandment and righteous ways of God. However, her cry represented for the entire period of the Old Testament, an understanding that messianic times will come in the future and Yahweh's *promise* will be fulfilled.

As we could see during the development of this topic, Eve's cry was interpreted in two completely opposite ways. Some modern commentators have argued that Eve wanted to show through her words, that through her autonomous power, she managed, along with Adam, to give birth to a man who belongs to them as a whole. In this sense, her expression was translated: "I have brought forth a man, the Lord." This interpretation would have led to an autonomization and opacification of the human nature towards God, after the fall. One of the arguments made by the exegites is that once with the fall into sin through disobedience and submission of human nature to imminent death, Adam and Eve considered that by the birth of sons, by this power that they possess, they can be immortal, thus overcoming death, the effect of their fall.

The opposite perspective is that which affirms the co-operation of God with the human nature in the act of procreation. Eve's words would thus mean a work together with God, in which He plays an active and decisive role. This perspective, unanimously supported by the Holy Fathers, and by the tradition of the Orthodox Church, as well as by many of the modern commentators of the Holy Scriptures, presents the attitude of humility and holy shudder that the proto-parents had at the time of the birth of the first man. This interpretation is in line and is compatible with the messianic interpretation of the verse. The analysis of the Hebrew term *qanah* and the preposition *et Yahve* has revealed that God is in fact the One who gives life and has in His hands every human person who is born through human parents.

This thesis highlighted the way in which man anchored in the tradition of the Holy Scriptures and the Church understands birth as an act of cooperation between God and man. Thus, we were forced to respond to the contemporary challenge of modern breeding techniques: in vitro insemination, surrogate mother, etc. The present research brings to light the special work of God in the act of giving birth to a new human life.

Contemporary scientific progress has influenced including how procreation is understood today. There are no new discoveries in the field of biology and medicine that make it possible to give birth to children, even in the case of couples in which the spouse or both suffer from infertility. Techniques such as *in vitro fertilization* or *surrogate mothers* are part of the set of methods called generic ARM (assisted reproduction methods). The contemporary society, animated by the new ideas of transhumanism in trying to reach a new stage of human being development, is actually trying to change the conditions in which the

human life unfolds. Of course, we can quantify and measure the advantages that modern technique brings to human life both qualitatively and quantitatively.

The problem that arises in this context is given by the fact that in the economy of these modern techniques of assisted reproduction there are certain skids that betray a gross disregard of the person and human spirituality. Thus, the orthodox theology enthralled by the life of the Church must correct by its testimony these shortcomings and even exaggerations of modern technology. For example, it is a gain that some couples who suffer from infertility can, thanks to the *in vitro fertilization technique*, acquire children. However, so true is the fact that there are many cases in which more embryos are produced than are necessary for procreation, embryos that are subsequently either subjected to medical experiments or frozen or simply discarded. In these cases, the Church offers the biblical and patristic testimony of the human life that values in front of the indifferent Creator that we are talking about an embryo that is in an early stage of development, or we have to deal with a developed human person.

The mission of biblical theology and the Orthodox Church is to defend at all costs the uniqueness and value of each human life, created and protected by the Creator. Moreover, Orthodox spirituality emphasizes with great boldness that procreation is a mysterious act that must be consumed between husband and wife and implies mutual affection and personal giving. When we look at the postulates of contemporary biology and modern techniques of reproduction, we cannot fail to notice the lack of interest for the sphere of dignity and spirituality of the human person. Astfel, avem de-a face în unele situații cu sarcini extraconjugale provenite prin combinarea genelor a doi străini, fapt care reprezintă un afront la adresa familiei creștine, bazată pe comuniunea personală între bărbat și femeie, comuniune de dragoste și dăruire reciprocă.

The approach between the premise of this thesis Gn 4,1: "With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man" and the bioethical theme of *modern techniques of reproduction* is not accidental and it makes full sense if we consider the relationship between birth and creation that Gn 4,1 speaks of. We could see during the exegesis in Gn 4,1 that the exclamation of Eve can be understood in 3 ways: 1) as an act of human creation of a new life, through the power of giving birth; 2) active divine intervention in both creation and birth and 3) synergy between human and divine act in perpetuating the human race. Orthodox theology adopts the third variant of interpretation, the synergy between the human and the divine nature in the act of procreation.

Regarding the comparative analysis between Cain and Elijah the prophet starting from Gn 4,1 and 3Kg 17,18, we notice the major difference of expression of the agiograph - man from God and man of God. Of course, we could not neglect the fate and journey of the two characters: Cain and Elijah the prophet. Cain, as emphasized by Augustine the Blessed and the Blessed Jerome, is a representative of the earthly city: "Then Cain built a city and named it, after the name of his son, Enoch." (Gn 4,17). Diametrically opposed, Elijah is the representative of the everlasting, perennial city of God through his personal sacrifice and service in the name of the living God of Israel.

The antithesis between Cain and Elijah highlights *two anthropological expressions: man from God and man of God*, of a deep and profound theological significance. First, the two expressions are also known in the time of the writing of the Pentateuch, because Moses is called the man of God, like the prophet Elijah, who lived in a later era. The two expressions correspond, as we observe from the careful reading of the Old Testament, to two qualitatively different modes of reporting and interaction with God. It is about the communion with God or the relationship with Him mediated through hearing the word, His command, in Cain's case, and communion through His sight, specific to Elijah, Moses and other prophets and patriarchs of the Old Testament.

The exegetical analysis of Psalm 138 provided a particularly valuable parallel for understanding the divine intervention in the immanent plan of human creation, formation and birth. The shudder and humility encompass the psalmist when he meditates on the mystery of creation and forming the baby in his mother's womb, a secret that the mind of man, including the psalmist breathed by the Spirit of God, cannot probe or describe. The images sprinkled with anthropological symbols: *the bones, the formation of man as a fabric in the mother's womb, the knuckles* that God Himself builds represents a necessary and organic explanation of the unpublished anthropological expression of the book of Genesis 4.1. If Gn 4,1 gives the image of the co-operation of the human with the divine, Psalm 138,13.15, in particular, describes in great detail the work of God in the creation, formation and birth of man, without ignoring the role of parents and, in particular, of the mother. Psalm 138 provides an explanation for the sense of *acquisition, of receiving from God* the verb *qanah*, which is why his exegesis is extremely edifying in the economy of the work. Of course, the biblical and patristic exegesis was supplemented by the Jewish perspective and that of the modern commentaries, which underline different interpretative perspectives, but are unanimous regarding the mystery of God's work in the act of procreation.

The two appointments: man *from* God and man *of* God can be considered in this case both as prerequisites for the comparative analysis of the two characters, as well as to synthesize their journey, their historical and eschatological destiny. In Cain's case, his origin *from* God was also a spiritual vocation, which consists in the struggle with the beginnings and the passions: "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."(Gn 4,7). It was noticed that some exegetes considered Cain to be the son of the devil, but the biblical exegesis and grammatical analysis of the text brought to light the divine participation of Yahveh in the birth of the first man. The New Testament echoes in Gn 4,1-25 briefly describe Cain's evil fate through the prism of his self-centeredness and of the rejection of the word of the Lord (Hebrews 11,4; Jude 11,1 Jn 3,12).

The present work can open several perspectives of biblical research and exegesis starting from the relationship between birth and creation in the Old Testament. Although this relationship is the essence of the theological and exegetical approach of this thesis, it has behind a much more general, broader idea, namely that of the *interaction* between the immanent and the transcendent plan, between *creature, creation* and *Creator, God*. By virtue of the last subchapter, which deals with the relationship between modern medically assisted reproduction techniques and the Christian family, which admits the intervention and presence of God in the process of procreation as well as the spiritual connotations of conjugal union, I consider it appropriate for a broader study, much more developed than that of the last subchapter, about how the interaction between the human and the divine plan manifests itself in the Holy Scripture and the compatibility of this intervention with the current scientific progress.

Regarding the sphere of exclusive Bible study, I believe that the present work could be continued through a comprehensive study or even a doctoral research paper presenting a comparative analysis of the anthropological *expressions: man after the image of God, man from God, man of God* and so on. Such research should highlight the way in which the Old Testament and New Testament agiographers perceived the *human person* according to the period of writing as having the *communion* or *approach of man to God*.