

ONTOLOGICAL ESSENCE OF BODY AND SOUL IN TERTULLIAN

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Tertullian was one of the most important church fathers of Western origin. He excelled not only in his argumentative and writing skills, but especially in his versatility as a theological thinker. He probably touched on all the problems of theology that were being solved in his time. Although official Christianity in the form of a doctrine during his lifetime, of course, did not exist, but this thinker definitely contributed to its formation and purification from various non-Orthodox impurities, especially from the environment of gnosis. He necessarily had to deal with various philosophical postulates during his work. It implicitly comes into conflict with philosophical thinking. Although it was not the first plan, Tertullian also postulated philosophical views. His originality cannot be denied, both in the theological and philosophical dimensions of his thinking. In his face, the well-known fact is confirmed that in the field of patristics it is very difficult to separate philosophers from theologians. This is how he expressed his views on the need for tolerance in the sense of religious pluralism. [20]

In the framework of collisions with philosophy, Tertullian had to express certain metaphysical and ontological views, to take a special position in this sense. Not because he dealt with systematic philosophy. Philosophical postulates served him as an argumentative potential against various opinions that clearly contradicted the basic postulates of Christianity. Tertullian argued both with various Gnostic schools and with Marcion. He disputed, for example, the Cainite heresies. [16] *Adversus Marcionem* is known as his most extensive work. It reflects the significance of the controversy with Marcion and his followers. He also argued with the modalistic monarchy (patripassianism) represented by Praxaeus. Wilhite argues that Marcion's docetism stands and falls on the testimony of Tertullian. According to him, there is no other evidence for this. [18] The question is why Tertullian distorted Marcion's Christology so much.

In this context, it is appropriate to explain Tertullian's position in the field of the problem of mind and body. This position has profound theological implications. In principle, we can say that the basis of the philosophical position regarding the ontological nature of the body and soul is a controversy with the gnostics and heretics (from today's point of view). Tertullian adapted his

position to the need to distinguish himself from views he considered foreign to Christianity. Here ontology provided him with good means of argumentation which he could use as a counter-argument against ideological opponents. In our study, we will discuss this problem in Tertullian in more detail.

Thus, Tertullian uses philosophy argumentatively, in the sense of polemic. Even if he speaks of this with restraint, it cannot be said that he does not want to have anything to do with philosophy in general. "He agrees only with a philosophy that corresponds to the revelation of God (credo, ut intelligam)". [17] It will be appropriate to outline how and on what topics Tertullian argued with his opponents.

The Valentinian gnosis looked at the body of Christ differently than the apostolic tradition perceived it. This can be attributed primarily to the docetist position. He was certainly not credited with either a material or bodily character. Valentinus, a gnostic of great influence, has the following main features of the teaching, reconstructed from fragments and from the teachings of his disciples: Divine fullness (πλήρωμα) consists of 30 paired aeons. The most important are the first four pairs that make up the ogdoad. In the eternal Aeon, the Father separated the Son. The Logos and the Proto-Man are close to them. The Son and the Logos close to Him became a body, the Son suppressed human nature in himself, and therefore in the revelation only the divine essence sounds like an anticipation of Monophysitism. Actually, it's aeons. In addition to them, there are much more aeons, the group is larger than that of the Barbelognostics, there are 80 of them. The Demiurge, the Old Testament God, organized the world. In the Son, Christ and Jesus are like two beings, while Jesus is the joint child of the aeons in all its fullness. Jesus had pre-existence before coming into the world. His real mother is Sophia, whom he abandoned and ascended to the Pleroma. Christ is a pure Spirit who came from above and passed through the body of Mary through the cross, as through a channel (Christ left his visible body before death, he died not as the Son of God, but only as a man Jesus). [12] Sophia, the last aeon (in the interpretation of gnosis, often perceived as a feminine spiritual being - divine wisdom, identified by the Gnostics with the Holy Spirit) wanted to know the unknown Father, who in fact was sin and the divine element thus fell into the world (sin in gnosis has epistemological rather than ethical dimension). The body of Christ was spiritual and heavenly. Due to the lack of sources, it is difficult to reconstruct his views in detail. However, Valentinus knows only one Sophia, he does not share her. In the interpretation of Irenaeus, the Holy Spirit is one of the aeons, according to the account of Hippolytus, he is one of the main aeons from which other aeons arose. Quispel argues that in Valentinus' stories,

Eireneus is simply not telling the truth, as are Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian. [15]

It is not easy to reconstruct the original Valentinian gnosis. There is no doubt that the Gnostics who professed this form of gnosis completely ignored the apostolic tradition. They definitely did not consider the body of Christ a body similar to a human. Their point of view also differed internally. One can distinguish between Western and Eastern Valentinians. While Western representatives considered the body of Christ to be psychic, Eastern Valentinians attributed it to a pneumatic character. The Docetist nature of the body of Christ is documented, for example, in the *Acts of John*, a work influenced by the Valentinian gnosis. "I was considered what I am not, not what I was for many others; but they will call me (talk about me) by something else, which is vile and unworthy of me". [23] Elsewhere there is a passage: "Sometimes, when I grabbed it, I met with a material and solid body, and at other times, again, when I felt it, the substance was immaterial and, as it were, did not exist at all." [23] It is indicative that the document *First Apocalypse of James*, which has obvious Valentinian features, also has Docetist features. In it, according to the Gnostic author, Jesus says the following: "I did not suffer or grieve in anything. And these people did me no harm". [24] The Apocalypse of Peter approaches the problem of the body of Christ in a similar, apparently Docetist way: "He whom you see above the cross, glad and laughing, is the living Jesus. But (δέ) he into whose hands and feet they are driving the nails is his physical part (σαρκικόν), which is the substitute". [2]

At times it may seem that the *Gospel of Thomas* had a Gnostic basis. It is not true. In this case, this is a work of an older time, in which the dogmatic thinking of the Platonic direction is manifested. Later versions of the text may have been influenced by Valentinian gnosis, but only marginally. The Gospel itself contains no speculative Gnostic elements. This only contributes to the spirit of asceticism.

The Gospel of Philip is somewhat similar in structure. This is clearly a gnostic approach, and it cannot be ruled out that Valentinus himself could have been the author. The Demiurge plays a negative role in this Gospel. The text denies the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. He claims that a woman could not conceive from a woman. The text also says that Jesus appeared in such a way that everyone could perceive him, but not as he really is. "He [appeared] to angels as an angel and to men as a man". [7] He appeared in His glory only to the apostles on the mountain: "Flesh [and blood] shall not inherit the kingdom [of God]". [7] The Gnostic author of the text refers to selected scriptural statements that he uses to support the escape from the body. However, in a

biblical context, they prove that the body will be saved, not just the soul. Docetist moments can certainly be found in the Gnostic Gospel in question.

The opponent to whom Tertullian paid the most attention in terms of polemic was Marcion. Marcion's doctrine, which is considered heretical, is close to Gnosticism, "to which he has been erroneously reckoned". [3] God the Father is an unknown god, in any case, he is not identical with the god Demiurge, otherwise the God of the Jews, but this is an unknown God, about whom his son Jesus gave the first message, which is understood here docetically. The result is two gods, the punishing God Yahweh and the unknown God proclaimed by Christ. Marcion did not know how to connect the punishing God YHWH with the Father whom Christ preached. He concluded that a truly good God cannot be oppressive. [1] He calls the Old Testament God Cosmocrator. The God of the Jews is just, the unknown higher God is good, he is the God of love. The Marcionist Jesus did not have a material body, but an apparent body, created supernaturally, though capable of suffering. He was not really born of Mary, for as the Son of God he could not be thus defiled by the world. Jesus Christ did not atone for sin, he only brought the message. Pospíšil considers Marcion's theology an attempt to introduce gnosis into Christianity. [14] His reflection of the Jewish religion was inaccurate and pessimistic.

Marcion's Christ was only a mode of the Father - the unknown God, but docetism prevents the crucifixion of the unknown. The crucifixion of Christ was real, the body of Christ really existed, but it did not have a divine essence, only "it was probably similar to the formations that arise during materialization during spiritualistic sessions". [13] He excluded almost everything from the canon, the entire Old Testament, leaving from the New Testament only the *Gospel of Luke*, even what is abridged by some passages and the epistles of Paul, except for the epistles to Titus and Timothy. The disciple of Marcion Prepon was of the opinion that Christ entered into Jesus after baptism. His disciple Apeles also made changes to the teaching, according to which the Demiurge is not a god, but only the highest created angel, besides him there is a fallen angel - the second in line, who became the lord of evil. Marcion rejects the resurrection of the body. He denies the birth of Christ in the flesh, he perceives Christ as a spirit. He is incapable of suffering. After Marcion, Apelles followed in his footsteps. He claimed that Christ had an astral body.

Tertullian answered in great detail those who openly contradicted the apostolic tradition in any form. Among the Gnostics, he strongly opposed Docetism and the rejection of the Old Testament. He tried to fight against the most flagrant interpretations in the sense of the emerging Christology and pneumatology, but above all against opinions that clearly deviated from oral

Christianity. Against these opinions, he had to arm himself not only with theological, but also with philosophical arguments, since his opponents also had opinions that had a philosophical dimension.

Our thinker had a rather limited metaphysical portfolio to choose from. We assume that the Indian metaphysical systems were not known to him, so he based only on those that were in the cultural consciousness of the Hellenistic world. Plato and middle Platonism were widely used by the Gnostics, so these directions were not attractive to him. He himself recalls that Plato, as a merchant, sold goods to the Gnostics that they used. [21] He partly used Aristotle, but did not become the basis for Tertullian in a metaphysical sense. He did not like the materialistic atomism of Epicurus. He regarded Stoic metaphysics as a suitable ontological substrate. He uses it as an ontological counterweight to the Platonism used by both the Valentinians and Marcion. [6]

As you know, the stoa is a philosophical trend that was influenced, among other things, by Heraclitus. What Tertullian could find in Stoic metaphysics as a reliable argument on which to rely was the corporeality of the soul. This was something that contrasted sharply with the dualism of body and soul characteristic of Platonism. Corporeality means that everything belongs to matter. Everything that exists is so corporeal, material. This applies not only to the world, including man with his body and soul, but also to the bodily God himself. It is not about the identification of matter and God, but about corporality - materiality. Therefore, it is inappropriate to attribute materialism to Tertullian. His true ontological position is corporality.

In the field of the ontological nature of the body and soul, Tertullian clearly takes a monistic position. This means that the body and soul constitute one ontological entity. Tertullian has a clear idea of the origin of souls. „Our faith tells us that souls are made or born“. [21] He criticizes those philosophers who believe that the soul consists of visible bodily elements. The fifth element was discussed not only by the Pre-Socratics, but also by Aristotle and the Peripatetics (*De caelo*). Tertullian singles out the Stoics, who say that the human spirit is merged with man. „But, on the departure of this spirit which is generated with the body, the living being dies. Therefore, this spirit which is generated with the body is a body. But, this spirit of which we speak is the soul. Hence, we must conclude that the soul is corporeal“. [21] The postulation of the corporeality of the soul gives Tertullian many argumentative advantages. Our theologian considers the Platonists wrong, their decision about the nature of the soul introduces confusion, in his opinion. According to him, the soul moves the body. If she herself were not corporeal, this would be impossible, there was no transmission mechanism. Descartes and the occasionalists, who chose the

epistemological solution, later had a problem with this problem. Tertullian's solution is ontological. He also refers to the opinion of Soran, who also considered the soul to be corporeal. Tertullian does not consider two transferred bodies to be an empirically impossible situation, he argues for the pregnancy of a woman who can carry several other bodies in her body. He considers the corporeal soul to be invisible. „The fact that the soul is invisible flows from the nature of its corporeal substance and is determined by its own nature. Besides, of its very nature it is destined to be invisible to certain things“. [21]

The soul is a special kind of body. Nevertheless, it has the basic properties that any bodily entity should have, such as form, limitation, three-dimensionality. He disputes the Platonist claim that if the soul had a form, it would be divisible. As evidence, Tertullian cites the experience of a charismatic Christian woman who, in a trance, could visually perceive souls as bodily entities. The form of the soul in this testimony was close to that of the human body. [21] The soul simply cannot have a form other than human, Tertullian believes. The soul has a color similar to air. Souls are recognizable by shape. „By the divine breath it was condensed and took on the lineaments of the body that it filled and, as it were, it was frozen into the exact shape of the body“. [21]

As for the beginning of life, Tertullian clearly speaks of this. According to him, life originates from conception, both soul and body. Our author speaks of the seed of the body and the seed of the soul, which arise from meditation. The exception was Eve, whose body was taken from Adam's rib. „So, for a certain length of time, her flesh was without specific form, such as she had when taken from Adam's side; but she was then herself, a living being, since I would then consider her soul as a part of Adam“. [21] Tertullian's strong views again have a polemical-argumentative reason. „The core of Tertullian's "doctrine"—the distinction between the Spirit of God (*spiritus*) and his breath (*flatus*), the latter being the very substance of the human soul, transmitted by the act of procreation and deriving, ultimately, from the original soul of Adam (traducianism)—was intended by him as the main weapon against the alternative concepts of the soul as presented by Hermogenes and Marcion“ [8]

Tertullian also deals with reason in *De anima*. He takes it this way: „By 'mind' I mean merely that faculty which is inherent and implanted in the soul and proper to it by birth and by which the soul acts and gains knowledge. The possession of this faculty makes it possible for

the soul to act upon itself, the soul being moved by the mind as if they were distinct substances“. [21] Our theologian considers the soul to be superior to the mind. In a dead person, his soul goes away, not his mind. He perceives the soul as indivisible. He does not agree with the opinion of Plato or Aristotle. „The soul,

then, is a single substance, simple, and can no more be said to be made up of parts than that it can be divided into parts, since it is indivisible“. [21] He does not consider it important to look for some bodily organ that would be considered the receptacle of the soul. Willhite points out that Tertullian uses the term "spirit" in two senses. As a soul distinct from the body, and also in terms of intellectual ability. [19] Tertullian positively perceives the opinion of Plato, according to which the soul has both a rational and an irrational beginning. He considers this opinion to be consistent with Christian revelation. Tertullian defines the irrational element as being under the influence of the serpent, he associates the irrational element in the soul with evil. Tertullian also thinks about the mechanism of cognition. Feelings he considers a gear lever that receives impressions, thinking is a function of the soul. Therefore, he does not consider thinking to be a force belonging to the body, brain, etc., but, according to Tertullian, it belongs to the soul. Feelings belong to the body, because the soul without the body does not receive sensations. „Therefore, sensation takes place in the soul and thought begins in the senses, but the soul is the root of it all“. [21] He believes that feelings are fallible. There can be a difference between sensation and reality, the senses can misperceive reality. Without feelings there would be no perception, there would be no elements that are a source of joy and satisfaction, says Tertullian. He does not deny the role of the sense organs as a source of knowledge. [21] Our thinker rejects both Plato's ideas and Plato's idealistic epistemology. He directly connects them with heretics, calling them Valentinians. It also refutes Plato's idea of ἀνάμνησις. He also rejects Plato's opinion about the transmigration of souls, according to Tertullian, this does not happen. As an argument, he postulates the thesis that souls must appear with the identity of their previous lives, which is clearly contrary to experience. [21]

The mind is higher than the senses, it cannot be said that the intellect is higher than the soul. The epistemological conclusions of Tertullian in this work are unequivocal: „(1) Intellect is not superior to sense on the argument that the instrument through which a thing exists is inferior to the thing itself. (2) Intellect must not be considered to be separate from the senses, since that by which a thing exists is united to that thing“. [21] Life, as well as intelligence, comes from the soul. Free will exists, man is his own master. Free will can be suppressed by Divine Grace. It is appropriate to quote a phrase in which Tertullian captured the essence of his own perception of the soul: „The soul, therefore, we declare to be born of the breath of God, immortal, corporeal, possessed of a definite form, simple in substance, conscious of itself, developing in various ways, free in its choices, liable to accidental change, variable in disposition, rational, supreme, gifted with foresight, developed out of the one original soul“. [21]

Regarding the origin of life, Tertullian advocates Traducianism. He disagrees with Plato regarding the pre-existence of souls. According to him, the soul is created by conception together with the body from the mental and physical seed. [11] We thinkers think that excess is the seed of the soul, and especially the seed of the body. They are connected, they form one being. The soul is indivisible. Its origin is in the breath of God who created the soul of Adam. From him come the souls of all mankind. For all other souls they are shoots (tradux) of the souls of Adam. Hereditary sin is also transmitted in this way. Here Christ was an exception, because in the human sense he was not created by a seed, but by a supernatural conception. Tertullian dedicated a special work *De carne Christi* to his body. „Tertullian himself claims *De carne Christi* to be a praestructio or foundation to his book on the resurrection of the flesh (*De resurrectione mortuorum*)“. [9]

The basis of the above file is its controversy with modern docetists. Here our author tirelessly defends the divine and human nature of Christ. [10] Tertullian proceeds from the fact that the birth was the will of God, and that is why he took the form of a man. Dunn points out that for Tertullian, Mary's virginity was related to more than just the question of Jesus' conception. [4] In Tertullian's Christology, Mary's virginity becomes a critical issue - cf. [5] Christ was born of flesh and bones. Our author's argument is primarily aimed at Marcion, who denied the physical nature of the body of Christ. Tertullian does not regard the incarnation as something unworthy of God. Our thinker objects to Marcion by saying that he was born in the same way. „*Odisti nescentem hominem, et quomodo diligis aliquem?*“ [22] If God were ashamed of the incarnation and the flesh, the redemption of the flesh, which is a reality, would hardly be possible. Tertullian claims that God incarnate brings justice, chastity, mercy, patience, and innocence. So, it is worthy of imitation and does not carry nonsense. The crucifixion of an unreal body and its death would be an ontological problem. If his death and crucifixion were unrealistic, then there would be a problem with the ontological status of his resurrection, which would have serious soteriological consequences. [22] In that case, the crucified and buried Jesus would be a lie. Here he postulates the famous words with which he points to the reality of the actions of Jesus, which are true, despite the fact that, from the point of view of the logic of possible worlds, their ontological actualization is extremely unlikely. „*Crucifixus est dei filius; non puset quia pudendum est. Et mortuus est dei filius; credibile est quia ineptum est. Et sepultus resurrexit; certum est quia impossibile*“. [22]

In the case of the unreal Christ, even the soteriological, historical and other important connections connected with him could not take place. Tertullian also

argues ontologically in this text in the same way as later in *On the Soul*. What is real is also corporeal. Incorporeality means unreality. Illusion without a real ontological essence (i.e., without corporeality) could not actively operate and thus interfere in any effective sense. Its source of human nature is the real human body. In turn, he acquired the divine essence through Sonship, which is impossible without God the Father. [22] The suffering of the body is also a testament to its true human nature. The apparent essence of the body of Christ will continue even after the resurrection. Thus, the belief of the unbelieving Apostle Thomas would be a lie of Christ. Jesus was not a high priest or a magician. [22]

The body of Christ was not composed of imaginary substance, Tertullian contradicts Apelles. According to him, there would be no radical difference in terms of accidents and actions, even if the body of Christ came from heavenly substance. Here we see an implicit game with the possibility of accepting the Aristotelian division into the sublunar and supralunar worlds. The argument also goes in the sense of interpreting some of Jesus' statements which, taken out of context, would make sense, apparently denying his birth. Tertullian shows that, according to the (gnostic) identification of evil with sin, even the body of Christ, although made of heavenly substance, must have been sinful. Our theologian refutes Gnostic views indirectly, arguing, proving that the consequences arising from their premises lead to a clear contradiction with reality. The miracles of Christ would not stand out to such an extent if He possessed some kind of miraculous or even apparent body. [22] He considers suffering sufficient proof of his true earthly origin. „*Ex hoc ergo convincimus nihil in illa de cellis fuisse, propterea, ut contemni et pati posset.*“ [22] The body of Christ was not psychic, and he did not have a soul formed from the body. And not pneumatic, as Tertullian attributes to Valentinus. The fact that the soul in Tertullian is invisible does not mean that it does not have a corporeal nature. He notes that the human soul is rational in nature. Christ took on a real human soul. He accepted her to bring her salvation. [22] It cannot be identical to his body. The soul does not have the form of a body of flesh and bones, neither with us nor with Christ, for then his soteriological work would have no meaning for man. He brilliantly corporally proves that everything that exists is the body of its own kind (*corpus est sui generis*). Thus, even the existing soul (human and Christ's) is corporeal, it has its own invisible body. [22] However, it is not identical with the human body, only in the metaphysical sense of corporality, according to which it would otherwise be unreal. It is ontologically no different from the soul of any other person.

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

In the area of psychology and the ontological status of the body, Tertullian was able to consistently stand on the monistic principle. He maintains this ontological position in both *De carne Christi* and *De anima*. It is based on the belief that everything that exists must necessarily be the body of its own kind, otherwise it would not exist. His conviction is not due to Tertullian's deep interest and leitmotif in constructing a metaphysical explanation of the universe. Our author enters the realm of metaphysics, nolens volens. His primary interest is the theological polemic against the Gnostics (especially the Valentinians), but also against Marcion. This controversy put him in a situation where it is necessary to postulate some kind of internally consistent ontology, compatible with the developing, but still very young church tradition. Of the already existing ontological models, Stoic teleism was the most suitable for him, which is diametrically opposed to the Platonism used mainly by the Gnostics. Its advantage is a strict ontological monism, which convincingly helped Tertullian to defend the salvation of soul and body, as well as theologically overcome a number of gnostic dualisms. On the one hand, he considers the soul and body to exist and therefore bodily; on the other hand, he is aware of their difference and does not speak of the soul from the body, nor of the psychic, pneumatic body. He also applies these beliefs about the ontological nature of the soul and body of Christ.

Acknowledgement: This article was developed as a part of solution of the project IG-KSV-ET-01-2021/12.

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Abstract

The article deals with Tertullian's ontological solutions in the field of the relationship between the soul and the body. Tertullian sets out his decision in such a way that, from the point of view of argument, he has the potential for polemics with the Valentinians and Marcion. Although the human body and the human soul are different, from an ontological point of view this is not a dualism. Both the body and the soul exist in reality, and therefore the soul must be corporeal. Not in the sense of materialism, but corporality. Tertullian preached the monistic identity of all things with corporality, both body and soul. He occupied the same position in the field of the body and soul of man, as in the case of the body and soul of Christ. He considered him a real person, while not denying his divine essence. Tertullian takes his ontological solution from the Stoics, seeking to avoid Platonism and metaphysically explain the monistic basis of the world - an argumentative weapon against gnostic dualism.

Keywords

Tertullianus, corporealism, body, mind, valentinians, Marcion