

Miloš Lichner (Ed.)

# HOPE



**WHERE DOES OUR HOPE LIE?**

International Congress of the European Society for  
Catholic Theology (August 2019 - Bratislava, Slovakia)

LIT

# Theology East – West

European Perspectives

# Theologie Ost – West

Europäische Perspektiven

edited by

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# GODGORSAKENNESS AND HOPE: TWO SIDES OF THE SAME REALM?

*Yuliia Vintoniv*

## Abstract

The article presents the phenomenon of Godforsakenness as a key element for finding hope. Attention is focused on the fact that hope is impossible without the despair of Godforsakenness, the collapse of the senses and the cry for help to God. The crucifixion of Christ, crying out of his Godforsakenness and the hope of the Resurrection, are indissoluble. The article offers an analysis of three stories from the transcendental life of Christ: the Crucifixion, the Harrowing of Hell and the Eucharist. They are all united by an invisible thread of Godforsakenness and hope. The suffering of God transforms the meaning of suffering and the death of man, and the Godforsakenness of man after Christ is understood only as a space of hope. The article also reveals the significance of the Eucharistic sacrifice of Christ as a manifestation of the transcendental-immanent relationship between of God and man, which not only testifies to man's not-forsakenness (Mt 28: 19-20) but also tells us about the greater kenosis of God – to be the Body and Blood to get united with His creation on the deepest level.

## Introduction

The Cross is our only unique hope.  
Simone Weil

Friedrich Nietzsche called hope the worst of all troubles, for it continues the torment of man.<sup>1</sup> And a century later, Richard Rorty said, “utopian social hope which sprang up in nineteenth-century Europe is still the noblest imaginative creation of which we have record”.<sup>2</sup> The reduction of hope to the civilizational linearity of pro-

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<sup>1</sup> NIETZSCHE, F. *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. London; T. N. FOULIS 13 & 15 FREDERICK STREET EDINBURGH, 1910, 82.

<sup>2</sup> RORTY, R. *Philosophy and Social Hope*. London: Penguin Books, 1999, 277.

gress is a misinterpretation that takes humanity away from the authentic meaning of hope as a virtue of God that goes beyond human understanding.

The twentieth century, which Fergus Kerr dubbed the epoch of Godforsakenness,<sup>3</sup> provoked a tremendous revival in theological minds. The same despair that united theologians gave them the opportunity to find meaning among the suffering. Their theology can be safely considered to have been born in the “land of death and night”: the “theology of crisis” by Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann conceived of the First World War; Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s “radical theology” proposed the concept of “the maturity of mankind” to deal with the concept of the “death of God” (Nietzsche); Kazoh Kitamori “The Theology of the Pain of God” and Jürgen Moltmann “The Crucified God” trying to understand the suffering of Christ in the light of twentieth-century history; the neo-patristic tradition of the Saint Sergius Theological Institute offered a school of Sophiology and actualized the thoughts of Church Fathers; the “New Theology” [Nouvelle theologie] by Henri de Lubac gave new life to an academic and scholastic theology that was realized in the main ideas of the Second Vatican Council; the “liberation theology” of Gustavo Gutiérrez just picked up on socialist ideas; the Jewish tradition offered theology after Auschwitz. All theological traditions are again and again trying to answer one of the main Kantian questions amidst the gloom and despair: “What can I hope for?”

Restored Ukrainian theological schools are also trying to formulate their own ideas for understanding the horrors of the twentieth century: the theology of Martyrs;<sup>4</sup> the theology of the Maidan;<sup>5</sup> liberation theology in Ukrainian post-socialist society<sup>6</sup> and the interdisciplinary project *Kyivan Christianity*, launched in 2013, represent research based at the Ukrainian Catholic University on Kyivan Christianity and the Uniate Tradition. However, the most important thing is to respond to today’s challenges: a six-year unannounced war in eastern Ukraine, migration, prisoners-of-war and despair within the society. In order to understand the meaning and purpose of these trials, it is necessary to understand the meaning of this despair, for it too can

<sup>3</sup> KERR, F. Theology in a Godforsaken Epoch. // *New Blackfriars* Vol. 46, No. 543, September 1965, pp. 665-672.

<sup>4</sup> In the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, see. Documents of the conference “Blood of the Martyrs the Seeds of the Church”

<sup>5</sup> See: *Bog i Majdan [God and Maidan]* Lviv: UCU, 2018; *Majdan i Cerkva. Hronika podij ta ekspertna ocinka, [Maidan and the Church. Chronicle of events and peer review]* red. L. Fylypovych, O. Gorkusha. Kyiv: Sammit-Knyga, 2014; *Rol' khrystyians'kogo rozumynnya doviry, gidnosti ta myloserdya pid chas Revolyuciyni Gidnosti 2013–2014 rokiv. Dovira. Gidnist'.* Myloserdya. [The Role of the Christian Understanding of Trust, Dignity and Mercy during the Dignity Revolution 2013–2014 [in:] *Trust. Dignity. Mercy*] Kyiv: Spirit and Letter 2017. *Majdan. Svidchennya. Kyiv 2013–2014 roky [Maidan. Testimony Kyiv 2013–2014]* Kyiv 2016; DYMID, K., DYMID, M. *Kamynnyia Majdanu [Stones of the Maidan]* L'viv: Svichado, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> See: DENYSENKO, A. *Teologiya vyzvolennya. Ideyi. Krytyka. Perspektyvy [Liberation Theology. Ideas. Critic. Perspective.]*. Kyiv: Spirit and Letter, 2019.

be filled with the energy of holiness,<sup>7</sup> can be a place of God's special action – space of hope in Godforsakenness.

Like any phenomenon, Godforsakenness and hope are best described through examples and context. In eastern Ukraine there is a city, Mariupol, and in this city there is a 15-storey building with a portrait of a little girl on one of the external walls. Her name is Melania. In 2015, Melania and her mother Olga got caught under a shelling fire, and mother covered up her three-year-old daughter with her own body and died. Melania was later found next to her mother's dead body; her own leg was torn off. Melania is now in constant rehabilitation because she is growing, and the prosthesis needs to be regularly replaced. Alexander Korban, an artist who heard Melania's history wanted to paint this girl because amidst shelling, despair and Godforsakenness, he wanted to bring a piece of hope, and this hope is in the little girl called Melania.<sup>8</sup>

The example of a mother's sacrifice for the sake of her child gives us reason to say that hope is not an ontological illusion that only a bright future awaits us. This is something which a person is able to endure in the darkest times of his/her life here and now. Still, what is hope? Why, as a phenomenon, does it emerge only in the darkest depths of human existence? Why in the experience of Godforsakenness? And most importantly, where does this streak of hope-light in the deadliness of night or despair come from?

The biblical narrative speaks of hope from different perspectives, but all of them can be reduced to one – as hope in God (Ps. 61:6). In this article, we propose to consider the dualism of despair-hope not as a confrontation, but as two sides of the same experience. Based on the doctrine of the Godforsakenness of Christ, we will demonstrate that the experience of the Godforsakenness of God is part of the soteriological dimension. The article does not purport to exhaustively cover the problem of Godforsakenness and hope but merely presents the main points of intersection of these two antinomies through the story of the Crucifixion of Jesus, the Harrowing of Hell and the Eucharist.

## The Christological and Trinitarian Mystery of Godforsakenness

Maximus the Confessor<sup>9</sup> identified four dimensions of Godforsakenness. The first is the economy (οἰκονομία), the descending Godforsakenness experienced by Christ

<sup>7</sup> SOFRONYJ (Sakharov). *Tajnstvo khrystyanskoj zhyzny* [The Sacrament of the Christian Life]. Svjato-Troyckaya Sergyeva Lavra, 2012, 35.

<sup>8</sup> The first time I heard about Melania was from Konstantin Sihov at the Summer Theological Institute in Kyiv.

<sup>9</sup> MAXIMOS the Confessor. Four Hundred Texts on Love. *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*. Faber and Faber, 1983, [V2] 112, 96.

on the cross, so that all those who have been forsaken may be saved in Him. The second is the trial of salvation, the Old Testament being a good example of this dimension. The third is purification for salvation, as it happened in the case of the apostle Paul. The fourth is the reminder that is best reflected in the call of the prophets to the Jewish people: repent, for ye shall perish. The epicentre of the experience of Godforsakenness is the passion of Jesus Christ on the Mount of Olives and the Calvary. And the words that the Son of God cries out on the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” This is what we call the experience of Godforsakenness.

In his epistle to the Philippians, the apostle Paul writes: “He [Christ] made himself as nothing, taking the form of a servant, being made like men; And being seen in form as a man, he took the lowest place, and let himself be put to death, even the death of the cross” (Phil 2: 6-8). In the epistle to Hebrews he says that in the person of Jesus Christ, we have a high priest who “has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin” (Heb. 4:15). Therefore, Godforsakenness is not a sin, it is an experience of the absence of God; it is an experience of the fierce anxiety for God which we see in its utmost expression in the Godforsakenness of Jesus Christ on the cross. This is the sign of the completed Incarnation of Christ, His kenosis (κένωσις). The illustration of the “exhaustion of the Word” is Christ who exposed, subjugated himself to people, became a slave, to enter the oblivion of the abyss that was formed after the fall of man. If kenosis explains how Christ could be God – the second hypostasis of the Trinity – and at the same time human, then economy (οἰκονομία) explains how Christ was able to pass the experience of Godforsakenness. This is the key to understanding Good Friday, and it explains the words of Christ in the dying moment, because without humiliation and full entry into human nature, Christ could not fully depart from the Father and enter into a state of Godforsakenness.

Sergei Bulgakov extends theological interpretation of Maxim the Confessor. Hope points out that the Father and the Holy Spirit, like Christ, also have their Kenosis. Kenosis of the Father is most manifested in the act of sacrificing the Beloved Son (Mt 3:17; Mt 17: 5; Mk 1:11) to death on the cross for the salvation of mankind (Jo 3:16). However, the Father is not the silent cause of the sacrifice of the Son, as Bulgakov points out; the Father is co-suffering with the Son and is co-crucified with Him: “If there is a sacrificial death of the Godman, then there is the sacrificial suffering of the Father, the suffering of love, empathizing with the Son, the self-crucifixion of the Father”.<sup>10</sup> Bulgakov argues that no matter how great the sacrifice may be, the Father never ceases to love the Son, but this love becomes latent. Therefore, the Son’s loneliness and forsakenness become so real: “The Son remains alone in his dying, just as the Father is left alone in the sacrificial exclamation ‘All is done’” (Jo 19:30).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> BULGAKOV, S. Sofyologyya Smerty [Sophiology of Death] Vesnyk russkogo xrystyanskogo dvyzhenyya Le messenger, 4 – 1978 № 4 (127), 26.

<sup>11</sup> BULGAKOV, S. Sofyologyya Smerty, 28.

Anthony of Sourozh and Hans Urs von Balthasar insist that Godforsakenness is an event between Christ and men, not a trinitarian event, as Bulgakov states. In their opinion Christ is a bridge between man and God-Father for their reconciliation. Balthasar writes:

“If God wished to ‘experience’ (Heb 2:18;4:15) the human condition ‘from within’, so as re-direct it from inside it, and thus save it, he would have to place the decisive stress on the point where sinful mortal man finds himself ‘at his wit’s end’. And this must be where man has lost himself in the death without, for all that, finding God. This is the place where he has fallen into an abyss of grief, indigence, darkness into the ‘pit’ from which he cannot escape by his own powers. God has perforce to place the emphasis on this experience of being ‘at one’s wit’s end’, in order to being together the fractured extremities of the idea of man. And this is what we actually find in the identity that holds good between the Crucified and Risen One”.<sup>12</sup>

Christ, dying as we die, also experienced the horror of Godforsakenness – “a state of existential separation from Him with whom Christ is in absolute ontological unity”.<sup>13</sup> Bulgakov also does not deny the ontological unity between the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, but rather emphasizes the fundamental importance of the experience of Godforsakenness that leaves us with the right to speak about God in Three Persons – inseparable. Bulgakov uses the principle of “economy”, which is unity in the act of dying for each hypostasis in his own way, but for all three persons together.<sup>14</sup> Godforsakenness is an economic, not ontological, forsaking of the God by God. The assumption about God being ontologically forsaken by God is absurd, because it destroys the dogma of the Trinity. Such an assumption can destroy the principle of the threefold unconditional love and solidarity that underpin the creation of the world and man. Bulgakov is very consistent with and rooted in the Trinity dogma. He does not “break the Trinity” in the experience of Godforsakenness but demonstrates that even in this experience the Trinity was fully present – each person in his own way.

On top of this, the economic principle of the Trinity Godforsakenness helps to refute another false hypothesis voiced by Albert Camus. The philosopher, following the theological thought that Christ is the “mediator” between God and men, makes the logical conclusion that the Father is cruel and inexorable and in order to calm his thirst for revenge, he sacrificed his Son: “The cross is also Christ’s punishment. One might imagine that He chose a slave’s punishment a few years later, only so as to reduce the enormous distance that henceforth would separate humiliated humanity

<sup>12</sup> BALTHASAR, H. *Mysterium Paschale: the Mystery of Easter*. Translated by Aidan NICHOLS. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990, 13.

<sup>13</sup> ANTONYJ Surozhskij. Dyalog ob ateyzme o poslednem sude [Dialogue on Atheism and the Last Judgment] // *Chelovek pered Bogom* [Man before God]. Moskow 2010. 56–57.

<sup>14</sup> BULGAKOV, S. *Sofologiya Smerty*, 30-31.

from the implacable face of the Master. He intercedes, He submits to the most extreme injustice so that the rebellion shall not divide the world in two, so that suffering will also light the way to heaven and preserve it from the curses of mankind”.<sup>15</sup> Such a thought about the Father’s satisfaction of justice is also contradictory to the core truth of the Christian faith. The fall of man was a disaster on a cosmic scale, both for man and for God in His infinite love. Sin destroyed the original plan – the ascension of man to God, but it did not destroy God’s unconditional love. Therefore, the purpose of salvation is to “heal” the wounded heart of man so he may again believe that God is love (1 John 4: 8).

The assumption of ontological forsakenness of any of the three Trinity persons immediately distorts the soteriological dimension of salvation, takes away from Christ his voluntary sacrifice and, most importantly, distorts the value of the sacrifice, which is not just a redemption for sins but has power to destroy sin as such. This idea is best captured by the liturgical language of the Holy Week calling Christ the Lamb, who voluntarily accepts sin, to give everyone the resurrection.<sup>16</sup> Christ transforms the Old Testament formula of sacrifice because He is God, who sacrifices himself for the sinners, because we are reconciled and saved by His life (Rom. 5: 6-10).

Balthasar also poses the question “Where is the merciful God?” in the Son’s death. He believes that the image of a cruel God is the result of an anthropocentric tendency. However, such anthropocentric dynamics is quite justified if we recall that it is precisely in the event of the death of the Son that most people seek answers to their “death on the cross”. Balthasar speaks of the sorrow of God Himself, expressed in the hour of darkness that surrounded the whole Earth (Mt 27:45; Mk 15:33; Lk 23:44). Balthasar does not focus on the Godforsakenness of Christ at the time of the Crucifixion; his focus is on Godforsakenness in the Harrowing of Hell:

“The real object of a theology of Holy Saturday does not consist in the completed state which follows on the last act in the self-surrender of this incarnate Son to his Father – something which the structure of every human death, more or less ratified by the individual person, would entail. Rather does that that object consist in something unique, expressed in the ‘realisation’ of all Godlessness, of all the sins of the world, now experienced as agony and a sinking down into the ‘second death’ or ‘second chaos’, outside of the world ordained from the beginning by God”.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> CAMUS, A. *The Rebel*. Publisher Vintage Books 1991, 110.

<sup>16</sup> Sticheron on Glory and Now: on Good Thursday “Агнець, що Його прорік Ісая, \* гряде на добровільне заколення \* і спину віддає на бичування, \* щокі на поличники, \* лица ж не відвертає від ганьби опльовувань \* і на безчесну смерть засуджується.\*Вседобровільно приймає Безгрішний, \* щоб усім дарувати із мертвих воскресіння”, BOGOSLUZHINNYA STRASNOYS I SVITLOYI SEDMYC` translated into Ukrainian by the liturgical translation workshop Trypisnets.

<sup>17</sup> BALTHASAR, H. *Mysterium Paschale: the Mystery of Easter*, 51-52.

The death of God is not the story of victim and executioner; it is testimony of the unconditional love of God, who gives Himself for the sins of the world: "See, here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1: 29). It also confirms the Gospel of Luke, according to which Christ's last words are: "Father, into your hands I give my spirit" (Lk 23:46). If "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" is the solidarity of Christ with humanity on whose behalf he cries out these words, then "Father ..." is a testimony of the Father's love. This call is also an invitation to God the Father to enter the darkest place in the whole world, a place-without-God, which Christ proclaims on behalf of mankind. This call is still present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

From the beginning of his Sermon on the Mount, Christ emphasizes that suffering, persecution and sacrifice in the name of God are blessedness, not punishment (Mt 5-7; Luke 13: 1-5), and He confirms this on the cross. In the experience of Godforsakenness, Christ became openly exposed to dying.<sup>18</sup> Bulgakov calls this process of dying the original sin,<sup>19</sup> and that also confirmed the healing power of Christ's cross death. He is so close to every human being that His death is part of all deaths, and He continues to co-exist with every human being in his/her death.<sup>20</sup>

## God Died and what next?

The apparent influence of Bulgakov on von Balthasar's theology is too vivid to go unnoticed,<sup>21</sup> but if the first one focuses on Godforsakenness in Crucifix and dying, the latter considers the Harrowing of Hell to be the central event of Godforsakenness. Balthasar speaks of the total solidarity of Christ with everyone who died in his own grave. Christ again and again suffers and dies with everyone; this thought is also valuable for understanding the theological depth of the Eucharist.

Hell is a continuation of Christ's self-abasement, solidarity with both the living and the dead.<sup>22</sup> In the cry of Godforsakenness, Christ "sinks into the realm of the dead, from out of which no word of his any longer makes itself heard. The aloneness, or, rather, the quite decisive uniqueness of that suffering seems to cut off all access to its inwardness: at the most, a silent 'assisting', from a distance, is all that is possible".<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> BULGAKOV, S. *Sofyologyya Smerty*, 39.

<sup>19</sup> BULGAKOV, S. *Sofyologyya Smerty*, 41.

<sup>20</sup> BULGAKOV, S. *Sofyologyya Smerty*, 33.

<sup>21</sup> ŽAK, L. Aktual' nost' bogoslovyya S.Bulgakova v dyaloge s Zapadom [The Relevance of the Theology of S.Bulgakova in dialogue with the West]// *Pravoslavnoe bogoslovye y Zapad v XX veke* [Orthodox Theology in the West in the Twentieth Century]. Moscow 2006, pp.119-146

<sup>22</sup> BALTHASAR, H. *Mysterium Paschale: the Mystery of Easter*, 149.

<sup>23</sup> BALTHASAR, H. *Mysterium Paschale: the Mystery of Easter*, 72.



It is important to remember that Hell only later took on the form of a particularly reserved space. In the early tradition of the Church, Hell was referred to more as the state of the human soul, as the experience of man without God. In this way, Godforsakenness is not just a crisis of meanings, but a gradual withering away of the fundamental truth of human existence – that man was created out of the unconditional love of God. Thus, Godforsakenness becomes a human condition after the expulsion from the Garden of Eden even to this day.

Balthasar draws attention to the power of Christ to “bind the strong man” in connection with the penetration into the deepest sphere of his power – Hell. Christ was dead but now lives forever and with all those who rest in their graves (Mt 27:52).<sup>24</sup> The Orthodox iconography captures the moment of the risen Christ in The Harrowing of Hell.<sup>25</sup> On ancient Ukrainian icons of the Harrowing of Hell, Jesus Christ appears in the image of the New Adam. Christ is the one who has the keys to death and hell (Rev. 1.18), the one who bound the devil and severed the bonds of death (Acts 2:24), the one who brings everyone out of Hell. The Saviour holds Adam by the wrist, where the pulse is, and he returns the life of the first man. It depicts the culminating meeting in the history of human salvation – the meeting of the Old and the New Adam. The triumphant-victorious nature of icons of this type is also emphasized by the fact that they were signed not as The Harrowing of Hell but as The Resurrection of the Lord.<sup>26</sup>

There is also a certain paradox in the event of coming down to Hell: Christ enters Hell as a human being but leaves and brings all men out of Hell as God: “He is the head of the body, the church: the starting point of all things, the first to come again from the dead; so that in all things he might have the chief place” (Col. 1:18).

Therefore, the Godforsakenness of Christ as Godman gives us a completely different view of the Godforsakenness of man, because Christ, in order to heal man from sin, had to experience “from within,” and was tested to help those who are tested (Heb. 2:18). This is how the troparion of the Orthros of Jerusalem describes it: “You who hold the edges of the world have allowed you to be buried, Christ, save humanity from Hell and to immortalize us as the Immortal God”.<sup>27</sup> Godforsakenness becomes an invisible space for God to fight for man, as it is also a place of hope and restoration of trust in God. Godforsakenness in the darkness of Hell is a throbbing wound that testifies to the soteriological “already and not yet” and at the same time the Christological “All is done” (Jo 19:30). The road through the cross and hell is

<sup>24</sup> BALTHASAR, H. *Mysterium Paschale: the Mystery of Easter*, 153-155

<sup>25</sup> The most ancient independent image of “Harrowing into hell” is a holiday icon of the late 15th century from the Church of the Intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the village Polyana of the Starosambir district of Lviv region.

<sup>26</sup> KREXOVECZKY, Y. *Bogoslov'ya ta duxovnist' ikony* [Theology and Spirituality of the Icon]. Lviv: Svichado, 2008, 193-194.

<sup>27</sup> See: Troparion of prophecy, BOGOSLUZHINNYA STRASNOYS I SVITLOYI SEDMYC' translated into Ukrainian by the liturgical translation workshop Trypisnets.

the way to return to man his true humanity. The experience of the Godforsakenness of Christ destroys the dualism of despair and hope, because Christ enters into the greatest despair that exists in Hell.

### **The Eucharist as a Continuation of Dying and Communion**

In the Eucharistic Prayer of Anaphora, which priests pray before the consecration, we find the following words: “He gave Himself up for the life of the world; He took bread in His holy, pure, and blameless hands; and when He had given thanks and blessed it, and hallowed it, and broken it, He gave it to His holy disciples and apostles”. By deliberately avoiding liturgical reasoning, we turn our attention to the moment of breaking the bread (Lk 22: 19-20; Mk 14: 22-25; Mt 26: 26-29). Breaking symbolizes not just a ritual or memory, but a literal refraction of the Body of Christ, His dying and death. The Eucharist reunites Life and Death, giving us the opportunity to witness the event of two thousand years ago – the Sacrifice and the Glory.

At the same time, the Eucharist is a testimony to the presence of God and hope in the darkness of Godforsakenness. Wine and bread changed (changing) into the Body and Blood of the Lord is the highest limit of God’s presence here on earth. This presence is accompanied by the consummation of His Body and Blood and is the imitation of Him: “To receive into me the One who was sacrificed for me means to grant him space in, and power of disposition over my whole existence”.<sup>28</sup> Balthasar emphasizes that the Eucharist is the time of uniting all members in the Body of Christ. However, what does this mean?

On the one hand, the Eucharist transforms the monologue into a dialogue and in the same way transforms the insignificance of fallen man into his greatness in crucified Christ (Gal. 2:19). In the Eucharist, Christ destroys the polarity of greatness and worthlessness because every time He is connecting Himself with the worthlessness of man He always transforms it into greatness. This is the core of the transformation of the experience of Godforsakenness into hope in Christ. If we need hope, we must cry out to God. On the other hand, the experience of Godforsakenness gives us hope, because it destroys the foundation of human control “to build everything in oneself”. Only God can restore the original harmony of life by His capacity to be the I-Other-world. In Godforsakenness, man does not need knowledge of God to believe in Him; he needs the experience of communicating with God like it happened with Job in the act of meeting God face-to-face: “Word of you had come to my ears, but now my eye has seen you. For this, cause I give witness that what I said is false, and in sorrow, I take my seat in the dust” (Job 42: 5-6).

The Eucharist also expresses the constant anguish and thirst for God. Alexander Schmemmann calls this process “to desire God”,<sup>29</sup> which means to understand

<sup>28</sup> BALTHASAR, H. *Mysterium Paschale: the Mystery of Easter*, 99.

<sup>29</sup> SHMEMANN, A. *Eucharystyya. Tajnstvo Czarstva* [The Eucharist of the Sacrament of the Church] Paris; YMCA-PRESS, 1988, 125.

that beyond God there is darkness, emptiness and meaninglessness, and accordingly, the sacrifice of Christ is a response to this desire. Praying to the crucified Christ is one experience, but consuming the crucified Christ reduced to bread and wine is a radically different experience of God, to which we must return again and again, which is why the Eucharist is the life of the Church.

The prayers of the Proskomedia (Liturgy of Preparation) literally reproduce the whole essence of Good Friday. The priest cutting out the Lamb says, right side: “As a sheep led to the slaughter”; left side: “Or a spotless lamb before its shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth”; the upper side: “In His humiliation justice was denied Him”; the lower side: “Who will explain His generation?” In the end, the priest pierces with a spear the right side of the Lamb and pours wine and a little water into the chalice. Christ Himself becomes the dying grain of wheat (Jo 12:24).

The Eucharistic “language” is the language of self-sacrifice. The testimony of the greatest love is to give life for one’s friends (Jo 15:13). Nevertheless, self-sacrifice in the Eucharist is also a hope that combines “here and now” with eternity. The Eucharist is the ability to already be in the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, the Eucharistic phenomenon of being God is immanently present, but at the same time, the transcendent reveals to us another space of hope – incarnate and here-present, which I dare say can go beyond the Holy of Holies. And the disciples of Jesus will become vessels in which He can sufficiently suffer.<sup>30</sup> Self-sacrifice is made possible only by accepting God as mine, obliging me to give everything without rest. Through the liturgical dimension, we are able to observe the highest manifestation of this love of God for us, which enables us to give this love to others (Rom 12: 1; 1 Pet 2: 5). And then the sacrifice of the mother in the unannounced war for the sake of her daughter will also be a space of the Eucharistic hope.

## Conclusion

The empirical sciences claim that nothing disappears without a trace. The suffering must hurt. Only the suffering is honest enough not to do anything else but feel pain. The despair that accompanies suffering is the most intimate space in the relationship between God and man. The suffering of God becomes the centre of understanding the catastrophe of the twentieth century, and it becomes the engine of speaking of God after the Auschwitz, the Holodomor, the Gulag and the wars that continue throughout the world.

The phenomenon of Godforsakenness is a phenomenon that lies in the space of the relationship between man and God. The Godforsakenness of man as a symptom of (original) sin, is the wound of losing God. This very wound, however, becomes

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<sup>30</sup> BALTHASAR, H. *Mysterium Paschale: the Mystery of Easter*, 95.

the largest expanse of the presence of God, confirming the theology of the Cross, the Harrowing of Hell and the Eucharist. The Godforsakenness of Christ is His solidarity with man to the point of economic loss of the Father. The suffering of God transforms the meaning of suffering and death of man, and the Godforsakenness of God after Christ is understood only as a space of hope.

Every man and woman carries an abyss that only God can fill, which is why he consumes. God is space of dialogue and change of a person, his/her return of lost greatness. The Eucharist is the embodiment of the promise of God not to forsake us, which was given in the Old Testament (Isaiah 1: 5) and confirmed in the New Testament, all the way until the end of the world (Mt 28:20). This makes it possible to speak of the Eucharistic Eschatology as a life in the Kingdom of Heaven already here and now. And this is the beginning of the road of hope, which begins on the cross and goes to Hell, where “death overcomes death”.

The highest limit of self-sacrifice has taken place on the Cross, but it continues to this day in the Eucharist. However, the testimonies of the martyrs (recognized and not recognized by the church community) are part of the great mystery of the Eucharist, because Christ suffers in them – beyond chronical time – just as he suffered on the cross in His time of death. That is why it is important to say that as long as one person is ready to give his/her life for the sake of another, hope does not die.

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