



Orthodox Response to Christian Universalism: The Theological Perspective of Pavel Florensky

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Abstract

This study aims to offer an Orthodox response to the challenges posed by the new understanding of Christian universalism. We argue that contemporary man requires a clear and comprehensive answer to this issue, given that universalism is not merely a theological concept but also must be understood by each individual. This response is imperative as Christianity is obligated to answer everyone at all times, in line with the teachings of Apostle Peter about being prepared to answer questions about our hope (1 Peter 3:15). In this context, the study examines contemporary antinomian views on Christian universalism, with a specific focus on the original theory of the theologian Pavel Florensky. Florensky posits that divine judgment will separate the 'holy self' of the damned - which will be preserved without exception and viewed joyously by the righteous, but will only objectively exist for them - from their self-consciousness of enduring torment and illusory subjectivity. Through this lens, hell is perceived as the sole reality in the consciousness of the damned, yet non-existent in the consciousness of God and the righteous. This study provides an important perspective on how Orthodox theology can respond to the challenges of universalism in a contemporary context.

Keywords: Christian Universalism; Divine Judgment; Orthodox Theology; Pavel Florensky; Theological Response.

Abstrak

Studi ini bertujuan untuk menawarkan respons Ortodoks terhadap tantangan yang diajukan oleh pemahaman baru tentang universalisme Kristen. Kami berargumen bahwa manusia kontemporer memerlukan jawaban yang jelas dan menyeluruh terhadap masalah ini, mengingat universalisme bukan hanya konsep teologis tetapi juga harus dimengerti oleh setiap individu. Respons ini penting karena Kekristenan bertanggung jawab untuk menjawab semua orang di setiap waktu, sejalan dengan ajaran Rasul Petrus tentang kesiapan untuk menjawab pertanyaan tentang harapan kita (1 Petrus 3:15). Dalam konteks ini, studi ini mengkaji pandangan antinomian kontemporer tentang universalisme Kristen, dengan fokus khusus pada teori orisinal teolog Pavel Florenski. Florenski mengemukakan bahwa penghakiman ilahi akan memisahkan 'diri yang suci' orang-orang terkutuk - yang akan dipertahankan tanpa pengecualian dan akan dilihat dengan sukacita oleh orang-orang benar, tetapi hanya akan eksis secara objektif bagi mereka - dari kesadaran diri mereka yang sepenuhnya independen dalam penderitaan abadi dan ilusi subjektivitas. Melalui lensa ini, neraka dipersepsikan sebagai satu-satunya realitas dalam kesadaran orang terkutuk, namun tidak ada dalam kesadaran Allah dan orang benar. Studi ini menawarkan pandangan penting tentang bagaimana teologi Ortodoks dapat menanggapi tantangan universalisme dalam konteks kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Universalisme Kristen; Penghakiman Ilahi; Teologi Ortodoks; Pavel Florensky; Tanggapan Teologis.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary religious discourse, the concept of universalism, particularly within Christian theology, has gained significant attention and generated diverse interpretations (McKanan, 2013). The eschatological perspective on time posits the potential for God's limitless communion with all of creation, providing an avenue for a free response from creation to be actualized through eternal communion with

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God (Eberhart, 2012). Throughout the annals of history, humanity has grappled with the nuanced understanding of the Creator's communion with His creation. In the early Christian epochs, a segment of believers ardently held to the belief in the imminent return of Christ, leading them to abandon their occupations, duties, and social lives in fervent anticipation of the impending end times.

Amidst this fervor, St. Paul the Apostle played a decisive role by addressing the Thessalonians through two predominantly eschatological epistles. In one notable passage, he emphasizes, "As to times and seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need me to write to you. For you yourselves know that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:1, New International Version). This biblical reference underscores the urgency and unpredictability associated with the eschatological events foretold by Paul.

Over the centuries, diverse eschatological visions have emerged, influenced by varying social, cultural, and religious contexts (Kwakye, 2022). The West, for instance, witnessed an era where exaggerated preaching about hell led to a decline in faith in eternal torment, fostering personal interpretations devoid of scriptural and patristic foundations (Launonen, 2022). Conversely, the late 20th century in the United States saw the promotion of an ethic of civility that encouraged the masking of scriptural language to avoid offending other confessions or faiths. This contemporary approach now predominantly centers on issues of pluralism/exclusivity, sexuality, and, notably, eschatology. These historical and contextual shifts underscore the evolving nature of eschatological perspectives and their impact on theological discourse.

To some, such a shift in perspective may seem to be just another example of the relentless dilution of modernity in the Gospel, a shallow optimism that refuses to acknowledge the power of evil in our world and our responsibility for it.

The Romanian Orthodox theologian Adrian Lemeni draws our attention to the fact that in contemporary society there is a tendency to reject the torments of hell and there is a desire to fortify through human powers a modern, safe, and prosperous earthly paradise. This ploy only deepens the tragedy of a personal hell and that of a generalised hell on a planetary scale, and in this way changes in *capite et membris* all the fundamental values of society, installing a primacy of matter that subordinates the spirit (Lemeni, 2007, p. 224)

Hence one of the important ideas evoked by contemporary theologians is the discrepancy between Christian teaching and the lightness with which we talk about the existence of a full hell, hence the idea that only I and my friends or people who do me good will be present in Heaven, while our enemies or the Church burn in the fires of hell. This idea has run like a red thread through the entire theology of the 20th century (Bell, 2011, p. 4).

The 20th century has been classified by contemporary theologians as the century of universalism (McClymond, 2018, p. 38). Universalism has come to be regarded as one of the most important themes in theology today (Alfeyev, 2007, p. 256), globalisation and constant contact with various non-Christian religions have led theologians to address the issue through the prism of religious pluralism (Cameron, 1988, p. 101) and present a universalism that is believed even by atheists (Rock, 2014, p. 4), because the God of the 21st century must be accepted by the new generation of people without religion. Theologian Calvin McClymond reinforces this conclusion, saying that the recent return to universalism is linked to the desire to make Christianity credible in a secular and even hostile world (McClymond, 2018, p. 1012).

The surge in support for universalism clearly seems to have something to do with the current social and cultural situation of the church in the United States. The idea of universalism, in earlier centuries rejected by the Church and often denounced as heresy, has found increasing support among Christian

theologians since the 1960s and then in popular Christian literature since the 1990s, and more recently in the film industry. In 1998 a suggestive film was made about the existential perception of heaven and hell by the simple man. This film, entitled *What Dreams May Come*, tells the love story of Chris Nielsen and his wife Annie. Chris dies and goes to heaven, and his wife, unable to bear the pain of parting, commits suicide, ending up in eternal torment. The film tells the story of Chris' journey from heaven to hell in search of his wife. The main message is precisely the impossibility of rational and existential conception of eternal happiness in the absence of loved ones. Driven by love, Chris wants to be with his wife in hell rather than in heaven, since without her heaven is hell anyway. Likewise, the Protestant film *Come Sunday*, released in 2018 and based on real events in the life of Pentecostal pastor Carlton Pearson, succeeds in problematizing the classical teaching on universal salvation and launching some pro-universalism arguments that can hardly be overlooked, while revealing the growing reluctance of early 21st century Pentecostal church members towards such a theory, considered outright heresy.

The beginning of the new millennium has brought with it a series of changes, facilitated by widespread access to information, with universalism becoming an issue in the debate in which the Orthodox Church is invited to present a position that is as clear and convincing as possible for contemporary man.

The aim of this project is to observe new trends in the theological expression of the Church's eschatological teaching, views for and against universalism, and the formation of an Orthodox response to the official foundations of the Church. Through this research, the aim is to re-evaluate this Christian concept in current theological discourse. In doing so, we start from the idea that universalism is grounded and sustainable, and ask whether it can be considered an official dogma of the Church.

The novelty of the work lies not in the theme itself, but in the approach and the perspectives proposed. The importance of this research can be highlighted by several aspects. Firstly, there is a need for a more comprehensive approach to the subject from a contemporary Orthodox perspective. The imperative to address this topic is also given by the increased access to information in recent decades, which has favoured the Church's interaction with the issues raised by theologians and thinkers from overseas who have distinguished themselves in the debate on this topic. There is also insufficient information on the issue in Romanian theology, with foreign research often inaccessible to a large mass of theologians, who also do not obtain sufficient information during their theological studies to respond to the issue in a relevant way. Too few studies deal with this issue from an interfaith perspective. Therefore, the present paper is an attempt to respond to these concerns in the specific indigenous context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A short incursion into contemporary theology on universal salvation

The Russian theologian N. Berdiaev believes that man has a right to hell by virtue of his inalienable freedom (Berdyayev, 1962; Coates, 2019), and Olivier Clement states that only Christ, the God-Om, can know the mystery of salvation without constraint. The theologian makes a bold assertion, saying that "the fate of hell lies in the mercy of the saints who descend into darkness with Christ to deliver the damned" (Clement, 1999, p. 109). At the same time, however, no man can be constrained, so neither God himself nor his saints can violate the freedom of man who refuses God to the end. Clement concludes: "The last word is that of prayer, of hope. Let us not speculate about hell, about the doctrine of apocatastasis. Let us only pray that all may be saved!" (Clement, 1999, p. 109).

The Greek theologian Nikolaos Matsoukas gives apocatastasis theory the status of *theologumenum*. He states that "at the end of time, God will abolish the remembrance of evil" (Matsoukas, 2002, p. 151). It admits apocatastasis in the sense given by St. Maxim the Confessor, saying that "the restoration of the original order will be through conscience, and not through communion-participation" (Matsoukas, 2002, p. 151).

Matsoukas understands that the topos of good will recapitulate all in Christ, in this way the Church will extend to the limits of creation. In this extension, the theologian stresses, Satan, and the devils will have no place. Their disappearance in the eschatological dimension of the future is certain. In the end, the one fulfilled in holiness will notice the eschatological absence of Satan. "A special emphasis is placed on love, since even love for demonized creatures is whole. Such love steadfastly longs to extinguish the memory of evil" (Matsoukas, 2002, p. 153).

Evdokimov (2009) believes that God expects apocatastasis from man, and H. U. von Balthasar (1989) believes that if we do not have the right to affirm apocatastasis, we have the right, indeed the duty, to hope in the salvation of all.

One of the contemporary proponents of apocatastasis is the American theologian David Bentley Hart. His teaching on human salvation is articulated in the teaching of St. Gregory of Nyssa. According to this teaching, the Saviour Christ, considered to be the express image of God the Father, is from eternity in relation to humanity. Christ the Logos is the archetype according to which humanity was created: "*All things were made through him (the Son), and without him nothing was made that was made*" (John 1; 3), but also man, to be the living body of the Logos. Christ was reborn to restore humanity to its divine purpose. Through the Incarnation the Saviour Christ assumed his fullness, penetrating all that was human. Bentley Hart considers that this union of Christ with man has the consequence of including all humanity in the pattern he establishes. Therefore, the moment of the Ascension of the Saviour with his risen body to heaven means the presentation of all humanity by Christ to the Father. Christ's obedience will be fully accomplished only in the eschatological life when humanity is yielded as one body in the act of the Son's complete obedience. Then the words of the Apostle Paul will be fulfilled: "God will be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28). The resurrection of Christ sets in motion a process by which the power of the new life is transferred to all humanity and will be complete when the last trace of sin has disappeared.

In keeping with this universalism preached by St Gregory of Nyssa, David Bentley Hart argues that in the end, for divine reasons, all men will be justified in being saved, since "humanity could not reach fulfilment in the absence of any member of this body. In the absence of the one lost, humanity as God wills it could never be complete, nor even exist as a creature made in the image of God; the loss of even one would leave the body of the Logos incomplete, God's purpose in creation unfulfilled".

Pavel Florenski's eschatological perspective

By far, Florenski's eschatological thought is the deepest and most comprehensive in contemporary theology. In the light of his dogmatic consciousness, undiminished and of rare clarity, with an astonishing vigour and depth of thought, he manages to integrate in a single vision a well-actualised patristic theology, a biblical exegesis of great rigour, as well as significant experiences of pre-Christian religiosity, perfectly assimilated philosophical ideas and artistic intuitions, of any objectivity, becomes naked subjectivity, which always preserves its freedom, but only for itself, that is, a rather non-existent freedom. "It is the empty identity of the self with the self that cannot go beyond the limits of the unique, eternal moment of sin, anguish and rage against God, against its powerlessness, the only demented moment prolonged into eternity" (Florenski, 1999, pp. 140–141). "In the self", after this mysterious fission, it becomes pure

objectivity, always real, but only "for another", insofar as it has not manifested itself for the self in the asceticism that loves. "For in loving, in giving oneself totally in love, one receives all of oneself, but grounded, affirmed, deepened in the other. He doubles his existence - his talent, receiving in himself the image of God from others" (Florenski, 1999, pp. 140–141). But by hating, he also deprives himself of what he has. "But for the sin of a man who has refused, God does not punish the whole creation. The rejected divine face ceases to exist only for the one who rejected it, not absolutely. The righteous who have entered into the joy of their Lord, into the joy of every divine image created by Him, acquire God, assimilating also this rejected gift of God" (Florenski, 1999, pp. 140–141). But by hating, he also deprives himself of what he has. "But for the sin of a man who has refused, God does not punish the whole creation. The rejected divine face ceases to exist only for the one who rejected it, not absolutely. The righteous who have entered into the joy of their Lord, into the joy of every divine image created by Him, acquire God, assimilating also this rejected gift of God". At the same time, evil character that does not possess the element of you does not exist at all for God or for the righteous. It is pure illusion, existing only for oneself, and can be symbolised by the snake that swallows itself, or by the 'spirit shells', those masks without substance. Florenski mentions that he is referring to the extreme case of complete Satanisation of the complete fall from the Spirit of life, i.e. in the case of the hullabaloo of the Holy Spirit, of conscious resistance to the truth. In general, "this process of division is partial, it amputates only that part of the asceticism which is affected and infected" (Florenski, 1999, pp. 143–144). Here, then, are already two meanings of apocatastasis. In relation to God and the righteous, all will be saved without exception, even the demons as existences in themselves. And as existences for themselves, those who are completely demonized are excepted.

Florenski supports his theory with numerous scriptural texts, which evoke the idea of divine judgment that divides, that separates, but he dwells particularly on the passage from 1 Corinthians 3; 10-15, which culminates with the words: *"If anyone's thing is burned, he will be destroyed; but he will be saved, but as by fire"* (1 Corinthians 10; 15). Florenski's interpretation of this text is, I believe, the best criticism of the Catholic purgatory, which is a poor, bad, vulgar attempt at a psychological and entirely understandable solution of eschatological antinomies.

Love cannot not forgive. From the point of view of eternity everything is forgiven, everything is forgotten, so that "God will be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15; 28). So, it is from the height of the idea of God: the impossibility of universal salvation is impossible (thesis). But from the point of view of the freedom of the creature, the impossibility of universal salvation is possible (antithesis), for the creature can meet God's love with total refusal. The above thesis and antithesis are clearly antinomical. For as long as God's love is recognized, the thesis is inevitable; and as long as the freedom of the creature, which is itself the consequence of God's love, is recognized, the antithesis is inevitable. The antinomic character of the dogma of final destinies is evident not only from a logical point of view, but also from a psychological one. God is no longer reconciled to the creature and does not forgive a hateful, hardened soul, but the soul does not want to be reconciled to God.

In these circumstances, not to consider evil will as evil would mean not to recognize the authenticity of freedom, and to force the creature to love means to frustrate it from freedom, it means that God himself should stop loving. "But being Love, He does not abolish anyone's freedom, because those who willingly reject Him, He removes from Himself, giving them what they have chosen for themselves" (Florenski, 1999, pp. 138–139). Although Florenski concludes that within the limits of reason there is not and cannot be a solution to this antinomy, he nevertheless concludes an original theory in terms of the terminology and concepts used, but well-founded scripturally, which comes somewhat close to the "unique and

supralogical idea of eschatology" (Florenski, 1999, pp. 138–139). For this reason, he turns his gaze from the outset not to the plane of moralism but to the ontological. Here is his theory.

Since evil character is what hinders a person's salvation, it is clear that salvation requires the separation of the person and evil character and their individualization. In other words, the ego splits, the evil will of man manifested in lust and pride separates from man himself, acquiring an independent and non-substantial situation in existence and, at the same time, being an absolute nothingness "for another", that is, for other people. In other words, "in the self" of the person, being essentially holy, separates itself from "for the self" of the person since this is evil. Cast into the outer darkness, the evil (existence for its own sake), private asceticism (which is "itself", the authentic self), "will burn before the eyes of the One who embodies the fullness of its ideal. But, says the apostle, despite the destruction of the thing, in spite of the fire that has enveloped man, "he himself" will be saved" (Florenski, 1999, pp. 151–152).

Florenski underlined the words "in spite of" to mark the categorical divergence between his view and the doctrine of purgatory, where man is saved not in spite of, but because of, the torment of purification. Another difference is that in the doctrine of purgatory man is saved as a whole, whereas in Florenski's interpretation man is not saved in his entirety, but only "himself", "in his self" created by God. The whole content of consciousness will perish insofar as it does not come from faith, hope, and love and only consciousness in a state of pure potentiality will remain.

"And the thing of man, his self-consciousness, separating itself from itself, will become pure illusion, eternally burning, eternally destroyed, will become an infamous dream, burned by the gaze of God, a nightmare without the dreamer, a groaning and gnashing of teeth that no one hears, a kind of uninterrupted hallucination of nothingness that exists for no one" (Florenski, 1999, p. 152) "Such is Gehenna: The only reality in one's own consciousness and nothing in the consciousness of God and the righteous. Being inaccessible to their perception, the righteous will not regret the evil, eternally burning asceticism" (Florenski, 1999, p. 152).

Being inaccessible to their perception, the righteous will not regret the evil, eternally burning asceticism." For them - and objectively - everything will be good, everything will be holy, and God will be all in all. Only evil asceticism has stiffened having beforehand a terrible and infamous vision, for it the expulsion from the face of God is an eternal, frozen "now" that never becomes a past. In this expulsion it burns eternally, but neither the expulsion nor the fire exists, only aseity sees them as in a dream. "Being an unutterable absolute and complete independence in relation to everything (as asceticism wants) and at the same time having no creative activity, this asceticism is deprived of inner and outer motivations to stop, to put an end to its desire. Left to its own devices, asceticism becomes a slave to itself, and in the naked self-identity of the sinful self, like an eternal whirlpool that has reached the end of its powers and has never been stopped, it spins senselessly in the darkness of unlife and torment: it has come to "you will be like God!" (Florenski, 1999, p. 157).

Florenski's theory, in his attempt to resolve the antinomy of the Gehenna, although the most profound and daring, remains contradictory and incomplete. In the first place, if Gehenna and the torments of evil asceticism are not at all in the consciousness of God and the righteous, how does Florenski know about them, and what do we do now that we have found out about them? Or perhaps then neither he, nor we, nor God will remember what we now imagine about what will be then?! This contradiction does not diminish the merit of his theory, but once realised, it shows us that one can go further, towards an even wider meaning, which encompasses Florenski's insights. This is also what the second observation leads us to: the incompleteness of his theory. For, if the fate of evil asceticism is so clearly and plastically presented to us, Florenski tells us very little and ambiguously about the remaining "self". For him "the eternity of

torments consists in a moment of their own, absolute in content, when sin comes into contact with the gaze of God, and which can never meet again" (Florenski, 1999, p. 158).

"Himself", *autos*, will be saved by fire, but will only be saved naked, as pure divine consciousness, in the state of pure potentiality of self-consciousness. He will not be an existence for himself, conscious, but only for others. At the same time Florenski speaks of the eternal happiness of the "in-self" and of the fact that he will have long forgotten the evil aseity he had and which he threw away like an eye that smeared him. But how is happiness without self-consciousness possible? Will the self-consciousness remaining in a state of potentiality be reactivated? Will "in the self" receive a new self-consciousness in parallel with the bad aseity? Wouldn't this harm the unity of the person and his freedom? What is the meaning of "pure divine consciousness"? Will there be a consciousness of God without self-consciousness? As for the question of the eternal happiness of the "in-self", if we stay within the framework of Florenski's theory and try to be consistent, this happiness is only for others, it is more the happiness of the righteous of the saved "in-self" of the damned.

Or maybe there will be a joy of "in self" of others living his happiness that he doesn't know about?! Won't the righteous notice the absence of the self-consciousness of the restored "in-self"? Or will they themselves be in God's self-consciousness? Is not this "in-self" more degrading without consciousness, formally like that of the uncreated, than evil but self-conscious asceticism? These questions cannot be answered without elaborating a coherent theory of the structure of consciousness, which must not lack an important, decisive element that Florenski omitted: the level of superconsciousness. From this perspective, one could ask the question of the restoration or reactivation of self-consciousness, of the structural reintegration of asceticism. Or at least one could overcome the contradictions and inadequacies of Florenski's theory, thus taking a further step towards the zenithal solution of the antinomy of *gehenesis*.

Even if it lacks the main synthetic element, the keystone of the system (namely the idea of superconsciousness), Florenski's theory still has strong integrative values. He sees it as the antinomial synthesis of the following groups of views shared by theological thought. "There is neither tempering nor weakening of thesis and antithesis, but on the contrary we have a strengthening and an amplification: both thesis and antithesis are carried to their extreme development" (Florenski, 1999, p. 163).

The first group of representations begins with the absoluteness of evil: all are doomed, all will perish. K. Leontiev. The next step is the popular image of hell where sinners boil in cauldrons of pitch for ever and ever, and its reflection cultivated in art, where human imagination has no limits in inventing torments and tortures. "Then the conception is refined to the representation of the inner source of the infernal torments, of the suffering due to repentance too late and to the distance from God. Finally, all torments are reduced to the lash of God's love and repentance, to the humble sense of one's own lack of dignity and the fact that happiness is not meditated upon. But even this slight shadow of summer clouds slips and disappears from the spiritual horizon, as some atonists think" (Florenski, 1999, p. 164).

The other group of ideas also begins by affirming the insignificance of human things, but sees everything not in the black tones of demonism, but in the pink tones of pantheism. What is human is so insignificant that everyone is right, everything is fine in the end. Vulgar Origenism comes from this state of indifference. According to it, the teaching about hell is just a scarecrow designed to make sinners go straight. For God will forgive us all anyway. The next form is that of genuine originism, according to which the torments of the afterlife serve to make a person right but also to punish him. The doctrine of the purifying fire of Gregory the Theologian and Gregory of Nyssa goes one step higher: torments are only a contingent consequence of the purification process (Florenski, 1999, p. 173).

According to Florenski, both sets of views have the same drawback: they "rationalize the mystical process of punishment and purification, so that, according to the law of identity, sin appears either as the very substance of the soul (in the first Protestant-type series), or in the form of something external to the soul (in the second Catholic-type series). Both are unacceptable. Nothing can compel an ill-willed man to change his evil will; and as long as he does not change it, he will not mend it: sin cannot be lifted from man without touching his inner essence (contrary to the second series). On the other hand, it is impossible for us to imagine an absolutely and completely perverse man, for that would mean that the divine creation has failed: the image of God cannot perish (contrary to the first series). From this it follows that the only possible conclusion is the one we reached before, i.e. the antinomy. This opinion claims faith and does not fit the plane of reason" (Florenski, 1999, p. 164), which is the best proof of its religious value. "Therefore, if you ask me: "So there will be eternal torment?" I will answer: 'Yes'. And if you ask me: "Will there be a universal restoration to happiness?", again I will answer, "Yes" (Florenski, 1999, p. 164)

CONCLUSION

Universal salvation has begun to become a current theme in the field of Christian eschatology and soon a real issue for the whole Church. Every Christian Church is invited to express its opinion on this question. In this article we have tried to systematize the information to make it more accessible, so that the reader can find answers to some questions about the value, importance and relevance of the concept for today. We show how apocatastasis is viewed in contemporary theological thought. The Russian theologian N. Berdiaev believes that man has a right to hell by virtue of his inalienable freedom, and Olivier Clement states that only Christ, God-Om, can know the mystery of salvation without constraint. Evdokimov believes that God expects apocatastasis from man, and H. U. von Balthasar believes that if we do not have the right to affirm apocatastasis, we have the right, indeed the duty, to hope in the salvation of all. Pavel Florenski has an original theory, well-grounded biblically and patristically, according to which the divine judgment will separate "in the holy self" of the damned (which will be maintained without exception and contemplated with joy by the righteous, but will exist objectively only for them), from their self-consciousness, the completely independent asceticism in relation to God and the righteous, which will eternally torment itself, burning illusory, in its own empty subjectivity. In this view hell is the only reality in the self-consciousness of the damned and nothing in the consciousness of God and the righteous.

On the basis of biblical places, historical and logical arguments, we found that the universal salvation postulated by some contemporary theologians is not a sound theory. Even if universalism were doctrinally supported by Holy Scripture, which however is not the case, and even if sound theological and philosophical arguments supported it, universalism still could not be the official public teaching of the Church, for it would conflict with the moral, spiritual and missionary foundations of the institution.

The results we have reached as a result of this scientific approach can be used in other projects and studies. Other contemporary authors who tackle this difficult subject can also be analysed and sensitive subject, but whatever the approach, most of the arguments converge towards one solution: universal salvation is not possible for all people, given the extent of freedom and human responsibility, which has consequences for eternity. At the same time, however, we can hope with that the number of those who will eternally reject God will be very small.

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