

Jesus Christ the Saviour

We were asking about whether we can talk, within the work of redemption, about the liberation of Jesus Christ in such meaning, about freeing man from evil powers. This question is in relation with the complex of questions that deal with the existence and quality of the evil, the wickedness.

If we accept that “...all salvation initiatives start from God himself” and we state that we have to search the “magnificent knowledge” (Phil 3, 8) of Jesus superseding everything, because he is the totality of proclamation, he is the “Intercessor of salvation” and the “objective of the universe”¹, then his authority is the most important. If we regard Jesus the embodied Son of God and the risen Savior as depicted by the New Testament, then we find a point for certain that can be taken as an authentic base. This way we get, that is necessary, to consider the Christ figure before the resurrection. By analyzing the self-assertion of Jesus before Easter, B. Sesboué leads us to the conclusion that there are accepted moments within the pre-resurrection picture of Jesus, words and manifestations can be regarded as own that speak about his special self-assertion². As we have seen, the subject forming the basis of stories about the temptation in the wilderness also belongs to this: it has got such orientations and relationships that can hardly be guessed by the community after Easter³. Manifestations of Jesus recorded about the Beelzebul-accusation also belong to this. One of the Jesus self-assertion sayings was recorded in relation with this (Mt 12, 28; Lk 11, 20) that is eloquent regarding the pre-Easter Messianic mind and a real, successful exorcism mission. In order to evaluate these Jesus manifestations, jointly with O. Spinetoli, from the inception that *the subjection of the world to Satan “is a data of the Jewish biblical religion, and not a divine message or announcement”*,⁴ we have to assume Jesus who, by the way, is regarded the divine Savior, that he only played a role, and for the sake of an objective and essential truth, he adjusted himself to the superstitious-mythical (i.e. Pagan, Middle-East, Canaan related) idea of his age. In opposition to this, from the big picture of Jesus in the New Testament no such

¹ A Szentírás és a krisztológia, A NEMZETKÖZI TEOLÓGIAI BIZOTTSÁG Dokumentuma, SziT, Budapest, 1998, 48-49.

² Vö. SESBOUÉ, B., *Krisztus pedagógija. Az alapvető krisztológia elemei*, Vigilia, Budapest, 1997, 163-166.

³ Vö. PUSKÁS A., *A teremtés teológiája*, SziT, Budapest, 2006, 79.

⁴ SPINETOLI, O., *Lukács, a szegények evangéliuma* Agapé, Szeged, 2001, 401.

adjustment can be discovered. Jesus adapted himself only to the will of the Father, to human suffering, to rejected people, furthermore to such humane where his environment received understanding, encouragement and healing support from him, but not adapted to errors, lies, sins, falsehoods and additional matters that affect salvation. Jesus aspired, in a rather radical way, to clean the everyday faith from automatism, the binding excess of the unclean system, the deceitful practice of practice of religion like to keep the Sabbath, even more to put aside socially deep-rooted habits like the ban of meeting women or toll-keepers. He himself acknowledges this type of living (Mt 5, 38), and Apostle Paul also tells with expression: "...was not yea and nay, but in him was yea". (2Cor 1, 19) The same structure can be seen in the missionary commands like in his life before Easter, the task to deliver from evil forces is dominant, this is a Jesus feature again.⁵ It is a notable fact that the task of exorcism, compared to the forgiveness of sins, appeared several times in the wording of missionary commands formulated before (Mk 3, 13; Mk 6, 7; 6, 23; Mt 10, 1). The importance of forgiveness within the apostolic mission is increasing in the Gospels of Luke and John (Lk 24, 46; Jn 20, 22 – 23). Others in modern theology, by following up this, give chance to the reality of the exorcism of Jesus depicted in the gospels, even to the reality of the Jesus experience serving as the basis of the stories about the temptation in the wilderness.⁶ The very incomplete data of the contemporary history of religion are insufficient to classify Jesus of Nazareth into a (unfounded) religious history category, and this way to suggest that his exorcism activity can be reintegrated to a given Pagan-Jewish forms. The acts of healing and liberation of Jesus cannot be highlighted from the propagation of the Gospel, they jointly and simultaneously aim at the presentation of the victory already taken place and for good. The now and then occurring Pagan or Jewish exorcists did not have such correlation and complexity.⁷

From the pre-Easter pictures of the New Testament the personage of Jesus is expressly outlined who has no other choice but to deal regularly with a hostile, evil, man-destroying figure who turns against him as well, trying to cunningly interfere his

⁵ I. m. 81.

⁶ Vö. KERTELGE, K., Teufel, Dämonen, Exorzismen in biblischer Sicht, in KASPER, W. – LEHMANN, K., Teufel, Dämonen – Besessenheit, zur Wirklichkeit des Bösen, Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, Mainz, 1978, 9.

⁷ Vö. PUSKAS, i.m. 81-82.; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Kittel, Vol. III, Eerdmans Publishing Company, Michigan, 1965, 129.

Son-of-God, Messianic mission. Among events of the Gospels, Jesus does not meet the evil spirit at peripheric places and this happens in various ways: in the wilderness, through possessed and ill people, and in his suffering. The expression “fight” is not really appropriate to use for this. Through his whole attendance, Jesus constantly surprises his contemporary and the succeeding generations by his humility, obedience, his relying on the Father and poverty that cannot be separated from his reputation and signs of omnipotence. By examining this person with special behavior, having a peculiar authority, after all with a very man-like moving, the word of faith can be independently conceptualized as described in the letter to the Galatians: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.” (Gal 5, 1) The Church, leaving the pre-Easter Jesus picture and wording the Christ faith after the resurrection, definitely stated and proclaimed: the liberation of God came visibly into sight in Jesus of Nazareth. This liberation is clearly targeted to three objects on which man has no authority: evil power, sin and death, the roots of this faith date back to the traditions before Easter, the major one among them is probably the liberation from the evil.⁸

Since Jesus before and after Easter is the winner over the personal, evil enemy according to the New Testament, similarly, and based only on this we accept the groping, teaching initiatives of Old Testament texts of various origin that may refer to the presence of such hostile activity in the life on mankind the characteristics of which can hardly be outlined.

Looking back with the respect of liberation to the Old Testament, the development of the proclamation can be more easily outlined. The Old Testament tells about the only God who primarily appears as the liberating God. The Old Testament gradually shows a figure who appears as a rebel against God and the enemy of man. In the history of religion the common experience of the people shows a critical and rational approach of spiritual factors appearing among the forms of human misery; invisible, conscious, unforgiving and destroying beings with hiding influence, having role at the start and development of suffering, in the evolution of various sins and human disputes. By containing and using ancient symbols and notions beyond the Bible (chaos, monsters, demonic names) they demonstrate the jeopardizing, manifold role of evil powers ruling over the human defeatedness. Due to this the faith of the

⁸ Vö. AMATO, A., *Gesù il Signore, Saggio di cristologia*, Edizoini Dehoniane, Bologna, 160.

Old Testament does not become either polytheist or dualist, or even demon believer. The Old Testament does not identify clearly the figure of hostile beings either with fallen angels or does not show their clear relationship with the main enemy, the Satan.⁹ By knowing the liberation activity of Jesus it can be stated that in spite of the few Old Testament notes, this evil power seems to be the reason of human failure from the beginning. The Old Testament does not deal in detail the way of overcoming, liquidating the spiritual pursuit of the anti-God evil, however makes the suffering man sharply speak, whose voice calling Him contains the request to deliver from this invisible mischief, its spiritual environment and impact (hell, etc.). The man with the faith of the Old Testament recognizes that there are personal powers and impacts from which only God can deliver, since he continuously celebrates the common experience of the people, the dramatic-historical memories of the delivery of the only God; at the same time there is a constant wait towards the Messiah to be come, and he waits for the deliverer in this relation, being immersed for a universal deliverer regarding the misery of all people and the whole of the history. The identification of the Satan and demons, the reference of their wickedness to the sin and fall of the angels, along the path of the canonic and deuterocanonical books, was realized by the apocryphal literature, the Jewish faith between the two Testaments and its byproduct. There they started to talk about actual delivery from these, and about the punishment of fallen angels. The impact of this can be seen in the New Testament however the laconicism (similar to that of the Old Testament) and soundness can be examined if compared to the angel – demon faith of the contemporary Jewish faith. *“Jesus’ teaching and the Christian preaching assumes and integrates several elements of the inter-testamental faith.”*¹⁰ Similarly to the Old Testament, the evil power comes up in the New Testament because God wants to rescue His creatures from all poverty, who *“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty.”* (Gal 5, 13) From the proclamations of the Old Testament results that *evil is neither from God, nor is perpetual*, even more it has not got its own creating power (this was explained and recorded later by church teachings and the magisterium). Since for striking down a proud, anti-God revolt man has experienced external reasons as well, since the direction to the sin during a mental

⁹ Vö. PUSKÁS A., *A teremtés teológiája*, SZIT, Budapest, 2006, 77-79.; LAVATORI, R., *Satana, unc aso serio, Studio di demonologia cristiana*, Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 1996, 60-65.; GOZZELINO, G., *Angeli e demoni*, San Paolo, Milano, 2000, 22-29.

¹⁰ TARIÁNYI B., *Biblikus teológia – Tanulmányok*, Szent Jeromos Bibliatársulat, Budapest, 1998, 108.

decision might have come from an external tempter, being himself a spiritual being, who himself is proud and against God. The figure of the proud angel rebelling against God was clearly created in the centuries before Jesus was born, having a tumble from his cherubic dignity where he was created to be good and blessed, gets stubborn in his pride therefore his fate is sealed. It is very important, starting to unfold in the Old Testament especially in the world of prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, that the victim, i.e. the self-sacrifice overcomes the evil powers.

The text of the New Testament does not want to teach demonology, it is about the deliverance. *“The New Testament literature does not talk about the evil only if the victory of Jesus is proclaimed by which God helps man”* – says G. Gozzelino.¹¹ The denominations of the evil power in the Gospels that can be taken back to Jesus (enemy, Satan, unclean spirit, demon, spirit of illness, earthly emperor) relate clearly to the same spiritual reality, at most a kind of, simple hierarchy can be read from the texts according to which the Satan (διαβόλος) can be regarded as the head of demons and unclean spirits.¹² When using together with other expressions from New Testament texts it becomes clear that Jesus and the tradition superimposed on Him uses the contemporary expression; likewise in case of good angels, the simplicity, generous density, laconicism and soberness can also be seen. From the Gospels till the Book of Revelations it is clearly perceptible that the saint authors mark the same dark and destructive power by using various traditional notions.¹³ There are signals in the New Testament in relation with the nature of the evil power in so far as to depict the deliverance from it, the liberation power of Jesus, or to give warning about something to take care of, to the person asking for, or already in the state of liberation. According to the New Testament, the devil may cause illness or obsession to some people without the sin of which would give reason for this; he is the enemy of the land of God, being in real, earthly power where people settle against the will of God. He obstructs the reception of the Gospel, he is the constant tempter and killer of man, opposing to the Carrier of life he is the king of death who turns against Jesus and by working on the physical death tries to overcome Him, finally he is the persecutor of

¹¹ GOZZELINO, G., *Angeli e demoni*, San Paolo, Milano, 2000, 186.

¹² LAVATORI, R., *Il diavolo tra fede e ragione*, Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 2001, 16.

¹³ Vö. SCHÖNBORN, C., *Isten elküldte Fiát, Krisztológia*, Agapé, Szeged, 2008 166.

his disciples, his people and his Church.¹⁴ The Gospel is summarized by the letter to the Hebrews: *”Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in, that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”* (Heb 2, 14 – 18)

Demonological notions of the intertestamentarian literature somehow influenced the church fathers of the first four centuries, but these mainly help to explain the message of the New Testament, where except for some moments, (e.g. the explanation in Gen 6, 2 – 4, or the Apokatastasis theorem) the teaching of the fathers is surprisingly uniform and coherent regarding the liberation work of Jesus. Fathers go further in what was started in the New Testament, to reduce the evil power to common denominator that is subject to the liberation of Jesus, and this is used with rich typology, sometimes allegorized, for the interpretation of the Old Testament. Apart from slight differences the church fathers of the 2nd -5th century appear with such uniform concept in which the teaching of the Church is ready about the liberation from the evil power, and thus finding the proper place in the synthesis of St. Anselm, St. Bonaventura and St. Thomas Aquinas as well.

When we believe together with the Church that *”Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son”* (Col 1, 13), we have to see how the Redeemer himself faces with this deliberate opposition, with the envy to all happiness, with the bullheaded, destructive will. In honesty He himself suffered from him, died of him, descended to the hell, meeting within the territories with his terrible work, who is death himself, in order to liberate man in all respects and ways that is imaginable; to surmount every obstacle in order to make man capable to endlessly celebrate the land of God. The liberation of God in the eschatological meaning occurred by personally meeting the devil. The liberation of

¹⁴ Vö. PUSKÁS A., *A teremtés teológiája*, SzIT, Budapest, 2006. 79-81.

man, kept unlawfully confined by the sin, is the act of love as it can be seen from the exorcisms in the Gospels, and also highlighted by several church fathers (e.g. Irenaeus) as well. As we have seen, the love of Christ that is jointly directed towards the will of the Father and the poverty of man, accepts embodied all confrontation, fight, humiliation, poverty, persecution, death and hell that can be experienced by meeting the Satan and his work. Therefore among dimensions of redemption (sacrifice, replacement, redemption, compensation, solidarity), the decisive respect is the replacement, in solidarity accepted by love, that makes a move among prisoners, against the enemy; in self-sacrifice it undertakes to force the “killer” to total retreat both in poverty and death. Starting from St. Irenaeus¹⁵ and the truth of St. Anselm it can be stated that man, who had been given the task at the beginning to overcome Satan but had a fall, is owing to restore what was spoiled; finally it should be the man to overcome the tempting detainer, and get back that was lost during the first defeat. The Redeemer, in the unity of divine and human nature is capable to complete this task. The liberating love, voluntarily and in a presenting way has suffered all curses given by the devil to man, and during the earthly life the detainer has been met more and more deeply and has become more and more a victim. “*The battle against the Satan does not start with making a show of the power*” – says C. Schönborn.¹⁶ Jesus Christ who is, without exception poor, demeaning, obedient, gentle and humble, gained the victory in decisive situations like his birth and his death on the cross. Satan wanted to fight against him. He not necessarily noticed the totally different battle of Jesus.¹⁷ The unique power of the teaching of Jesus, his omnipotent reputation, being the head, his secret of being the Son of God shows even before Easter the signs of the land to come, by the way of exorcisms, His glory is developed in the resurrection and the faith based on it. The means of the redeemer life before Easter, in the spirit of the eight beatitudes, are “fighting” the divine love, in the “weakness”. The redeemer toolkit, seemingly with two different types means the same, the authority is the effect of the same weakness, the humility is the presence of the divine omnipotence and the only life of one person of Jesus Christ; they are both the manifestation of that agape

¹⁵ „A Sátán uralmából való kiszabadítás a megváltás *terminus a quo*-ja, valamint az emberiség megelőző történelmének összefoglalása.” A megváltás teológiájával kapcsolatos néhány kérdés, a NEMZETKÖZI TEOLÓGIAI BIZOTTSÁG dokumentuma, SZIT, Budapest, 1997, 28.

¹⁶ SCHÖNBORN, C., *Isten elküldte Fiát, Krisztológia*, Agapé, Szeged, 2008, 167.

¹⁷ Vö. KERESZTÉNY R. O.CIST, *Jézus Krisztus*, SzIT, Budapest, 1995, 180.

that the enemy cannot bear in any form, when this turned to him on the cross, it had to disappear for good. The liquidation of the evil is done by the redeeming love, for the very reason to have love for their creatures in the judgment, as “self – liquidation”. Hans Urs von Balthasar quotes the idea of H. Schauf about the “*perpetual self-consumption*”. “*If the person created as good turns against the goodness itself, then in essence it turns against himself, this could be only called as absolute deformation... Who irreversibly refuses the fire of the divine love, he will experience it only as a burning fire.*”¹⁸ Ziegenaus also says, that “*a certain God, who is himself love, does not hate anybody, not even Satan.*” The endless distance from God depends on the creature and not on God.¹⁹ It is his own weapon, the death, that turns against the enemy in Christ who is about to die on the cross. Death comes from him due to jealousy, wickedness and hatred. In the crucifixion of Jesus Christ such a divine and human love arrived to its peak that “died for everyone”, by experiencing this, the existence of evil (aiming to death) is divested from its living since life giving in Jesus for others is expanded to all people.

The Holy Spirit has got his own role in the divine act of redeeming, from the moment that he “takes” Jesus to the wilderness of temptation; he is the “hand of God” who makes the devil leave, and proves to be acting in the sacraments from the very first days of the Church after Easter: first in baptism, in presenting the charisma of exorcism, in discernment, by the truth of the divine teaching. In the history of salvation, in relation to redeeming, the figure of the “woman” flashes who is against the snake and the dragon, and becomes tangible as Mary, Mother of God having role around the redeeming Child and the victorious Lamb of God, merging into the historical assistance of the Church on the way of liberation. The service of the faithful angels, the testimony, sacraments, sacramentals, devotion of the living and fighting Church, continues the work of Christ, the head, against the evil power until the parusia, in the in the possession of the merciful gifts of the redeeming personification, crucifixion and resurrection. According to C. Schönborn “*the Church has been*

¹⁸ BALTHASAR, H. U., *Mit szabad remélnünk?* Sík Sándor Kiadó, Budapest, 2006. 106.

¹⁹ ZIEGENAUS, A., *A teremtés jövője Istenben, Eszkatológia*, SzIT, Budapest, 2008. 181.

*fighting with the beaten enemy.*²⁰ Jesus Christ delegates his Church on behalf of him, to help mankind liberate from rambling and heresies.

Several church fathers proclaim the faith according to which the redemption implements the land of God so that the personal opposite is liquidated. This faith is further confirmed by teachings of the universal councils and papal statements: its considered essence is conceptualized as acknowledged by St. Basil the Great: “*Jesus Christ liberated us from sin from malediction due to sin, from death and evil.*”²¹ Until the 2nd Vatican Council there were 22 Magisterium statements about the role, impacts of, and liberation from the fallen angel.²² There are several clear relevances in the texts of the 2nd Vatican Council in relation with the evil and salvation history. There are 18 expressions altogether relating to the devil that may not seem much, nevertheless contains the opinion of the Church and the sensibility of thinking of the Council for the totality of the faithdeposit.²³ Pope Paul VI gave teaching several times about the evil power of which the homily on 29th June 1972 is an outstanding one.²⁴ Another teaching was told in the same year on 15th November at the general audience.²⁵ He analyzes the activity of the devil and calls attention to the liberating power of the salvation that is “still going on today” especially in baptism, and refers to the importance of the spiritual fight. Similarly, Pope John Paul II expressed this on various private audiences²⁶ as a catechesis, about the role of angels and fallen angels. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, published in 1992 mentions the baptism against-saying and the exorcism (1237), the prayer of the Church for liberation and the sacramental of exorcism (1673), Satanism among idol-worship (2113), sins of occult practices related to the devil (2115), within the examination of Our Father pray, the necessity of the gift of discernment for people who live in temptations (2847).

²⁰ SCHÖNBORN, C., *Isten elküldte Fiát, Krisztológia*, Agapé, Szeged, 2008, 250-251.

²¹ Vö. NAGY SZENT BASZILEOSZ, *A keresztségről* I, 16, ford. Vanyó László, in *Szent Baszileosz művei*, Ókeresztény írók, XVI. kötet (szerk. Vanyó László), SztT, Budapest, 2001, 159.

²² DH 149; DH 224; DH 241; DH 247-248; DH 286; DH 291; DH 411; DH 457-458; DH 575 (37); DH 631; DH 723; DH 800-801; DH 1078; DH 1333; DH 1440; DH 1511; DH 1521; DH 1858-1869; DH 1862; DH 3642; DH 3670; DH 3678.

²³ LG 5.16.17.35.48.55.63; GS 2.13a.13b.22.37; SC 6; AG 3.9.14.19; DH 11b.

²⁴ *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, 10 (1972) Città del Vaticano 1973, 703-709.

²⁵ L.m. 1168-1173.

²⁶ Pl. 1986. július 9-én, augusztus 13-án, illetve augusztus 20-án; in *Credo, le catechesi del papa*, 3 Leumann, Torino, 1988, 140-165.

The Christian teaching puts accent on the complexity of reality, thus in this manner responds to the mystery of evil in the earth.²⁷ The origin of evil is not reduced to one or two factors, finally does not teach that everything can be explained from the man, even the solution can be derived from; no dualist world concept is composed by enlarging the role of the evil, but teaches the man to a realistic fronting against the evil, but instead of escaping with the existing godman, in fear, to face the evil in reality, and if necessary, to fight at possession of victory – giving hope in any case for the eternal future without the evil.

The angle of view of hope is not reduced by the picture of the liberating Jesus moreover it is widened and enriched.

²⁷ Vö. LAVATORI, R., *Satana, un casa serio, Studio di demonologia cristiana*, Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 1996, 418.