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CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON SALVATION: CHRISTOLOGY AND ESCHATOLOGY EXPLORED

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Abstract

The hypothesis of this paper is based on an examination of the relationship between Christology and eschatology with soteriology, and through the analysis of their selected core concepts, it seeks to contextualize the discourse on salvation within a contemporary framework. Specifically, the study explores the terms of hope, faith, freedom, and bodily resurrection, which provide a framework for a modern approach to soteriological reality.

The selected terms, when considered together, demonstrate their suitability in connecting the experiences of the contemporary individual, their existential position, and perspectives on salvation, while also drawing on rich theological traditions and Catholic doctrine. The initial research question that stemmed from the interconnection of the two treatises (Christology and eschatology) with soteriology has provided us with significant insights into various possibilities for contemporary understanding of salvation.

Key words: salvation, Christology, Eschatology, hope, freedom, bodily resurrection, faith.

Introduction

As the theological landscape evolved over time, profound developments in soteriological thought and Christological understanding emerged almost simultaneously, with eschatology playing a crucial role in connecting their fundamental concepts. It is primarily for this reason that we utilize these two doc-

trinal treatises (Christology and eschatology) to explore how to speak about soteriology today, not only in an isolated academic context, but also within the framework of vibrant proclamation from which theology cannot abstract itself. Certainly, the interpretation of signs of the times, along with the linguistic and conceptual comprehension of the modern individual, as well as the theological pursuit of clarity in its content, all contribute significantly to the communication of the fundamental soteriological message.

The concept of salvation is complex, not only in theological terms but also linguistically. It is a category that can be used in a completely secular manner, and, on the other hand, it is discussed within other religious traditions as well. A univocal discourse on salvation cannot even be found within Catholic theology, starting from New Testament expressions, through the deepening of the Fathers and the scholastic schools, which, while contemplating the purpose of the Incarnation, also spoke about its salvific effect. The Reformation and Counter-Reformation took their positions on the question of salvation, and in the modern and postmodern eras, we find further explorations of this theme. Traditional soteriological models (the theory of enlightenment and restoration of humanity; the theory of sacrifice (St. Augustin) and the rights of the devil; the theory of satisfaction (St. Anselmo) and just punishment (Luther)), as well as contemporary soteriological approaches (God's self-communication (Rahner); anticipation of resurrection (Moltmann); salvation as liberation (Gutiérrez); soteriology of love (O'Collins)), reveal the multifaceted complexity in the endeavour to approach and elucidate the question of salvation.¹

The Second Vatican Council not only narrowly views the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as soteriological moments, it also includes His entire life, thus introducing the concept of solidarity as a soteriological category for the first time (*Gaudium et spes*, 32). Subsequently, the notion of solidarity starts to supersede the idea of satisfaction in soteriology.² God the Father »did not spare his own Son but handed him over for the sake of us all« (Rom 8:32) and He became man »for our sake and for the sake of our salvation«³ as stated

¹ Cf. *Christian Theologies of Salvation. A Comparative Introduction*, Justin S. HOLCOMB (ed.), New York, 2017; *Salvation in the New Testament. Perspectives on Soteriology*, Jan G. VAN DER WATT (ed.), Leiden-Boston, 2005; *Isus Krist Bogočovjek i Spasitelj*, Stjepan KUŠAR (ed.), Zagreb, 1997, 157-259; Ante MATELJAN, Božje milosrđe i naše spasenje. Soteriološke teorije i Drugi vatikanski koncil, in: *Bogoslovska smotra* 86 (2016) 3, 597-623; Aldo STARIĆ, Teorije spasenja kroz povijest, in: *Bogoslovska smotra* 52 (1982) 4, 513-535.

² Cf. Ivan DUGANDŽIĆ, *Pred Biblijom i s Biblijom. Odgovori i poticaji*, Zagreb, 2007, 162.

³ Heinrich DENZINGER – Peter HÜNERMANN, *Zbirka sažetaka vjerovanja, definicija i izjava o vjeri i čudoređu*, Đakovo, 2002, no. 125.

in the Nicene Creed. Accordingly, due to the indissoluble link between the Person of Jesus Christ and the act of redemption, soteriology becomes a crucial intersection of both Christology and eschatology. As we delve into the modern approach to soteriology, we will draw upon the fundamental concepts and insights from these disciplines to enrich our discussion. Furthermore, it is crucial to continually strive for more effective ways of articulating mutual interconnectedness of these disciplines in proclaiming and reflecting the unified event of salvation. The purpose of this paper is precisely rooted in their reciprocity, in order to construct a potential framework for a contemporary approach to salvation using selected concepts drawn from their theological discourse: categories of hope, freedom, faith and bodily resurrection as central.

Given the four selected concepts we aim to explore contemporary aspects of the discourse on salvation, we emphasize that we do not associate any of them exclusively with Christology or eschatology. Instead, we examine them within their theological context, which at times encompasses both tracts. In addition, it will be important to consider anthropological realities that assist us in better understanding the human being today, in order to proclaim the soteriological message more appropriately. We start from the question: how to translate the complex soteriological message into the contemporary language, so that it remains faithful to the doctrine and yet understandable?

1. The question of language concepts

In the patristic period, every attempt to explain the doctrine of redemption faced a significant challenge: the issue of adaptation.⁴ This difficulty persists across all eras, including our own. The considerable number of adaptable components and the various terms used to describe the work of Jesus Christ suggest that the doctrine of redemption has been in a state of development longer than many other Christian doctrines.⁵ Despite the long history of Christianity, there has not been a cohesive systematic soteriology. Some may argue that the diversity within this area is even more suitable than it is in Christology.⁶ This leads us to one of the objectives of this article, namely a translational endeavour – an attempt to translate selected Christological-Eschatological con-

⁴ Cf. Donath HERCSIK, *Gospodin Isus. Studija o kristologiji i soteriologiji*, KS, Zagreb, 2023, 159.

⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 162.

⁶ Cf. Gerard O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical and Systematic Study of Jesus*, Oxford, 2009, 298.

cepts in a way that is both relatable and understandable to a contemporary audience when discussing salvation. »Language was and still is the carrier of the message of salvation, and it also affects salvation.«⁷ Therefore, the task of systematic theology is not only to reflect on the fundamental contents of faith, it should also be the one that creatively translates these contents into a language that is understandable and accessible to contemporary people, given the signs of the times. Thus, the content framed in this way should serve as a stimulus and support on the path to salvation.

Of course, awareness is necessary when selecting a particular metaphor or term from the diverse range available in the discourse of soteriology, both biblical and traditional, and when developing it in isolation or at the expense of others. Failure to do so risks resulting in a partial and inadequate comprehension of the reality of redemption.⁸ Here, we aim to avoid this issue by not considering the selected concepts in isolation or solely in relation to contemporaneity, but rather in their complex theological context, especially by referring to the dogmatic treatises on Christology and Eschatology. However, metaphorical language is indispensable in communicating the soteriological message, and it deserves significant attention. This is particularly important considering that »metaphor is widespread in everyday life, not only in language but also in thinking and action.«⁹

Various metaphorical descriptions are employed to soteriologically portray the state of humanity. Examples of such discourse on the soteriological reality can be found throughout the New Testament.¹⁰ Examples include being spiritually dead or enslaved, failing to follow the »new Moses«, burdened with

⁷ Jan G. VAN DER WATT, Introduction, in: *Salvation in the New Testament. Perspectives on Soteriology*, Jan G. VAN DER WATT (ed.), Leiden-Boston, 2005, 1.

⁸ Cf. Trevor HART, Redemption and Fall, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, Colin E. GUNTON (ed.), Cambridge, 1997, 190.

⁹ George LAKOFF – Mark JOHNSON, *Metafore koje život znače*, Zagreb, 2015, 3.

¹⁰ For example, while the verb σώζω in Greek can have the following meanings: to save, deliver, rescue, preserve, keep, maintain, heal, skilfully achieve, pass, continue, live on, and σωτηρία means salvation in terms of a means of salvation, sustenance, protection, mercy, deliverance, happiness, health, all within the context of secular Greek. As for the New Testament Greek, the verb σώζω can signify being saved from evil, liberating someone, preserving from death, delivering from eternal destruction, and being a participant in salvation. Cf. Marijan Jerko FUČAK, Spasenje čovjeka u Novom zavjetu s osobitim obzirom na nauk sv. Pavla, in: *Isus Krist Bogočovjek i Spasitelj*, Stjepan KUŠAR (ed.), 157-158. Furthermore, salvation carries the meaning of wholeness, integrity, and is associated with peace, blessing, righteousness, and deliverance from evil. In the Old Testament, it is perceived as a given, something efficacious in the present and future, with Yahweh as its guarantor. The prophets herald salvation as a future reality, while in the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the ultimate bringer of salvation. It is realized in the

guilt or sin, and more. Each of these descriptions and metaphors corresponds to a distinct image, such as forensic language for guilt, the birth of new life for overcoming death, conversion for finding the right path, atonement for sin, and so forth. Nevertheless, these images all converge on a common theme: the helpless condition of humans, incapable of independently restoring their broken relationship with God. Again, a variety of images are employed to convey God's intentions and actions. Forensically, people are justified; socially, they become friends or children of God; culturally, they are purified, and so on. Exploring how this restoration occurred leads to a range of images. It may involve a price being paid, a person being born from God, a favourable judgment being rendered, a sacrifice being offered, and more. All these images attempt to elucidate how the relationship between God and humans could be restored. These expressions form an integral part of the imagery employed to articulate the soteriological reality.¹¹ In nearly all cases, these diverse images are connected to Christological events, specifically the crucifixion and resurrection, or are by its content linked to the Eschatological concepts. It is our contention, therefore, that it is evident and justified to employ the selected Christological-eschatological concepts of hope, faith, freedom, and bodily resurrection to make our discourse on salvation more comprehensible and relevant to contemporary individuals. By utilizing specific theological and biblical imagery, we seek to bring the message of salvation closer to the people of today, to whom we inevitably proclaim this message.

Images serve as tools of conveying specific salvific concepts. It is important to differentiate between the medium of expression (the image) and the actual content of the expression (the message). While the image serves as a means of representing a distinct reality, such as the soteriological reality, it does not constitute the reality itself. Instead of fixating on the image itself, the emphasis should be placed on the message conveyed by the image. Images fulfil a functional role in communicating these ideas.¹² Consequently, it is more advantageous to centre attention on the conceptual reality introduced by a given image, thereby surpassing the formal expression. Ultimately, it is theol-

Paschal mystery, that is, through faith and hope in the resurrection. Cf. *Praktični biblijski leksikon*, Zagreb, 1997, 386-388.

¹¹ Cf. Jan G. VAN DER WATT, Conclusion – Soteriology of the New Testament. Some Tentative Remarks, in: *Salvation in the New Testament. Perspectives on Soteriology*, Jan G. VAN DER WATT (ed.), 519-520.

¹² Cf. Jan G. VAN DER WATT, Conclusion – Soteriology of the New Testament. Some Tentative Remarks, in: *Salvation in the New Testament. Perspectives on Soteriology*, Jan G. VAN DER WATT (ed.), 521.

ogy that both employs and interprets these images, revealing their theological message that transcends the mere form or representation.

Just as the New Testament authors employ various, yet complementary, concepts when discussing salvation¹³, which are largely influenced by their respective contexts and consequently shape their linguistic concepts, we also have the task today to speak and proclaim the salvific event of Jesus Christ within the circumstances in which contemporary individuals live. Despite being historically and culturally conditioned, theological discourse must not adapt to the time or, worse yet, overshadow the content of faith with its expression. In the end, theological discourse is prophetically understood in a biblical sense: it is often challenging and demanding because its goal is to provide a salvific response to God's calling. On the other hand, the language of contemporary individuals is often devoid of substance, frequently characterized by technicism and manipulation. As a result, the task of conveying meaning, a sense of the sacred, and soteriological messages is further complicated.¹⁴

Referring to the assertion made by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI that God has frequently »been portrayed using true yet concurrently empty and clichéd formulas, which no longer resonate with our contemporary life context and are frequently no longer comprehensible«¹⁵, it becomes crucial to render the essential content of faith, encompassing soteriological elements intelligible to enable its actualization in lived experiences. As emphasized by Pope John

¹³ »The Hebrew verb *yāsha'* and the Hebrew noun *shālôm* denote, respectively, 'to save,' 'to deliver from oppression,' and 'to provide peace and prosperity'; and 'salvation,' 'completeness,' 'peace,' or 'well-being.' The verb *shālam* means 'to be whole, uninjured, sound, peaceful,' and the Hebrew Piel form (a term of Hebrew grammar denoting action) *shillēm* means 'to restore,' 'to complete,' 'to secure.' The most transparent meaning of the term is conveyed by the book of Judges. The narratives of Judges recount a repeated cycle of events in which God raises up 'saviors' to deliver Israel. The Greek *sōtēria*, 'deliverance,' 'salvation,' and *sōtēr* and *sōtērios*, 'savior,' 'deliverer,' 'preserver,' occur nearly 250 times in the LXX, and some 64 times in the NT. The verb *sōzō*, 'to save,' occurs nearly 100 times. The Greek *sōtēr* generally translates Hebrew *yēsha'*; *sōtēria* usually translates *yēsha'* or *yeshū'āh*. 'Saviors' sprang up with ideas of a 'golden age' in the Roman imperial period, an age that would bring peace and security. To Hellenistic or Greek-speaking Jews, God kept Israel from dangers, and was *pantōn sōtēr*, 'savior of all,' and the author of deliverance (Wis. 16:7; cf. 1 Macc. 4:30; 3 Macc. 6:29, 32; 7:16). The term could also be applied to philosophers, statesmen, physicians, and pagan deities. Later Judaism, however, applies the term only to God.« Anthony C. THISELTON, *Systematic Theology*, Cambridge, 2015, 211-213.

¹⁴ Cf. Iva MRŠIĆ FELBAR, (Ne)razumljivost teološkog jezičnog diskursa, in: *Filozofija i religija. Suvremene perspektive*, Zbornik radova sa znanstvenog skupa održanog 3. XII. 2016. na Katoličkom bogoslovnom fakultetu Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Danijel TOLVAJČIĆ – Iva MRŠIĆ FELBAR – Nenad MALOVIĆ – Alojz ČUBELIĆ (eds.), Zagreb, 2018, 176-177.

¹⁵ BENEDIKT XVI., *Svjetlo svijeta. Papa, Crkva i znakovi vremena*, Split, 2010, 82.

Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*: »The Church cannot abandon man, for his 'destiny', that is to say his election, calling, birth and death, salvation or perdition, is so closely and unbreakably linked with Christ.«¹⁶ Finally, the question of salvation is a central theological inquiry.¹⁷

2. Hope and freedom: exploring the dynamics of salvation

The concepts of hope and faith are not only biblically and theologically grounded but also anthropologically close to contemporary men and women. Hope affirms the eschatological tension between »already« and »not yet«, affirming the present oriented towards the future. The horizon of hope includes responsibility and calls into question historical accomplishments, directing humans towards eternity and the question of salvation. Ultimately, hope is »a gift of God's grace through which we experience His salvation«¹⁸.

Freedom, on the other hand, as a constitutive part of human nature and a state bestowed by the Creator, finds its culmination in Christ. »This freedom obtained through Christ is certainly greater than any other kind of freedom, be it political, social, or economic.«¹⁹ However, on the journey towards discovering the fullness of freedom, humans inevitably encounter lower degrees of freedom as well as its limitations, in order to be able to make ethical choices for or against salvation. The inherent nature of freedom alone would not suffice to attain the actuality of salvation. It is through the transformative power of grace that this freedom is activated to its fullest extent, especially when individuals personally and fully align themselves with God's calling, whether it be through the sacrament of baptism or by conforming to the likeness of Christ.²⁰

People today desire autonomy, sovereignty, and agency in their actions and life planning. Moreover, the concept of freedom is excellently linked to us as co-creators, which is emphasized today in fields such as entrepreneurship and the start-up scene. However, this is an initial step towards approaching the notion of salvation, given the translational endeavour that theology undergoes

¹⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptor hominis*, *Encyclical letter at the beginning of his papal ministry*, 4.III.1979, *Redemptor Hominis* (4.III.1979) | John Paul II (vatican.va) (Accessed 26.VI.2023), no. 14.

¹⁷ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptor hominis*, no. 7; Ante MATELJAN, Božje milosrđe i naše spasenje. Soteriološke teorije i Drugi vatikanski koncil, in: *Bogoslovska smotra* 86 (2016) 3, 597-623, here 602.

¹⁸ Nada, in: *Enciklopedijski teološki rječnik*, Zagreb, 2009, 701.

¹⁹ Sloboda, in: *Ibid.*, 1059.

²⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*

with its fundamental concepts. Therefore, in their creation and life planning, people can connect with God as the Creator. This is a relationship of freedom and openness, mutual trust and encouragement, an authentic partnership in dialogue. From this almost prosaic starting position, we can contemplate the category of hope, which is excellently connected to freedom as it directs our attention to what is already present and what is yet to come. Additionally, hope is a driving force and a value that positively directs us towards future goods. Just as the ancient Israelites had initially hoped for a long and good life, land, and earthly goods, over time they expanded their horizon of hope.²¹

International Theological Commission indicates that redemption is primarily concerned with God as the author of our redemption, rather than being centred on us. It is because of this that redemption can truly provide liberation for us and be the timeless and eternal Good News of Salvation. If we were to evaluate redemption solely based on our existential needs as humans, we would risk the suspicion of creating a Redeemer-God that is merely a reflection of our own needs.²² Two options exist: one is a self-assured »modernity« that believes in the potential for self-redemption, while the other is a disillusioned post-modernity that despairs of any progress in the human condition.²³ Considering these difficulties, we believe that before embarking on an exploration of potential frameworks for contemporary discourse on salvation, it is important to emphasize the significance of anthropology as a tool that aids us in approaching theological interpretation and discourse on salvation. »According to the Christian faith, 'redemption' – salvation – is not simply a given. Redemption is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope, trustworthy hope, by virtue of which we can face our present: the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey.«²⁴

However, we cannot confine ourselves solely to the anthropological aspect, regardless of its usefulness in situating soteriology within the contemporary context. Indeed, the category of hope suggests that we cannot rely merely

²¹ Cf. Iva MRŠIĆ FELBAR, Jesmo li slobodni umrijeti? Neki aspekti tematiziranja smrti i slobode u suvremenoj katoličkoj eshatologiji, in: *Filozofska istraživanja*, 41 (2021) 1, 136.

²² Cf. International Theological Commission, *Select Questions on the Theology of God the Redeemer* (1995), no. 2, in: SELECT QUESTIONS ON THE THEOLOGY OF GOD THE REDEEMER (vatican.va), (Accessed 31.VII. 2023).

²³ Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 30.

²⁴ BENEDICT XVI, *Spe Salvi*, Introduction, in: *Spe salvi* (30.XI.2007) | BENEDICT XVI (vatican.va) (Accessed 31.VII.2023).

on and hope for earthly goods. The anthropological level needs to transition into the theological realm. This is also evident in the case of freedom.

While the challenges such as illness, physical and mental anguish, and death itself are the fundamental existential difficulties encountered by humans, there are other more personal issues that individuals face. These include struggling to achieve inner equilibrium, living in harmony with others, coping with ecological concerns, and combating the sense that life is ultimately meaningless when faced with overwhelming pressures. The history of warfare, with its attendant cruelty and horror, serves as a reminder of the difficulties humans encounter while attempting to coexist with one another.²⁵

It is apparent in the present era that the human condition is fraught with uncertainties. The situation can be characterized as a struggle between two opposing forces, pulling each individual and humanity as a whole in different directions. On one end, individuals possess an inherent and unshakeable longing for a meaningful and fulfilling life, filled with joy and contentment. However, on the other end, there is an unavoidable recognition of limitations, discontentment, disappointment, and affliction that are integral to the human experience.²⁶ In this context, we precisely resort to the category of Christian hope and freedom as concepts that pertain to our existential realm, implicitly considering them significant and indispensable for life. It is precisely in this manner that they point towards a step further in the understanding of salvation, starting from anthropological realities and progressing towards theological, and soteriological aspects.

2.1. Hope in action: the dynamic impetus of the eschatological hope

Although hope is not originally a biblical-theological concept, as it primarily denotes something expected in the future while its realization remains uncertain, the biblical notion of hope significantly diverges from this meaning. Indeed, the biblical understanding of hope is primarily intertwined with faith, which imparts content and assurance to it. The Old Testament Psalms exemplify this relationship between hope and faith, as the petitioner expresses unwavering trust in God through fervent prayers (cf. Psalms 25:1-3). Jeremiah further reinforces the efficacy of hope (Jeremiah 17:13), while in Romans, God is portrayed as the embodiment of hope (Romans 15:13). Additionally, when

²⁵ Cf. International Theological Commission, *Select Questions on the Theology of God the Redeemer* (1995), nos. 13 and 14.

²⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 31.

God reveals His name to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:14), the use of a grammatical form denoting unfinished present conveys a profound sense of future anticipation: »I am who I will be.«²⁷

The anticipation within Christian hope is neither passive nor inactive. Undeniably, the promises that inspire hope become a motive and impetus for action and ultimately serve as the driving force behind ethics. »And time opens space for further progress: space for God, who continues to act, to create, to save, to provide, to perfect, to renew, to re-create; and space for humans, who are offered again and again the opportunity of freely responding to God's gifts.«²⁸

Hope also mediates patience due to the awareness of the distance between the current state and what is promised, yet it does not diminish its strength by being realistic. On the contrary, hope motivates faith to action. Hope is indissolubly linked to faith (cf. Heb 11:1ff). Thus, hope mediates an important fact of our interaction and cooperation with God, while also acknowledging that not everything depends solely on our abilities but rather on our trust in God's providence.

In contemporary theology, especially under the influence of J. Moltmann,²⁹ hope has been placed in the position it rightfully deserves as a constitutive element of faith and eschatology in general. This is particularly significant when considering the interconnectedness between hope and action, or eschatology and ethics, which has implications for the soteriological aspect as well. Paraphrasing Moltmann's perspective on Christian hope,³⁰ we can assert that Christianity, much like our own existence, is fundamentally shaped by eschatological hope. This hope is directed towards the transformation of the present and opens to the promised future in Christ, that is, salvation. Hence, our hope primarily draws its vitality from Christ's resurrection, yet remains aware that it must continually prove its strength in the face of death.

²⁷ Cf. *Praktični biblijski leksikon*, 225-226.

²⁸ Paul O'CALLAGHAN, *Christ Our Hope, An Introduction to Eschatology*, Washington, 2011, 3.

²⁹ See more in: Jürgen MOLTSMANN, *Teologija nade. Istraživanja o temeljenju i posljedicama kršćanske eshatologije*, Rijeka, 2008; *The Future as a New Paradigm of Transcendence*, in: Jürgen MOLTSMANN, *The Future of Creation: Collected Essays*, Minneapolis, 2007; Jürgen MOLTSMANN, *Teologija nade nekad i sad*, in: *Bogoslovska smotra* 79 (2009) 2, 207-221; *Antwort auf die Kritik der Theologie der Hoffnung*, in: *Diskussion über Theologie der Hoffnung*, Wolf-Dieter MARSCH (ed.), München, 1967; Nela GAŠPAR, *Zadaća i perspektive teologije nade u globalnom svijetu*, in: *Riječki teološki časopis* 31 (2008) 1, 113-131.

³⁰ Jürgen MOLTSMANN, *Teologija nade*, 21-27.

The process of salvation is directed towards an eschatological future. Throughout history, this anticipation has been evident in messianic promises and, most significantly, in Christ's resurrection. Through faith and hope, we partake in His resurrection, eagerly awaiting the full manifestation of His lordship and the world's transformation – a transformation that is already underway with God's presence in the world.³¹

2.2. Hope – the transformative perspective of salvation

In the light of the aforementioned it becomes apparent that in the perspective of salvation, highlighting the significance of hope becomes essential. The Old Testament illustrates the process of depending on hope and recognizing hope as a motivating and transformative factor. Despite being strongly linked to historical events, the Scriptures provide a vast record of hope, even though they may at times seem unfamiliar to contemporary audiences.³² However, the basic process remains the same. In the historical context and given life circumstances, a person discovers hope that is not solely directed towards earthly matters but rises with the expectation of the Savior, seeking salvation beyond the confines of history.

Certainly, in the context of the New Testament, this is the hope embodied by Jesus Christ. This should be Christian hope grounded in the experience of the Crucified and Risen Christ (Christ is our hope, 1. Timothy 1, 1), a hope that despite sin and evil, sees the good and desires the good. It is also a hope that moves towards change and transforms everything that is not in accordance with the path leading to salvation, whether in personal life or in social reality. To offer hope to the contemporary person, so that they do not weaken in the face of their existential difficulties, but that it strengthens them to approach the Redeemer, is the task of all of us. Hope should not only be spoken of; it should be lived. Only such hope has the potential to become someone's support in difficulties. We often live in a world of despair, where we have everything yet have lost meaning. This is particularly evident in the context of interpersonal relationships, which are then reflected in our relationship with God.

In our pursuit to grasp the transformative nature of salvation, hope takes centre stage, leading our aspirations and igniting purposeful endeavours. This

³¹ Cf. Ante MATELJAN, Soteriološka misao Jürgenna Moltmanna, in: *Crkva u svijetu* 26 (1991) 4, 248.

³² Cf. *Systematic Theology. Roman Catholic Perspectives*, Vol. II, Francis SCHÜSSLER FIORENTINA – John P. GALVIN (eds.), Minneapolis, 1991, 352.

unravels the intricate interplay between hope and salvation, revealing how hope empowers individuals towards liberation, resilience, and a revitalized perspective on life's potential. As we delve into the transformative perspective of salvation through hope's lens, we encounter its profound ability to embolden individuals, fostering courage and perseverance on a path towards a future illuminated by the promise of redemption. The potency of hope lies in its capacity to facilitate redemption and renewal. It bestows individuals with a sense of purpose and significance during their salvific journey, fostering spiritual growth as they await the fulfilment of God's promises. Hope's transformative essence motivates believers to actively engage in God's redemptive endeavours, playing a role in the realization of His kingdom on Earth. This participatory facet of hope underscores the partnership between humanity and God in the process of salvation. Ultimately, hope, as a lens of transformation concerning salvation, serves as a constant reminder of believers' eternal destiny, offering a forward-looking vision filled with anticipation for communion with God in the life to come.

2.3. *Liberated for freedom: reflections on salvation*

Undisputedly, human acceptance of grace must be a genuinely restored act of freedom. The entire Church Tradition, based on Sacred Scripture, asserts that to understand and achieve the work of salvation, two mysteries must be connected.³³ In relation to salvation, hope and freedom are closely intertwined, as the hope of being saved enables individuals to be freed from despair and find the courage to persevere through challenging circumstances. Furthermore, freedom is a central concept in understanding salvation, which involves being liberated from sin and death, and having the freedom to live a renewed life through Christ. »Human freedom is, in fact, an authentic and enduring necessity because, and this is a crucial assertion, individuals find their salvation when fully engaged in the ambiguity and banality of worldly needs, within which they temporally prepare their salvation by freely choosing either good or, conversely, their own downfall: *Tertium non datur.*«³⁴

In Old Testament texts, freedom is employed to signify liberation from compulsion and slavery (Exodus 21:2), while the New Testament concept of freedom finds its best expression in Romans 7:15, 17-19. Sin is the root cause of

³³ International Theological Commission, *Select Questions on Christology* (1979), no. 9, in: *Select Questions on Christology* (vatican.va) (Accessed 31.VII.2023).

³⁴ Gianluigi PASQUALE, *Teologija povijesti spasenja u XX. stoljeću*, Zagreb, 2011, 554-555.

bondage, and Jesus Christ liberates us from this state. Freedom, akin to hope, is firmly grounded in faith. The emphasis lies not on freedom of choice or free will but rather on freedom from sin, the law, and death.³⁵ Paul's use of the term »righteousness of God« is rooted in the Old Testament, where it signifies God's benevolence and faithfulness towards Israel, particularly in upholding the Covenant. This concept is synonymous with notions such as »salvation« (Isaiah 46:13), »grace,« and »mercy« (Jeremiah 9:24) in the Old Testament, reflecting the enduring relationship between God and His people. For Paul, this expression serves to elucidate the profound meaning of Christ's death and resurrection as an eschatological event embodying God's righteousness. Consequently, it reveals a God who is »faithful« (Romans 3:3) and »true« (Romans 3:4), and through His grace, everyone is justified »freely« (Romans 3:24). Thus, God extends the opportunity of salvation to all.³⁶

It is through this liberation that we are ultimately redeemed.³⁷ To reach the pinnacle of the soteriological process, our cooperation is indispensable, especially in the aspect of freedom that seeks the fulfilment and completion of human existence. This understanding of freedom is continuously built, acquired, and sustained. Freedom in the context of salvation is a divine gift, liberating individuals from sin, fear, and self-centeredness. It empowers them to choose redemption, pursue virtue, and love selflessly. This freedom brings assurance of eternal life.

Salvation involves both individual redemption and the transformation of society and the world. This transformation is made possible by the hope and freedom that come with salvation, empowering believers to work for justice and the common good. Additionally, the experience of hope and freedom in

³⁵ Cf. *Praktični biblijski leksikon*, 378-379.

³⁶ Cf. Ivan DUGANDŽIĆ, *Biblijska teologija Novoga zavjeta*, Zagreb, 2004, 109. It is essential to give attention to nuances in terminology to avoid falling into the heresy of apokatastasis. Specifically, God desires the salvation of all, and thus, we can hope for and desire the same, but we must refrain from asserting that everyone will be saved, as doing so would entangle us in the free will of others and God's ultimate decision to determine who is saved.

³⁷ »Redemption« and its verb form, »to redeem,« translate Hebrew words like pādāh or pedûth, and gā'al or gō'el. These are matched by Greek terms agorazō and sometimes rhuomai, lytroō, and lytron. Hebrew pādāh means »ransom,« »free,« or »rescue,« while gā'al covers these and »kinsman« roles. Greek agorazō implies »buying« or »exchange.« Lytron, lytroō, and lytrōsis are frequently used for ransom, »redeem,« and »release.« »Redeem« and »redemption« offer a concise sermon in biblical contexts. They typically signify rescue from peril, with a redeemer facilitating freedom, security, or new life. The exodus illustrates this, where God saved Israel from Egypt, granting new life under Moses and later Joshua in the Promised Land. Cf. Anthony C. THISELTON, *Systematic Theology*, 207-208.

salvation is not solely a future reality, but rather something that can be lived out in the present. This is made possible by the Holy Spirit, which enables individuals to live in hope and freedom even amidst difficult circumstances. »In cases where the original framework for understanding salvation is not apparent, a framework that arises from the essence of freedom, salvation may appear as a wondrous magnitude that sounds mythical. However, fundamentally, it is not so (...).«³⁸ Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend the historicity of humanity and salvation, as addressing the question of salvation without considering the framework that entails secularism, historicity, and temporality would result in an inadequate response. Ultimately, even the persona of Jesus Christ was at risk of becoming a myth had it not been for its historicity.

Finally, it is important to note that hope and freedom in salvation are not exclusive to a select few but are available to all. Salvation is a gift of God's grace that is freely offered to anyone who places their faith in Christ. Thus, everyone, regardless of their past, has the potential to live a renewed life in Christ, filled with hope and freedom. In human relationships, the presence of interactive freedom plays a crucial role, shaping not only our actions but also the dynamics of our connections. This inherent responsibility forms an essential foundation for the expression of love. »Freedom is the unfolding of the eternal, in which we do not merely observe from an external standpoint, for we are ourselves the ones who are still unfolding within freedom. It is through enduring the multiplicity of temporality that we bring about this event of freedom, creating the eternity that we are and are becoming.«³⁹ Our identity is not exclusively defined by our innate qualities, but also by the choices we make, placing freedom at the core of this process.⁴⁰ Both hope and freedom are there-

³⁸ Karl RAHNER, *Temelji kršćanske vjere. Uvod u pojam kršćanstva*, Rijeka, 2007, 66. Rahner further explains: »In its explicit formulation, classical Christology does not clearly express nor directly signify the *soteriological* significance of the event of Christ. This is particularly true for the Western understanding, which remains somewhat unfamiliar with the idea of the 'acceptance' of *complete* humanity within the individual reality of Jesus (likely due to Western individualism). Consequently, within this framework of understanding, the hypostatic union represents the constitution of one person who *accomplishes* redemption if it acts morally and if its achievement is accepted by God as representative for humanity (Redeemer, atonement). However, starting from the statements contained in Scripture and our contemporary understanding – preeminently from the overtly explicit and specifically *soteriological* statements – it is desirable to have a formulation of the Christological doctrine that directly indicates and expresses the *salvific* event that is Jesus Christ himself. Repeatedly incorporating this aspect into the chosen formulations could aid in avoiding a monophysite, as well as a mythological, misinterpretation.« *Ibid.*, 364.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁴⁰ Cf. Philip A. ROLNICK, *Osoba, milost i Bog*, Zagreb, 2012, 21-23.

fore intimately tied to the concept of salvation⁴¹ and we can employ them to examine the question of salvation from a contemporary perspective.

3. Faith and bodily resurrection as possible salvation concepts

In addition to hope and freedom, the terms of faith and bodily resurrection constitute the framework for our investigation of the contemporary approach to and discourse on salvation. We believe that faith and bodily resurrection can, in their expression, bridge the gap between the original theological context and the modern existential challenges, allowing individuals today to discern the joy of the call to salvation within these terms and to explore their vitality and complexity.

3.1. Faith

Faith is the next possible concept for the journey of salvation, as it is through faith that believers are able to place their trust in God's promises and receive the grace of salvation that is offered to them. Faith is a personal relationship with God, which is dialogical, dynamic, and points to salvation and eternal life. It can grow stronger or weaker and has a personal and ecclesial impact on the believer's life.⁴² The term »faith« pertains to a mindset encompassing belief, confidence, or dependence on the utterance or nature of someone else, while »faithfulness« denotes a virtue or trait of one's character displayed through consistent and reliable behaviour over time.⁴³

In accordance with the tenets of faith, the future is rendered accessible to the present such that it transcends mere speculation as a state of »not yet«. The presence of such a future state exerts a transformative effect on the present, imbuing it with an inherent connection to this future reality. As a result, elements of the future permeate into the present and become entwined with its fabric, while the present similarly imparts its own influence on the future state.⁴⁴ Therefore, faith in Catholic theology is intimately tied to the category of salvation, as it is through faith that believers are able to receive the gift of

⁴¹ Cf. *Katekizam Katoličke Crkve*, Zagreb, 1994, no. 1741, 1817.

⁴² Cf. International Theological Commission, *The Reciprocity between Faith and Sacraments in the Sacramental Economy*, no. 78, in: *The Reciprocity between Faith and Sacraments in the Sacramental Economy* (vatican.va) (Accessed 31.VII.2023).

⁴³ Cf. Faith, in: *New Dictionary of Theology, Historical and Systematic*, Martin DAVIE – Tim GRASS – Stephen R. HOLMES – John McDOWELL – T. A. NOBLE (eds.), Illinois, 2016, 322.

⁴⁴ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Spe Salvi*, no. 7.

salvation that has been won for them through the redemptive work of Christ on the cross.

The concept of faith as an interpersonal connection between individuals or between humanity and God is not exclusive to Christianity. For instance, within the Jewish tradition, it finds abundant evidence in the Old Testament, frequently articulated through the *'aman* root.⁴⁵ The Old Testament understanding of faith carries the connotation of steadfastness, firmness, and trustworthiness. It denoted the relationship between Israel and Yahweh, wherein they were called to firmly adhere to their God and His promises. The prototype of such faith is undoubtedly Abraham (Genesis 12), and from the prophet Isaiah's perspective, faith is emphasized as the fundamental human disposition towards God and the very possibility of sustaining life (Isaiah 7:9). The New Testament understanding of the concept of faith experiences actualization in Jesus' teachings and encouragement to believe in His word. Through this faith, the occurrence of the Kingdom of God is made possible. Subsequently, in Pauline writings, faith is portrayed as salvific, being the faith of the heart and confession (Romans 10:9-11), and even faithfulness is referred to as faith (Galatians 5:22). Faith is the response to God's word in Jesus, and in it, salvific goods – the Spirit and life (John 6:33) – manifest, such that the one who believes does not see eternal death but is, in other words, saved (John 8:51). Faith is understood as dynamism and as something non-uniform. However, the essential content of faith lies in its practice, particularly within the context of community.⁴⁶ Furthermore, we consider that an essential aspect of faith lies precisely in its communal and individual dimension, which needs to be nurtured and actualized more than ever before in today's context, together with aforementioned concepts of hope and freedom.

Faith, as it is evident, cannot be exclusively associated with eschatology or Christology, as its essence encompasses both realms, even though we observe that its object is connected to soteriology. Hence, it is not surprising that we have chosen the concept of faith as pertinent to contemporary discussions on salvation.

Faith is naturally inclined to express and nourish itself through sacramental means due to the sacramental structure of the economy that generates it. Therefore, the belief in the saving grace of Jesus Christ should not be in opposition to its historical continuity in space and time through the Church,

⁴⁵ Cf. Ian G. WALLIS, *The Faith of Jesus Christ in early Christian Traditions*, Cambridge, 1995, 9.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Praktični biblijski leksikon*, 450-451.

it should rather be viewed as an integral part of the sacramental system. In essence, faith and the sacraments should not be considered separate entities, preferably they should be understood as mutually reinforcing components of the same theological framework.⁴⁷ »Recent theology affirms that Jesus Christ is the primary sacrament (*Ur-Sakrament*) and the key to the sacramental structure of salvation history. In summary, we discover in Jesus Christ that the divine economy of salvation is sacramental because it is incarnational.«⁴⁸ Pope Paul VI, in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975)⁴⁹, refers to the division between the Church and modern culture as the drama of our time (EN 20). Within this division, he opposes the concept of integral liberation that emerges from the mission of the Church.⁵⁰ Its soteriological role is linked to human development and liberation (EN 39). The soteriological role of the Church lies in its witness of Jesus Christ through word and deed as the eschatological salvation of the world, which is made present in the celebration of the sacraments. Faith should, in its manifestation, reflect sacramental incorporation into the Church because sacraments nourish and sustain faith. This is where the sacramental role of the Church becomes evident as it bears witness to salvation by bearing witness to Jesus Christ.

3.2. Bodily resurrection

Finally, bodily resurrection is our fourth overall key component of the contemporary approach to salvation. The Resurrection is so inherently characteristic of God that it can serve as a sign of God himself. An eschatological self-revelation of God as the rule of life and death takes place through Jesus' Resurrection. Faith in the Resurrection is based on faith in God's creative power, thus linking the work of creation and redemption. Faith in the resurrection of the body relies on God in whom all things are possible. This is the fundamental decision of orientation and meaning of existence because the Christian concept of God either stands or falls with it. If we take the message of the historicity of the Resurrection seriously, then we necessarily speak of its corporeality and concreteness, which is inconceivable without the human body.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Cf. International Theological Commission, *The Reciprocity between Faith and Sacraments in the Sacramental Economy*, no. 78.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 30.

⁴⁹ POPE PAUL VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, in: *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 8.XII.1975 | Paul VI (vatican.va) (Accessed 6.VIII.2023).

⁵⁰ Cf. Walter KASPER, *Crkva Isusa Krista. Ekleziološki spisi*, Zagreb, 2013, 249.

⁵¹ Cf. Walter KASPER, *Isus Krist*, Split, 2004, 182-183.

Salvation is a process whose regularity is evident in the epochs of the world, in the history that becomes the history of salvation: from creation, through the Abrahamic era and the era of Israel, to its culmination in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, which then continues in the time of the Church and the anticipation of the Parousia.⁵² We cannot view the corporeality of the resurrection as a salvific event detached from the context of historicity. Eschaton is shaped through historicity. Through the event of the Incarnation, God reveals Himself and grants us a tangible and concrete manifestation within the confines of time and history.⁵³ This revelation allows us to redefine our own historical trajectory, guiding it towards the realm of eternity and salvation. »The historical event of Jesus' resurrection does not leave history untouched, as it becomes inscribed within it. The eschaton shapes history by giving it the form of a final event in which all of history is fulfilled. This shaping entails redirecting human history towards a resurrection-oriented narrative, transitioning from mere human existence to a state of being oriented towards resurrection for all.«⁵⁴ Thus, man's body is no longer destined for decay and disappearance, but for eternal life and salvation.

The resurrection of the body points to the meaning of death, and theology teaches us that both mysteries, death and resurrection, are inseparable in relation to salvation. »Death does not achieve its effect except through resurrection. (...) Therefore, Christ's death does not have a direct efficacy on salvation; it has that efficacy because it triggers resurrection. (...) Death has salvific value in that it constitutes the meritorious cause of resurrection.«⁵⁵ It is exceptionally important for contemporary understanding of salvation that the con-

⁵² Cf. Bonaventura DUDA, Kratak pogled u misterij Krista i povijest spasenja, in: *Isus Krist Bogočovjek i Spasitelj*, Stjepan KUŠAR (ed.), 20-21.

⁵³ We can acknowledge that Thomas Aquinas contemplated the following question: Was the Incarnation necessary for the redemption of humanity? Based on biblical grounds, Aquinas posits that we are indeed saved through the Incarnation, but he does not assert that salvation would have been impossible without it. Aquinas states that the Incarnation was »not essential for the restoration of human nature« since God, with His infinite power, had various other means to achieve this objective (3a, I, 2). Nevertheless, Aquinas views the Incarnation as an extraordinary means of effecting our salvation, primarily because it involves God directly communicating with us in human form. Additionally, it instills hope and love within us when we recognize that God shares our human nature. The Incarnation also provides us with a flawless and comprehensible model of righteous living, while simultaneously reminding us of the inherent dignity of human nature. Cf. Brian DAVIES, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae. A Guide and Commentary*, New York, 2014, 297.

⁵⁴ Jean-Yves LACOSTE, Isusovo uskrsnuće – od povijesnog do Božjeg prava, in: *Isus Krist Bogočovjek i Spasitelj*, Stjepan KUŠAR (ed.), 138.

⁵⁵ Jean GALOT, *Isus osloboditelj. Soteriologija*, Đakovo, 1997, 393.

nection between death and resurrection is actualized and brought closer to the present-day individual. Only on this basis can a step forward be taken in proclaiming the resurrection of the body and its salvific message that equally touches the person who, as mortal and fragile, senses the power of the resurrection message not only in the context of their spirit but also in the body, which is the cornerstone of salvation. »The dehumanizing of death necessarily brings with it dehumanizing of life as well. (...) Attitudes to dying determine attitudes to living.«⁵⁶

Christ's resurrection had marked the beginning of new life and served as the foundation for the bodily resurrection of humanity, a soteriological significance corroborated by both Scripture and Tradition. We should emphasize that matter, despite being affected by sin, has now been renewed, and Christ's resurrection has revealed the potential for it to be a pathway towards salvation. Upon examination, we discover that Jesus, through his resurrection, embodies an »eschatological« reality, signifying that the resurrection is not the culmination but rather the commencement of an ongoing process yet to reach its fulfilment.⁵⁷ The progression of history leading to its ultimate conclusion forms an integral aspect of the anticipated fullness, with this participation being a crucial element in both the eschatological reality and the significance of Christ's resurrection.

»The Hebrew perception of the human person was that of a living body whose existence is necessarily corporeal.«⁵⁸ As Christianity emerged in the early centuries, this perspective encountered the Greek concept of the human spirit possessing a degree of independence or transcendence, a challenge later faced by Judaism as well. In Hebrew anthropology, any postmortem existence was naturally envisioned as corporeal, involving an awakening from death to resume human life. In contrast, Greek anthropology presented an alternative possibility – the continuation of the human spirit in a disembodied manner. Both perspectives are projections, interpreting the unknown through extrapolation from our known experiences of bodily life in the world and introspective consciousness. In the development of Christian eschatology, these anthropological views merge into a hybrid projection with intriguing paradoxes. Acknowledging the metaphorical and analogical nature of these projections

⁵⁶ Joseph RATZINGER, *Eschatology, Death and Eternal Life*, Washington, 1988, 71-72.

⁵⁷ Cf. Richard VILADESAU, *Answering for Faith. Christ and the Human Search for Salvation*, New York, 1987, 234.

⁵⁸ *Systematic Theology. Roman Catholic Perspectives*, Vol. II, Francis SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA – John P. GALVIN (eds.), 356.

can lead to enriching insights. Nevertheless, when these images were interpreted literally, it had the potential to generate confusion and emphasize fear at the expense of hope.⁵⁹ Regrettably, such distortion happens even today.

The body is viewed as a divine creation that represents the entirety of the human being, rather than just a single aspect.⁶⁰ The corporeality of the resurrection signifies that the whole person is with God, that they are saved, and the resurrected corporeality of Jesus Christ indicates his relationship to the world and to us, which is particularly evident in the Eucharist, where he is with us in a new way.⁶¹ »According to contemporary anthropology, corporeality is not identical with physical corporeality and materiality. Corporeality primarily signifies man's embeddedness in the world (...).«⁶² Through the body, man is in the world, in relation to the world, and it is impossible to think of his existence apart from corporeality.

Today, people want to save their bodies from decay and aging and keep them vital and youthful for as long as possible. This may not be bad, however, such attempts seem to mostly involve a shift in emphasis from the body created for eternity to eternity transferred into temporality. Transhumanist advancement, for example, seeks to transcend human limitations (first of all death) by utilizing contemporary scientific disciplines and modern technologies. It adopts a technological and secular approach to address the inherent deficiencies of humanity, offering technocratic solutions to profound inquiries concerning mortality, immortality, and the prospect of eternal life.⁶³ Through technology, we are empowered to surpass numerous confines that encompass both our physical and mental realms. Transhumanism ascribes a spiritual significance to this act of transcending limitations.⁶⁴ »For where there is no death, there is no life, and where life is perpetually prolonged, the sense of fulfillment diminishes, giving rise to agony.«⁶⁵ Similarly, we could say the same about the human body: death serves as a reminder of our fragility and limitations, yet it simultaneously opens up the prospect of new life and the resurrection of the body. This is not to be conceived in a technological or cybernetic

⁵⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 356.

⁶⁰ Cf. Walter KASPER, *Isus Krist*, 182.

⁶¹ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, 183.

⁶³ Cf. Odilon-Gbenoukpo SINGBO, Postsmrtno stanje: metafizičko-eschatološke ambicije transhumanizma, in: *Filozofska istraživanja*, 40 (2020) 2, 251-267.

⁶⁴ Cf. Michael S. BURDETT, *Eschatology and the Technological Future*, New York, 2015, 100.

⁶⁵ Odilon-Gbenoukpo SINGBO, Postsmrtno stanje: metafizičko-eschatološke ambicije transhumanizma, 267.

sense but rather with a perspective rooted in Christ's resurrection, one that holds salvific significance.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of oneself beyond immediate, partial, superficial, and potentially misleading standards and assessments, it is imperative for an individual to approach Christ with their restlessness, uncertainty, weaknesses, and sins, as well as their experiences of life and death. This involves a process of entering Christ and fully embracing and internalizing the reality of the Incarnation and Redemption, as a means of self-discovery and realization.⁶⁶

Through our union with God in Christ, our personal identity, with its physical history, will be preserved, and our authentic selfhood will be strengthened. Ultimately, the pinnacle of love will be achieved through the highest form of union, yet this will not entail a dissolution of our individuality back into the divine source from which we originated, since the ultimate, mutual, and loving union with God will not obliterate our distinctiveness.⁶⁷

The reason for contextualizing corporeality within the framework of the discourse on salvation certainly lies in the emphasis placed on the body today. This gives us reason to theologically turn our gaze back to the body, especially to the corporeality of the resurrection, in order to properly understand it through eschatological and Christological specification and correction. Then, we can truly be able to connect the concept of bodily resurrection with salvation, that is, to realize that our salvation is directed towards corporeality and that it represents a redeemed reality.

Conclusion

In order to address the research question concerning contemporary perspectives on the discourse of salvation, we have conducted an exploration of the dogmatic disciplines that correlate with the soteriological tract (Christology and eschatology) and proposed four fundamental terms that facilitate discussing salvation from a modern standpoint.

Throughout this study, it becomes evident that the categories of hope and freedom, as well as faith and the resurrection of the body within their theological context, which implies a Christological-eschatological foundation, can serve as a framework for the discourse on contemporary soteriology, which

⁶⁶ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptor hominis*, no. 10.

⁶⁷ Cf. Gerard O'COLLINS, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical and Systematic Study of Jesus*, 312.

would seek to be closer to the contemporary man and the world it creates, both in content and approach. These four terms constitute a framework and a template that enables us, starting from mainly anthropological data, to arrive at a theological message and the reality of salvation. Given that salvation is not easily understandable today without a theological exploratory system and foundation, these guidelines allow us to approach and update the soteriological message, while remaining faithful to the biblical message and doctrine.

This framework stands as a manifestation to the dynamic synergy between traditional Christian principles and the contemporary context. It avoids compromising any essential elements of the Christian narrative or engaging in potentially destructive reinterpretations. Our primary goal was to establish profound connections among hope, freedom, faith, and bodily resurrection, interweaving Christology and eschatology, thus culminating in an integration of both aspects into the soteriological discourse.

Hope and freedom are intrinsically intertwined, just as bodily resurrection and faith are deeply connected. Together, all four concepts converge towards the pursuit of salvation and enable us to articulate its essence. In the same way that suffering, and death have historically acted as a bridge to the realm of resurrection, thereby embodying a distinct mystery, these interconnected concepts serve as a vital junctures between our daily experiences of creation (represented by freedom), surrender (expressed through faith), trust (embodied in hope), and acknowledging our physical nature (through bodily resurrection). By doing so, they enable us to enter the realm of transcendent reality and allowing us to articulate salvation in more comprehensible terms.

Considering the commitment of human effort and God's grace, the presented concepts point precisely to this dynamic – the human condition and the desire for the restoration of God's image within, but in collaboration with God's »yes« in the incarnate and resurrected Word through which we inherit eternal life. In the contemporary world, man is inevitably in a situation of eschatological tension that reflects this aspiration, but the Church, together with theology, must be able to proclaim salvation in terms that are not only firmly grounded in theology but also existentially relatable. Finally, God emerges not as a problem in salvation, but as its ultimate solution. Our aim is for this solution not to become an incomprehensible equation, but rather a proximate resolution and a calling that reaches every individual.

Sažetak

**SUVREMENE PERSPEKTIVE GOVORA O SPASENJU: ISTRAŽIVANJE
KRISTOLOGIJE I ESHATOLOGIJE**

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Hipoteza članka polazi od istraživanja odnosa kristologije i eshatologije sa soteriologijom, te analizom njihovih izabраних носивих pojmova nastoji smjestiti govor o spasenju unutar suvremenog konteksta. Konkretno, istražuju se pojmovi nade, vjere, slobode i tjelesnosti uskrsnuća, koji pružaju okvir za suvoremeni odgovor na pristup soteriološkoj zbilji.

Zaključno odabrani pojmovi pokazuju prikladnost u povezivanju iskustava suvremenog čovjeka, njegove egzistencijalne pozicije i perspektive spasenja, uz povezivanje s bogatom teološkom tradicijom i katoličkim naukom. Početno istraživačko pitanje koje je pošlo od povezanosti dvaju traktata (kristologije i eshatologije) sa soteriologijom, pružilo nam je kroz odabrane pojmove značajne uvide u različite mogućnosti suvremenog razumijevanja spasenja.

Ključne riječi: spasenje, kristologija, eshatologija, nada, sloboda, uskrsnuće tijela, vjera