
ON THE FALSE CRISIS OF FAITH OR ON HOW THAT THEOLOGY CANNOT END UP IN IDEOLOGY

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Abstract

Saint Thomas has faith and wisdom when he is willing to die for Jesus; he has reason without faith and without wisdom when he does not understand where Christ is going and he asks for evidence; he is a theologian on the eighth day under the saving burden of the expression – “My Lord and my God”; he is a religious character in general, with more ups and fewer downs. Some want him an ideologist; Thomas is nothing like that, like that are the ones who want him ideologist and attribute him the phrase “believe and do not question”. Thomas has not said something like that, nor did he believe in it. The order, for him as well, is *credo – intelligo – credo*, and to put faith on a secondary place is pride, as it is indifference to be satisfied only with faith. Faith itself is prepared and accomplished by the adhesion of intelligence, so that ‘to believe’ is a dialogue between logic and Revelation. Many have faith, but only few also appeal to reason. However, not only Thomas is convinced that in front of the authority of Revelation, reason must obey without seeing itself constrained or defeated. The word of God is true whether reason understands it or not. On the other hand, the Bible is not a scientific book, its purpose is not that of *proving* the existence of God. Faith *suggests*, reason *requires*.

Keywords: faith, faithlessness, reason, mind, religion, philosophy, theology, ideology

1. Identifying the problem: faith vs. faithlessness

The passers-by, the foremost priests, the elders and the teachers along with them mocked the crucified Christ and said: “let Him come down from the cross now, so we can see it and believe it” (Mark 15.32). The same we read in Matthew 27.42. When the blind men ask Christ for their sight back, Christ asks them: “Do you believe I am able do this?” And the blind men confirm. “And then He touched their eyes and said: “According to your faith it shall be done to you!” (Matthew 9.28-29). And the eyes of the blind men open (Jesus had cured repeatedly the blind men. The other places are: another one in Matthew 20.30-34, each time two blind men, another one in Mark 10.46-52, it is about Bartimaeus, again one in Luke 18.35-42 in Jericho, while John dedicates the

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whole chapter IX to the healing of the blind from birth. As a matter of fact, John gives faith the meaning of ‘sight’, of revealing the Truth). What is noteworthy in the relationship between the one who works the miracle and that/those over which it is exercised? Christ puts blinds’ faith to test, i.e. making the miracle involves faith from the other side. If the blind men do not believe, the miracle is not performing. The miracle requires a *feed-back*, whose form of manifestation is faith. Depending on the answer, the confirmation or the denial of the act of faith, the miracle occurs or manifests itself as absence. The essential problem is, in fact, the following: what is faith?, because the blind men do not see, even though they believe, then they see precisely by virtue of their faith. It is clear, thus, “that to believe means something else than to see, to establish, to register, that the words said by the bishops and scholars at Lord’s crucifixion (Matthew 27.42, Mark 15.32) – “so we can see and believe” - does not mean only blasphemy, mockery and pitilessness, but also a semantic error, the confusion between two opposite verbs: to see, to believe. Faith excludes sight; it is the entrusting of those unseen” [1].

And the author that I have just mentioned grasps and analyses a paradox that is something like this only from the perspective of logic, and not from that of faith. That particular place regards the healing of a possessed child. The child’s father tells Jesus: “If You can do something, have pity on us and help us. Jesus answered: You said: If you can!... Everything is possible for him who believes. Immediately the child’s father cried out: I believe, God! Help my faithlessness!” (Mark 9.22-24). The words of the father are, I repeat, from a logical point of view, a contradiction. Except that this formula not logically will it be analyzed and its result is not a formal one, but an ontological one. The evil spirit leaves the child not for the contradiction to be avoided, the evil spirit leaves because there is someone – the father – who believes without seeing and asks for help, asks God for help with shout, asks for help with shout and tears (the triptych is: help – shout – tears). Peter himself is forgiven not only because he cries, but because he cries bitterly (Matthew 26.75).

Faith [2-4] is, simply said, the human faculty through which revelation is received. Paul states that through faith, which is the work of grace, occurs the state of salvation in the fallen man (“The immaculate one shall live by faith” – Romans 1.17; “We believe that man is corrected by faith and not by the works of law” – Romans 3.2, and the same is written in Galatians 3.24). A John Chrysostom tells us about faith that it is the foundation of Church, case in which it is not the Church that justifies the faith, but vice versa, faith justifies the Church. Faith is on the one hand life stile (faith works through love – Galatians 5.6; faith has a soteriological character – Matthew 9.12), as it is also way of knowledge, which is the same with being a way of contemplating the Truth. Maximus the Confessor synthesizes: “Faith in God is the same with God’s Kingdom. It differs from the Kingdom only by thinking, because faith is God’s Kingdom without shape, and the Kingdom is the faith that received in a heavenly manner a shape [...]. God’s Kingdom is faith developed through work. And this Kingdom realizes the direct union of those who are part of it. So it has

been clearly demonstrated that faith is a power of connection that realizes the direct union even above the nature of that who believes with the believed God” [5]. A preliminary test of an essential definition of faith talks about ‘faith’s leap’: “Faith has always had through itself something from a break, from a daring leap, since it represents, simply, a risk to accept the invisible as a true reality” [4, p. 37].

In the Old Testament, the idea of faith is expressed through the verbs ‘to believe’, ‘to trust’, ‘to hope’. The New Testament uses to express faith the noun ‘pistis’, the verb ‘pisteuō’, the adjective ‘pistos’, and the Latin translation uses the verb ‘crēdō, ere’ and the noun of feminine gender ‘fidēs, ei’. The New Testament frequently uses the term as such and its derivations, the idea being that according to which Jesus saves the world through His death and Resurrection. Faith is thus the only way through which people can save themselves and even the times of the verb ‘pisteuō’ answer for this aspect: “the aorist time indicates a unique act from the past and proves the decisive character of faith. When a person comes to believe, he surrenders himself decisively to Christ. The present time communicates the idea of continuity. Faith is not a temporary phase. It is a continuous attitude. Past tense combines both ideas. It speaks about a faith that continues an act of faith from the past. The person who believes enters a permanent condition.” [3, p. 281].

What is happening to Thomas, the apostle?, with the one who “owes his fame to a fact that should be reason for shame”. Surely, because he wanted to see rather than believe, “Thomas the Twin is the protector of modernity” [6]. It is interesting that Thomas is mentioned with personal references only by John, who also calls him Didymus, the Greek version of the name of Thomas. In Aramaic, ‘Thomas’ means ‘twin’; it is not known clearly who his brother is or to whom he is brother. From this point of view, the Syrian Christianity suggests that his personal name was Judas and was twin brother with Jesus [7]. (Apostle Thomas dies at Edesa and The Gospel of Thomas seems to have been written somewhere at the middle of II century right in Edesa, in Eastern Syria.) The Gospel of Thomas includes several dozens of sentences (logia) and each sentence is preceded by the following prolog: “These are the hidden words that the living Jesus spoke and Didymus Judas Thomas wrote”. Rather, maybe, there is a ‘twin’ in each of us, an imbalance between reason and faith, case in which Thomas is precisely the twin in us. Thomas is the one willing to die for Jesus instead of and before the other disciples (John 11.16) and again Thomas is the one who does not understand, and here he resembles Peter, where will Jesus go when He announces His departure. Thomas asks: “Lord, we do not know where You are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answers Thomas: “I am the Way, the Truth and Life. No one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14. 5-6). Thomas is absent when Jesus, after resurrection, showed Himself to the other apostles, and when they tell him the news, he does not believe, he doubts, asks for visible and tangible evidence concerning the resurrection and the raised one. After eight days, and the eighth day is no longer earthly, i.e. from a Sunday to another, Thomas is present as well. Jesus greets everyone (“Peace be with

you”), and then He speaks only to Thomas: “<<Reach here with your finger and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be faithless, but believing>>. As an answer, Thomas said to Him: <<My Lord and My God!>>. <<Thomas>>, Jesus told him, <<because you have seen Me, you believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed>>” (John 20.27-29). The confession of an overwhelmed Thomas: “My Lord and My God”, supreme confession of faith, marks the blessing promised to all those who believe without seeing. With these words, “Thomas confessed his defeat more beautiful than any victory, and from that moment he was entirely of Christ. Until then he had worshiped Him as a man more perfect than the others; now he recognizes Him as God; moreover, as <<his God>>” [6, p. 55]. Later, Thomas will be present both to Ascension and Pentecost. What is significant is the fact that the first Sunday after Resurrection is Thomas’ Sunday. Why only of Thomas?, because if we will “search the other Gospels as well, we will see that not only Thomas was unbeliever; unbelievers have been all the Apostles, so Thomas’ Sunday (implied: the unbeliever) should be named of all the Apostles haunted by unbelief” [1, p. 182].

When Maximus the Confessor comments in *Ambigua* (143) chapter 24 from *The Oration on Easter* by Gregory the Theologian, he thus says: “Thomas is translated ‘twin’, which means ‘doubt’, or ‘he who doubts’ in thoughts, and therefore, without the touch of the nail traces, he does not believe there has been the resurrection of the Word. So Thomas is still the man who doubts, who hardly believes that it will occur inside him the resurrection of reason (word), virtue and knowledge. Only the memories of the committed sins convince him to receive the resurrection of the Word (Reason) and to confess Him Lord and God.” [8].

Here is now an issue that concerns the reaction of Jesus’ acquaintances after Resurrection as it gradually appears throughout the four gospels.

In Matthew 28.17, the episode is dispatched: “When they saw Him, they worshiped Him, but some of them doubt”.

In Mark 16.10-14, Mary Magdalene carries the news about the resurrection to the Apostles: “When they heard that He is alive and she had seen Him, they did not believe her” (16.11). The Apostles do not believe the other two that saw Him either (16.12-13). “Finally, He appeared to the eleven ones, while they were eating; and He admonished them for their unbelief and the hardness of their hearts” (16.14).

The report from Luke 24.10-43 is even more explicit, the tension rises, the words about Resurrection seem fairytales for the Apostles, the disciples on their way to Emmaus are able to see it only later, the disciples return to Jerusalem and tell what had happened to them, how the breaking of the bread occurred. Then Christ Himself comes in their midst and, frightened, the Apostles believe they see a spirit, Christ urges them to feel Him, something seems to happen to them but, “they still could not believe it because of joy and amazement” (24.41), the Raised one asks for food, explains to them and their minds are opened by Christ

so that they are able to understand the Scriptures, that after opening their eyes so that they could see, and their sense to feel.

After this crescendo one can even better understand what happens in the fourth gospel.

What unites all these four stories? The despair doubled by unbelief. “There is thus no doubt that they did not believe. All of them, not just Thomas, did not believe because that was not something to believe” [1, p. 184]. And since that was not something to believe, they did not believe! But to believe does not necessarily mean to believe what is easily believed, no!, to believe means to believe what should not be believed, ‘to believe the unbelievable’. That is why there are more important those that I believe without seeing them. Now it is equally true that Jesus is not seen, Jesus lets Himself be seen, there is the need of a certain education of sight, hence the fact that the Teacher acts both as Teacher of the heart (mind) and of sight and is the one who also activates the ‘mind’s eye’, and, particularly at first, through empirical evidence: He shows them His wounds, asks them to touch Him, requires food and eats.

Here’s how, in reality, the binomial about which we can talk now is not faith versus reason, the useful and the only functional binomial is faith versus faithlessness.

Tertullian is right when he says exactly this: I believe because it is foolish, reckless, terrible, shameful (*quia ineptum est*), it is impossible (*quia impossibile*), finally, I believe because it is unbelievable and, still, undoubtedly (*certum est*). In chapter V from *De carne Christi* appears Tertullian’s famous expression: *Crucifixus est dei filius: non pudet, quia pudendum est. Et mortuus est dei filius: prorsus credibile est, quia ineptum est. Et sepultus resurrexit: certum est, quia impossibile* (“God’s Son has been crucified? I am not ashamed, even if one should be. Moreover, God’s Son died; it must be believed, even though it is foolish. He resurrected from the grave; it is undoubtedly, even if it is impossible”) [9]. It is beyond reason. Could it be impossible for faith as well?

2. Mind vs. reason

I suggest, for further discussion, a difference. Here it is: “The Holy Fathers make a distinction between mind (*nous*) and reason (*logos*). Reason is the faculty that reflects on things including them in different concepts, which are called as well, reasons (*logoi*), due to the fact that they could be objects of reason. Mind is the faculty that reflects contents, without delineating them into concepts. Reason is spread from mind, as it is always born the divine *Logos* from the Father, who is the first mind (*nous*) [...]. As the divine mind is the principle of all, so is the mind inside man the final principle of all those in him, hence of reason as well. That is why it is the base of human subject, which is beyond all delineating contents, beyond even the reason that contains them in concepts. It is the indefinite base of the subject that makes use of reason as well. Reason cannot take notice of it, by means of no concept, since it is beyond reason and any concept. We must leave all the concepts and go beyond the

reason that forms the concepts, so we can take notice of the indefinable base of our subject. Only then the mind meditates on itself [...]. Only mind can meditate on itself, but it must remove the things and concepts, which by its determinative (rational) thought placed themselves between itself and its self-meditation” [10].

For Saint Macarius the Egyptian mind beats reason and nous starts evolving towards kardia. He states in one of his homilies: “Grace itself writes in their hearts the laws of Spirit [...]. And the heart dominates and rules over all the flesh. When grace takes over the heart, it becomes master over all members and over all thoughts. Because in there, in the heart, is the mind” [11]. The Homily XVII, 15 specifies: “the perfection consists of the fact of entering your dark mind and killing the snake that killed you, that nestles in the deepest part of mind [...]. Indeed, the heart is an abyss [...]. Besides, all philosophers, the Law and Apostles, even the arrival of the Saviour, aimed at purity. Any man, either Jew or Greek, loves purity, but cannot purify himself. It is necessary, therefore, to examine how and by what means the purity of heart is achieved.” [11, p. 183]. The idea is that if the heart wants incessantly God, then it is impossible for Him not to become the Lord of his heart, of the one who wants this. Therefore, reason is spread from mind the same way in which the Logos is spread from the Father who is the first mind. This distinction, inoperative in Philosophy, at least in that of the Greeks, is brilliantly expressed and summarized, while tracking down Dionysius the Aeropagite, by Maximus the Confessor in chapter V of *Mystagogy*. Here’s how: “to the mental faculty are connected the contemplative and practical side. The contemplative one is also called mind, the vital one, reason. The factor that triggers the mental faculty is the mind; and the one that takes care of the vital one is reason. The first one, i.e. the mind, is and is called wisdom when it guards its entirely unchanged moves towards God. Reason is and is called caution when, uniting the vital faculty with activity, presents it the same as the mind [...]. The mind, acting in contemplation’s habit, is lead towards the truth through a knowledge that is not forgotten and it does not end [...]. Clearly speaking, a part of the soul is the contemplative part, and the other one is the practical. The contemplative side was called mind (Maximus speaks about Dionysius – n. m.), and the practical one, reason. Mind was named wisdom, and reason, caution.” [12]

Let me summarize what in fact Maximus summarizes from Dionysius the Aeropagite, namely chapter VII from *De divinis nominibus*, the chapter entitled ‘On wisdom, mind, reason, truth, faith’ [13]. The soul is formed of: the mental faculty (moving freely through will) and the vital faculty (it remains as it is its nature, i.e. without the freedom of choice). To the mental faculty are connected the contemplative side and the practical one. Thus we have the mental contemplative faculty (mind) and the mental practical faculty (reason) as the first powers of the soul. After a development of Maximus we reach the following situation:

- the mental side includes: mind, wisdom, contemplation, knowledge, the knowledge that does not forget the truth;

- for the rational side (or the mental practical faculty) answer: reason, caution, making, virtue, faith, good.

It follows from this six pairs that I find in the soul and which move around the pair that indicates God, i.e. the last pair. Here they are:

- mind and reason;
- wisdom and caution;
- contemplation and making;
- knowledge and virtue;
- the knowledge that is not forgotten and faith;
- truth and good.

Because it moves progressively through these pairs, the soul unites itself with God. The movement on the two columns is as it follows:

- first column: the mind, moving through wisdom, comes to contemplation, through contemplation to knowledge, through knowledge to the knowledge that is not forgotten and through the last one to truth. Near truth, the mind reaches the border of movement and is limited by being and power, by habit and work;
- second column: reason, moving through caution, comes to making, through making to virtue, through virtue to faith and through it to good. Near good, reason ceases its works being, in its turn, limited by power, habit and work.

It is very clearly expressed this report in the following formula: “reason is work and manifestation of the mind, being to the mind like the effect to the cause.” [12, p. 23]. What does the soul have as its own progressively through the coming out from one another? “Through mind it has the wisdom in potency, from wisdom results contemplation, from it knowledge, from knowledge the knowledge without oblivion, and through them all it is taken towards the truth, which is the borderline and the final target of mental goods. And through reason it has caution, from it results the making, from making, virtue, from it, faith, through which it rests well as purpose and happy ending of the rational works. Finally, by putting all these together one can gather the science of the divine ones.” [12, p. 24]. And Dionysius, the one commented by Maximus, states: “our mind has the power to understand, power through which it contemplates the intelligible ones, but the union with which it joins those beyond it, surpasses the nature of mind. That is why we must understand the divine ones not in our way, but by completely getting out of ourselves and completely becoming of God. For it is better to belong to God than to ourselves.” [13, p. 163].

The mind is simple, without sides, undivided, is a recondite wisdom, not an irrational one. It is, rather, as in the theology of hyper-relatives, it is hyper-rational, over-rational, trans-rational. A similar formula appears in Augustine as well in *De Trinitate*, VI, 18, 24: *Mens autem rationalis sicut purgata contemlationem debet rebus aeternis, sicut purganda temporalibus fidem* (“The clean rational mind owes to the eternal things contemplation, and while in the process of cleaning owes to the temporal ones faith.”). *Igitur, ego ipse mente servio legi Dei* (“Thus, only with the mind I serve the law of God” – Romans

7.25) and moreover: *Orabo spiritu, orabo et mente* (“I shall pray with spirit, I shall also pray with mind” – 1 Corinthians 14.15).

3. Two significant episodes

We thus have faith, mind and reason, we have the binominal faith – faithlessness. The mind cannot separate itself from faith as it happens in the case of the dramatic separation of reason from faith. Saul was a rational character and used to practice a type of foolish faith. Definitely, Saul as Saul had no mind. Paul had them all.

It can be observed how, especially nowadays, both faith and reason have impoverished one in front of the other and maybe each to itself. “Reason, lacking Revelation’s contribution, has gone on side ways that risks making it lose from sight its final target. Faith, without reason, risks being no longer a universal suggestion. It is illusory thinking that, before a weak reason, faith could be deeper; on the contrary, it falls into the great danger of being downsized to myth or superstition. Likewise, a reason which does not face a mature faith is not challenged to set its eyes on the novelty and radicalism of the being.” [14]. I find it suitable to exemplify this report by and with two episodes of the New Testament, both placed under the following assumption: I believe so that I understand, it is not that I understand so that I believe, for if the world does not believe, nor it understands.

I find the first episode in John 4.4-26. It takes place in Samaria next to James’ well at the sixth hour of the day (the hour when Christ’s agony on the cross begins). The characters are Jesus and a woman from Samaria. The disciples were away in the city of Sychar (a city near the field which James gave to his son, Joseph) to buy food. We must observe that this episode can be found only in John. The woman from Samaria is the human nature that seeks the truth exclusively through reason, she is reason itself, alone, unaccompanied. Reason (this woman) meets faith (Christ) and, here is the depth of it, Christ asks for water ‘as if’ faith would ask reason for a drink. And this means that the Saviour asks the being, to any being that He created (and Samaria through the woman who represents it, is chosen so that it can precisely show that salvation is for all, it is true that not in anyway), to seek for Him by means of reason as well. They meet by the well two characters, two powers, two freedoms and Christ “recognized in the woman who came to draw water one of those natures worthy to be challenged and conquered by Him” [1, p. 56]. Such natures are liked by Christ, a persecutor (Saul), a libertine, yes, but not just anyhow, but from passion (Mary of Magdala), a publican (Zacchaeus), the woman putted on quarrelsomeness (the woman from Samaria) or impatient characters such as Peter. “God insisted for His victory not to be an easy one, as if granted, but free, spontaneous, sprang from a conviction preceded by doubt, totally transforming for the faithful from Samaria.” [1, p. 60] And it is known, the inhabitants of Samaria were at first hostile to Christ, they were idolatrous and seen as defiled by the Jews, as the first ones believed in Him as well. Philip will preach the

Gospel in Samaria, Peter and John give the Holy Spirit to the baptized one also in Samaria, Peter talks in Samaria both with Simon Magus and the woman from here (the one to whom Christ revealed Himself as Messiah and who will become heralded of Christ all the way to the distant Rome).

The second episode speaks about Peter and John going to the grave. The episode with the two of them together is only in John 20.2-10, while in Luke 24.12 it is only about Peter. How do we interpret the pericope from John? Peter and John run together to the grave. Peter is the symbol of faith, John of reason, the grave is the Scripture. John, younger and faster, reaches the grave faster, but does not enter. Peter goes in first, then John as well, sees and believes. Faith (Peter) must go in first, because if God spoke it is impossible for reason not to take this into account. To understand the truth you must first believe it. Peter believes so that he can understand, it is not that he first understands so that he can then believe. The two of them run, it is not a simple run but a together-running, the two of them are competing in the good race. It can be said that "Peter is the same man who gained the strength of the faith in God through the kind of life. And John is the one who for a lot of kindness and the untouchable purity of heart is being loved by the Word and that is why he is trusted with the treasures of wisdom and knowledge [...]. They run competing among themselves, one striving to transcend, by virtuous making, the contemplation of the other; and the other one, hurrying to surpass by experienced contemplation the making of the first. And they aspire by running together, each of them equally aspiring to their own good. Again, Peter or John, is each human who succeeded in getting closer to God and has the active side of the soul as some Peter, and the contemplative one as some John, competing together, according to reason, without any hesitation or diminution of one over the other; and again, competing, so that each, aspiring to his own height, seem to surpass the other." [8, p. 323] The complete human is Peter and John. Divided, the two of them are no longer a unity and the fact that they are still something does not mean much anymore, frankly speaking it does not mean anything anymore in the plan of salvation.

God, as we can see, asks for faith but also for rational understanding, and many thought and, fortunately, still think that it would be great negligence the strength in faith, unsupported by the effort of understanding what you believe. Faith must precede, that is true, but rational deepening leads to the coronation of faith, so that reason strengthens faith (*ratio confortata fide*).

Peter is an enthusiastic, strong in faith but rather heavy in understanding and equally questionable. Reason was not exactly his strong point, he was not, as they say, a sober mind. He also has the bad habit of falling asleep precisely when he should not, in decisive moments: he falls asleep on Mount of Transfiguration, falls asleep on Gethsemane after the Last Supper and, if he does not fall asleep, he denies God for fear. Paradoxically, he compensates by great bravery and sorrow tears (Matthew 26.75). After Resurrection, the Lord restores him in apostolate, confirms him in His mission (John 21.18) and Peter learns that the Lord asks love, not friendship.

From Luke 9.51-56 we learn an interesting thing: James and John were fast in nature. In order to arrive to Jerusalem, Jesus had to pass through the land of Samaria. The messengers sent to find a hosting place returned with a negative result. Then, James and John ask God to descend fire from heaven and to destroy them, as Elijah did. Jesus quarrels them. Maybe they took this freedom because they were close relatives of Jesus (their mother, Salome, was cousin with Virgin Mary), maybe because, at the beginning, they were impulsive and hasty, with impulsive and angry nature, reason for which Jesus “named them Boanerges” (Mark 3.17), which means “sons of thunder”. Anyhow, the three of them, Peter, James and John were forming a sort of ‘trinity’, and John will accompany Simon Peter in the missionary activity in Samaria! It is on three important occasions that only the three of them are present together: at the resurrection of Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5.37), at the event of Transfiguration (Mark 9.2) and in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14.33). And in Luke 22.8 we see how Peter and John are named by Jesus to prepare the last Easter meal. John remains “the disciple whom Jesus loved” and who understood that ‘to serve’ is not the same with ‘to listen’, that respect is not the same with love. And thus faith becomes the spiritual power of accepting as being true the things that are not seen and which cannot be rationally understood. It is not by accident that John is the one who first and fully understood the significance of the shroud in which Jesus’ body had been wrapped. It was him, not Peter, nor the other disciples who “did not understand that, according to the Scripture, Jesus had to rise from the dead” (John 20.9). Then, it is said, “the disciples went back home”. It is true that the “disciples” from this pericope (John 20.10) were two, John and Peter, not twelve, because Judah had ended and Matthias had not been yet chosen, a choice to which, in fact, John will be present [6, p. 162; 3, p. 579, 1013; 15].

It is not unspeakable that John ends his Gospel with a new misunderstanding of Peter. Jesus predicts the way of Peter’s death, tells him to follow Him, Peter turns and sees “the disciple whom Jesus loved” and asks what will happen with him. Jesus’ answer is not understood neither by Peter nor by the other disciples and Peter, again, proves that among those incapable of understanding he is among the most heavy-headed. And for all these not to be against the disciples, Jesus “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24.45: *Tunc aperuit illis sensum, ut intellegent Scripturas*).

4. Fides et ratio: Scholastic Marginalia

Saint Augustine affirms in different places that the purpose of catechesis is that of creating in catechists the spiritual (of faith) and rational availability of receiving and understanding the truth. In Hebrews 11.1 it is written: “And faith is an unwavering trust in the things hoped for, a strong conviction on the things that are not seen” (*Et autem fides sperando rum substantia, rerum argumentum non apparentium*). It is from here that Augustine starts when defining the purpose of catechesis, purpose that we find in the fullness of faith. In *Enchiridion*, 8 he writes about faith as it is *convictio rerum quae non videntur*.

This is the Catholic rule (*catholicae Regulae*). Faith as such engages all spiritual faculties, first of all reason and will. *Sermo* 43.4 states: *Dicit mihi homo: "Intellegam ut credam". Respondeo: "Crede ut intellegas"*, because *Nullus quippe credit aliquid, nisi prius cogitaverit esse credendum* ("nobody believes anything if he does not think first that it has to be believed" – *De praedestinatione sanctorum*, 2.5). The progress of knowledge and faith is mutual.

The word 'catholic' as such needs a few explanations. Fortunately I also know them from Augustine. Here's what this is about. Around the year 400, the Donatist bishop of Circa, Petilianus, referring to the term 'catholic', said to those that were behind this word: "you usurp the name of *catholica*, because your Church is not a complete unity; or, the Greek *catholicos* means unique or total" (*Si vos tenere Catholicam dicitis, catholicos illud est quod graece dicitur unicum sive totum. Ecce in toto non estis, quia in parte cessistis. Therefore, Quid significet nomen catholicos? What does the catholic name mean? Augustin respondit: Et ego quidem graecae linguae perparum assectus sum, et prope nihil; non tamen impudenter dico, me nose olon non esse unum, sed totum; et kath'olon secundum totum; unde Catholica nomen accepit. Ecce unde Catholica vocatur. What does Augustine answer? Here is: "I have not studied Greek but very little, in fact almost nothing, however, without flattering myself, I state that I know that olon does not mean unum, but totum, and kath'olon means secundum totum. Thus the word *catholica*", and Augustine brings for support the pericope from Acts 1.8 where it is stated: "and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria and to the ends of Earth". All these take place in *Contra litteras Petiliani*, II, 38, 90-91. The term, for that matter, is much older. It appears in Plato, in *Menon*, 72c, 77b, 79abc, is frequent in Aristotle with the meaning of 'universal', not 'general', and with this meaning the term is present in the table of Aristotelian categories. 'Catholic' was, in the beginning, a qualifier next to the noun 'Church' and bared two acceptances:*

- the universality in heart and mind, not in space. In this first acceptance the qualifier 'catholic' appointed the wholeness of Christian teaching as being one, complete, right and clean;
- in the second case, the qualifier 'catholic' was the opposite to the heretic word, therefore, 'catholic' meant 'orthodox'.

As for the words 'catholic Church', we find it for the first time in Ignatius Teoforul in *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, VIII, 2: "where the bishop is seen there should also be the crowd of believers, just as where Jesus is, the Catholic Church is as well". The meaning is exactly as in *Martyrium Policarpi*, XIX, 2: "Christ is the shepherd of the Catholic Church everywhere". The same way Saint Cyprian in *Letter LXVI*, 8 where he speaks about *ecclesiae, quae catholica una est*. The term was also used for designating local churches and namely the ones that kept intact the communion of faith. Polycarp, for example, is known as "the bishop of the Catholic Church of Smyrna", just as the Church of Nazianz is called Catholic and Gregory – "bishop of the Catholic Church of Constantinople". It is as clear as it can be the following thing: "old Christians understood by 'Catholic Church' the one Church, complete and keeper of a right and clean teaching, heaving as

leader Christ the Saviour. The same name was attributed to the particular Churches as well, not separated in what the communion of faith and of the love for complete Church was concerned. It is obvious that to the Catholic Church, thus understood, were opposed the heresies and heretics, schisms and schismatic, as well as all the “cliques that have torn the community of faith and love” [16]. Therefore, and here is all the beauty, to be ‘Catholic’ does not mean something else than being ‘Orthodox’, i.e. opposed to the heretic. This meaning of fidelity I find in Augustine in several places: *Epistola* 53; *De unico baptismo contra Petilianum*, 12, 20; 13, 21; 14, 23; *Contra litteras Petiliani donatistae*, II, 92; II, 108; *De vera religione*, V, 9, where I also read: *qui Christiani catholici vel orthodoxi nominatur, id est integritatis custodes, et recta sectantes* [“but only to those who are called Catholic Christians, and namely right-believers (i.e. Orthodox – n.m.), i.e. those who guard integrity follow the right path”]. And a Niceta of Remesia writes in *Explanatio symboli*, 10: “according to the confession of the Trinity, you shall confess that you believe in the Holy Catholic Church”. Logic comes to help me here: if Christ’s Church is Catholic and its members are Catholics, then also its faith and teaching are Catholic. Vincent of Lerin ends this issue in *Commonitorium*, I, 2: *id teneamus quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est* (you are a Catholic if you practice that which has been believed anywhere and anyhow). The same way Cyril of Alexandria in *Catechesis XVIII*, 23: “The Church is called Catholic because it spreads all over the world, because it teaches Catholic and without defect”.

Very clear is the following idea: although no one does not believe in God if he does not understand something, however, by the very faith with which he believes, he is healed so that he can understand the greater ones; because there are some that if we do not understand we do not believe, and there are others that if we do not believe we do not understand! However, in the field of faith, authority is essential: *quod scimus, debemus rationi; quod credimus, auctoritati* (“what we know we owe reason, what we believe, to the authority”) [Augustine, *Retractationes*, I, 14, 3]. „The bishop of Hippona managed to produce the first great synthesis of philosophical and theological thinking where there were pouring the currents of Greek and Latin thinking. And in him, the great unity of science, which found its ground in the biblical thinking, was confirmed and supported by the depth of speculative thinking. The synthesis made by Saint Augustine will remain for centuries as the highest form of philosophical and theological speculation that the West has ever known” [14, p. 32]

God is the material, formal and final object of faith. Faith leads us to certainty non argumentatione humana, sed divina auctoritate (*De Trinitate*, XIII, 9, 12), as *fides enim gradus est intelligendi; intellectus autem meritum fidei* (*Sermo* 126, 1, 1: “faith is the guide towards knowledge; knowledge is the reward of faith”). From this perspective, the men of letters have to learn not to dislike the strong language of the Scripture just because it is not emphatic. The man of letters must overcome his prejudice. The excessive cult of shape is a reprehensible vanity. The idea is above word as the soul is above body [17].

Augustine states right after conversion the two sources of knowledge: reason and authority. Chronologically, faith precedes reason. To understand a thing we must previously admit the *credo ut intellegam*. In several places Augustine affirms the priority of faith:

- De ordine, I, 9, 26: *tempore auctoritas, re autem ratio prior est*;
- De Trinitate, VIII, 5, 8: *prius autem quam intellegamus, credere debemus*;
- In Evangelium Ioannis tractatus, 40 starts from John 8, 32: *Et cognoscetis veritatem, et veritas liberabit vos* (“you will know the truth and the truth will set you free”). Augustine writes: *Credimus enim ut cognoscamus, non cognoscimus ut credamus* (I believe so that I know, it is not that I know so that I believe).

In all these passages it is however about the intimate understanding of the revealed truths. In what the preparation for faith is concerned, Augustine clearly marks the role of reason which precedes and accompanies the adhesion of the spirit. This is the order of relations between reason and faith [18]. Here are some examples now.

In front of faith, reason shows us not the intimate truth of statements, but the quality of that who wants to be believed upon his word. Letter 120, addressed to Consentius, studies precisely the report between reason and faith and, after proclaiming the priority of reason: *fides praecedat rationem* (I, 3). In the very act of faith, reason protects and sustains the authority of confession. Augustine states in *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 2, 5: *cogitat omnis qui credit, et credendo cogitat, et cogitando credit*. For the intimate understanding of the mystery, faith precedes reason. Once the divine confession is known, reason stops at the edge of mystery. Augustine resumes his position in two formulas: *intellege ut credas, crede ut intellegas* and *nisi credamus, non intellegimus*.

Augustine is the first one, at least in the western area, who felt the need to rationalize his faith, which is the same with saying that he places it in line with reason. “I understand so that I can believe; I believe so that I can understand” means that I, before believing, need to establish with the help of discursive reason the motifs of reliability or the grounds of my faith. The same, once faithful, each person’s reason is to be exercised ceaselessly if it wants the harmony of dogmatic truths to enter among them or their correspondence with reason. We believe so that we know, it is not that we know so that we can believe (*credimus ut cognoscamus, non cognoscimus ut credamus*)! Thus, faith precedes reason (*fides antecedit/praecedit rationem*). This is not however a disregard of science (reason); in fact, Augustine sees as heretics all those who are followers of blind faith. As faith precedes reason, the latter one may as well precede faith, without being any contradiction here. Augustine says in *De Magistro*, 11, 37: “So, what I understand I also believe at the same time; but not everything that I believe I understand. And everything I understand I know; but not everything that I believe I know” (*Quod ergo intellege, it etiam credo, at non omne, quod credo, etiam intellego; omne autem et intellego, scio, non omne quod credo, scio*). He has his bases of this statement in Isaiah 7.9: *Nisi credideritis, non intellegetis*.

The formula from Isaiah is invoked by Augustine in a lot of places. For example, in Letter 120, 1, 3 he writes: *Et ideo rationabiliter, dictum est per prophetam: Nisi credideritis, non intellegetis*. It is interesting that *Sermo* 43 has the following title: *De eo quod scriptum est in Isaia: "Nisi credideritis, non intellegetis"*. Here also appears the well-known formula: *Fides quaerens intellectum*. At 43, 7, I read: *Tu dicebas: "Intellegam ut credam"*. *Ego dicebam: "Ut intellegas crede"*. *Nata est controversia, veniam ad iudicem, iudicet Propheta, immo verus Deus iudicet per Prophetum. Ambo taceamus. Quid ambo dixerimu, audit est. "Intellegam inquis, ut credam"*. *"Crede, inquam ut intellegas"*. *Respondet Propheta: Nisi credideritis, non intellegetis*. *De Doctrina Christiana*, II, 12, 7, solves things for good. Here is what it says regarding the place from Isaiah: *Item illud eiusdem Isaiae: Nisi credideritis, non intellegetis, alius interpretatus est: Nisi credideritis, non permanebitis*, first reference is to Septuagint, the second to Vulgate (I find the reference to Isaiah also in *De Fide et Symbolo*, I, 1, in *De Libero Arbitrio*, I, 2, 4; II, 2, 6, as well as in *De Trinitate*, VII, 6, 12). This place, rather obscure, I prefer transferring to Eugen Munteanu who says: *"Augustine's formulation, Nisi credideritis, non intellegetis, reflects [...] Septuagint's tradition. The original Hebrew text contains an untranslatable pun, on the root 'MN, which may lead, by vocalization, to the verbs 'to support' and 'to believe' [...]. In the Hebrew Bible, the mentioned verse is thus presented [...]: But if you do not follow Me, no one can support you. In Vulgate, the formulation is close to the original Hebrew text (Si non credideritis, non permanebitis) and differs from Saint Augustine's option, quoted and commented by him in De Doctrina Christiana" [19].*

Faith suits its truth by adhesion; reason intimately makes its truth by Science. The two kinds of truth do not exclude, but complete each other, so that their ground is one – God. Moreover, rational truth is a confirmation of faith because, Augustine says, Science sometimes precedes faith, other times it follows faith. Precedes because faith's truth is made intelligible with the help of the concepts of Science; follows because Science's truth leads to the deepening of the truth embraced by the revealed doctrine. However, in the end, the essential key of reason's collaboration with faith is in the primacy of faith; respecting this exigency, the Christian can use reason. In *De vera religione*, VIII, 14 Augustine states that reason makes us understand those that we believe. Revelation guarantees reason's objectivity, and not vice versa. Faith does not prove; it proposes, not imposes, it is not demonstrative, is indicative. Reason proves, and in this act it should not forget what it owes to Revelation. And reason is indicative, but only in the matter of purposes, but is not also capable of getting us the means to achieve these goals. This helplessness becomes operative only with the faith that does not give life to pride, as reason does. Faith gives us the truth, reason deepens it. It is clear that reason is given one of the most important roles; reason strengthens faith. In *De doctrina christiana* (II, 40, 60) is a restriction that aims at philosophers' pride: if a philosopher spoke about the Saviour, we ought to praise him, not follow him! To philosophize is a good thing, but with moderation!

Faith, on the other hand, is nothing but a reflection upon which someone agreed. God gave us reason and, therefore, He cannot hate in us reason. There are in us a lot that we believe without knowing them, but nothing that we know without believing it. Not all those who think also believe at the same time, but all those who believe, think. De utilitate credendi (10, 24; 11, 25; 12, 23) exemplifies: “the one that we call faith is the base of human life. Friendship is founded on it, because friend’s thoughts cannot be seen and still are believed”.

Augustine’s philosophy “is developed entirely inside faith, being nothing but an endeavour to find again through reason the truth received in the heart by means of authority” [17, p. 155]. Thus ‘to believe in order to understand’ is for Augustinianism an essential exigency that implies adhesion (faith) and participation (reason and faith). Namely *fides debet praecedere intellectum, ut sit intellectus fidei praemium* (“faith is to precede understanding, so that understanding is a reward for faith”). A thing cannot be loved unless it is known. If it is not thought, says Augustine in *De praedestinatione sanctorum* (2, 5), faith is zero (*quoniam fides si non cogitetur, nulla est*), and *De fide, spe et charitate* relates faith to consent: if consent move away, faith moves away, because without consent is not believed in any way. Accepting Revelation, reason does not humiliate itself and it ceases seeking; recognizing the differences is not oppose to highlighting the convergences. “Religion, in the end, cannot be on the lonely way of mystic, but only in the communion done by the annunciation and hearing of word. The communication of man with God and of people among them requires and conditions each other. Moreover, maybe the mystery ‘God’ is from the start the most urgent challenge of man to dialogue, challenge that will never lead to a final result; and the dialogue, as limited and confused as it might be, leaves the Logos to resound, the true word, from where any word comes.” [4, p. 67] And Augustine, among the first ones, understood that authentic dialogue is not a dialogue about something, but one in something, is not so much a dialogue about God as it is one in God, and ‘I believe in something’ does not mean anything else but ‘I believe in you’, and this ‘you’ is a ‘you’ called Christ.

As a summary, we can say that “the role of the reason philosophically educated becomes even more relevant under Saint Anselm’s interpretation (an Augustinian, as a matter of fact – n.m.) regarding *intellectus fidei* [...]. Saint Anselm emphasizes (in succession of Augustine – n.m.) the fact that the intellect must start looking for what it loves; the more it loves, the more it wants to know more [...]. The fundamental harmony of philosophical knowledge and of knowing faith is again confirmed: faith asks for its object to be acknowledged with the help of reason; reason, the highest point of its research, admits that it is necessary what faith stands for” [14, p. 33]. Anselm tells us at the end of chapter IV of *Proslogion*: *ut si te esse nolim credere, non possum non intelligere* (“for if I did not want to believe that you are, I could not either understand”). Philosophy (reason) is for the faithful the art of discovering in the soul of the unfaithful exactly the faith that hides, and the faithful discovers it by means of the reasoning that the unfaithful one finds in him. The role and dignity of philosophy (reason) grow. Called to defend the faithful ones from the attacks of

those who deny God, philosophy discovers the status of being the conscience of the communion that exists between being's reason and the Reason of the Creator.

Anselm's position and the revival of Augustinianism is also the result of an immediate reaction to an author from that time, namely Petrus Damiani. He starts from the premises that to apply reason to faith does not mean anything else but to dissolve faith. Next, reasonable research, knowledge must be prohibited for the Christian, because it is dangerous in what salvation is concerned. The devil inspires people, says Petrus Damiani, the will of knowledge and precisely this will was the cause of the original sin and the source of all bad. As a matter of fact, in *De sancta simplicitate* (P.L., vol. 145, col. 0695C) the author speaks about cupiditate scientiae. The bishop of Ravenna resembles dialectics (science, reason) to a humble subject of religion. The comparison is successful and develops a prodigious and illicit career under the formula: philosophia ancilla theologiae. The formula as such is not used by the author anywhere. The idea is however to be found in *De divina omnipotentia*, col. 0603D, chapter V. And it goes further with Saint Thomas of Aquinas, although he does not use the formula either. The idea appears in *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 1, a. 5: sed contra est quod aliae scientiae dicuntur ancillae huius ("but against is the fact that the others are called the servants of this one", and right away Thomas sends to Proverbs 9.3). Petrus Damiani concludes: the most important thing is salvation, the safest path to it is monarchism. The question is raised: a monk, in order to be saved, needs philosophy, reason? No! The scripture has everything one needs to know for salvation. This is what the monk should know, not philosophy. Philosophy is the invention of the devil, and if there was something good left in philosophy it has been destroyed by grammar. What does grammar do? It teaches us to decline Deus in plural! It is clear therefore that the first teacher of grammar was the devil. Syllogism and declination are neither appropriate nor of the match of divine power. In return, Thomas says: if people would have nothing else but reason to know God, the result would be that they would find themselves in maximis ignorantiae tenebris (*Summa contra gentiles*, 1, 4). And in *Summa theologiae* Thomas brings clarifications right at the beginning of the paper in article 1: "If it is necessary to have another doctrine next to the philosophical disciplines", when he concludes: "So, besides the philosophical disciplines analyzed on the ground of reason, they (people – n.m.) needed to receive the doctrine by holy revelation" [20]. Reason needs help (debilitas rationis) and receives this support from faith.

Shortly, Saint Thomas "had the great merit of setting in foreground the harmony that exists between reason and faith. The light of reason and the one of faith, both come from God, he says: that is why they cannot contradict among them. Radically, Thomas admits that nature, personal object of philosophy, can contribute to the understanding of divine revelation. So faith is not afraid of reason, but it investigates it and believes in it. As grace implies nature and leads it to perfection, the same way faith implies and perfects reason." [14, p. 34]

5. Thomas the Apostle between religion, Theology and ideology (or on 'believe and do not question')

What I am interested now most is in the episode regarding Thomas the Twin. What is it about? "The atheists and critiques of Christianity use Thomas' episode and of the others to show to the Christians what they call 'crisis of faith'. Don't you see, they argue, that even the disciples doubted and did not believe. The more strongly we can suspect all of you that you are not of good faith, that you pretend. And I also mention the phrase of the possessed child's father: "I believe, God, help my unbelief", an expression, the same people say, of an ambiguous faith. They can be answered: the Evangelists – honest, realistic, un-hypocrite – did not falsify the truth, they did not insist on hiding it. They have registered the moment of human (and understandable) doubt and they have mentioned it without hesitation or rush. But they have also noted the declaration of the same Thomas: My Lord and my God! which definitely ends the crisis. The crisis is now surpassed, the temporary disbelief wasted. The short and absolute exclamation of the ex 'unfaithful' annihilates everything that preceded it (just as the tears and screams of the father of the possessed child solve the critical point formulated in the binomial faith – unbelief)." [1, p. 187] There were no atheists back then, nor critiques of Christianity.

The first Christian community is born in Jerusalem, 43 days after Thomas' Sunday, in the day of Pentecost (Acts 2.41: "and in that day, to the number of disciples were added almost 3000 souls").

As for the atheists!, what is there more to say. The word 'atheist' has at least a double signification. Wills do not stand the word, the Jew and the Christian, they cannot be atheists, atheism is something inapplicable to monotheism of any kind it might be (Julian the Apostate was not an atheist, he was, for the virtue of apostasy, a confessor of God, even if one against, hence the 'trap' of the atheist: any atheist, by the fact itself that he is an atheist, bears testimony for and about Christ by that he disputes Him, otherwise he himself would be in an unilateral contradiction!). A Jew cannot believe that God does not exist. This issue is not even in question, as it was not for the medieval ones either. It was not the existence of God in stake in such situation, especially for the Jews in testaments, in stake was the power and the use of God's power on Earth. Not even the 'unwise' from Psalm 13.1 did not believe that God does not exist; he was just convinced that God does not have any power on Earth. This was the supreme recklessness. No creature is indifferent to a certain Creator, whether it knows or it does not know anything about Him. Because being an atheist does not mean not believing in God (or in different gods of circumstance), to be an atheist you do not become, to be an atheist you are now, and this may mean predestination (as for the Greeks: you are 'unfavourable' and definitively wrong, as those from the nations of Labdacids and Atridas; at Greeks one does not mistake along the way, more or less, you are either wrong or not!, here is the beginning of ideology. Socrates refuses to escape precisely for not becoming an atheist, i.e. by the protective gods of the place as he was

also not accompanied by the god from his native city), as it may mean a malediction that is unfavourable (and final in the case of the fallen angels), but not final, as in the case of Adam, humans, and in this situation the malediction, precisely because it is not final, it should not become an ideology (there are no ideologies ‘along the way’, ‘of branch’ or ‘of niche’ for the simple reason that ideology intends, by denomination itself, by the fact that it wants to become an ‘ideology’, to behave in time at least as in Zeno’s aporias: the ideology manifests in time and is outside it. Just like Jesus, the critiques of Christianity say, not the atheists!). Because ideology transforms time in end and Heaven in State, and if there is anywhere an atheist, then we can definitely locate him in State (of course, if by State we understand that institution which, gradually and insinuating, takes over the tasks reserved for religion, hence the concept of ‘secularization’). From here the huge difference as well: Heaven (salvation) is not a place but a condition, the State is not a condition but a place. Religion faces ideology, it is not confused with it, the space of religion is transcendence, of state is immanence, so that, by definition, religion refuses its condition of ideology (unless, as in Althusser, religion is a pure form of ideology in general).

The assumed point of view is: religion faces ideology, this is clear. The problems appear in the report that is established between theology and ideology: “Although Theology is not ideology, however the theological discourse has an ideological dimension [...]. Theology becomes an ideology when its serving function is not assumed as a process of ‘legitimization’ of Truth, but as legitimization of the ‘authority’ of an institution and its structures of ‘power’.” [21] Theology is not ideology for at least two reasons:

- “it is not an expression of ‘the social or cultural imaginary’” and
- “it is not an act of dissimulating and determining real life” [21].

What and how is Thomas, what does he have, how much does he have from what he is missing? I say that Thomas has faith and mind when he is willing to die for Jesus; he has reason without faith and without mind when he does not understand where Christ is going and when he asks for evidence; he is a theologian on the eighth day under the saving burden of the expression – “my Lord and my God”; he is a religious character in general, with more ups and fewer downs. Some want him an ideologist; Thomas is nothing like that, like that are the ones that want him ideologist and attribute him at least the occasion of the birth of the phrase ‘believe and do not question’. Thomas has not said something like that, nor did he believe in it. The order, for him as well, is *credo – intelligo – credo*, and to put faith on a secondary place is pride, as it is indifference to be satisfied only with faith. Faith itself is prepared and accomplished by the adhesion of intelligence, so that ‘to believe’ is a dialogue between logic and Revelation, and Christian wisdom is the same with faith. Many have faith, but only few appeal to reason. However, not only Thomas is convinced that in front of the authority of Revelation, reason must obey without seeing itself constrained or defeated. The word of God is true whether reason understands it or not. On the other hand, the Bible is not a scientific book, its purpose is not that of proving the existence of God. Faith suggests, reason

requires. The Bible does not make me believe in God the way in which Science constrains me to believe in a physics law, for example.

6. Conclusion

Shortly, Thomas is a stranger to this illicit phrase alike Christianity. The phrase as such, in a modified form, exists, however, somewhere. Celsus uses it, a Platonic and anti-Christian philosopher from the second century. His paper was entitled *Logos alethes*, title that might be translated by ‘true word’, ‘true teaching’, ‘true basis’ or even ‘true faith’. The book, lost, is a virulently anti-Christian pamphlet. It is recovered and restored, incompletely, from and by Origen’s text – *Contra Celsum*. Origen’s book, as a reply to Celsus’ text, presents first Celsus’ thesis, then Origen’s position and the book can be divided in three sections: the first one wants to prove that Christian religion “is very recent and of suspect origin” (I, 14 – II, 79), the second part (III, 1 – V, 65) claims that “the doctrinal bases of Christianity are false”, the last part (VI – VIII, 72) shows that “the doctrinal values of Christianity are worthless” [22].

I said that in *Logos alethes* Celsus is here and there a redoubtable pamphleteer, malicious about everywhere, conceited and often disdainful. As a response, Origen has the steadiness of common sense and does not step aside from fining Celsus when he bluffs, makes confusions or, he just does not understand those related to Christian faith. Origen obtains an advantage from the very beginning: he is a Christian probationer. “Here is where it actually stands the undisputed strength of Origen’s argumentation: for him Christianity is first of all fact, feeling, only secondly is doctrine” [22, p. 14], and this removes Origen from the condition of ideologist, condition in which Celsus remains constant. Origen is not an ideologist, he is an apologist because, as he confesses in ‘Preface’, “I fight, one by one, as my best possible, the accusations brought by Celsus against us” and “I answer to each of the charges made against us in writing by Celsus, fighting what I found worthy of answering from the sayings, even though these are not capable of shaking any of our believers”. How come? Simple: Celsus’ delusions are ‘vain wisdom’ and his book is not a ‘true discourse’ as it is not a ‘discourse true’ [23].

Here is that place (as a clarification of reading I say that the italic text and in the chevrons belong to Celsus and from this text starts Origen to fight him. What is not in italic belongs to Origen.): “Celsus urges <<to not receive any teaching, unless it is guided by reason and by healthy mind, since the mistake is hard to avoid if we approve the teaching without control>>. It is clear that him (Celsus – n.m.) puts Christians <<together with those who believe without judgment/ground [...]. The same way are things for Christians as well [...]. Some not wanting to give, nor ask ground about what Christians believe, answer us something like this: Do not question, but believe; faith shall save you>>. From where I draw conclusion that, for Christians, <<wisdom is something bad in these times, while insanity is something good>>. Here is what it should be answered to these blames: if it were possible for all humans to neglect their daily

occupations and to dedicate all the free time to philosophical researches, then no one should follow any other way than this one [...]. But if something like that is not possible [...] then I wonder what other better way would be better for the crowd than the one given to the nations by Jesus?" [23, p. 36] Celsus is convinced that this formula belongs to the Christians, for Origen it belongs to Celsus, the polemic part is obvious, the ideological one is implicit. "Then Celsus textually declares: <<if Christians would like to answer my questions (not in order to inform me, since I know everything, but because I speak to everyone equally), it would be good. But if they do not want to accept anything, because of their habit: do not question, believe instead, then I would have to explain what means this true nature of the teaching that they practice and the source from where it started>>". Origen has fun on this "I know everything" and replies: "not even I, that I have dedicated all these years researching these problems, would say that <<I know everything>> because I love truth [...]. If he have had at least said these words to some common people, who, in their ignorance, do not realize what they are saying" [23, p. 38], and Origen's irony targets Celsus' charge regarding the Christians' ignorance and the fact that, of course for this ignorance, of not questioning and better believing (the two, at least, reasons for which Celsus is convinced that the statement in discussion belongs to Christianity are: 1. Christianity is a religion like any other and 2. Christians are ignorant, barbaric, silly, primitive). We have, therefore, two formulas – 'believe and do not question' vs. 'do not question, but believe' – formulas which find their resemblance in that none of them belongs to Christianity, as their difference is given by a coordinator ('and') replaced with an adversative ('but') [24].

For Theology it is not important neither the resemblance, which is perfectly useless, nor the difference, without consequences of faith. Ideology, in this case, still searches to find, still knocks to be opened, and ends up like this, against itself, in a profoundly theological language.

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