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# CHAOSKAMPF IN THE ORTHODOX BAPTISM RITUAL[1]

## ABSTRACT

The present article analyses the occurrence of the *Chaoskampf* motif in the Orthodox Baptism ritual and its biblical and Near-Eastern backgrounds. Such statements are direct references to Old and New Testament texts in which water has negative connotations, being associated with hostile or chaotic aspects of existence. In the baptismal interpretation of the biblical motif, sea, depths and dragons are figurative names for demons. The liturgical reinterpretation of these biblical references is the preamble of the baptismal exorcisms. Biblical texts about the struggle against chaos were included in the ritual in order to illustrate Christ's supremacy over all hostile forces subduing man before Baptism. This illustrative process occurred with the historical development of the baptism ritual after the 4th century.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In certain statements uttered during the Orthodox service of baptism, water appears to have negative connotations, being associated with forces inimical to human beings, which are nevertheless under God's control. Such statements occur in the *pre-baptismal exorcisms* and in the *prayer for the blessing of baptismal waters*. My purpose is to show that these statements have biblical backgrounds that allude, more or less obviously, to the Ancient Near Eastern myth of *Chaoskampf*. First, I will mention those passages from the baptism service and identify the references to biblical texts. I will then analyse if the

*Chaoskampf* motif is suggested in those texts and how it is reinterpreted in the baptism ritual. In the last section, I will briefly address the question why these biblical texts were included in the ritual. But, first, I will briefly describe the biblical motif of *Chaoskampf*.

## 2.    *CHAOSKAMPF* AS BIBLICAL MOTIF

Near-Eastern and biblical texts sometimes describe the submission of the creation to God as a struggle between Him and forces that threaten human existence. In biblical theology, this motif is known as *"Chaoskampf"* – the struggle against chaos. Though attested in many Near-Eastern sources, the best-known version of the myth has been preserved in the Babylonian epic *Enuma Elish*. Marduk defeats Tiamat – the goddess of salt water, with the appearance of a monster – and thus enables the emergence of both the world and its human beings. Significant similitudes to the biblical *Chaoskampf* motif are found in texts from ancient Ugarit (Phoenicia), which mention the fight of Baal against the god of the sea (Yam) and against the god of death (Mot). The defeat of Yam and Mot culminates in the proclamation of Baal's kingdom.

Since Gunkel's *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* (1895), scholars admit an influence of *Chaoskampf* motifs in the Bible, especially in the creation story of Genesis 1 and in some psalms. Only a few authors (Childs 1960:36; Anderson 1967:39; Hamilton 1990:110) claim an etymological connection between Tiamat and *tehôm* – the biblical word used in Genesis 1:2 to designate the primordial ocean – while the majority rejects this thesis (Day 1992:228; Tsumura 2005:36-41; Waschke 2006:574-581). Tsumura (2005:9-76) has questioned the thesis of a connection between Genesis 1 and Ancient Near-Eastern texts about the struggle against chaos. Focusing her analysis on the *Chaoskampf* theme in the Psalter, Watson (2005:259) claims that "there is no unequivocal internal evidence pointing to its existence" in the texts she considered. These critics have failed to completely discredit the existence of the *Chaoskampf* motif in biblical texts, but have shown that the theory needs a corrective. Thus, a distinction between a primeval *Chaoskampf* and one after creation is useful, since only some of the texts contain cosmogonies, while others intend to legitimate the king (and kingship) as protector of cosmic order (Bauks 2001:431-464).

In Ancient Israel, *Chaoskampf* cosmogony was perhaps even more popular than the one in the first chapter of Genesis (Von Rad 1992:164). But it was never presented as an epic in the writings of the Old Testament, as it happened in the Ancient Near East. Elements of *Chaoskampf* sometimes

occur, in scattered words or concise references, recalling both the Mesopotamian and the Ugaritic version of the myth. Chaotic connotations of water are related to the sea,[2] the rivers,[3] the deeps,[4] and to some of their associated personifications such as dragons (*tannînîm*),[5] Rahab[6] and Leviathan.[7] But these elements serve only to assert the supremacy of God over all creation, including the forces hostile to existence.

Creation was not perceived as an immemorial, completely finished act. Chaos persists as a dimension of threatening the collective or individual existence, even if God has control over it. Therefore, the fight against chaos can take the historic form of God's victory over the enemies of Israel, as in the Exodus tradition: with "a strong hand and an outstretched arm", (Ps. 136:12 RSV) God drives away the waters and destroys the hostile forces of the Egyptians. Biblical texts also use *Chaoskampf* imagery when proclaiming God's salvific acts in eschatological times (Isa. 27:1).

The biblical *Chaoskampf* motif is a rhetoric figure that expresses God's eternal kingship and his care for the world and for Israel (Bauks 2001:461).

## 3.    THE *CHAOSKAMPF* MOTIF IN THE BAPTISM RITUAL

Baptism is an initiation sacrament in the Orthodox Church. It marks the transition of a person – be this an adult or a child – from an existence subjugated by sin to a new life in the resurrected Christ. This process is reflected in the two-part structure of the ritual. The first one is the preparatory rite. It begins with exorcisms (the rejection of Satan) and culminates in the acceptance of Christ and proclamation of the Nicene Creed. The second part is the Baptism itself. After the blessing of baptismal waters, the person is baptised by immersion in the name of the Holy Trinity. Orthodox Baptism ritual includes Chrismation and Eucharist.[8]

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2    Exodus 15; Psalms 29:3.10; 33:7-8; 46:3-4; 65:8; 74:13; 77:16-21; 89:10.26; 93:3-4; 104:6-7.9; 106:9; 114:3; Job 7:12; 26:12; 38:8-11; Proverbs 8:29; Isaiah 17:12-13; 51:9-11; Jeremiah 5:22; 6:23; 50:42; Nahum 1:4; Habakkuk 3:8.
3    Psalms 24:2; 89:26; 93:3; 107:33; 114:3.
4    Genesis 1:2; Job 38:16; Psalms 33:7; 42:8; 77:16; 104:6; 107:26; 135:6; 148:7; Jonah 2:6; Habakkuk 3:10.
5    Psalm 74:13; Job 7:12; Isaiah 27:1; 51:9.
6    Psalm 89:11; Job 9:13; 26:12.
7    Psalms 74:14; 104:26; Job 40:25-41:26; Isaiah 27:1.
8    For a general introduction to baptism in the Orthodox Church, cf. Schmemann (1974) and Heiser (1987).

The text of the Orthodox baptism ritual is attested to in the *Barberini Euchologion*, a manuscript from the 8th century AD. This codex is the oldest source for the Byzantine rite. Approximately five hundred years later, the content of the *Euchologion Bessarion* was nearly similar to that of Barberini (Arranz 1982:299). Most of its prayers and orders of the sacraments are still in use nowadays in the Orthodox Churches (Parenti & Velkovska 2000:19-23). In what follows, I shall refer only to the passages containing allusions to the *Chaoskampf* motif – i.e. the pre-baptismal exorcisms and the prayer for the blessing of waters – using the current text of the Orthodox ritual after the edition of Vaporis (1977:46-73).

# 3.1     Water and chaos in the pre-baptismal exorcisms

Three exorcisms precede the ritual of Orthodox baptism. In the Early Church, exorcisms were performed during the preparation for baptism (catechumenate), after the reception of the novice (Schmemann 1974:18-21). Since baptism took place on Easter, exorcisms were performed at the beginning of the Lent and during the Holy Week (Heiser 1987:270-274). Currently, the three exorcisms are performed in less than twenty minutes.

Although the contrast between God and demons is understandable in the exorcisms, there are also allusions to water instances being opposite to God. These assertions (I-V) from the first and the second exorcism are marked in bold in the text below:

> The Lord rebukes you, o devil, He that came into the world and made His dwelling among men, that He might cast down your tyranny and deliver man; … I abjure you by the Living God, Who has shown forth the Tree of Life, and posted the Cherubim, and the flaming sword that turns about to guard this; be rebuked, and depart, **(I) for I forbid you, through Him that walks on the waves of the sea [θαλάσσης] as upon dry land, Who forbade the storm of the winds, (II) Whose glance dries up the deep [ἀβύσσους] and Whose threatenings melt the mountains**; for it is He himself that now forbids you through us … **(III) Fear God, Who sits on the throne of the Cherubim, and looks upon the depths [ἀβύσσους]** …, before Whom tremble Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Principalities, Authorities, Powers, the many-eyed Cherubim and the six-winged Seraphim; **(IV) Whom Heaven and earth fear, the sea [ἡ θάλασσα] and all that live therein.** Come forth, and depart from the sealed and newly-enlisted soldier of Christ our God …
>
> Therefore, you all evil, unclean, abominable, loathsome and alien spirit, I adjure you by the power of Jesus Christ, Who has all authority

in Heaven and on earth, … (V) Fear God, at Whose command the earth was established upon the waters [ὑδάτων]; … Who has placed the sand for a boundary to the sea [θαλάσσῃ], and made safe paths through the waters [ὕδατι σφοδρῷ]; Who has stretched out the Heavens as with a curtain; Who covers His upper rooms with waters [ὕδασι] … Who calls up the waters of the seas [τὸ ὕδωρ τῆς θαλάσσης], and sprinkles it on the face of the earth. Come out! Depart from him (her) who is now being made ready for Holy Illumination … (First and second exorcism).

All five excerpts above are direct or allusive references to biblical texts. They share the idea of an opposition between God and different instances of water (sea, depths) and the submission of those instances to the Creator.

## (I)    "For I forbid you, through Him that walks on the waves of the sea [θαλάσσης] as upon dry land, Who forbade the storm of the winds."

The first statement mentions two episodes from the New Testament: Jesus walks on the sea (Matt. 14:22-33 par.) and stills the storm (Matt. 8:23-27 par.). While the disciples fear in front of the tumultuous sea, Jesus subjects it. This not only is reminiscent of the *Chaoskampf* motif, but also shows Jesus to be the Lord of the sea.

## (II)    "Whose glance dries up the deep [ἀβύσσους] and Whose threatenings melt the mountains."

There might be allusions to Judges 5:5, Psalm 18:16, Nahum 1:4-5 and Habakkuk 3:6 in this statement.[9] These theophanic hymns (Judg. 5:4-5; Ps. 18:8-20; Nah. 1:2-6; Hab. 3:2-15) describe an upheaval of the most thorough elements of nature at the advent of the Lord: mountains shake, even melt in front of Him; the sea dries up at His admonition.

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9    Judges 5:5: "The mountains quaked before the LORD, yon Sinai before the LORD, the God of Israel." (RSV).
Psalm 18:16: "Then the channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bare, at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils."
Nahum 1:4-5: "He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, he dries up all the rivers … The mountains quake before him, the hills melt; the earth is laid waste before him, the world and all that dwell therein."
Habakkuk 3:6: "He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered, the everlasting hills sank low. His ways were as of old."

Habakkuk 3:8-15 contains a "refashioning of Canaanite epic with YHWH as divine warrior" (Anderson 2011:61). The *Chaoskampf* scenario in Habakkuk 3 is also supported by vv. 8-10: the rivers and the sea are the object of God's wrath; waters and deeps loudly manifest their fear. The association of sea and rivers in Habakkuk 3:10 and Nahum 1:4 is also reminiscent of Ugaritic mythology, where the opponents of Baal are "Prince Yam (Sea)" and "Judge Nahar (River)".[10]

The theophany in Psalm 18:8-20 has often been related to *Chaoskampf* (cf. Kraus 1978a:291; Jeremias 1965:89-91). The reference to "many waters" (v. 17) and the military imagery in verse 15 are allusions to the fight against chaos (Hossfeld & Zenger 1993:127; Jeremias 1987:40; Craigie 1983:88).

## (III) "Fear God, Who sits on the throne of the Cherubim, and looks upon the depths [ἀβύσσους]."

This statement is a quote from the Song of the Three Young Men[11] who praise God as universal King, whose dominion includes the heights and depths of creation.

## (IV) "Whom Heaven and earth fear, the sea [ἡ θάλασσα] and all that live therein."

The expression "heaven and earth, the sea and all that live therein" is encountered in Psalms 69:34, 96:11 and 146:6 as a synonym for creation.

In Psalm 69, the sky and the earth do not quake, but praise God. The three spheres of creation together with Israel and the nations are called to worship and glorify the Creator (Ps. 96). Trust in the Lord is revealed by the fact that the sky and the earth are His workmanship (Ps. 146).

The sea is mentioned in all three psalms together with heaven and earth. But the detailing, which is done only in the case of the sea ("everything that moves therein"), might recall the great sea monster (Gen. 1:21). This association is found in the Song of the Three Young Men (Dan. 3:79 LXX): "Bless the Lord, you whales (κήτη) and all creatures that move in the waters ..." (RSV). In the Septuagint, κῆτος – the whale or the great fish – is the Greek rendering for three personifications of marine chaos: *tannîn* (Gen. 1:21), Rahab (Job 9:38; 26:12) and Leviathan (Job 3:8). There is no other hint of a chaotic threat in Psalm 146 (cf. Watson 2005:221).

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10  *Zbl ym*; *špt nhr*. Cf. KTU 1.2 iv 7-40.
11  Daniel 3:55 and Odes 8:54 in LXX.

"Waters", "deep waters", "deep" and "flood" are metaphors for death in Psalm 69:2-3, 15-16. The psalmist's plea for rescue is based on God's power to rule over these instances of chaos. Thus, the *Chaoskampf* motif is presupposed in this instance, even if there are no hints to Creation or Exodus, or statements about waters being defeated.[12]

Watson has negated connections to the *Chaoskampf* motif in Psalm 96. Watson (2005:202-208) takes the "roaring sea" (v. 11) as an image of "musical celebration" and praise of the Lord. But this description is reasonable only if the roar of the sea is generally associated with a threat to life (i.e., with chaos). In my opinion, Psalm 96:11 proclaims a conversion of chaotic forces. Similar to Psalm 104:26, where Leviathan is but one of Lord's creatures, the pet of God, the roaring sea praises the Creator in Psalm 96:11.

(V)    "Fear God, at Whose command the earth was established upon the waters [ὑδάτων]; ... Who has placed the sand for a boundary to the sea [θαλάσσῃ], and made safe paths through the waters [ὕδατι σφοδρῷ]; Who has stretched out the Heavens as with a curtain; Who covers His upper rooms with waters [ὕδασι] ... Who calls up the waters of the seas [τὸ ὕδωρ τῆς θαλάσσης], and sprinkles it on the face of the earth."

The amalgamation of biblical references in this last statement refers to God's action of securing human life from the threatening of waters. He spread out the earth upon the waters (Ps. 136:6) to make it proper for human habitation. The assertion that God puts borders to the sea, thus limiting its potentially destructive sphere of action for man, is cited, in this instance, after Jeremiah 5:22, but is also found in sapiential literature.[13] The path laid in the sea by the Redeemer of Israel (Ps. 77:20; Isa. 43:16; Wis. 14:3) is an element of the Exodus tradition. The image of waters obeying God's command to flood the earth is in Amos 5:7-8a a warning to those who disregard the laws and justice of the Creator. The separation of waters by making the firmament (Gen. 1:6-7; Ps. 104:3), along with the

12    Watson (2005:93) considers that chaos is not meant in Psalm 69, because "creation and exodus language is understandably absent" and "there is also no imagery of the floods being cut, divided, gathered, or rebuked, or of the waters fleeing".

13    Proverbs 8:27-29; Psalm 104:9.

other deeds mentioned, demonstrates the supremacy of the Creator over creation.

Psalm 77:17-20 evokes Israel's crossing of the sea using a theophany impregnated by *Chaoskampf* language (cf. Kraus 1978b:696-697; Jeremias 1965:26-27; Dahood 1968:231-233).

Genesis 1:6-7, Jeremiah 5:22, as well as Psalms 104:3 and 136:6 speak of God's controlling the waters rather than in conflict with them (Day 1992:229). But, if God had not gathered the seas, the earth would have remained flooded. If God had not set boundaries to chaos, the destructive forces would have reversed over the world. Therefore, chaos, represented by sea and deeps, persists as a dimension of existence, but it is under the control of the Creator. If vague echoes of the *Chaoskampf* occur in these Old Testament references, they serve only to assert the supremacy of God over the forces hostile to existence.

## 3.2    The blessing of water and the dragons in Jordan

Water is consecrated in the sacrament of baptism in order to "show and to be remission of sins, redemption, salvation" for the one to be baptised (Schmemann 1974:50). The blessing of baptismal water begins with a doxology ("Great are you") and further shares the common structure of cultic Orthodox prayers, having an anamnetic introduction that evokes God's salvation in the past and the actual demand for the repeating of His rescuing work in the present. By the 8th century, this baptismal prayer was slightly adapted to be used also for the Epiphany blessing of waters. Thus, the exorcism contained in the baptism blessing was replaced with anamnetic doxologies (Denysenko 2012:83-100).

The most intriguing statement in the baptism blessing is found in the anamnetic passage preceding the epiclesis:

> Great are you, O Lord, and wondrous are Your works, and no word will suffice to hymn Your wonders (thrice). For by Your Will have You out of nothingness brought all things into being and by Your power sustain all creation, and by Your Providence direct the world. ... You did hallow the virginal womb by Your birth ... (VI) You hallowed the streams of Jordan, sending down from the Heavens Your Holy Spirit, and crushed the heads of dragons [τῶν δρακόντων] that lurked therein.

After evoking God's action in the past, the prayer continues with the epiclesis and the demand for casting out the evil forces hidden in the baptismal water (exorcism):

Do You, Yourself, O Loving King, be present now also through the descend of Your Holy Spirit and Hallow this Water.[14] And give to it the Grace of Redemption the Blessing of Jordan. Make it a fountain of incorruption, a gift of sanctification, a loosing of sins, a healing of sickness, (VII) a destruction of demons [δαίμοσιν], unapproachable by hostile powers [ταῖς ἐναντίαις δυνάμεσιν], filled with angelic might; and let them that take counsel together [οἱ ἐπιβουλεύοντες] against Your creature flee there from ... Let all adverse powers be crushed beneath the signing of your most precious Cross.[15] ... And let not a demon of darkness [δαιμόνιον σκοτεινόν] conceal himself in this water; neither let an evil spirit [πνεῦμα πονηρόν], bringing obscurity of purpose and rebellious thoughts, descend into it. ... Manifest Yourself, O Lord, in this water, and grant that he (she) that is to be baptized may be transformed therein to the putting away of the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to the putting on of the new, which is renewed according to the Image of Him that created him (her) ... (Prayer for the blessing of baptismal waters).

## (VI)    "You hallowed the streams of Jordan, sending down from the Heavens Your Holy Spirit, and crushed the heads of dragons [τῶν δρακόντων] that lurked therein."

The first phrase should not challenge our understanding, since it is a reference to the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-34). The following phrase is bizarre since there is no reference in the New Testament to either Jesus' or the Father's crushing the heads of the dragons that lurked in Jordan.

Anyway, there is a close reference to this affirmation in the Old Testament. The formulation in the water sanctification prayer is almost identical to that of Psalm 74:13-14 (73:13-14 in LXX):

Thou didst divide the sea [yām] by thy might; thou didst break the heads of the dragons [tannînîm, Gr. δρακόντων] on the waters;

Thou didst crush the heads of Leviathan [liwyāṯān, Gr. δρακόντος] thou didst give him as food for the peoples of the wilderness.

The opponents of the Lord are the sea (yām), the dragons (tannînîm) and Leviathan (liwyāṯān). There is no detailed description of this battle; only

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14   The celebrant mentions this epiclesis thrice.

15   The celebrant mentions this exorcism thrice, accompanying it with apotropaic gestures: he signs the water thrice with the sign of the cross, dipping his fingers in the water and breathing upon it.

short and almost ambiguous assertions about the submission of these hostile forces by God. They sound like an echo of a forgotten epic that could find its place neither in this psalm nor in the rest of the Old Testament.

All of God's opponents from Psalm 74:13-14 are encountered in Ugaritic epic: the sea (*yām*), the dragons (*tannînîm*) and Leviathan (*liwyāṯān*). There are mentions of the fight of Baal – the main Phoenician god – against the god of the sea (whose name is *Yam*) and against the god of death (Mot). The dragons and Leviathan are also known in Ugaritic mythology as *tunnanu* (*tnn*) and *Lotan* (*ltn*). They appear as personifications of chaos, fighting on the side of Yam and Mot against Baal (Niehr 2006:728). The goddess Anat, always ready to come in defence of Baal, mentions the following in one myth about the Phoenician god (KTU 1.3 III 35-40):

> What enemy rises up against Baal
>
> What adversary against Him who Mounts the Clouds?
>
> Have I not slain Sea [*ym*] beloved of El?
>
> Have I not annihilated River [*nhr*] the great god?
>
> Have I not muzzled *tnn*, holding her in a muzzle?
>
> I have slain the Crooked [*ʾqltn*] Serpent,
>
> The Foul-fanged [*šlyṭ*] with seven heads … (Gray 1957:39).

Several Phoenician magical texts mention that Baal once defeated *tunannu*, for which he is invoked again to crush it or cut its tongues. This means that *tunnanu* was imagined as a dragon with multiple heads (Niehr 2006:728). One of the mythological fragments, describing the preamble of the fight between Baal and Mot, also mentions the serpent Lotan (KTU 1.5 I 1-3):

> … though thou didst smite *Ltn* the primaeval [*brḥ*] serpent,
>
> And didst annihilate the Crooked [*ʾqltn*] Serpent,
>
> The Foul-fanged of seven heads … (Gray 1957:47).

The Hebrew equivalent is encountered in Isaiah 27:1, where Leviathan and *tannîn* are also mentioned:

> In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing [*bārîaḥ*] serpent [*nāḥāš*], Leviathan the twisting [*ᵃqallāṯôn*] serpent, and He will slay the dragon [*tannîn*] that is in the sea.

Ugaritic echoes are obvious in this instance, especially as regards terminology. Leviathan is designed as the fleeing serpent (perhaps because it is defeated?), the crooked serpent (due to the pain of the wounds?).

Moreover, the only occurrence of ʾªqallāṯ̲ōn in the Old Testament is in this verse. This suggests that the Ugaritic term (ʿqltn) was adopted together with the Ugaritic tradition in Ancient Israel, but did not develop a use in the language. The lack of its use in the Hebrew Bible may be a result of the poor reception of this tradition or of its transformation in the Israelite religion.[16]

The Orthodox baptism ritual maintains elements of the *Chaoskampf* motif received through Psalm 74. The difference is that, in the Orthodox ritual, *Jordan* replaces the *sea* from the biblical psalm. The Septuagint makes no distinction between Leviathan and *tannînîm* in Psalm 74:13-14.[17] The Hebrew *liwyāṯān* is rendered as δράκων. Greek translators perceived Leviathan and the dragon as synonymous terms, as the mythological background was probably no longer familiar in the 2nd century BC.[18] The use of the LXX in the Eastern Church explains why there is no reference to Leviathan in the Orthodox baptism order. Only the dragons referred to in Psalm 73:13-14 occur in the blessing of the baptismal water.

(VII)    "… a destruction of demons [δαίμοσιν], unapproachable by hostile powers [ταῖς ἐναντίαις δυνάμεσιν], filled with angelic might; and let them that take counsel together [οἱ ἐπιβουλεύοντες] against Your creature flee there from … Let all adverse powers be crushed beneath the signing of your most precious Cross. … And let not a demon of darkness [δαιμόνιον σκοτεινόν] conceal himself in this water; neither let an evil spirit [πνεῦμα πονηρόν], bringing obscurity of purpose and rebellious thoughts, descend into it …"

The apotropaic acts of the celebrant – the act of thrice signing in the form of the cross and blowing over the water – assume the presence of hostile forces therein. It becomes clear that "dragons" in VI must be connected with the evil spirits that oppose God and human beings in VII. In the baptismal

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16    The motif of God's submission of the dragon is encountered also in Isaiah 51:9. The cutting of Rahab to pieces is mentioned in warlike language, in the same way in which the piercing of the dragon (*tannîn*) is rendered, as events having occurred in the old days.

17    LXX does not distinguish between dragon (*tannîn*/δράκων) and serpent (*nāḥāš*/δράκων ὄφις) in Isaiah 27:1.

18    Even in the Ugaritic texts, the distinction between Lotan, tunannu and the serpent is not certain.

interpretation of the biblical motif from Psalm 74, the word "dragon" is a figurative name for demons. Thus, the ancient motif of the fight against chaos became the fight against the demons in Orthodox understanding and was used both in the pre-baptismal exorcisms and in the prayer for blessing the baptismal waters.

## 4. THE METAPHORICAL AND ILLUSTRATIVE FUNCTION OF THE *CHAOSKAMPF* ALLUSIONS IN THE BAPTISMAL LITURGY

Why did the Orthodox Church include biblical texts alluding to the *Chaoskampf* in its exorcisms? In my opinion, this occurred with the cultic development. There was no unique and uniformed ritual of baptism in the Early Church. The evolution of the ritual, from the early Christian period to its present form, was a complex process. Concise forms of this ritual, circulating in parallel in Christian churches, were amplified both conceptually and as regards symbols, especially since the 4th century AD. At the same time, an amalgamation and standardisation of the ritual occurred (Ică 2008:279-283). Writers from the 4th and 5th centuries (Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose of Milan, Egeria, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia) describe similar phases of the ritual occurring during the Great Lent and culminating in the baptism on Easter (cf. Röwekamp 1992:15-59; Heiser 1987:95-109).[19] Biblical imagery was used as a discursive illustration of cultic acts.

Tertullian (2nd century) is the first to inform us about the blessing of the baptismal water through prayers and about the ritual of renunciation of Satan (*abrenuntiatio diaboli*) preceding the baptism (*De baptismo* 4). The Apostolic Tradition, an anonymous work, which comprises material from various sources between the 2nd and 4th century (cf. Bradshaw *et al.* 2002:1-15),[20] contains a baptismal order including the main elements of the later Byzantine rite (*Traditio Apostolica* 21-23, cf. Botte 1946:49-56). Euchological forms are given in addition to the typiconal indications in an Ethiopic variant (Salles 1958:43). The sanctification of water also involved its exorcism:

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19 The following acts preceded baptism: reception and preparation of catechumens; exorcisms; renunciation of Satan and allegiance to Christ; confession of faith; pre-baptismal anointment, and sanctification of baptismal waters. This was followed by chrismation and celebration of the paschal Eucharist.

20 The work has often been attributed to St. Hippolytus of Rome. This thesis was also upheld in the well-known edition of Botte (1946).

> Send (Thy Holy Spirit and) Thy holy power over this water and sanctify it, change it and bless it against all hostile work, all the magic and all the spell ... (Salles 1958:45).[21]

Exorcism and anointing with oil was meant to be a "shield of faith against all work of demons" (Salles 1958:47).[22]

However, excepting this allusion to Ephesians 6:16, there are no biblical references in these forms. The Euchologion of Serapion, bishop of Tmuis (Egypt, 4th century) preserves a prayer for the sanctification of baptismal waters without the exorcism of the water (cf. Heiser 1987:67).

*Testamentum Domini*[23] (5th century) is the first text that includes the expanded form of a pre-baptismal exorcism. Biblical references to the *Chaoskampf* motif closely resemble the forms encountered in the current Orthodox ritual.

| *Testamentum Domini* 2.7 (Cooper & Maclean 1902:122-123)[24] | Orthodox service of the Holy Baptism |
|---|---|
| "... Whose glance measureth the mountains, and whose Name, when uttered, cleaveth the depths (*abyssos*) ..." <br><br> (Exorcism before the laver) | "…Whose glance dries up the deep (ἀβύσσους) and Whose threatenings melt the mountains …" <br><br> (First exorcism) |
| "... before whom the earth and the depths together tremble; before whom the sea (*pelagus*) and the dragons (*dracones*) that [are] in it quake ..." <br><br> (Exorcism before the laver) | "… Whom Heaven and earth fear, the sea (ἡ θάλασσα) and all that live therein ..." <br><br> (First exorcism) |
| "... from whom all nature and creation that opposeth itself (*omnis natura et creatura adversa*) fleeth ... because of whom the whole army of the adversary is subdued, and the Devil (*diabolus*) is fallen, and the serpent (*serpens*) is trodden down, and the dragon (*draco*) is killed ..." <br><br> (Exorcism before the laver) | "... You … crushed the heads of dragons (τῶν δρακόντων) that lurked therein … let them that take counsel together (ὅι ἐπιβουλεύοντες) against Your creature flee there from ... let all adverse powers (ταῖς ἐναντίαις δυνάμεσιν) be crushed beneath the signing of your most precious Cross …" <br><br> (The blessing of baptismal waters) |

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21  My translation.
22  My translation.
23  This Church Order originated in Syria. The Greek original was lost. It was preserved, in its complete form, in Syriac and published in 1899 by the Patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius Ephraem Rahmani, who also offered a Latin translation of the text.
24  The Latin terms in brackets are taken from Rahmani.

Even if *Testamentum Domini* reflects the practice in the churches of Syria during the 5th century AD, the pre-baptismal exorcism included biblical references to *Chaoskampf*, in a form that differs slightly from the Orthodox rite of baptism.

The present text of the Orthodox baptism is attested to in the *Barberini gr.336* manuscript, written in the 8th century, but presumably containing even earlier material (Arranz 1982:296). The baptismal rite was ultimately practised in a uniformly form in the Byzantine Empire even earlier, in the 7th century (Heiser 1987:224). Consequently, the tendency of amplification of the exorcism prayers during the 4th to the 8th centuries is obvious. Biblical texts and images were an excellent means to explain what actually happens in the pre-baptismal ritual. Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 313-386 AD) uses an abundance of biblical imagery in his catechetical lectures. He also refers to Psalm 74(73):13 in his baptismal catechesis (Catechesis 3.11, PG 33,441):

> Thus Jesus was baptized, that thereby we again by our participation might receive both salvation and honour. ... Since, therefore, it was necessary to break the heads of the dragon [τοῦ δράκοντος] in pieces, He went down and bound the strong one in the waters, that we might receive the power to tread upon serpents and scorpions (Gifford 2004:17).

References to the Saviour's work of casting out demons and allusions to the motif of the fight against chaos in both the Old and the New Testament, now understood as a battle against demons, thus found their place in the baptismal rite. Old Testament associations, especially in the blessing of water, show that the *Chaoskampf* motif is used to proclaim the supremacy of the Saviour in the fight against the devil.

Anyway, the premises of this metamorphosis seem to be present even in the Scripture. On the one hand, chaos is personified (Rahab, *tannîn*, Leviathan), on the other hand, these powers are considered hostile to human beings and, ultimately, to God. The four beasts from Daniels vision (7:1-8), judged by the Ancient of days, emerged from the sea![25] The connection between the sea/dragon and the demonic sphere is found in the New Testament. The Synoptic Gospels place the healing of the demoniac of Gadara/Gerasa immediately after the calming of the storm (Mt. 8:23-27, 8:28-34; Mk 4:3-41, 5:1-20; Lk 8:22-25, 8:26-39). Jesus commanded the wind and the sea *to be quiet*, as He had done with an unclean spirit

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25   In this instance, these beasts are symbols of historical domination, but hostile to God. Emerton (1958:225-242) and Day (1992:230) pointed out an influence of the *Chaoskampf* motif in Daniel 7.

(Mk 1:25, 4:39). The pigs of the Gadarenes, in which the legion of demons cast out by Jesus fled, jump (not accidentally) in the sea! Finally, the Book of Revelation (12:1-9) speaks of Archangel Michael's celestial fighting against "the dragon, that ancient serpent" – forms referring to Leviathan, Rahab and the dragon from Isaiah 27:1 and 51:9. Like the Ugaritic Lotan, the dragon of the Revelation has seven heads (12:3). It is identified with "the Devil, Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" (v. 9). The fight against the dragon becomes the fight against the devil and his angels, fought by Christians on earth (12:13). The connotation of water as destructive element, hostile to God, is also present, in this instance: the dragon casts out of its mouth a river, which wants to drown the woman with her child (v. 15).

In conclusion, the use of biblical texts about the *Chaoskampf* in Orthodox baptism ritual has both a metaphoric and an illustrative function. By his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ defeated for eternity the powers hostile to Him. In the pre-baptismal exorcisms, the sea and the depths became metaphors for hostile forces. "The depths" are now the forces of darkness that cannot hide in the depths of the one to be baptised and are constrained to depart from him.

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