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Simone Weil's Questions about God

ABSTRACT. We can say that the 20th century was not an era for seeking the truth in the first place. Philosophers and others were absorbed with the idea that we cannot know anything for certain. No one is able to claim that something is really true. However, we can find philosophers who were willing to die for the truth. We can discover them in the Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Churches. For example, father Pavel Florensky, a Russian philosopher and priest, played an important role in solving the problem of correlation between culture and religion. He died executed by the firing squad at the Solovki Gulag on December 8th, 1937. Another such philosopher was St. Edith Stein. She was martyred equally for the truth of the Catholic Faith and for the truth of Mosaic Faith. Edith Stein was put on a train heading for the East and died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz probably on 9th August, 1942. The third person, who died for the truth in those horrible times, was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The integrity of his Christian faith and life led him to a concentration camp, where he was hanged on April 9th, 1945. Looking at those great people of European history in the 20th century, we can see some contrasts and similarities to the life and activity of a French thinker – Simone Weil. Simone Weil was looking for the truth all her life. She was Jewish, but she was attracted to Roman Catholicism and sure that the truth is in God. Simone Weil persuades us that it is at the same time possible and impossible to know God, because “Dieu ne peut être présent dans la création que sous la forme de l’absence”.

If we want to ask about God, we should ask about the world. This is the first step. Then, if man wants to know and experience God more deeply, he has to ask about himself. The next step is to look for personal self-consciousness of truth. Simone Weil became convinced herself that she should ask like the psalmist: “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Ps 8, 5).

Simone Weil was extraordinarily sensitive to human misery. Her compassion was real co-suffering. Moreover, it is just from this place that she asked about the human experience of often-undeserved misery. She asked about man and his relation to God and through this relation –

about his relation to the world. She asked about man, God, and the world from the middle of suffering, and explained to us what things are perfect joy.

The French philosopher, Simone Weil is one of the most important thinkers of the 20th century, and particularly of the time of World War II so it is worthwhile to look at her questions about God.

HORRIBLE TIMES AND THE TRUTH

We can say the 20th century was not a time for seeking the truth in the first place. Philosophers, as well as a number of other people, were absorbed with the idea that we cannot know anything for certain and no one is able to claim that something is really true. However, we can also find philosophers who were willing to die for the truth. We can find them in the Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Churches. For example, Fr. Pavel Florensky, a Russian philosopher and priest, played an important role in solving the problem of correlation between culture and religion. He died executed by the firing squad at the Solovki Gulag on December 8th, 1937. Another such philosopher was St. Edith Stein. She was martyred equally for the truth of the Catholic faith and for the truth of the Mosaic faith. Edith Stein was put on a train heading for the East and died in the gas chambers in Auschwitz probably on 9th August, 1942. A third person, who died for the truth in those horrible times, was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The integrity of his Christian faith and life led him to a concentration camp, where he was hanged on April 9th, 1945.

Looking at those great people of European history in the 20th century, we can see some contrasts and similarities to the life and activity of a French thinker – Simone Weil. Simone Weil was looking for the truth all her life. She was sure that the truth is in God and she wrote: “I am quite sure that there is a God in the sense that I am quite sure my love is not illusory”.¹

¹ S. Weil, *La Pesanteur et la Grâce*, Paris 1966, p. 116. In brief: PG. English translation by E. Crawford, M. von der Ruhr, London 2002, <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=102841549>.

SIMONE WEIL'S SHORT BIOGRAPHY:
WHO WAS SHE?

Simone Adolphine Weil was born in Paris on February 3rd, 1909, in her parents' apartment on Rue de Strasbourg. She was the only daughter of Selma and Bernard Weil, and their second child. Her elder brother André later became a well-known, talented mathematician. Her parents did not live like orthodox Jews. Still, they were generally inclined to take their tradition for granted, but only from time to time. They used to appear at her grandparents' Passover dinners, obligatorily once a year. Simone Weil's father was a well-to-do Alsatian physician. It was good for her because she was often ill as a child, and suffered from chronic sinusitis as an adult woman. Her mother Salomea Reinherz, was Austro-Galician, and came from a wealthy family of Jewish business people. She had wanted to become a doctor but her father forbade her. Bernard Weil and his wife created a specific intellectual atmosphere for their two children, who showed their great intellectual potential already early in life. Both André and Simone got the best education available and studied at the Lyceum Henri IV. Simone Weil was taught by the renowned French philosopher Alain, the pseudonym of Emile Auguste Chartier (1868-1951), from whom she learned to think critically. She also learned Greek and was acquainted with the philosophy of Plato and the poetry of Homer. In 1928, Weil had the highest score at the entrance exams for the *École Normale Supérieure*.

Weil's career as a teacher of philosophy began in 1931 and finished in 1937. She took her first teaching post at the girls' lyceum Le Puy. She had her own theories of pedagogy and methodology. They were very revolutionary at that time, and on the whole her colleagues and superiors did not like them. In 1934, in the next secondary school she was forced to stop teaching because of her unorthodox methods and began working in a Paris factory. By 1936 Weil had returned to teaching, but was not as enthusiastic as she had been at her previous positions. Next, she worked for the first part of the winter of 1937–

38. Unfortunately, she caught a cold in January, and had to go to the Benedictine Abbey of Solesmes. But she continued teaching in some form for the rest of her life. This is the first characteristic trait of her philosophy for us. She wanted to know and she wanted to pass this knowledge on to others.

Another point that must be stressed is that Simone Weil had very particular feelings for others, especially unknown people. For instance at the age of six (in 1915), she refused to eat sugar, because it was not rationed to French soldiers in the war. She made a similar decision during the World War II. She was undeterred in her involvement with the workers and dreamt of living and working with poor people. In 1936 she went to Spain to join the anarchist militia in the Spanish Civil War. However, she did not want to fight but to share in the experiences of the working class. She did want to fight in World War II, but it was impossible as her health was damaged and that is also why she never had a regular job in her adult life.

After her experience in the Spanish Civil War, her care for people, their living conditions and suffering, changed direction. She averred her feelings for others as the source of her own deepest suffering. For this reason, she started to mediate between God, God's suffering and the Cross. She was Jewish, but was attracted to Roman Catholicism, because "the greatness of Christianity does not involve seeking supernatural remedies for suffering it is the supernatural essence of suffering".²

Nevertheless, what is also worth mentioning is that she refused baptism. She asked and thought about the Roman Catholic Church but did not get any satisfying answer either from others or from herself. Weil died in 1943 at Grosvenor Sanatorium in England at the age of thirty-four. She was diagnosed with tuberculosis but refused medical treatment and continued to reduce her food intake.

Gustave Thibon was the first reader of Simone Weil's writing, which was published posthumously in 1947. It

² PG p. 86.

was *Gravity and Grace*³ with his own introduction. Gustave Thibon affirmed that in the field of philosophy, metaphysics and psychology Simone Weil rather asked questions than arrived at the answers. She is like a guide who gives travellers a piece of advice, and not a fixed answer. When still a child, Simone Weil already asked the basic question about the creation of the world. In secondary school, she learned how one should ask to hit the nail on the head.

She put down her religious thoughts in the form of short sentences, which were full of contents. Her ideas force the reader to a deep consideration of his or her existence. Simone Weil wanted to understand everything as far as possible, and she shared those methods of seeking the truth with everybody who wanted to listen or read about it. Hence, in her writing, we can encounter questions and opposing realities put side by side, as well as paradoxes. This way of reasoning is her purposeful intention, compelling the readers to reflect and make an individual choice of their paths of life. Simone Weil was extraordinarily sensitive to human misery. Her compassion was real co-suffering. Moreover, it is just from this perspective that she asked about the human experience of often undeserved misery. She asked about man and his relation to God and through this relation – about man's relation to the world.

The French philosopher Simone Weil is the most important thinker of the 20th century, and particularly of the time of the Second World War.

Before we pass on to a more detailed analysis of Simone Weil's thought, there is one thing that should be taken into consideration.

At present, we are in a far better situation than Simone Weil herself as well as her first commentators. In the 1960s the Second Vatican Council took place, which

³ It is the most important of Simone Weil's books. She had been writing it for two years, and finished in 1942 before she sailed to New York with her parents on May 17th. It is a collection of religious essays and aphorisms, and a compendium of her writings that have become a source of spiritual guidance and wisdom for many.

was very important for the development of theological thought and pointed out new directions of investigations. It once again directed the theologians' thoughts back to the Fathers of the Church, who achieved the *magnum opus* of the enculturation of the Revelation, expressing it in the language and civilization of the Greco-Roman culture. Just as the Church Fathers, Weil showed great appreciation for the sources of European culture.

In the 20th century, after World War II many prominent theologians, philosophers and thinkers published their reflections and the conclusions of their investigations of God's relation to man and the world. This contemporary theological thought helps us to read the specific metaphors and images used by Simone Weil in her works to show the relation between God, man and the world.

ASKING ABOUT GOD WE ASK ABOUT WORLD

If we want to ask about God, in Simone Weil's opinion, we must not turn directly to Him as an object of investigation. If we want to ask about God we have to ask about the world first. Why? Since what is supernatural cannot be the object of investigation in itself. Wanting to study the "supernatural" we cannot turn in our investigations towards the "supernatural". We never study God as God, even though it is our intention. What exceeds the surrounding reality and us cannot to be objectified or named with any complete name. According to Simone Weil, man has a duty to focus his attention on the world. She is convinced that to be able to ask "about something more" we should first get to know, as far as possible, what is given to man in an objective way.⁴ If we want to ask about God, we have to ask about the world first, and then we can ask not about God Himself but about his relations with the world.

Looking at the surrounding world, at the limitless cosmos, man can ask: Where is God? Taking Simone Weil as

⁴ Cf., PG p. 132.

a guide, in the first approximation we receive the answer – nowhere. Nothing that is in this world and nothing that is experienced by man, is God. Man cannot treat anything in this world as if it was God. According to Weil the world is not God.⁵ In a second approximation we can say in her words that “God can only be present in creation in the form of absence”.⁶

Here is one of the paradoxes that are characteristic for the whole of Simone Weil's thought, because what else can we call the qualification *present absence*. Becoming absorbed in the thoughts of this French philosopher we can say: God is absent in the world but the thing is, that it is all about the *but*.

Analyzing this sentence one should be aware that the basic thesis in Simone Weil's philosophy of creation is comprehending what is created in its intermediary function. Simone Weil introduces the term *metaxu*, from the Greek *metacu* meaning “between, in the middle”. With this term, she defines every value and good, whose task is to fulfil an intermediary function by means of mutual relations. Everything that belongs to *metaxu* exists as created, but existence itself does not exhaust the essence of *metaxu*. It is necessary to read this reality as intermediary towards a good, because “the essence of created things is to be intermediaries”.⁷

Simone Weil argues that the world truly exists, as it is the mediator towards good. The function of *metaxu* is typically relational. One ought to ask, between what or who? For the French philosopher the answer is obvious, between God and man. God created the world and in this sense He is present. He is as present as the creator in his work, which lives its own life after it came out of his hands. Looking at the created universe one can say that there is no creator in it in the literal sense. Nothing in the world, which is absolute and limited, is God. We can say that God is present in creation, but in the form of ab-

⁵ Simone Weil is not the supporter of a view called pantheism, although some of her interpreters attribute this thought to her.

⁶ PG p. 112.

⁷ PG p. 146.

sence. On the one hand, we point to relations that the Creator has with his work, and on the other hand, we point to the distinction and independence of this world. Contemporary theologians formulate this thought in one short momentous sentence: *God is nothing in this world, but everything for this world*. We find an echo of these words in the following sentence of Simone Weil: "This world, in so far as it is completely empty of God, is God himself".⁸

If we reject the intermediary function of creation as its constitutive idea, and read Weil's sentence literally and without reference to the whole of her works, then we can suspect her of pantheism. However, on deeper analysis we begin to see the world in its basic function of mediation on our way towards God.

On the other hand, the world which has its own independent existence is not a straightforward way, it is even an obstacle. There is ambivalent tension in our perception of the world, which Simone describes in the following words: "This world is a closed door. It is a barrier. And at the same time it is the way through".⁹

The world is absolute and will not satisfy everlasting human desires. It may even become an obstacle when man desires to turn his attention to transcendence – a very serious obstacle, which can even make it impossible to achieve the truth and the good. Simultaneously, the same world can become a passage towards God. It can become a place of meeting God. How? Simone Weil uses a very meaningful image to explain the principle of mediation.

"Two prisoners whose cells adjoin communicate with each other by knocking on the wall. The wall is the thing which separates them but it is also their means of communication. It is the same with us and God. Every separation is a link".¹⁰

The world which man exists in, separates him from God, obscures Him. According to St. Paul the Apostle,

⁸ PG p. 112.

⁹ PG p. 146.

¹⁰ PG p. 146.

“now we see a dim reflection in a mirror” (1 Cor. 13, 12). The relation between God and man is constituted by the world of *metaxu*, on our way to God the world is like a walking stick for a blind man. The walking stick itself is not the goal, but it can help to find the right way. The world we live in is to be recognized as endowed with the Creator's love and therefore is a way to get to know God.

“If my eyes are blindfolded and if my hands are chained to a stick, this stick separates me from things but I can explore them by means of it. It is only the stick which I feel, it is only the wall which I perceive. It is the same with creatures and the faculty of love. Supernatural love touches only creatures and goes only to God. It is only creatures which it loves (what else have we to love?), but it loves them as intermediaries”.¹¹

The world – and this is its point – shows by its whole existence, the absence of God. On the other hand, man can only find his way to God in this world. Putting it more emphatically, by means of this world man seeks and finds the One, who is everything for this world. The world is a place of God's mediation by supernatural love of the Creator's love to creation. In such a world, mutual relations between God and man are established. When man finds the essence of good, then real meeting with God is possible: “(...) who is none other than the good itself – the good which is found nowhere in this world”.¹²

The discovery of a real good in created things, which is the discovery of their intermediary role in achieving God through their intrinsic goodness, allows us to understand the truth that the world cannot satisfy human desires. Human existence does not depend on the world. Simone Weil warns her readers:

“By putting all our desire for good into a thing we make that thing a condition of our existence. But we do not on that account make of it a good. Merely to exist is not enough for us”.¹³

¹¹ PG p. 68.

¹² PG p. 99.

¹³ PG p. 146.

The world is limited in its temporal and spatial structure and just because of this limitation, it points to the Infinite. For this reason, the world is not worth the love that man can give, since he desires more than just the goodness of the created things. Awareness of this is the first step that man should take in order to realize that all the surrounding things do not satisfy our needs at all. The world is a mediator and its existence is purposeful as it points us towards the existence of supernatural beauty. The world can be loved only as permeated with the light of divinity.

ASKING ABOUT GOD WE ASK ABOUT MAN

Cognition of the world does not exhaust human possibilities of formulating questions about God. Man states that there is a need inside of him to reach out towards the deeper essence of matter by reflection and contemplation. Simone Weil, thanks to her classical education, was able to use the output of the philosophy of ancient Greece creatively. Man is a small cosmos for her, in which the order of the whole universe is reflected.¹⁴

“We are a part which has to imitate the whole.”¹⁵

Man is part of creation’s work, a special part. The whole is included in him, insofar as it is possible for the whole to be reflected by parts. If we add the biblical view of man to this image, then we will get a depiction of man as a part, which reflects the whole in relation to God. The whole plan of God’s creation is possible to be read in man along with relation to the Infinite. Recognition of this fact by insight, leads man to the question which we come across in the Psalms: “What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that Thou visitest him?” (Ps 8, 5).¹⁶

¹⁴ The role of man in creation was similarly interpreted by those Fathers of Church who especially cherished the philosophy Plato and Plotinus.

¹⁵ PG p. 141.

¹⁶ *The Bible, King James Version Old and New Testaments, with the Apocrypha.*

Simone Weil is convinced that these are questions that no one with a serious interest in human life can afford to do without. If man wants to ask about the Supreme, the personal God, if he wants to get to know Him deeper and deeper, he must embark on the way of seeking the truth about himself. He must face the task, which is: *get to know yourself*. The way towards the truth about man was cherished by thinkers of the Hellenic culture. John Paul II reminded us of this when he wrote in his encyclical *Fides et ratio*,

“The admonition «Know yourself» was carved on the temple portal at Delphi, as testimony to a basic truth to be adopted as a minimal norm by those who seek to set themselves apart from the rest of creation as «human beings», that is as those who «know themselves».”¹⁷

“Know yourself” is the leading thought of the world of Greek culture. We know that the Fathers of the Church in first centuries of Christianity accepted this sentence as their own, and shed on it the light of the Revelation. Simone Weil, just like them, is convinced that if man enters inside himself, he will discover that he possesses exactly what he desires.¹⁸ By this effort one can find the answers to the basic questions: Who am I? Where do I come from? Where do I aim? What do I desire? When do I really exist?

Simone Weil gives us surprising answers to the last of the questions because her definition of a person is as follows: I am that which has to disappear, I exist when there is no me. How to understand her words?

“God gave me being in order that I should give it back to him. It is like one of those traps whereby the characters are tested in fairy stories and tales on initiation. If I accept this gift it is bad and fatal; its virtue becomes apparent through my refusal of it. God allows me to exist outside himself. It is for me to refuse this authorization”.¹⁹

God bestowed man with independent existence, differ-

¹⁷ John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, http://www.vatican.va/edocs/ENG0216/_P2.HTM.

¹⁸ Cf., *Cahiers*, I, Paris, 1951, p. 38. In brief *Cah I*.

¹⁹ PG p. 48.

ent from Him. Unity with the whole creation is His desire, but this can be achieved only through man. To explain her point Simone Weil brings in the following image: "To be what the pencil is for me when, blindfold, I feel the table by means of its point – to be that for Christ. It is possible for us to be mediators between God and the part of creation which is confided to us. Our consent is necessary in order that he may perceive his own creation through us."²⁰

Just as the world is a mediator between man and God, by principle of reciprocity man is a mediator between God and creation. These are mutual relations, in which the more the deity loves creation the more transparent it becomes for the penetration of God's light, which Simone Weil identifies with mercy. The more transparent man is to God's light the more he devotes himself to God, the more his God-independent "I" disappears. However, man gains complete existence in God, who is his goal and greatest happiness.

Describing the reality of mutual relations between God and creation, Weil confronts us with another paradox. God's love is love for Himself.

"His love for us is love for himself through us. Thus, he who gives us our being loves in us the acceptance of not being."²¹

It is only possible to understand this sentence in conjunction with another, in which Simone Weil explains her view on the essence of sin.

"The self is only the shadow which sin and error cast by stopping the light of God, and I take this shadow for a being."²²

Simone Weil has a coherent vision of relations between God, man and the world. The world by the act of creation is endowed with God's mercies and God desires to see his creation as good (Cf. Gn 1). In man, however, the Creator sees a person through whom He wants to see the good of creation. His *inspection* of the world He made

²⁰ PG p. 48.

²¹ PG p. 36.

²² PG p. 48.

is dependent on the human decision. His omnipotence cannot be understood as independent plenitude of power, but as the power of a beggar, who tries and strives for what he desires.

“Our existence is made up only of his (God) waiting for our acceptance not to exist. He is perpetually begging from us that existence which he gives. He gives it to us in order to beg it from us.”²³ It is the principle of the evanishment of the human “I”, the surrender of one’s own will to God’s will. It is not human will that ought to be exercised in this world. In this context, our whole real human life is woven of acts, in which we say just like Christ «... Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me: neverthelless not my will, but Thine, be done.»” (Lk 22, 42).²⁴

Only sin which is the realization of human “I” contrary to God, prevents the penetration God’s mercy towards creation. It is this shadow which forbids the light to penetrate through man towards the rest of creation. We come across a similar idea of mediation between God’s creative mercy, man and the world in the Fathers of the Church, particularly St. Gregory of Nyssa who lived in the 4th century. In his opinion, as well as in Simone Weil’s, the attitude of full mediation expresses itself in the virtue of humility. “Humility is the refusal to exist outside God. It is the queen of virtues.”²⁵

A truly Christian humility means becoming transparent to God’s mercy, which is a final and full of love consent to one’s non-existence differently than in God.

In the Simone Weil’s opinion, man does not exist beyond God, without relation to God it is not possible to tell about His existence at all. This is also an obvious axiom for the Church Fathers, who developed their theology under the influence of Plato and the stoics. Simone Weil, who rather did not know the works of the Greek Fathers of the Church, used the same sources and so she individually follows the same way as the first Christian theo-

²³ PG p. 36.

²⁴ *The Bible, King James Version Old and New Testaments, with the Apocrypha.*

²⁵ PG p. 48.

logians. By sharp and surprising statements Simone Weil convinces the reader that man's happiness depends on a voluntary and conscious choice of living in God. From Him man comes and to Him man returns, if he realizes the virtue of humility.

ASKING ABOUT GOD WE ASK ABOUT SUFFERING

To love God and because of that to be sure of His presence seems to be easy and obvious. "I love, I regard, I devote myself, I am happy". This looks like an image of joy or ethereal idyll. However, Simone Weil introduces us to the reality of the world we live in, the world in which we experience evil and suffering. She convinces us that "human life is impossible. But it is only affliction which makes us feel this."²⁶

Simone Weil asks her question about God from the position of the suffering man, like the biblical Job. A suffering man will not admire the beauty of the world surrounding him, he will not hear the harmony in Bach's music, or the Gregorian chant. He suffers, and in his conviction, innocently. How to find God in such a predicament, how to recognize Him as beauty and truth? How to cling to Him in submission of one's will? Simone Weil states that in such a situation one ought to love God through evil as it is. According to her, when we love God even while we experience evil, what we love is really God. It is necessary to love God through evil, but by this love we do not express any acceptance of the evil. Evil is a reality which we hate. Evil is an unacceptable and incomprehensible reality, although by this love man can accept a relation of love with God and can also experience God's love.²⁷ Such is Christ's attitude, the God Incarnate in the world. Simone Weil assures us that just as Him man should strive to become empty: "«He emptied

²⁶ PG p. 99.

²⁷ Cf., PG pp. 80–81. The hagiographer describes a similar attitude in a story about perfect joy according to St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis of Assisi, *The Little Flowers*, Chapter VIII, http://san-francesco.org/fioretti3_eng.html.

himself of his divinity.» To empty ourselves of the world. To take the form of a slave. To reduce ourselves to the point we occupy in space and time – that is to say, to nothing”.²⁸

How to achieve this? This was a question, which Simone Weil struggled with throughout her life. She searched for solutions not only in the heritage of the European culture. According to her, the superiority of Christianity consists in that it does not look for liberation from suffering, but for its supernatural sense.²⁹ Accepting the supernatural sense of suffering is the most difficult attitude of what man can surrender, however Simone explains: “I should try to have such a concept of God’s mercy, which will not fall apart, which will not change despite what fate will bring, and which could be passed on to every human being.”³⁰

And the next question. What is God’s image, which will not change in the most difficult situations? Simone Weil has no doubt, that this is the image of God abandoned by God Himself.

“The abandonment at the supreme moment of the crucifixion, what an abyss of love on both sides! «My God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me?» (Mt 27, 40; Mk 15, 34) There we have the real proof that Christianity is something divine”.³¹

The true divinity of the Christian religion appears at the most inconvenient moment. Simone Weil shows that at the moment of the greatest abandonment, at the moment of agony, Christ is omnipotent, because that is when the greatest good happens. At this moment the strongest relations of love become established, which I can only describe with the words *the abyss of love*. Jesus experienced the greatest evil and utmost abandonment. That is the source of His desire for good, His desire for the Father’s love is infinite. Through the experienced evil the greatest good is revealed. An analysis and meditation on

²⁸ PG p. 22.

²⁹ Cf., PG p. 86.

³⁰ *Cah I*, p. 213, author’s translation.

³¹ PG p. 92.

the mystery of the Cross brings Simone Weil to the statement: "Evil is the innocence of God".³²

With these words Simone Weil introduces the next paradox, namely that we can experience good, the greatest good, through evil. Jesus' death did not annihilate evil, but overcomes it in two ways. God bears suffering because suffering love is the source of inexpressible joy. By such love, a return to paradise is made possible. This is a return to loving by, but not despite, suffering. God overcomes suffering also because He does not annihilate it by an act of His will, but by experiencing the depth of every evil He transforms it from within. God bears suffering because it is through the Cross that such a transformation is at all possible. God's love is a suffering love because of the unsatisfied desire for unity with creation. This love suffers and expiates creation so that unity would be possible. Therefore Simone Weil states, that "Evil is to love, what mystery is to the intelligence".³³

For love, evil is something that is impossible, because God has no relation with evil, there is no idea of evil in Him.³⁴ Simone Weil does not look to God for the explanation of evil, does not look for His acquittal, because in her opinion, God's omnipotence consists in the fact that in this world, where there are so many manifestations of evil, where there is a lack of good, which is God's absence, good is fulfilled and it is the supernatural good.³⁵ For love, evil is incomprehensible, it is not possible to explain it at all, to understand or to accept it, as it is something entirely strange. Thanks to God it becomes the measure of cognition of the Supreme Mystery. Man's attitude towards evil is the attitude of helplessness similar to that experienced by the mind confronted with an incomprehensible Mystery. It is then an analogy, which shows human powerlessness as well as the power of every suffering.

³² PG p. 112.

³³ PG p. 81.

³⁴ Cf., J.-M. de Garrigues, *Dieu sans idée du mal*, Desclée Editeurs 1990.

³⁵ K. Rębilas, *Bóg w filozofii Simone Weil (God in the Philosophy of Silone Weil)*, Kraków 1997, p. 57, manuscript.

CONCLUSION

The world we perceive is full of contradictions and paradoxes. Simone Weil, when asking about God, encapsulates her thoughts in the form of paradoxes. It is necessary to remember that when we ask about God we do not ask about a thing or object, we do not ask about some rational reality or identified relations. Asking about God, in Simone Weil's opinion, we ask about an authentic contradiction.

"A case of contradictories which are true. God exists: God does not exist. Where is the problem? I am quite sure that there is a God in the sense that I am quite sure my love is not illusory. I am quite sure that there is not a God in the sense that I am quite sure nothing real can be anything like what I am able to conceive when I pronounce this word. But that which I cannot conceive is not an illusion."³⁶

God's existence is an obviousness for her, and the background of all her difficult considerations. Keeping this in mind, we have chosen Simone Weil as our guide in asking about God, and looked at several of her paradoxes.

Asking about God in the world, Simone Weil, through her religious experience says that she meets God, who is present in the form of absence, which means that He is everything for this world, but nothing in this world. The world portrays God insofar as it is the mediator on our way towards Him.

The next paradox is the statement that man's existence relies on non-existence. Analyzing the French philosopher's thoughts, this sentence ought to be completed in the following way – man's existence consists in non-existence beyond God. The world and man vis-à-vis God is a system of mutual dynamic relations. The world exists as man's experience of a mediator towards God. Man exists as a mediator through whom God can see His creation. Therefore, it can be said, that God loves Himself through creation.

³⁶ PG p. 116.

A subsequent and the most difficult paradox is the statement that it is necessary to love God through evil. Simone Weil argues that in extreme situations in a severe lack of any good, there becomes revealed in man the most profound desire for good, which is a pure desire for God. And in this way God reveals Himself to man. This is a very meaningful reflection, considering the times in which it arose.

The role of suffering in man's life, in Simone Weil's interpretation, allows us to look for the principles of acceptance and justification of the attitudes of the representatives of the three great Christian Churches mentioned at the very beginning of our considerations: Pavel Florensky, Edith Stein and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In my opinion, their attitude, despite some similarities, differs significantly from the individualistic attitude of Simone Weil. Her philosophy, read from her published writings, enables only a partial justification and understanding of her personal attitude towards her own life and death. It seems, however, that thanks to Simone Weil's reflections, we can say how Fr. Pavel Florensky, St. Edith Stein and Dietrich Bonhoeffer fully realized the virtue of humility as well as how God could see His creation in these horrible times through their lives.

TRANSLATED BY MAŁGORZATA WIERTLEWSKA