Particular Judgment in *Visio Baronti*

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Keywords: *"Visio Baronti"*; *soul*; *particular judgment*; *aerial toll-houses*; *eschatology*; *afterlife*

1. Introduction

New Testament fragments such as Mt. 25:31–46 or Ac. 20:12–15 assert explicitly the idea of a divine judgment as a spiritual and transcendent act determining the eternal condition of all souls, based on the moral value acquired throughout the life of Earth. Placed in an indefinite moment – which "but of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mk 13:32), at the end of times, when the dead will resurrect (1 Cor. 15:1–58); it is the purpose of the Son's second coming. On the other hand, fragments such as "the parable of Lazarus" in Lk 16:19–31 feature the idea of a retribution, of a separation between the good and the bad, as consequence of a judgment operated right after death. From the perspective of divine justice as a postulate of moral law, the condition of the soul between the end of earthly life and the Final Judgment was a constant concern of the first Christian centuries, thus evolving from a moral theme to a theological one. This led to the emergence of the doctrine of particular judgment, based on trying to figure out what happens right after death (Riviere 1925: 1767), while a particular role in the presentation of these intuitions was played by visions – *visiones animarum*. A medieval literary genre subordinated to the moral edification of the readers/audience – presenting the afterlife and featuring a significant eschatological mark – the visions also dealt, naturally, with recurrent theological topics.

Written in late 7th century, *Visio Baronti* is one of the founding texts of this genre. Conceived as an autonomous text, "not just an *exemplum* invoked for clarifying a doctrinal theme or a stereotypical story to insert into the biography of a saint." (Ciccarese 1987: 231), *The Vision of Barontus* features the journey of a soul in the afterlife, by focusing not that much on the description of its "geography" – like in *Visio Sancti Pauli/Apocalypsis Pauli*, which was a source of inspiration, no doubt – but on presenting what happens to the soul immediately after death. I propose an analysis of the text precisely from the perspective of particular judgment, and to this end, I will try to feature the elements specific to this topic compared with the way they had been approached in certain fundamental texts within Greek and Latin patristics. First of all, though, I believe it is necessary to present a synopsis of the *Vision.*

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2. Synopsis of the work

Visio Baronti starts with two introductory chapters where the author presents the context: of a noble origin, recently converted to Cenobitic along with his son Aglioaldus, one day Barontus got suddenly sick after the morning matins. Reunited around him, his fellow monks, starting with deacon Eudon, are left with the only choice of praying for the soul of the dying; they do this until the dawn of the subsequent day, when Barontus surprisingly recovers and tells his fellow monks about his ecstatic experience. From this point on, Barontus is the one telling the story (with short interruptions for contextual clarifications, such as the one in Chapter six concerning abbot Leodoaldus): the arrival of the demons who violently try to drag him to Hell; the appearance of the archangel Raphael[1] who decides, towards the evening, to bring him before the Eternal Judge to determine whether Barontus's soul, the only one to judge, deserves to go to Hell for his sins; the continuation of the discussion between the demons and archangel Raphael; the healing of a fellow monk within the monastery of Méobecq through the archangel Raphael; four other demons come to help the first one, while Raphael has the support of two angels: their prayers make the last four demons lose their powers and collapse; arrived at the first gate of Heaven, they see some of the fellow monks of the monastery (whom the author names) waiting for the day of their Judgment, when they are to receive the full eternal joy (chap. 8); Barontus's honesty – who recognizes his guilt before his fellow monks – is rewarded with their initiative of praying for the salvation of his soul; after the second gate, the second region of Heaven is populated by an immeasurable crowd of souls of the pure (children and virgins) who also support Barontus through their prayers; the third region of Heaven is inhabited by the souls of deserving persons who dedicated their lives to God; while in the fourth – beyond which only an immense brightness was visible – Barontus's soul meets the soul of his humble fellow monk Betolenus, charged with monitoring the chandeliers of churches around the world. The most interesting passage of this work takes place in this setting: Raphael sends and angel to get Saint Peter; the latter invoked – before the demons accusing Barontus of his capital sins – the good deeds he achieved: he gave to the poor (thus invoking here Tob. 4:11), he repented and he had a monastic life; he added that the goods deeds weigh more than the bad ones (chap. 12); at the demons' firm refusal, who invoked the judgment by God of leaving Barontus's soul alone, Saint Peter chases them using the three keys he was holding; then, as a reward, Barontus is asked to give to the poor the twelve gold coins which he was holding hidden from this entry to the monastery[2]; after

[1] In *Visio Sancti Pauli/Apocalypsis Pauli*, the Disciple is accompanied by the archangel Michael. But in this context, it is an infirmity of the body preceding the vision, Raphael's presence ("God heals"), starting from the hour (*hora tertia*) his fellow monks start praying for Barontus, is also a metaphor of the healing and salvation of the soul.

[2] This fragment may also be read as a disapproving message towards a similar episode recounted by Gregory the Great in *Dailoguri*, IV, LVII, 8 *sqq*.: because he had hidden three golden coins, thus breaking a rule of living together, the monk Iustus is punished by getting buried outside the monastery's cemetery (in a pile of garbage, *in sterquilinio*) along with the hidden coins, and his fellow monks are forbidden to accompany the dying in the last moment with their prayers. After thirty days,

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several moralising pieces of advice, Barontus is accompanied to the first gate of Paradise; from here, accompanied to the soul of a fellow monk, Framnoaldus, gets to the infernal places, not before meeting in the intermediary space between Heaven and Hell (chap. 16) Abraham, in the bosom of which he is wished to arrive after the end of his earthly life[3]. Whereas presented very schematically because of the mist and the smoke (chap. 17), Hell unveil a taxonomy of the grave sins depending on which the damned are grouped and punished[4]: pride, luxury, perjury, homicide, envy, calumny, deceit. The author does not forget to mention that some of the damned benefit from the sabbatical moment of interruption of punishments, the *refrigerium* being here the hand brought from Heaven only those who also did good deeds, even a few, in their lives. Thus, the author seems to reprise Augustine's division of the souls presented in *Enchiridion*, 109–110: the very bad (for whom no intercession works), the not very bad (whose torments may be mitigated by the prayers of the relatives), the not very deserving, the deserving[5]. Coming back to the physical body occurs after leaving the spiritualised body ("the aerial body," chap. 18). The author swears by the authenticity of the story (chap. 20); two exhortative chapters follow that have no connection to the story, reason for which they were considered subsequent (Ciccarese 1987: 47–48) interpolations.

The other piece of the hagiographic file for Barontus is a very brief *Vita*[6], recounting that after the vision, Barontus insisted to his own abbot and was allowed to go to Rome t pray at St Peter's grave, the benefactor who saved him by hashing away the accusing demons; upon returning from Rome, Barontus stops somewhere near Pistoia and founds an *eremos*; he is joined by Desiderius and four other young people in the area. After their death, the *eremos* is turned into a monastery, in the chapel of which they brought first Barontus's body, and then successively and with miraculous interventions the bodies of the other disciples.

3. Particular judgment

In order to understand particular judgment as seen by the author of the text, I will try to present in as many details as possible the moments and elements of this process, thus making for each one the necessary connexions with opinions made by the authors of texts that may have been a source of inspiration.

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his fellow monks are advised to pray for the forgiveness of Iustus; Gregory himself seems to feel sorry for his harshness.

[3] In *Visio Baronti* this place is not mentioned, "Abraham's arms" (Lk 16:22) that generated numerous discussions in patristics, otherwise than as an intermediary space between Heaven and Hell. We understand from the text that this space is desirable, but we do not know who inhabits it and until when.

[4] In their presentation, the author compared them to the bees flying around the beehive, hence he might have taken it from Visio Suniulfi in *Historiarum libri decem*, IV, 33, by Gregory of Tours. This agitation of the bees probably suggests the opposite *requies*, reserved to the righteous of Paradise.

[5] For a discussion regarding Augustine's division of the souls into three of four categories, see Le Goff 1995, vol. I: 130–137.

[6] Though it features no interest for the issue we approach, I mention it briefly, for the sake of information accuracy. A translation of the text, signed by Maria Virginia Porta, was published in Torrigiani. Porta 2013.

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3.1. The soul leaving the body

The critical moment right before death (seeming or not) coincides with the moment of the emergence of demons claiming the soul of the dying given the sins committed throughout life. Their claims, arrogance, and violent attitude are contrasted by archangel Raphael, a spirit of light: the dispute ends with the archangel's decision of taking Barontus's soul before the Court of the eternal Judge (chap. 3), but also of leaving in the body Barontus's spirit[7]. Leaving aside the considerations related to tripartite anthropology (body, soul, spirit, among which only the soul is subjected to judgment), this last detail is an indicator of the fact that Raphael was aware of the outcome from the beginning. At the mere touch of the archangel, the soul separates from the physical body by receiving a spiritualised body ("aerial body," chap. 4) distinct from the physical body, but keeping the head – beyond doubt the reason, because under any circumstance, Barontus's soul will react in a conscious and rational manner to everything that happens to himself – and all the five senses. Small like a bird[8] getting out of the egg (chap. 4), the soul is risen to Heaven by Raphael, thus conquering the effort of the demons of dragging him down[9], to Hell.

This reason for the emergence of the demons – whose function is to accuse the soul, to support with evidence the accusations, as well as to punish him with violence – is a common reason for the entire patristics. Its Scripture background is a verse within a letter by Saint Paul: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephes. 6:12), a verse that also represents the grounds for "the aerial toll-houses," a system of separating the good from the bad and of placing them in Hell or Heaven places awaiting for the Final Judgment coinciding with Parusia, Christ's second coming, and with the resurrection of bodies. In homily XXIII within *Homiliae in Lucam* (translated into Latin by Jerome), Origen refers expressly to some souls who, inhabiting the edge of the world, research very carefully whether they may find in us something belonging to them and he invokes, to support his statement, the verse: *venit princeps mundi istius, et in me habet nihil* within John 14:30. We encounter the same idea in the first hagiographical writings: for instance, in the plastic image within chapter 65 of *Vita Antonii* by Athanasius the Great (a text from late 4th century, soon translated int Latin by Evagrius Ponticus) or in the letter *Ad Bassulam* by Sulpicius Severus, in the

[7] In his edition (*Visio Baronti monachi Longoretensis*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, Hannover and Leipzig, Hahn, 1910), W. Levison transcribes the abbreviation "spm" as *spem* ("hope"), while G. Henschen (*De SS Baronto et Desiderio eremiti, Pistorii in Hetruria*, in *Acta Sanctorum, Martii*, tomus III, Anversa, 1668: 567–574) prefers to transcribe as a spiritum ("spirit"). I choose the last equivalation, given its conformity with I Tess. 5:23: … *spiritus vester et anima et corpus*, etc.

[8] A plastic image with numerous occurrences in the Christian literature in late Antiquity. In chapter 65 of *Vita Antonii* by Athanasios the Great, the souls exiting the bodies are featured as birds who trying to fly to the skies, are welcomed by a gigantic and hideous being trying to hinder their ascension; only the righteous manage to overcome this endeavour. In addition, Gregory the Great in *Dialogi*, II, XXXIV, 1 sees his sister Scolastica's soul rising to the skies as a dove (*in columbae specie*).

[9] A similar scene, which features the additional motif of the narrow bridge, in, for instance, Gregory the Great, *Dialogi*, IV, XXXVII, 12.

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very last words by Saint Martin[10], whereas in *Vita Martini*, VII, the same Sulpicius Severus provides a totally different view of particular judgment – immediately after death, the soul is led before Christ's Court, who exercises his role as a judge assisted by the angels intervening to pronounce the sentence.

3.2. The judgment place

The judgment place is thus Heaven – crossed hastily – which proves that the presentation of a "geography" of the afterlife is a secondary objective of the work. The Paradise is divided into four, according to different levels of holiness (Ciccarese 1987: 43). The statement is not new and – whereas we may invoke for this subdivision a New Testament underlying reason[11] – it must be stated that it can be found in pre-Christian Jewish apocalyptic literature: in *the Book of Enoch*, XXII, 2 *sqq.*, the Sheol is featured as divided into four empty, deep, and very smooth places, meant – according to the explanation provided by the same archangel Raphael, accompanying Enoch – to receive the souls of the dead until the day of their judgment.[12] However, it is interesting that in *Visio Baronti* even the demons have access to this space[13] and they chase Barontus's soul by accusing him even before Saint Peter, in the last level where the soul is allowed to enter. It is even more surprising that – asked concerning his religious identity – Barontus's soul answers punctually and adds that he owes to it everything he is (chap. 9). However, little before, there is an explicit mention that the souls lose the ability to speak until the moment of their judgment (chap. 4). This may be a mishap by the author or we may believe that the judgment already began, not necessarily in a certain place, but by becoming aware and by acknowledging his own guilt? And yet, "a soul is going to judgment!" exclaims the chorus of the pure, occupying the second level of Paradise, followed by the chorus of the martyrs within the third level: "Conquer, Thou Warrior Christ, conquer..." (chap. 9), the last one crossed by the soul of Barontus. Here – before the fourth night, beyond which Barontus can only see an extraordinary brightness – occurs the decisive scene of particular judgment.

3.3. The judge

The statement made by archangel Raphael and the interventions made by Paradise inhabitants would suggest that the judgment would involve Christ. But this does not happen: Saint Peter is summoned for the cause and he is the one pronouncing the sentence ("he is not your companion, but ours" – chap. 12), he tells the demons. The disciple's role is not just of defender and protector of the monks

[10] Sulpicius Severus, *Ad Bassulam*: *Quid, hic, inquit, astas, cruenta bestia: Nihil in me, funeste, reperies. Abrahae me sinus recipiet.*

[11] John 14: 2: "In my Father's house are many mansions...".

[12] *Cartea lui Enoh* 2018: 66–67 From the subsequent explanations, given that the souls within these places correspond to different moral levels, it may be deduced that even before the final judgment, there is a "preliminary judgment," immediately after death (*ibidem*: 69–70). The motif was reprised, naturally, in the Christian apocalyptical literature: in *Visio Sancti Pauli/Apocalypsis Pauli*, the divisions of Paradise and Hell outline a taxonomy of virtues and vices.

[13] Even though in Job I: 6–12, we see Satan talking to God and accusing Job "before the Lord".

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within a monastery dedicated to him: he assesses comparatively the good and the bad deeds of the soul; he banishes the demons (who only invoked the sins) by hitting them with the keys (a hilarious scene, specific to an homily); he then advises Barontus concerning what he has to do to thank for the forgiveness – these roles are accomplished by any confessor, as an intermediary between man and God. He accomplishes them within the sacrament of confession: the assessment of facts, the provision of divine forgiveness, and the determination of the canon[14] as satisfaction for the sins committed. Thus, we may see this particular judgment as made in Christ's name, without requiring his physical presence, through the power given to the disciples (and to their descendants), as suggested by the sacrament of the confession? Or, on the contrary, are we suggested that the act of confession can be compared to a partial/temporary particular judgment? All the more as the forgiveness of sins is closely related to repentance – in the context, to give the twelve coins to the poor (chap. 13) – the entire scene suggests references to several details within the verses Mt. 16:18–19.

3.4. Procedure

First of all, deeds are judged exclusively. They are taken into account since childhood (some of them erased from the memory) until the seeming death – as Augustine points out in *De praedestinatione sactorum* (XII, 24, where he invokes the verse II Cor. 5:10), death closes definitively the period where the individual may prove or not the honesty of his faith, the adhesion to divine precepts. Neither the intentions nor the potential merits – those that, according to Augustine in the same work, someone may have had if they had been living more in the body – are taken into account. The defendant stands between the accusers and the judge, namely an *arbiter*, in our case Saint Peter. He is asked to determine the veracity of the accusations. Upon receiving confirmation from his part, Peter invokes in the person's defence that the vices he was accused of had been confessed and that the defendant had not only repented, but also done charitable work. From a doctrine perspective, it should have been enough, but Saint Peter goes on by saying that on top of that Barontus gave up on the world and became a monk in order to dedicate himself to the service of Christ and he adds: "These good deeds outweigh all the evil actions you recount" (chap. 12). Consequently, the demons should acknowledge defeat and Barontus should be considered a companion of the righteous. Thus, the topic featured here is exchange, compensation between the god and the bad deeds, a commonplace in the toll-houses within Eastern patristics.

It is true that the Latin fathers did not manifest any particular interest for the way in which particular judgment unfolds. In *De Civitate Dei*, XX, I, 2, Augustine discusses only the Final Judgment, though asserting explicitly three types of divine judgments: *prima iudicia* (referring to the fallen angels and to the first men), *novissimum iudicium*, namely the Final, definitive Judgment to be made by Christ for the living and the dead (II Tim. 4:1) upon His second coming, among which *media iudicia*, because the act through which God judges is continuous,

[14] The insistence on the theme of penitence was related to the introduction on the continent – from the British Isles – a of private penitence instead of the public one. See Torrigiani, Porta 2013: 41.

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uninterrupted; effects of His sentences are also visible during the earthly life. Probably in the category of *media iudicia* one must include particular judgment, because in *De anima*, II, 4, 8, Saint Augustine talks about a judgement right after death, whose consequences – beatitude or damnation – are experienced until the resurrection of bodies and the Final Judgment[15]. Unfortunately, concerning the details of such particular judgment, a rather vague clue is provided only in *Confessions*, IX, 13, 36. It is vague because, first of all, we do not know before whom the accusations are presented; on the other, the presence of the "enemy," of the devil "summing up our offenses, and searching for something to bring against us" in this context is seen by J. Riviere[16] (Riviere 1925: 1801) as a reminiscence of folk imaginary. The undisputable aspect is that the presence of the devil in the act of separating the souls right after exiting the bodies is a commonplace in both Greek patristics and Gregory the Great.[17] Leaving aside the thesis of the two eschatological regimes (*Moralia in Job*, IV, XXIX, 56; XIII, XLIII, 48 – XLIV, 49), reprised by Isidore of Seville (*Sententiae*, I, XIV, 16) – but which seems to be of no interest for the author of *Visio Baronti* – Gregory states that immediately after death there is a separation of the good from the bad; their joy or suffering is only related to the soul until the Final Judgment when, with the resurrection of the bodies, the joy or suffering will be full (*Dialogi*, IV, XXVI, 1–4). However, concerning the specifics of such separation, Gregory the Great had no firm and articulate opinion: on one hand, he talks about tests to which the souls are subjected – such as the bridge over a dark and foggy bridge, emanating a cloud of unbearable reek, which souls have to cross; the righteous managing to arrive to the other side, with as much authority as the sincerity in which they lived, and in the case of those slipping off the bridge, he mentions a dispute between ugly men rising from the river and men dressed in white and very beautiful, some dragging the souls down, other lifting them up. The Judge was present here only by allowing such scenario (...*in illo occulti arbitri examine*...); beyond this bridge, there are pleasant and green fields; separate mansions for each, full of overwhelming light (*Dialogi*, IV, XXXVII, 8–14). On the other hand, little before (*Dialogi*, IV, XXXVII, 5–6), in a passage retrieved almost identically in Augustine (*De cura pro mortuis*, XII, 15), he talks about a judge ordering the souls to be brought to Him. Furthermore, Gregory attests the idea that the souls of the dead suffer similar ordeals if they were guilty of similar deeds (*Dialogi*, IV XXXVI,

[15] The same idea in *De praedestinatione sanctorum*, XII, 24. Around the same time, Jerome (*In Joelem Prophetam*, II, 1) believed that the Day of the Lord means the judgment day or the day where each soul leaves the body. What will be for all on Judgment day is accomplished for each on the day of their death (*Quod enim in die judicii futurum estomnibus, hoc in singulis die mortis impletur*), an opinion that is hard to correlate with the one within *In Isaiam*, VI, XIII, 6–7: The Day of the Lord or of the end of the entire world, and of judgment, or of exit from life for each of us is close (*Prope est dies Domini, vel consummationis totius mundi, atque judicii, vel exitus uniuscujusque de vita*)." But Jerome is equally uninterested in the details of such judgment.

[16] The idea of judgment involving a calumniator (*calumniosus adversarius*) and an infallible judge is reprised by Augustine in *Sermones*, XCI, 4, where, invoking II Cor. 1:12 ("For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience"), individual conscience is involved, but it is not clear to which judgment Augustine refers in this excerpt.

[17] *Cf. Dialogi*, IV, XL, 6–9.

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14) and that they can return to earth sometimes to atone for their sins,[18] if they are not severe enough to ensure damnation.

In Greek patristics, there was higher focus on the selection process of souls immediately after death based on the moral values of the deeds committed during their lives. In *On principles* (I, praef., 5) Origen states that the soul will be rewarded for his merits when separated from this world (Origen, 1982: 41); also in *On principles*, II, XI, 6, upon invoking the verses within Ephes., 2, 2, he imagines that the souls of the righteous linger, depending on their own capabilities, in the skies as in a school of souls, where they are instructed in all they have seen on earth and they are given guidelines concerning the afterlife (Origen 1982: 184). We should not see in this retribution a universal judgment that – in *Contra Celsum*, IV, 9 – he places at the end of the world. Furthermore, in *On principles*, II, IX, 8, Origen supports the idea that the process through which God judges the world is continuous, operating from the earthly life and becoming complete on the day of the final judgment. As for the judgment of the souls right after death, within *In Lucam homiliae* (a work translated by Jerome into Latin), Origen imagines that immediately after death souls are welcomed by the bad spirits at the edge of the world who, upon researching things in details like *publicani*, try to find the evil within (*cf*. John 14:30) and try to bring them into slavery if the souls, accompanied by the good angels standing alongside the righteous, have nothing to give in return (*quod pro vectigali queamus reddere* – homily XXIII). In homily XXXV, analysing the verses Lk 12:58-59, Origen identifies the *adversarius* with *angelus iniquitatis*, *iudex* with Christ; *princeps* means *princeps angelorum iniquitatis* in opposition to the Son, the true prince, through *exactores* those spirits applying the sentence, while through *carcer* the place of damnation – all these elements structured according to a dynamic similar, in my opinion, to the one within Homily XIV, *De exitu animae*, by Cyril of Alexandria, (one of the founding texts of toll-houses doctrine). More interested in the "procedure" of this Judgment, Cyril populates the spaces of afterlife with only two categories: the damned and the saints or the sinners and the righteous. The simple, binary "geography" – Hell and Heaven, netherworld and the bosom of Abraham[19] – has the division of the souls as correlative. In what concerns the procedure in itself, concerning the Homily by Cyril, the angel or angels accompany the soul of the dead to God's throne of glory; the path is full of aerial toll-houses, mandatory passage points where the soul is accused by various reproachable deeds by the bad spirits/demons; good angels have the duty of providing – along with the soul of the deceased – to the bad spirits in exchange for the reproachable deeds of the deceased his good deeds that respect the specifics of the toll-house that he crosses. Given that toll-houses are some sort of taxonomy of sins, to the toll-houses correlative to the five senses, the Alexandrine adds others without fully listing them. The remarkable aspect of this process is the motif of the exchange: if the soul – through the deserving deeds offered in exchange for sins – does not manage to get past it regardless of the reason, it is going to Hell. If, however, the good deeds outweigh the bad ones, it will overcome each toll-house and it will end up alongside

[18] *Dialogi*, IV, XLII and LVII.

[19] Plural probably due by the logical necessity of including as many souls as possible.

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the inhabitants of the celestial paradise. Whereas it was not the first thought current of Eastern patristics[20] on this topic and it never became dogmatic, the doctrine of the toll-houses had a huge success; it was reprised, with different nuances and details, by authors such as Simeon Stylites (Homily XXII, featuring the idea of chronological phases of the ascension of the soul through the aerial toll-houses) or in *Viața Sfântului Vasile cel Nou*, thus influencing considerably the medieval imaginary.

4. Conclusions

Upon analysing comparatively the few elements of patristic theology listed above and those featured in *Visio Baronti*, several conclusions may be drawn.

First of all, the text shows clearly the need to judge the soul immediately after death, based on which, depending on the *merita vel demerita* acquired until the moment of death, a separation should be made between the good and the bad, a statement already made by both Latin and Greek patristics. This intermediary judgment does not exclude and does not substitute the Last Judgment – solemn and definitive – through Christ as a Judge, which settles the condition of each person for eternity; joy or suffering because full as the bodies resurrect.

Barontus's return to the body in order to accomplish his penitence and to correct his behaviour reprises the idea of the possibility of atoning on earth; this idea, correlated with the older thesis of the utility and efficiency of prayers for the dead, was stated by Gregory the Great through examples in the fourth book of the *Dialogi.*

Any idea expressed in the text – even that of the tripartite system body-soul-spirit – has a foundation in the interpretation of a Scripture passage, especially from the New Testament.

By acknowledging the guilt, by assessing not only the bad deeds, but also the good, mainly by prescribing a penitence, the judging of Barontus's soul reminds of the sacrament of confession and of private penitence.

The idea of *refrigerium* as a way to ease on the punishments for only some of the damned souls reminds of Augustine's stance in *Enchiridion*, 109–110.

Whereas the text makes no reference to what later would become the Purgatory, placing in *Visio Baronti* Abraham, namely the bosom of Abraham, somewhere between Hell and Heaven remains – compared to traditional interpretations – bizarre and hard to explain at the same time.

Through both the topic of the dispute between angels (or archangels supporting the cause of the soul by highlighting the good deeds) and demons along the way towards the judgment place (a topic also featured in Eastern patristics) and mostly the topic of the exchange mentioned above, *Visio Baronti* is more likely similar to works specific to Greek patristics, namely the doctrine of toll-houses.

Hence, from the perspective of particular judgment, *Visio Baronti* features a mixture of opinions reprised from Latin and Greek patristics. Definitely, some elements of this mixture are also referenced by M.P. Ciccarese when stating that the

[20] The idea that right after death the souls are separated by God's judgment is encountered in Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Maximus the Confessor, etc.

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author reprises freely several folk beliefs and phantasies (Ciccarese 1987: 235). However, this mixture attempts to make peace between a procedure of particular judgment specific to Oriental patristics (Origen, Cyril of Alexandria) and authoritarian opinions specific to Latin patristics (Augustine, Gregory the Great), such as the one referring to the tripartite or quadripartite (according to Le Goff) Augustinian division of the persons having passed to the afterlife – the very righteous, the not very righteous, the not very bad, the very bad – based on which we later defined the Purgatory, by detailing the intermediary categories (the not very righteous, the not very righteous) and the idea of purification by fire (*focus purgatorius*).

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Abstract

Written in Gaul in late 7th century by an unknown author, *Visio Baronti* presents the journey to the afterlife of a monk's soul from the perspective of what happens with the soul right after exiting the body. A founding text of the medieval literary (sub)genre *visiones animarum*, the work has been analysed not only from this perspective, but also as a narrative meant to sort out – from the standpoint of Christian doctrine – the "geography" of the afterlife and the theological beliefs of the period. My intention is to analyse the way in which the author of the text represents particular judgment – which, according to Christian teachings, occurs right after the separation of the soul from the body – and to identify a series of connections between this narrative and its possible sources pertaining to Latin or Greek patristic writings.

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