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# COSMOLOGY OF SAINT VICTORINUS OF POETOVIO: FROM THE CREATION OF LIGHT TO THE CREATION OF ADAM

## INTRODUCTION

Among the holy fathers and church writers of the pre-Nicaean period (1st - early 4th century)<sup>1</sup> who wrote in Latin, Saint Victorinus of Poetovio (years of life: c. 230 - 303/304; place of ministry: the city of Poetovio in the Roman Empire, or the city of Ptuj in the Republic of Slovenia) occupies a special place. After Sainted Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130/140 - 198) and Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200/210 - 258), and many other true disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, Victorinus became famous in the Church of Christ as one of the martyrs. In addition, Victorinus of Poetovio is called by many scholars the first Latin interpreter of Holy Scripture (as most of his works are devoted to exegesis of biblical books) (see: Khandoga, 2021b, s. 259-260; Adinolfi, 2003, s. 184), the first Christian writer of the Pannonian province of the Roman Empire (see: Bratož, 2002, s. 7; Bratož, 2001, s. 313) and the chief moral teacher for Poetovio Christians (see: Khandoga, 2023, [in printing]; Pani, 2005, s. 151-155).

<sup>1</sup> This division of Christian writers into two groups is found, for example, in the studies of Russian professors Sidorov A. I. and Sagarda N. I. (see: Sidorov, Dobrotsvetov, Fokin, 2019, s. 15-24; Sidorov, 2011, s. 26-39; Sagarda, Sagarda, 2004, s. 27-44; Sagarda, 2004, s. 7-20).

Unfortunately, from the extensive list of Victorinus of Poetovio's works mentioned in St. Hieronymus (Jerome) of Stridon's treatise "On Illustrious Men" (c. 347 - 419/420) (see: Hieronymus, 2009, s. 348-349), only one work has survived: an interpretation of "On Revelation" (see: Victorinus, 2017c, s. 110-265). But Hieronymus also writes of "many others (multa alia)" (Hieronymus, 2009, s. 348) works of Victorinus, which perhaps he had not read, and therefore did not mention in his essay<sup>2</sup>. Among them, researchers consider the following to be authentic works of the Poetovio saint: the treatise "On the Creation of the World" (see: Victorinus, 2017a, s. 295-300) and a fragment "On the Life of Christ" (see: Victorinus, 2017b, s. 303). As for the homily "On the Ten Virgins," which appears in some uncritical editions of Victorinus of Poetovio's works, for a number of reasons (for example, there is no Christology, another eschatology is revealed, elements of a conversational style are present, and more) it is believed that this work is not authentic (Khandoga, 2021c, s. 19; Khandoga, 2020a, s. 135). Its author is an anonymous Latin interpreter of the Gospel of Matthew (see: Gryson, 2007a, s. 155), who lived in the late III or early IV century, which we conventionally call Pseudo-Victorius of Poetovio (see: Gryson, 2007b, s. 813).

It is quite natural that the direct source for Victorinus of Poetovio's exposition of cosmology and, in particular, his theological terminology of creation is the treatise "On the Creation of the World", and the indirect source is the interpretation of "On Revelation". As for the fragment "On the Life of Christ," this terminology is absent. However, it may be useful to those interested in the liturgical calendar of the second half of the III and early IV centuries (see: Khandoga, 2022, s. 237-242; Bratož, 2002, s. 11-12, 18-19; Bratož, 2001, s. 321-324). In addition, the original writings of Victorinus do not focus on angels and animals, but on the first-born man, or Adam, as he was the crown of God's creation before the Fall, and on the New Adam, or the Lord Jesus Christ, as he saved mankind from the power of the devil (see: Khandoga, 2021a, s. 150-153; Marin, 2004, s. 201-205). With this in mind, the purpose of this article is to uncover the cosmology, or doctrine of creation, of Victorinus of Poetovio, that is, a theological-philological analysis of the quotations that refer to God's creation of all things visible and invisible.

2 For example, «Canon Muratori» (see: Anonymus, 2008, s. 32-34), ascribed to Victorinus of Poetovio by a Western scholar (see: Armstrong, 2008, s. 3). It is known, however, that this work was written by an anonymous man at the end of the second century, or c. 200 y. (see: Seleznev, Kalinin, Tikhomirov i dr., 2012, s. 249; Naumowicz, 2011, s. 11-12).

## MEANING AND PURPOSE OF CREATION

At the beginning of his treatise “On the Creation of the World”, Victorinus of Poetovio, citing the Book of Genesis, the prophet and legislator Moses (16th century BC) as the main source of his work, reveals a teaching on the dual meaning of the creation of the world. On the one hand, he argues that God created the world to glorify His greatness to the first-born man, angels, and animals: “God created the whole vast universe in six days out of nothing (*sex diebus ex nihilo*) to beautify His majesty (in *ornamentum maiestatis suae*), and on the seventh [day] he sanctified it with blessing, resting [from] the works [of His] (see: Genesis 2, 2-3)” (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 295). In this Victorinus follows Tertullian (c. 155/160 - after 220), quoting him almost verbatim from time to time: “The God whom we revere is one. He by the Word which He commanded, by the Reason which He arranged, by the Power which He could, produced out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) all [the splendor] of this universe with all the ornamentation of the elements, bodies and spirits for the adornment of His greatness (in *ornamentum maiestatis suae*). Therefore, the Greeks called the world by the word *cosmos* (κόσμος)» (Tertullianus, 1954, s. 117). Consequently, God, or the one God who created everything is God the Father, the first Person of the Holy Trinity.

On the other hand, Victorinus pays special attention to creation out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*): this is evident even from the title of the treatise – «*De fabrica mundi* (On the creation of the World)» and the first sentence: “When I, left alone with my thoughts, reflect on the creation (*de fabrica*) of this world in which we are enclosed, [I am always struck by] the rapidity of its arrangement (*fabricae*)...” (Victorinus, 2017a, p. 295). Of the terms he chooses not “*creatio*,” which has some connotations of birth, nor “*opificium*,” which might “push” the well-known architectural meanings and overemphasize the significance of the creature, but “*fabrica*,” which derives from “*faber*” - “*smith*,” respectively, the original meaning of the noun “*fabrica*” - “*smithcraft*” (Dvoretiskii, 1976, s. 410; Oxford, 1968, s. 665), i.e., the creation of a product completely different from the original ore and, accordingly, carrying the meanings of qualitative change and creation out of nothing.

Thus, in the quotation from Tertullian’s treatise *Apologeticus*, two fundamental truths are important to Victorinus of Poetovio: creation for the sake of glorifying divine greatness and creation out of nothing. However, what is important for us in this fragment is not only what Victorinus used from it, but also what he omitted.

First, Victorinus did not take advantage of Tertullian’s triadic reasoning about the creative Mind, by which he meant God the Father (see: Fokin, 2014, s. 146-148; Fokin, 2005, s. 84-85), about the Word and the Power, by which he probably meant God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Perhaps his binitarianism, that is,

the doctrine of the mixing of “the Second and Third Persons of the Holy Trinity” (Khandoga, 2020b, s. 160; Fokin, 2004, s. 264), was at work here. Therefore, for example, in the treatise “On the Creation of the World” we read: “But to the settler of all this creation is the Word His name. For thus says His Father: My heart has poured out the good word (Psalm 44, 2)» (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 298). Also, the interpretation of “On Revelation” repeatedly points out that the world was created by God the Father and God the Son (see: Victorinus, 2017c, s. 110, 204).

Second, Victorinus does not touch on the theme of peace as adornment and the consideration of the Greek word “κόσμος,” which means both “peace” and “adornment” (see: Dulaey, 1993a, s. 300; Dulaey, 1993b, s. 149; Mehlmann, 1964, s. 415). In addition, after mentioning the six-day creation of the world, which is not in this work of Tertullian, he immediately “speaks” of God’s rest on the seventh day (see: Genesis 2, 2). Probably because the biblical numerological subjects for Victorinus of Poetovio are more important than the ancient philosophical reflections borrowed by Tertullian from Greek philosophy or Greek poetry about the order and beauty of the cosmos, which is a “lawful and symmetrical spatial structure” (Averintsev, 2004, s. 94).

In this context, the expression «in ornamentum maiestatis suae (to decorate His greatness)» (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 295) loses its ancient philosophical meaning, which was first transferred to the universe the ideas of order and beauty by Pythagoras (c. 570 - c. 490 BC) (Averintsev, 2004, s. 89), and then it was borrowed by Plato (428/427 - 348/347 BC) and the Stoics (late 4th century BC - late 2nd century BC). However, this fragment is more reminiscent of the biblical saying: “O Lord, my God, you are marvelous, you are clothed with glory and majesty” (Psalm 103, 1). Thus, Victor’s “ornamentum” is closer to the ornament that adorns “the edges of the Lord’s garments” and fills “the whole temple” with them (Isaiah 6, 1).

## THE FIRST AND FOURTH DAYS OF CREATION

On the first day of creation, according to the teaching of Victorinus of Poetovio, God created light and “laid down” the principles of timekeeping, that is, the first hours and days: “In the beginning, God created light (Genesis 1, 1; see: Genesis 1, 3) He divided it by a duodecimal number [h]ours into day and night, evidently so that day would replace night as a place of rest from the labors of men, and then would overcome day again, and so, alternating, labor would be supported by rest[s] of night, and rest would again alternate with daytime activity” (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 295). Consequently, the first day (or, in modern parlance, the first day) consisted of 12 day and 12 night hours.

What is the length of this day? Did Victorinus understand it symbolically, as an indefinitely long period of time, or literally as 24 hours? The alternation of light and darkness in 12 hours, begun as early as the first day, seems to indicate that he understood the days of creation literally (see: Victorinus, 2017a, s. 300). However, further analysis of the fragments of the treatise “On the Creation of the World” compels us to come to deeper conclusions.

First, the sun and the moon, which connect day and night in 24 hours, are created by God on the fourth day, as Victorinus of Poetovio testifies: “On the fourth day [God] created two luminaries in heaven, larger and smaller, so that one could rule the day and the other the night (Genesis 1, 16), the sun and the moon, and the other stars he placed in heaven, that they might shine above the earth (Genesis 1, 17) and distinguish the times and the years and the months and the days and the hours (see: Genesis 1, 14) [by their] location [in heaven]” (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 295). Thus, after the creation of the luminaries, that is: the sun, the moon, and the stars, and the beginning of the seventh day of rest, a new countdown of time begins – weeks, months, years, etc., appear. In addition, Victorinus, revealing the doctrine of the first and fourth days of creation, from which the counting of time began, that is, the first hours and days appeared, mentions the 12 hours of day and 12 hours of night, which are intended by God for the work and rest of people. As the Slovenian professor Rajko Bratož rightly believes, “the exegesis of creation in these two days reflects the anthropocentrism of the author’s approach, according to which the creation of man (or the first humans - Adam and Eve - Author) must be the ultimate goal of Divine care” (Bratož, 1999, s. 302; Bratož, 1986, s. 299).

Secondly, the “keepers” or witnesses of the 24 hours are the original angels, who are older than the other angels, that is, the angels and archangels, because they were created on the first day when God separated light from darkness: “As for the duodecimal number, as I mentioned above, the day is divided into two halves by the twelve hours of light and night [time]. And by means of these hours the months, and the years, and the times, and the ages are reckoned. Therefore the twelve angels of the day [and] the twelve angels of the night (*diei angeli duodecim, noctis angeli duodecim*), are appointed, no doubt in accordance with the number of the hours. For they are the twenty-four witnesses of the days and the nights, who sit before the throne of God with golden crowns on their heads [and] who are called elders in the Revelation of the Apostle and Evangelist John (see: Revelation 4, 4), for the reason that they are older than other angels and men” (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 300)<sup>3</sup>.

3 The notion that there are some primordial angels, different from other angels, is characteristic, for example, of Hermes’ “Shepherd” (140-150) (see: Hermas, 1958, s. 108-110).

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this fragment. These 24 hours are special because they are used to count the hours and days, and they also have 24 guardian angels who abide in unceasing praise of the Lord for creation and provision over the world, or universe. Furthermore, these angels “came into existence to be witnesses of creation, for God created light in order that the world might exist in one’s eyes” (Dulaey, 1993a, s. 116).

It is also important that the guardian angels, “connect” with the substance of light created by God on the first day. Perhaps this is due to their light-bearing nature, as well as to the golden vestments and white robes of the 24 elders. But, in our opinion, the reason here is deeper.

Light is a universal substance, a carrier of information, and a known medium necessary for being. It is not by chance that in inter-testamental (see: 2 Maccabees 7,28) and New Testament texts (see: Hebrews 11, 3) creation out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) is understood not so much as removal from nothingness into being as the formation of the visible from the invisible, or from primeval matter (see: Sil’vestr, 2016, s. 187; Losskii, 2012, s. 448). It is worth noting another important feature: ancient philosophers and geographers tried to connect time and space into one whole. Therefore, they assigned each hour its climatic belt (see: Klavdii, 2007, s. 213-217).

Now let us remember what the ministry of the twenty-four elders of the Revelation of the Apostle John the Theologian is all about. It is a service of praise: “And on the thrones, I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white, with crowns of gold on their heads. [...] And when the animals give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, Who lives forever and ever, then the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and they worship Him who lives forever and ever, and they place their crowns before the throne, saying, ‘Worthy are You, Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for You created everything, and everything exists and was created by Your will’” (see: Revelation 4, 4-11)<sup>4</sup>.

Let us note that the 24 elders of Revelation praise God above all for creation, and they also participate in the cosmic liturgy, the praise of the world, turning to the Lord with thanksgiving for all His mercies. Importantly, light also takes part in this worldwide praise: “Praise Him, sun and moon, praise Him, all the stars of light” (Psalm 148, 3). On the other hand, in biblical theology the praise of light and angelic praise are connected with each other: “On what is its foundation established, or

4 Victorinus of Poetovio interprets this passage of Scripture in his “Revelation” as follows: “Since He came who overcame death and is alone worthy to receive the crown of immortality, all - no matter how many crowns they may have as a sign of glory for some beautiful deed - lay them at his feet, that is, for the sake of the surpassing victory of Christ all [other] victories [are] laid at His feet” (Victorinus, 2017c, s. 162).

who laid its cornerstone, in the common rejoicing of the morning stars, when all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38, 6-7).

The proof that in the pre-Nicaea period (the I to the beginning of the IV century) the theology of praise, i.e. themes of joint praise of the material and angelic worlds, was topical is shown by "the only early Christian hymn notated which has reached us: The Oxirinus Papyrus No. 1786, paleographically dated to the third century" (Vasilik, 2006, s. 127):

- I. "Let the dawn be silent and the stars be light-bearing,  
Let the springs of noisy rivers dry up.
- II. When we sing of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
- III. And the powers all [together] exclaim, Amen, Amen.
- IV. Strength, praise, and glory to God,  
the Giver of all good things. Amen, amen."  
(Anonim, 2012, s. 134).

Without going into a detailed analysis of the hymn to the Holy Trinity, we should note that "in the listing of the creatures singing God, the order of the Song of the Adolescents is partly preserved: first the dawn associated with the sun, then the stars and only then the sources of rivers" (Vasilik, 2006, s. 132). In addition, partly the order of the anonymous work "The Song of the Three Fellows" (I-III centuries) reproduces the Hexahemeron of the prophet and legislator Moses. Accordingly, with some caution, we can testify to the connection between the order of creation and the order of praise on the one hand, and the unity of the material and angelic worlds in praise on the other.

Attention should also be drawn to the fourth stanza of the hymn, which has clear parallels in Revelation: "And I saw, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the animals and the elders, and their number was the darkness of those and thousands of thousands, who said with a loud voice: Worthy is the Lamb slain to receive power and wealth, and wisdom and strength, and honor and glory and blessing. And every creature that is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all that is in them, I heard them say, sitting on the throne, and the Lamb, blessing and honor, and glory and power forever and ever" (Rev. 5, 11-13). Therefore, there is undoubtedly a cosmological and eschatological character to the praise of the angelic and material worlds.

Thus, considering the above, and also knowing Victorinus of Poetovio's particular penchant for the allegorical method of interpreting Scripture (see: Khandoga, 2021b, s. 260-262; Panagopoulos, 2013, s. 395-396), one can reconstruct his



thoughts concerning the first and fourth days of creation as follows. In these days God created light, the twelve angels of day and the twelve angels of night, which are actually “countless” primordial angels, the sun, moon, and other stars, and also laid down the laws, of a dualistic nature, by which the world began to exist.

Their dualism can be described as follows:

1. Spiritual-material character: the 24 hours have as their witnesses the 12 angels of day and the 12 angels of night, who are older than the rest of creation.
2. Ontological-doxological character: the temporal principles of the created world are united with the primordial angels who praise God incessantly.
3. Temporal-spatial character: the unity of the world is conditioned by the unity of time and space.
4. Stationary-kinetic character: 12 hours are allotted for day and 12 hours for night, in other words, half of the time is for motion, half for rest.

It is important to keep in mind that Victorinus of Poetovio revealing the doctrine of the first four days of creation, uses only one term “fecit” which comes from the verb “faciere” meaning “to bring up, to form” (Dvoretiskii, 1976, s. 412; Oxford, 1968, s. 668-670). It follows that God did not create the world in a single moment, but took time for all creation. Victorinus, therefore, understands the biblical days of creation literally as consisting of 24 hours. In addition, this view is confirmed by the fact that he is struck by “the rapidity of its (i.e., the world - Author) dispensation (uelocitas fabricae ipsius)» (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 295).

## THE SECOND AND THIRD DAYS OF CREATION

Victorinus of Poetovio, revealing the doctrine of the six-day creation of the world, does not mention the second and third days, that is, after the first day immediately proceeds to the fourth day. However, we can partly judge his ideas about creation these days by other fragments of the treatise “On the Creation of the World”. In the first of these, we read: “Thus this Word is called wisdom, when He created light; intellectus, when He [created] heaven (caelum); consilium, when He [created] earth and sea (terram et mare); fortress, when He [created] sun and moon and other luminaries” (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 298). In the second of these we read: “The Holy Spirit filled the Virgin Mary on the same day in which He created light; He turned into flesh on the same day in which He created earth and water (terram et aquam); He turned into milk on the same day in which He created the stars”

(Victorinus, 2017a, s. 299)<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, Victorinus was aware of creation in these days, but purposely omitted it.

Some conclusions can be drawn from these passages. First, according to the ordinal correlation, the Word of God is called “intellectus (mind)” in the creation of heaven. In addition, the following expression of Victorinus is also noteworthy: “When I, left alone with my thoughts, reflect on the creation of this world in which we are enclosed (in quo clausi tenemur), [I am always amazed] at the rapidity of its arrangement...” (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 295). It is possible, of course, to quote general words about the fact that the world has not only a beginning, but also an end. However, it is more likely that we are talking here about more specific cosmological things—the idea of the world as a closed space. Therefore Victorinus of Poetovio, following St. Theophilus of Antioch (second half of the II century) (see: Théophile, 1948, s. 132) adhered to the idea of a “limited universe”, that is, he believed in the existence of a flat earth and a chatra sky above it (see: Makarov, 2003, s. 87; McVey, 1991, s. 52).

Secondly, by heaven, in a broader sense, we must think of the seven heavens, since Victorinus has the idea of relating the seven heavens to the seven gifts of the one Holy Spirit (see: Victorinus, 2017c, s. 112). This idea, with minor modifications, was borrowed by him from Irenaeus of Lyon (see: Irénée, 1995, s. 44-46): «Also those days correspond to the seven heavens. For so it is written: By the word of the Lord the heavens are established, and by the spirit of his mouth all their power (Psalm 32, 6); these are the seven spirits. [Here are the names of these spirits, which rest on Christ [the Lord, the Son] of God, as defined by the prophet Isaiah: And the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and godliness, shall rest upon Him; and the spirit of the fear of God shall fill Him (Isaiah 11, 2-3). Consequently, the highest heaven is wisdom, the second is reason, the third is counsel, the fourth is fortress, the fifth is knowledge, the sixth is piety, and the seventh is the fear of God” (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 297-298). Unfortunately, Victorinus does not develop this teaching further

And thirdly, according to the ordinal correlation, the Word of God is called “consilium (council)” in the creation of the earth and the sea, or earth and water. Naturally, in the perception of man of late antiquity, sea and water are synonymous. Nevertheless, here, in our opinion, is a twofold reason. On the one hand, land and sea are opposites, on the other hand, they are dialectically inconceivable without each other. Council, as we know, consists of a dialogue, often a dialogue of opposites, which, however, come together in a unity of solution.

5 In view of the fact that Victorinus was a proponent of Binitarianism, by “He” we must mean the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

Yet Victorinus of Poetovio makes no mention at all of the creation of plants, trees, and herbs (see: Genesis 1, 11-12). At first sight, this is somewhat strange, considering the symbolic meaning which in Christian tradition is given to plant life and especially to the seed: it is worth remembering at least the parable of the sower (see: Matthew 13, 3-23), or the words of Christ the Savior: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a grain of wheat fall into the ground and it dies not, it remains alone; but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit” (John 12, 23-25). However, this is not surprising if we consider the need for a binary-dialogical construction that would justify naming the Word of God “counsel” in the creation on the third day: the reference to every herb sowing seed (see: Genesis 1, 29) would violate this construction.

## THE FIFTH AND SIXTH DAYS OF CREATION

Only briefly does Victorinus of Poetovio dwell on the fifth day of creation: “On the fifth day earth and water produced their offspring (faetus suos)” (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 296). In another chapter of his treatise “On the Creation of the World” Victorinus also holds this view: “[Christ] was turned into blood on the same day in which the earth and water produced their offspring (faetus suos)” (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 299). However, in these fragments, we should pay attention to two points.

First, there is a well-known discrepancy with the biblical text, which tells about the fifth day of creation: “And God said, ‘Let water produce reptiles, a living soul; and let birds fly over the earth on the firmament of heaven. And God created great fish, and every soul of the reptile animals, which the water produced according to its kind, and every bird of prey according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth. And there was evening and there was morning: the fifth day” (Genesis 1, 20-23). As we see, Scripture says nothing about the earth giving birth to fish, reptiles, and birds; that belongs to the water.

Secondly, we are faced with the difficult task of interpretation: are we to consider here the connection of the fifth and sixth days, or are we still talking about the fifth day? In the latter case, we could see here a well-known natural philosophical reflection: reptiles and birds are born in water, but continue their life on earth.

To resolve this question, it is necessary to draw on the broader context of the treatise *On the Creation of the World*. Speaking of the sixth day, Victorinus notes that “on the sixth day was created that which was lacking” (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 296), but goes on to speak of the creation of man. Therefore, the “missing” may refer to both humans and mammals.

The decisive consideration may be the enumeration of the 7 attributes of God's Word, which have a clear reference to the 7 days of creation: "Thus this Word is called... knowledge - when it produces [the begotten (faetus)] of the earth and the sea" (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 298). Consequently, Victorinus unequivocally attributes the creation of all animals to the fifth day. Furthermore, the Word of God on this day is defined through "the Spirit of knowledge (Spiritus scientiae)" (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 298). In addition to its ordinal meaning, this definition can be connected to the diversity of the animal world.

Why is there such a break with the text of Genesis, which reads as follows: "And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth a living soul according to her kind, cattle, and creeping things, and beasts according to their kind. And it became so» (Genesis 1, 24)? Could it be that Victorinus used a corrupted Greek or Latin text of Genesis which combined the fifth and the sixth days? The answer to such questions can only be negative: we have no manuscript or patristic sources testifying to the combination of the fifth and sixth days either concerning the Septuagint or Itala (see: Grilikhes, 2017, s. 414-415; Skobelev, 2013, s. 24-25).

Thus, in this case, Victorinus of Poetovio changed the biblical text on his own initiative. What was his motivation? We can hardly give an unambiguous answer to this question, but the following is obvious: Victorinus completely "freed" the sixth day for the creation of angels and first-born man, or the first humans, thereby emphasizing their exclusive position in the world. By this he drew a sharp distinction between the animal world, denying the close kinship of the mammals, the "beasts of the earth" on the grounds that they have a "living soul" (Genesis 1, 30), and first-born man as well as the angels, who have no souls.

Now note that Victorinus of Poetovio calls the fish, reptiles, birds, and mammals created on the fifth day "faetus. This word, translated from Latin into Russian, has a number of meanings: "bearing a fetus", "resolved from childbirth", "progeny" and "offspring" (Dvoretiskii, 1976, s. 424-425; Oxford, 1968, s. 695). From this it is possible to make the following assumption: the earth and water by divine command produced innumerable number and variety of living beings, which then were formed under the influence of the potencies invested in them. However, such an assumption is debatable and needs further confirmation.

Victorinus of Poetovio is also very brief about the sixth day of creation: "On the sixth day was created that which was lacking (quae deerant)" (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 296). Perhaps it is the vegetable world (see: Genesis 1, 29-30), that is, the herbs and trees, which he did not mention in his treatise "On the Creation of the World".

In addition, on the sixth day, according to the teaching of Victorinus, God created the angels and archangels and the first-born man: "But before [God] created

the angels and archangels, [after] he formed a man, supposing the spiritual before the earthly; for light [appeared] before heaven and earth. [...] But that is why [God] finished His work before He created the angels and created man, lest [heretics] by false speech insist that the angels were [in this] His helpers” (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 296). Consequently, God created the angels first and then man<sup>6</sup>.

However, the French professor Martine Dulay in his commentary on this fragment of the treatise “On the Creation of the World” poses the following question: “What are the affairs in question?” And he resolves it as follows: «*Spiritualia terrenis anteponeus* (the spiritual before the earth)”, - says Victorinus of Poetovio, “they (that is, the angels and archangels - Author) were created by God before all animals, that is, probably on the fourth day, together with the stars, which, as thought before, they rule” (Victorinus, 1997, s. 219; Khandoga, 2016, s. 146-148). Consequently, the other angels were created by God on the fourth day.

Without entering into a discussion with the esteemed professor, we believe that God created the angelic world, that is, “innumerable” angels and archangels on the sixth day, because, first, Victorinus, in revealing the doctrine of the fourth day, does not mention the creation of angels; Secondly, the saying “the spiritual before the earthly” explains why God created the angels before man on the sixth day; and thirdly, the saying “lest [heretics] by false speech insist” indicates that the angels were created by God on the last day”.

Moreover, according to the teaching of Victorinus of Poetovio, it was not to angels that God subdued the world, or the universe, but to first-born man. Perhaps here there is a counter to the teaching of the Gnostics (the so-called set of heretical sects active in the first centuries after Christ’s birth), who allowed the complicity of angels in the creation of the world, or at least presented their role in governing the universe as excessively active (see: Khosroev, 2016, s. 164-240).

The analogy of the primacy of light in relation to heaven and earth, that is, “for light [appeared] before heaven and earth” (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 296), clarifies the essence of angelic ministry and human purpose. Heaven and earth (see: Genesis 1, 1) are structures in need of control, while light is the medium that fills and animates them. Angels, like light, illuminate and sanctify both the world and first-born man. Therefore, “countless” angels serve man as older brothers, with full freedom, and through this do the will of God.

In addition, on the sixth day God created His main creation, the first-born man, or man and woman (see: Genesis 1, 27): “Thus God formed man out of the

6 This is the opinion of most researchers (see: Heidl, 2017, s. 14-15; Heidl, 2001, s. 1187; Fokin, 2005, s. 267; Fokin, 2004, s. 460; Bratož, 1999, s. 303-304; Bratož, 1986, s. 299-300; Daniélou, 1978, s. 114).

earth (see: Genesis 2, 7) as the master of all the creatures He made on the earth and on the water (see: Genesis 1, 28). [...] This sixth day is called Friday, that is, the preparation of the kingdom. For Adam [God] created in His image and likeness (see: Genesis 1, 26-27)” (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 296). In this Victorinus of Poetovio follows Theophilus of Antioch: “And above all the prophets accordingly taught us that God created all things out of nothing. For nothing is consonant with God, but being himself a place, needing nothing, and existing before the ages. He willed to create man, that he might be able to comprehend, and for him he prepared the world. He who is created has need of this or that, but the Graceless One has need of nothing” (Théophile, 1948, s. 122). Consequently, the name of the first man is Adam.

On the same day God also created the first woman. Victorinus mentions her in the context of the saving acts of the Son of God and the sin of the first men: “In order to recreate Adam through the Sabbath, as well as to come to the aid of all His creation, [God] did so through the birth of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Whoever is thus taught in the law of God, who is filled with the Holy Spirit, let him not despise in his heart what the angel Gabriel preached to the Virgin Mary (see Luke 1:28) on the same day on which the dragon seduced Eve...” (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 299). Consequently, the name of the first woman is Eve.

There are two important points in these fragments about the creation of man. First, he was created by God as the lord of all creatures, that is, all the animal world existing in water, on earth, and in the air (see: Genesis 1, 20-25). In this, Victorinus of Poetovio continues the line of the chief apostle Paul: “For it was not to the angels that God subdued the future universe of which we speak; on the contrary, someone has testified, saying, ‘What does man mean, that You remember him, or the son of man, that You visit him? Thou hast not much humbled him before the angels; Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast subdued all things under his feet. When Thou hast subdued all things unto him, Thou hast left nothing unsubdued to him” (Hebrews 2, 5-8). This is why God placed man at the center of creation.

Second, God created the first-born man in His own image and likeness (see: Genesis 1, 26-27). What are the image and likeness according to the teaching of the Petachean saint? They are related, as we have just mentioned, to man’s dominant position in the world. And it is also likely that the image and likeness of God are included in the concept of “*pietas* (*piety*)” because the Word of God according to the ordinal correlation is so called on this day (Victorinus, 2017a, s. 298). In addition, if we compare the first creation - light and the last creation - man, we can conclude that the first-born man, like the angels, was to illuminate and sanctify the world created by God.

At the same time, we see that Victorinus of Poetovio categorically denies the idea of human “co-creation” to God, at least at the level of creation of the world, probably because for him it was associated with ancient “theurgy”, that is the notion that people not only can participate in the divine acts, but also subordinate the gods to their will (see: Petrov, 2003, s. 200).

## CONCLUSION

Victorinus of Poetovio (c. 230 - 303/304) as the guardian of the Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture of the Church of Christ, following Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyon and Tertullian, taught that the world and everything in it - the first-born angels, animals, other angels, and the first-born man - were created by God in six days out of nothing (*sex diebus ex nihilo*). In addition, Victorinus, in his treatise “On the Creation of the World” and his interpretation of “On Revelation” “established” a kind of hierarchy: in first place he put the first-born man, in second place the angels, and in third place the animals. Therefore, the world, or universe, was created by God for the sake of man, or the first humans, Adam and Eve.

In the first and fourth days, God created light, the original angels, or the twelve angels of day and the twelve angels of night and the luminaries, or sun, moon and other stars. With this it should be borne in mind, firstly, that from the first day the counting of time began, that is, the first hours and days appeared, secondly, from the fourth day another counting of time began, not because light began to alternate with darkness, but the sun began to alternate with the moon and, thirdly, from the first day each successive day consisted of 24 hours - 12 hours of day and 12 hours of night. Also on the first day, the first living beings appeared in the world, the original angels, who began to praise the Creator incessantly for all His good deeds.

On the second and third days, God created heaven, earth, and sea, or earth and water. However, if we read Victorinus of Poetovio’s Six Days sequentially, that is, chapter by chapter, we notice that he purposely omitted these days, because after the first day he went directly to the fourth day. Probably because Victorinus considered these days to be of secondary importance.

On the fifth and sixth days, God created the animals, the other angels, or angels and archangels, and the first-born man. But in regard to the animals, i.e. the fish, reptiles, birds, and mammals, Victorinus goes against the Holy Scriptures (see: Genesis 1, 20-25), because he considers them all to have been created by God on the fifth day. Probably because he decided to “free” the sixth day for the sake of the other angels and man. Keep in mind, however, that the angels and archangels were created by God on the last day, so that the heretics, or Gnostics, could not

claim that Victorinus taught as they did. Consequently, God's favorite creation is the first-born man.

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# COSMOLOGY OF SAINT VICTORINUS OF POETOVIO: FROM THE CREATION OF LIGHT TO THE CREATION OF ADAM

## SUMMARY

This article reveals the cosmology, or the doctrine of the creation of a little-known holy father and, possibly, the first martyr of the Pannonian province of the Roman Empire – Saint Victorinus of Poetovio (c. 230 - 303/304), the author of the first Latin Six Days. Victorinus, in his original writings - the treatise “On the Creation of the World” and the interpretation of “On Revelation”, using various exegetical methods, for example, allegories and typologies - paid particular attention to the meaning and purpose of creation, the first, fourth, fifth and sixth days of creation. As for the second and third days of creation, you need to be an attentive reader in order to find the necessary information in the treatise “On the Creation of the World”. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that Victorinus of Poetovio, as a supporter of binitarianism, taught that there is a single God the Creator, or God the Father and God the Son. However, this does not mean that Victorinus did not know anything about the Holy Spirit, since in the treatise “On the Creation of the World” and the interpretation “On Revelation”, He is repeatedly mentioned, starting with the events associated with the incarnation of the Son of God into the world. As a result, we learn that the world, or the universe, was created by God in six days from nothing and for the glorification of His greatness by the primordial man, or the first people, the primordial and other angels, as well as animals. In addition, the uniqueness of this Six Days lies in the fact that Victorinus of Poetovio, when writing it, used not only the Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition but also repeatedly resorted to the author’s innovation.

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