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## ICOANA CREDINȚEI

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## Preface

The 7 issue of *Icoana Credinței/ Icon of Faith* (IFIJISR) contains a group of articles with various themes, dedicated to the areas of Theology, Education, Science and Religion. The committee of authors present in the issue Number 7, Year IV (2018) of *Icoana Credinței* proposes to provide interaction within the community of thinkers, engaging in the dialog between religion and all type of science.

Thus, 1-st section: **THEOLOGY STUDIES** starts with the keynote lecture “*The Missionary Nature of the Church in the Book of Acts. An Exegetical and Theological Study*”, delivered by Professor PhD. Daniel AYUCH, at the International Conference: *Theology, Iconography, Confession: Resistance of the Church by Culture and Spirituality*, Târgoviște, 2017. In that atmosphere, the study of Fr. PhD. Marin BUGIULESCU called: “*Holy Icon – the Reality of Knowledge and Vision of God*” states the theological reflection about the icon. Holy Icon is an embodiment of the love of God, thus the central theological ground of the veneration of icons being a Christological one. Fr. PhD. Nicolae PREDA signs the paper, entitled: “*The Nominal Remembrance of Believers (Living and Dead) during the Evening Services*”, discusses the Byzantine rite of the remembrance of the living and the dead during the evening service that has “survived” only in the rule of the Lity, which was “included” in the Vespers structure but also in the Compline’s. The next paper belongs to Fr. PhD. Cosmin SANTI and brings new clues in understanding “*The passage into eternal life and the separation of the soul from the body in the Christian hymnographers’ thinking*”. This first section ends with the paper of PhD. Traian-Alexandru MIU and bears the title: “*Hesychasm–the return to the peace of the Spirit*”. The article highlights the theological doctrine about the Hesychasm, a spiritual form of recovering the peace of the Spirit, a spiritual way finding its attainment in the intimate communion with God.

The 2-nd section: **EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND RELIGION STUDIES** includes firstly Fr. PhD. Alexandru-Corneliu ARION paper: “*Relationship between Faith and Science in the Major World Religions*”, whose subject is an essential understanding of the main religions through the paradigm of their dialogue with science. The following issue, unfolded by PhD. David K. GOODIN is the “*Orthodox Theology and Empirical Science: Kant as a Bridge to the Apophatic Revelation of the Orthodox East*”. He demonstrates that the common ground for discursive exchange through exploring the apophysis aspects of Kantian transcendental theology can become a bridge to the Orthodox negative theology. Next article belongs to PhD. Ion Marian CROITORU, in which he exposes the theme: “*Father Arsenie Papacioc and the proper arrangement of spiritual life. Glimpses of his experiences in the communist prisons*”. The following paper bears the signature of PhD. Nicușor BELDIMAN, and is dedicated to a remarkable Romanian personality, the archimandrite Father Sofian Boghiu, wherein is presented the *Homiletic Profile of Father Sofian Boghiu (1912-2002)*. The section ends with PhD. candidate Iakovos MENELAOU’ paper: “*Alexios I Komnenos and his Church Policy*”. The author stresses out the great activity of Emperor Alexios I, considered an authentic protector of Orthodoxy, since he helped monasticism, fought heresies and supported the building or renovation of churches.

Therefore, the content of the current issue is a good invitation to reading theological, philosophical and moral-educational researches, and to stating the scientific aim of *Icoana Credinței*, the Journal published by Faculty of Orthodox Theology, of “Valahia” University, from Târgoviște, promoted at international level by “*Icon of Faith International Academic and Scientific Areal*” (IFIASA).

January 2018

Editor Ph.D. Marin BUGIULESCU

**\* THEOLOGY STUDIES****THE MISSIONARY NATURE OF THE CHURCH IN THE  
BOOK OF ACTS.  
AN EXEGETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL STUDY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The Acts of the Apostles speaks often about the social work of the Church through recurring concepts such as koinonia, mercy, hospitality and philanthropy. This paper deals with the ways that the Book of Acts promotes harmony in conditions of diversity (such as religious, cultural, or political pluralism). Several texts will be compared and interpreted to draw a clear picture of the Church's call to serve the world and to witness Christian Faith in words and deeds. The world can be healed with the power of the Divine Word. This does not happen only by preaching and teaching, but also by acting and caring for the needed and the poor. The theological narrative of Acts shows how the Christian faith - the Way, as Luke likes to call it - grants a new understanding of reality and calls people to break the rules of worldly wisdom and to behave according to the wisdom of the Kingdom, where the principles of social relation are redefined through the lens of the Resurrection.*

**Keywords:** Acts of the Apostles; social work; Church; mission, koinonia; Resurrection; community service; Diakonia; hospitality;

**INTRODUCTION**

With the Resurrection of Christ, something new happened in human history and in all creation. The possibility of restoring corrupted nature and giving back life to a rotten body has inspired very soon early Christian communities to do the same in their context, i.e., to give life again to a society overcome by the power of death and sickness.

Preaching the kerygma of Resurrection implies a change in society. Therefore, mission means acting and doing good deeds, as well. Missionaries are not only expected to teach, which is of course the basis and foundation of all their activities, but they are also expected to help people organize their new life and to express their faith in everyday work.

The second book of the Lucan diptych has the particularity of narrating the formation of the Church in a well-structured account that takes place in the East Mediterranean region. Saint Luke the Evangelist opted for writing two volumes, the first one deals with the revelation itself and with the foundation of faith, while the second deals with the apostles' and the people's witness to this faith. In this way, Luke wrote an etiology of the Christian faith.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, Luke follows the Old Testament pattern of Torah-Historical Books, where God also reveals his will and then the people witness to it among

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<sup>1</sup> LÖNING, *Geschichtswerk*. I, 48.

the nations. The main difference is shown in the eschatological aspect of the Lucan account. For him, these books contain the definite answer to God's promises in the Old Testament and to the people's expectations in the first century AD.

This paper deals with the ways that the Book of Acts promotes harmony in conditions of diversity (such as religious, cultural, or political pluralism). Several texts will be compared and interpreted to draw a clear picture of the Church's call to serve the world and to witness to the Christian Faith in words and deeds. There are three topics that show the concept of mission and social engagement in the Book of Acts and that are presented in this article: (a) Community Service, (b) Impartiality and (c) Hospitality.

The Book of Acts teaches that the world can be healed with the power of the Divine Word. This does not happen only by preaching and teaching, but also by acting and caring for the needy and the poor. The theological narrative of Acts draws within its lines new principles of social relation, which are redefined through the lens of the Resurrection.

## 1. COMMUNITY SERVICE

The Greek term *Diakonia* (διακονία) occurs very frequently in the New Testament (32 times). The Pauline letters use it the most, namely 24 times. After Paul follows Luke, who uses it 8 times in Acts and one in the Gospel. *Diakonia* does not only mean service or ministry, but particularly the charitable service, with the idea of giving aid and support to the needy ones, this is why the title of this paragraph is Community Service. Sometimes it can also connote the service of God as an office or ministry, which is always related to the community. Preaching the Word is a service as much as attending the tables of the poor is. The Apostle Peter will name his service "the ministry of the Word" (τῆ διακονία τοῦ λόγου, Ac 6:4), while the chosen seven will be dedicated to "daily ministration" (τῆ διακονία τῆ καθημερινῆ, Ac 6:1). There is no dichotomy between both services. The seven men are not chosen because of their capacity to attend tables but because of their reputation, their inspiration by the Holy Spirit and their wisdom (Ac 6:3).

The concept of *Diakonia* is not only present where the term appears. For Saint Luke, the first Christians practiced charitable relief on such a large scale that there was no one in need among them (see, for instance, Ac 4:34). The Apostles themselves took care of the sick ones and even raised the dead in the name of social service or *Diakonia*. In the coming two paragraphs, we shall see what is meant with *Diakonia* in the sense of relief for the poor and the sick.

### 1.1. *Diakonia* for the poor

Because of Pentecost and the persuasive speech that Saint Peter gave in Jerusalem about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, thousands of people started to change their behavior. The first two summaries of Christian community life in Acts (2:41-47 and 4:32-35) give the impression that there were not only an important number of rich people, who were ready to sell their possessions, but also poor Christians were there to receive the donations.

The summaries show that first {Do you mean the adverb firstly or the adjective 'early'} Christians tried to level social differences among them and to live all together as brothers and sisters who care for each other. As a matter of fact, someone who had sold his properties and distributed the proceeds among the hungry has quickly enough become as poor as they. Christians live in full trust of God's providence. As the Lord Jesus said: "Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these" (Mt 6:28-29).

The verb “to distribute” (διαμερίζω) is quite an important term in this context. On the one hand, the tongues of fire “were distributed” among the community gathered in the house (2:3). On the other hand, the believers distributed their possessions and goods for the sake of helping their fellow-Christians (2:45). As a response to God’s generous distribution of eschatological gifts, the members of the Church care to provide the ones in need with earthly goods.<sup>2</sup> Christian detachment of valuable possessions is directly related to their new world vision, in which human beings have restored their value, for God’s intervention in history has given them a tangible hope for salvation.

In this context, the Greek term *Koinonia* (κοινωνία), which means “fellowship”, is also very important. The phrase “they had everything in common” (εἶχον ἅπαντα κοινὰ, Ac 2:44) finds no parallel in either the Old or the New Testament. The expression is based on Hellenistic cultural backgrounds and represents Greek ideals that make more comprehensible the early Church experiences after Pentecost. In classic Greek writings, this formula can be used with mainly three different purposes: (1) as a principle for an ideal state, (2) as a myth of a past golden age, (3) as a principle of friendship. However, the purpose in Acts is eschatologically oriented. As Dupont notes, Luke prefers to call the members of the community “believers” (οἱ πιστεύοντες, Ac 2:44), instead of using the typical Hellenistic terms “friends” or “brethren”.<sup>3</sup> Luke sees a deep relationship between social behavior and the work of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Therefore, he envisages the fellowship of goods as a result of the eschatologically fulfilled hope of Israel. This becomes even clearer when one notices the explicit use of Old Testament terminology and theology.

Klauck summarizes the Old Testament influence in three essential motifs:<sup>4</sup> (1) the expression “one heart and one soul” instead of the Hellenistic version “one soul”; (2) the LXX formula *epi tò autó* (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ), which occurs very often in the LXX for the Hebrew phrase *yahdaw* (יָחַד) meaning together; (3) and above all the theological allusion to Dt 15:4 in the expression “for there was not a needy person among them” of Ac 4:34.

### 1.2. *Diakonia* for the sick

Already in the second summary there is an allusion to the Apostles’ gift for healing the sick (Ac 4:33) and the third one is clearly more concentrated on this topic (Ac 5:12.15-16). As a matter of fact, the ministry of the Word and the ministry to the poor is finally completed by the ministry to the sick. This activity is considered as charitable relief, as well, and belongs to the “good deeds” (καλὰ ἔργα, Matt. 5:16; Jn 10:32; 1Tim 5:25; Mk 14:6) of Jewish and now Christian pietism, which is so frequently quoted in the New Testament.

Particularly interesting for this title are two sets of parallel narratives that show the healing power of the Church at the hand of Saint Peter and Paul. The first set consists of two healing miracles: the lame man of the Temple (Ac 3:1-10) and the cripple man of Lystra (Ac 14:8-18). No doubt that these two scenes represent the inclusion of marginalized people in the community of the Church. However, they also teach the caring love of the Apostles that do not only teach and preach but also see the immediate need of these two men and intervene for releasing them of their pains. Luke cares to underline the importance of faith in both scenes. Saint Paul heals the sick man when he perceived that he had faith to be “saved”. So does Peter at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, when he fixed his gaze upon the beggar and he saw, as Paul did, the faith in his heart (Ac 3:4).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. AYUCH, *Handeln*. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. DUPONT, *Études*, 519.

<sup>4</sup> Vgl. KLAUCK, „Gütergemeinschaft“, 74 § 3.

Besides, Acts tells two narratives about the raising of dead: The first is the young woman Tabitha of Joppa, who was healed by Saint Peter and the second is the young man Eutychus of Troas, healed by Saint Paul (Ac 9:36-43 and 20:7-12). Tabitha was restored back to life to continue with her good work that helped widows and needed people, while Eutychus came back to life to learn to listen carefully to the Word of God. Two examples of pastoral care performed by the Princes of the Apostles showing the force of the missionary church. These scenes are only examples within the Book of Acts which is plenty of wonders performed by the Apostles in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the Hellenistic World while they traveled around preaching the kerygma of the Resurrection. We can mention a few: The Apostles heal many in Jerusalem (5:15-16); Philip heals many in Samaria (8:5-8); Peter heals Aeneas at Lydda (9:32-35) and Paul heals a slave girl at Philippi (16:16-18).

## 2. IMPARTIALITY

After Pentecost, the Church takes a universal character and is open to every human being in the world. Saint Paul says in Galatians: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (3:28). As a matter of fact, Jesus behaved and taught without any favoritism. He addressed the weaker and the lower social strata. He took care of marginalized sick people as well as of foreigners and Gentiles. Saint Paul uses in his letters for this teaching the term *Partiality/Favoritism* (προσωποληψία, see Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25; also in Jam 2:1). Acts of the Apostles narrates in several opportunities some exemplary stories with the purpose of teaching the principle of impartiality and tolerance for the coming generations. For Saint Luke, Christians are a new category of people, who behave following the Lord’s words and deeds. For them, no worldly ethos has authority, since as of now the ethos of the Kingdom rules. Therefore, no discrimination between human beings can be accepted.

### 2.1. No Preference for Cultural Origins

The first episode one can mention from Acts is, undoubtedly, the incident with the widows and the election of the Seven (Act 6:1-7). This text witnesses how Christians from Hellenistic origins complained that local Aramaic speaking Christians neglected their widows in daily services. There was a practice of favoritism that broke the communion of goods established after Pentecost. In the account, Luke does not describe in detail the conflict causes because he focuses on showing the community’s ability to find a solution. With the election of the Seven for serving the tables without favoritism the unity of the community is restored: “*The whole assembly approved this proposal*” (6:5).

Solutions in the Early Church are not based on discrimination but on tolerance and impartiality. Thus, this account is above all an *edifying story* laying emphasis on the need of the community to avoid any kind of unfair treatment of its members.<sup>5</sup> The Christian community is expected to be open to everyone without distinction.

Once the conflict is overcome and solidarity is restored, the word of God keeps on growing and the number of disciples multiplies: “And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith” (6:7). The message is of vast importance: The unity of the Church is an essential part of Christian mission.

According to Luke the Church is not only expected to coordinate and deliver the services of preaching, and helping the poor, but all this must happen in harmony and without favoritisms among their members.

<sup>5</sup> TARAZI, *Old Testament 1*, 22-25.



## 2.2. No Preference for Religious Origins

The author *ad Theophilum* dedicates several pericopes to the question whether the Church should show a certain preference to those who come from Judaism to the detriment of those coming from gentility. One of the most prominent readings that deal with this question is the narrative of the so-called Apostolic Council in Acts 15:1-29. The communitarian aspect of this episode is clear and has several indicators. It is “the Church”, who sends Paul and his companion to Jerusalem; it is again “the Church” (v. 4) of Jerusalem, who receives the Antiochian delegation. It is “the multitude” who listens to Peter, Paul and James (v. 12) and the Apostles start their speeches and the letter with the word “Brethren” (vv. 7.13.23). Moreover, “Brethren” is used very frequently in this chapter to refer to the members of the community (9 times: vv. 1.3.7.13.22.23\*2.32.33). As a result of the council, there is a meeting in Antioch and they rejoice with the letter message (v. 33), which clearly refuses to charge the Church with a “great burden” (v. 28), a term that in the context of the scene implies nothing more than to impose circumcision and the observation of the Law as practiced by the Jews.

In other words, the decision of the Jerusalem assembly affirms that Gentile Christians are supposed to abandon their former practices of idolatry, as much as Jewish Christians are expected to leave their former practices of Judaism. Christianity is neither a new Gentile religion, nor a Jewish sect. Christianity has been founded by the teachings of Jesus Christ and the seal of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2). Christians are taught to leave behind their former religious practices and to follow a new life of “divine service” (λατρεία) according to the teachings of the Lord and His Apostles.

Luke develops in one chapter of meetings and discourses, what had been the key question among the Christian communities living on the east coast of the Mediterranean basin. Paul dedicates chapters of his letters to this issue, particularly in Galatians and Romans and he reaches similar results.<sup>6</sup> The Lucan text (see vv. 2.7a) shows affinity with other narratives in the Gospels and with some allusions Paul makes to the dissensions and debates caused by some Christians influenced by certain Jewish teachings. Let us mention for instance Jn 9 or Mt 23; Gal 3 or 1Tim 1:6-11. The Synoptic Gospels focus frequently on the issue of salvation for the Jews and the Nations, for all mankind. Let us think, for instance, about the miracle stories in Mt 8-9 and all their parallels in Luke and Mark. Healing and preaching go to every human being, no matter what religious background he or she comes from. In Acts 15 Luke chooses the narrative framework of an apostolic assembly to affirm that there is a consensus among Christians regarding this issue.

Having said so, the letter issued by the Jerusalem assembly is to be seen not as a list of prohibitions but as a list of recommendations. Letters with moral recommendations were not unusual in early Judaism.<sup>7</sup> The four recommendations given by the Apostles are the general rules of Jewish behavior among the nations; James knows them and has already mentioned them in his discourse (Ac 15:20). In a way, they seem to be a slight concession to the Jewish parties who were advocates of circumcision. However, what this letter really teaches is that from now on the Christian communities follow neither the ethos of the Jews (‘no’ to circumcision), nor the one of the nations (‘no’ to idolatry); they are bound to live according to Jesus’ teachings.

Once in Antioch, the Apostles convene the community and deliver the letter that produces joy among those gathered (v. 31). The act of “rejoicing” (χαίρω) is the Lucan sign

<sup>6</sup> See AYUCH, “Roots”, 147-165.

<sup>7</sup> LANGNER, *Evangelio*. 354.

for the inception of eschatological time, the human answer when they witness to the fulfillment of God's plan. Barnabas and Paul have already caused great joy in the communities of Phoenicia and Samaria, when they proclaimed the conversion of the Gentiles on their way to Jerusalem (v. 3). Another keyword in this paragraph is "peace" (εἰρήνη, v. 33). In the Lucan diptych, peace and joy are two indicators of the eschatological times. They remind the readers of the birth of Jesus (Lk 2:10-14) and of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:37-38). Readers understand that God begins to fulfill his plan with the Gentiles, which is their integration into the community of salvation.

Both texts, Ac 6:1-7 and 15:1-29, show that the expanding and mission oriented Church does not know either discrimination of *ethnia*, nor of religions. God's call to be part of His people is open to every single human being. Let us think of the two cultural parties that constitute the primeval community in Jerusalem or the permanent acceptance of both Jews and Nations (other than Jews) in Acts 15. Both paragraphs show that the Church cannot endorse a secular or religious culture to be used as the exclusive basis of her kerygma, since the Church embraces and changes any human background with the power of Divine revelation.

### 3. HOSPITALITY

A community that strengthens the weak and feeds the hungry, a community that keeps its door open to every human being, no matter their language, religion or nation, such a community cannot but show a great sense of welcoming hospitality to everyone.

The New Testament registers two relevant words related to this topic: the noun "hospitality" (φιλοξενία, Rm 12:13; Hb 13:2) and the verb "to show hospitality or to lodge" (ξενοδοξέω, 1Tim 5:10). In these three texts the authors foster the practice of offering shelter and food to the strangers. In Romans, Saint Paul argues that Abraham and Sarah have entertained angels without knowing it because they were hospitable.

The Book of Acts does not have matches for these two terms. However, there are plenty of pericopes that encourage hospitality as it was practiced in the early Church. Without hospitality St Paul would have never been able to move between towns, regions and even continents.

Luke tells that this process of changing places and meeting new people and cultures has not always been an easy task for the first missions of the Apostles. Saint Peter, for instance, needed a vision and the initiative of Cornelius' emissaries to be able to move from the house of Simon the Tanner, who was a Jew, to the house of Cornelius, a Roman military leader (see Ac 9:43 – 10:48). When the brethren in Jerusalem knew that Peter entered a Gentile house and that his Kerygma was accepted in the house, they took issue with him. They were afraid of losing their identity and being consumed by the splendor of heathendom. They had forgotten that it is not with their own will and words that they preach the Word of God but with the Holy Spirit's. Worldly speaking, the Church is small and weak and seems to be like a lamb among wolves. However, their members know that they are strong in their faith and have confidence to the Lord and his Holy Spirit.

Hospitality can be seen in many paragraphs of Acts. In the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, there were many Christians gathered together praying when Peter came to them to find a shelter after being liberated from prison with the help of an angel (12:11-14). Lydia the seller of purple fabrics was the one who opened the doors of Philippi to Paul by accepting not only his preaching but also by urging him to stay at her place: "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay," said Lydia to

Paul and Silas in Acts 16:15. Let us think also of Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth (Ac 18:2.18). Jason of Thessalonica was even risking his own life when he received the Apostle in his house (Ac 17:5-7).

Hospitality happens because of this friendly disposition toward people that Christians have, because of philanthropy, a term present only once in Acts 28:2 to praise, not the members of the Church, but the natives of Malta, who cared for Paul and his companions after they shipwrecked. It is worth mentioning here that Christians practice an even higher virtue, the greatest of all, as Paul says in 1Cor 13, namely neighborly love. Neighborly love is one of the highest virtues in Christianity. However, this study is dedicated to study and analyze specific and particular practices that emanate from those who cultivate Christian virtues.

For a missionary church there is no land, no city, and no country that cannot be invited to be part of the people of God. Missionaries are called to move everywhere and to give witness in every place and under any condition. No land is the land of the elected ones and no land is the land of barbarians and sinners, as the Psalter says: *“The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains. The world, and those who dwell in it”* (24:1).

## CONCLUSIONS

Acts witnesses how hard the Apostles worked to deliver effectively the teachings of the Lord. They preached, they healed and they engaged for the sake of the neighbor. They supported persecution, prison, pain and even death to help the others. From the Book of Acts the reader understands that missionary activity is not a privilege but a ministry, a service in the sense of the Greek word *Diakonia*. One understands that the Church in this world has the task to serve humankind without any distinction.

The evangelization plan given by the Risen Lord in Acts 1:8 is perfectly fulfilled in the final verses of the book (28:30-31): The Apostles have witnessed the Resurrection in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and, with Saint Paul in Rome, in the “remotest part of the earth.” On the one hand, we reach the end of an era in which Paul, the last of the witnesses directly sent by the Risen Lord, concludes his mission's odyssey from Jerusalem, the city of the first assembly of the true Israel, to Rome, the center of the vast and fertile world of the Gentiles. On the other hand, modern readers feel disappointed by the Lucan ending, because they expect a conclusion to the biography of Paul. However, the readers should consider that neither in the case of Peter, nor in the case of any other Apostle, does Luke offer a conclusion to their lives. It is the path of the exalted Christ, the definitive carrier of salvation for all nations, that has been traced in Acts. His witnesses come in and go out of the book pages according to the demands of proclamation.

The end of Acts (verses 30-31) presents the Christian message with its untamed power to expand all over the world. When the reader closes this book, the personal fate of Paul is overshadowed by this open end of the triumph of the Gospel above any powerful opposition. If one reads the Acts of the Apostles as being the acts on the proclamation of the Gospel, one understands the leading role of the Gospel in the Lucan narrative and comprehends the end of the book as a triumphant one.

Proclaiming the Gospel conveys to people a new understanding of reality that breaks the rules of worldly wisdom and leads to the wisdom of the Kingdom, where the principles of social relation are redefined with the eyes of faith. When the new believers experience the visit of the Lord in their lives and in their hearts, they feel the liberation power of the Gospel and are motivated to build a new life based on the civilization of love.

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## HOLY ICON – THE REALITY OF KNOWLEDGE AND VISION OF GOD

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### ABSTRACT

*According to the Orthodox Theology, holy Icon is a reality of knowledge and vision of God. The icon is an embodiment of the love of God, thus the central theological ground of the veneration of icons is a Christological one. For the theology of the icon, the concept of the face as a reflection of the prototype is central. The specificity of the Orthodoxy shows us that Theology is the science of the complete knowledge with a direct existential implication of the only truth about life-Maker, iconically expressed by God – Holy Trinity. The theological background of knowledge is essentially of ecclesial nature, as a gracious ambience in which the Divine Revelation represents the power of Truth. That is why Church is the guarantee and the authenticity of the free and infallible knowledge of the divine truth which it internally possesses.*

**Keywords:** Orthodox Theology; icon; Church; vision and knowledge of God;

### INTRODUCTION

Knowledge of God, according to Orthodox thought, is possible, first of all, because of the Incarnation of Christ, but also the character of a personal being specific to both God and man. God's knowledge relates to divine iconology, to His "exits" outside His Being. Therefore, in terms of Christian theology, knowledge is harsh and not real, for man cannot know the Divine, Absolute and Eternal Being, but only its manifestation in time and space through the three Persons of the Holy Trinity and through all acts of divine revelation.

God's knowledge is a natural reality in the process of acquiring holiness or deification of man, and it represents his mission in the world, but also the sublime and mysterious aspect of Orthodox spirituality synthesized by Eastern patristic theology through living in grace and participation in the love of the Holy Trinity.

Man, from the first moment of creation by God, is called to acquire the state of resemblance to his Archetype. Deification is the holy, sanctifying condition that personalizes ontologically and indelible light and divine glory in the reality of eternal existence. If the beginning of this process of communion, love, and grace, between man and Creator is covered with reason in cognition expressed as a way of life, in the ontological sense, *theosis* is the state of apogee or the last stage of perfection by which man, ceaselessly, participate in the eternal love of the Holy Trinity.

In the theology of the Orthodox Church, the ontological and phenomenological aspects of the deification of man, as a living with Christ and as a life in the Holy Spirit, as high ascetic and mystical states are correlated with the view of the light of the world. In this sense both the state of *gnosis* and *theosis* are simultaneous realities of the presence of God, but as Paul Evdokimov points out:

“There are two aspects that structure the mystical union: the real presence of God in the deified soul and transcendence absolute of the same God Who remains eternally inaccessible and infinitely remote”<sup>1</sup>.

However, deification is a state of dynamic communion and is not conceived as a static identity in a substantial ontological conception. The ontological basis of deification is the Person and the Work of Christ, the Son of God Incarnate, in which the participation of all nature, and not the identity of the essence, including dynamic, reciprocal and personalistic elements in the relationship between the Creator and creation, is accomplished. The ontological restoration of the human flesh assumed by Christ as a body is personally acquired by incorporation into the Church, and therefore, in a broad sense, the process of deification begins with the Holy Sacrament of Baptism, but in a stark sense this is a purifying and transfigurative harvest event that opens the way to the knowledge of God and to the sight of the uncreated light, the glory of God, through the sharing of eternal love, pregnant in this world through union with Christ.

The process of God's knowledge is both cataphatic and apophatic, which implies paradoxes and antinomies: "*It is known by knowledge and ignorance*" (και διά γνώσεως γινώσκειται και δι' αγνωζίας)<sup>2</sup>. Because of these difficult points in history, there have been many Gnostic doctrines, both Christian and non-Christian, claiming to have the true knowledge that leads to knowledge.

Etymologically the word *gnosis* (Gr. *gnosis*) means knowledge. In the sense of presenting modernist sciences, Gnosticism is the result of syncretism, between Hellenistic and Oriental thinking. In the spirit of patristic thinking centered on divine revelation, the knowledge of God is existentialist personality, which involves meeting, personal communion and personality with peers and God. Unlike Gnosticism, where knowledge itself is the goal of Gnostics, in Christian theology knowledge is a means, a set of contents that go beyond the given sphere of knowledge. This ultimate goal is union with God or deification, the state of Orthodox iconography.

The icon, defined magisterially as "*opened window in heaven*", is a representation of the transcendental reality, spiritual in immanence, in the material world, felt as the presence of holiness and of the Holy Deity in the sacramental, ecclesial hierarchy. This holy presence works by God the Holy Trinity, which really gives man the possibility of communion, salvation, and sanctification.

## **1. HOLY ICON, THE EMBODIMENT OF THE LOVE OF GOD – THE CHRISTOLOGICAL BASIS**

The icon is an embodiment of the love of God, therefore the central theological ground of the veneration of icons is the Christological one. For the theology of the icon, the concept of the face as a reflection of the prototype is central. Light and grace within the ecclesial is based on the Person and the Work of Christ the Son of God Incarnate in an inseparable relationship with the Holy Spirit and active through the members of the harvest Body that He sanctifies and become saints. The Holy Icons depict the state of holiness through which are the harsh presence and spiritual realities of God's knowledge and vision. Thus "the icon in its being, and especially when it is a" feast icon:

<sup>1</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *Ortodoxia*, trad. de Rom. Irineu Popa, București, 1996, p. 123, 172

<sup>2</sup> Sfântul Dionisie Areopagitul, *Despre numele dumnezeiești*, 7, 3, PG 3, 872 a.



transcendental, scholastic and abstract intellectualism of Western thought is not an argumentative force because the basis is the living revelation expressed by the experience mystical and mystical within the liturgical-community framework of the ecclesial space. Thus Father Stăniloae puts into dialogue the patristic thinking, argued with texts of particular accuracy with the ecclesial life, in the center of which lies the deified human, fully represented by Christ, the God-Man.

„If the very existence of the icon relies on the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation is, in turn, supported and proved by the image. In other words, the icon is a guarantor of the illusory reality of the Divine Incarnation. That is why, in the eyes of the Church, the denial of the icon of Christ equates to the denial of His Incarnation”<sup>9</sup>.

The same idea is supported by Michel Quenot as follows: "*ignoring the icon means to incarnate the Incarnation, which it confesses and in which it finds its beginning*"<sup>10</sup>. Starting from Christ and passing through the ecclesial and mystical space, Father Staniloae defines man and the world with finesse and delicacy, outlining the theology of the icon in a concentric spiral of iconic knowledge. In this sense, he says:

"The Byzantine icon is solidarity with the beginning patristic exegesis of Holy Scripture. The icon makes it plain in the image and simultaneously what exegese and patristic preaching sink to say in words and in succession"<sup>11</sup>.

So, the theological concept promoted by Father Dumitru Stăniloae is an eminently personalist icon, but revealed through Christ, the Son of God, who through the Incarnation has a person composed of divine nature and human nature. From this perspective, man is the one who has to conform to the rationality of his own nature and the world, to maintain his own will and freedom in the good will of the Creator (God) who draws and keeps him in love and communion, all of which are actually implications of the divine image in human nature in a sacramental manner. At the basis of spiritual life lies the Christological reality that the Church updates for its members Christians who live in the perspective of acquiring holiness displayed on the imagery by icons.

## 2. GOD'S KNOWLEDGE AND VISION WITHIN THE ECCLESIAL SACRAMENTAL HARVEST

Talking about God, rationalizing Divine Existence, thinking that there is a Supreme Being is in fact a call to what the Creator has put into human being, the mental and mental aspect through which man reaches the act of knowledge, understanding, and science. This complex and antinomic process is a revelation and certainty that, at least from a logical point of view, is possible. Man ascends with the mind to perceive the mysteries of God and creation, and this presupposes, on the one hand, the understanding of one's own existence and the existence of God on the other. From the theological thinking perspective, this act is not based on the intellectual processes specific to man scientifically advanced with the passage of time, because God is not an idea, a man-made conception, but is grounded in God's revelation, the Divine Revelation. God exists and is revealed to men, of course progressively in the Old Testament and fully through Jesus Christ. Man's reception of this revelation not only involves intellectual mechanisms, neither scientific schemes nor

<sup>9</sup>Leonid Uspensky, *Teologia icoanei*, traducere de Teodor Baconsky, Ed. Anastasia, București, 1994, p. 80

<sup>10</sup>Michel Quenot, *Icoana, fereastră spre absolut*, Editura Enciclopedică, 1993, p. 15

<sup>11</sup>Pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Introducere, la Wilhelm Nyssen, Începuturile picturii bizantine*, traducere de Pr. D. Stăniloae, Edit. IBM al BOR, București, p. 8.



philosophical views, but a relationship, a bond of love and communion of man with God, specific to the personal beings, occasioned generally by the sacred and sacred space of the Church. Divine revelation is comprehended and transmitted by Sacred Scripture and Holy Tradition, but in close connection with the Church and Christ, which has authority over its formation, fixation, defense and explanation under the direct presence, assistance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, of God.

Supernatural revelation is the source of faith, but also the record of God's works. It imposes the direct or indirect presence of God through dialogue and communion towards the full union with Him that is reached by faith (Hebrews 11: 3). Divine supernatural revelation is contained in Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition, its ways of transmitting to us. Sacred Scripture and Holy Tradition are two ways or modes of storing, preserving, and transmitting Revelation. Holy Tradition is the permanence of the Church's dialogue with Christ.

Between Sacred Scripture and Holy Tradition there is no difference in the revealed substance or content, but only in the form and manner in which it was transmitted. Starting from the divine revelation data transmitted by Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition, the process of knowledge also involves conceptual coordination with logical, analogical and symbolic valences, using words, reasoning, images, symbols, analogies, according to the human way of thinking and understanding to express and define their realities and existence.

God's knowledge is a way of life that Jesus Christ the Son of God incarnate has made and which the Church makes possible to its members in the theandrical, sacramental environment. Man cannot know God without the dates of Divine Revelation, and especially without harvest and ecclesial life, through which he unites with Christ through the Holy Mysteries. The process of knowledge is continuous because what is to be known (God) is Absolute that is why the dogmatic theological knowledge is accomplished in eternity and involves a transformation of man, a sanctification of it, and a fulfillment of the divine image through the likeness of God.

The patristic teaching shows that by means of natural revelation in the analytical, deductive way through thinking man postulates the existence of the Creator-God. But more than that, the natural revelation presupposes the deciphering of the rationality of creation and the attainment of the One-Christ Reason, the Divine Logos. In the New Testament, the Savior is designated both as the "divine Logos" (John 1: 1) and as the icon of the unseen God (Colossians 1: 15). *"In Him, human reason has, as in his own Person, the knowledge of the infinity of divinity, and can communicate to men in an accessible way without end"*<sup>12</sup>. This makes possible the presence of Christ as the Creator Logos, through which the world is the work of God Who takes care of it. Through Christ, the world becomes transparent, transparent for the glory of God. *"His invisible things are seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the beings ..."* (Rom. 1: 20-23). Saint Maximus the Confessor understands through the unseen the reasons of things, drawn up before centuries, which Saint Dionysius the Areopagite called good sayings.

"It is the rationale of things, drawn up before the ages of God, as he himself knew the reasons that the holy men have the habit of calling themselves good things. These, being invisible, are seen through the understanding of the beings. For all the creatures of God, contemplated by us by nature, with the help of proper knowledge and knowledge, reveal to us in secret the reasons that have been made and reveal through them the purpose set by God in all flesh, in this meaning and " The heavens say the glory of God, and the power of His

<sup>12</sup> Pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*, vol. I., Edit. Cristal, București 1995, pp. 16-17.

hands proclaims her strength. " And eternal power and deification is Providence that keeps things together and the work of deification of those sustained by Providence"<sup>13</sup>.

In patristic theology, which Professor Dumitru Stăniloae has synthesized masterfully in his works, the importance of natural revelation is related to the knowledge of the creatures to raise to God's knowledge as a creative and supportive cause of all. This knowledge does not only remain at the level of understanding the creatures as opaque and separate things, without their foundation in the common and transparent fund of divine transcendence, but also involves a state of enlightenment. This knowledge of divine purposes in the world, called contemplation, is considered in Eastern spirituality, the second step following purification of passions, in the spiritual ascension of the long process of perfection.

Supernatural revelation deepens and illuminates natural revelation, so as to eliminate the danger of God's confusion with creation. On the basis of the character of personal Being, God reveals himself as a fused love kenotic in the saving action of the Incarnate Son, a reality explained by the theology of Redemption. Christian life in ecclesial space is both sacramental and ascetic, mystical. On the steps of spiritual ascension the man, beginning with the iconic sight of God, reaches the gracious knowledge of divine glory. Father Dumitru Stăniloae presents the apophatic theology, through the consciousness of the intellect's inability to express the divine being; this is the mystical theology of God's direct feeling and experience, which cannot be fully exposed in positive terms, that is why their denial is needed. For example, God is identified by Truth, Good, etc., but in reality He is more than these concepts. This thinking also applies to the theological definition and the theological expression of sacred icons that present divine glory.

"Palamas speaking of divine light has understood it as a manifestation of God's personal or tripersonal. If we make a distinction between this light and the divine essence, we only understand that God's personal or tripersonal does not exhaust in every manifestation of Himself as a work or as uncreated grace or as light, the entire infinite substance of essence that exists and is held in movement, or in endless works, by hypostasis, or by the Trinity of hypostases. But speaking of the work or the grace, or the divine light, Palamas always understands the Person or the Divine Persons as a Subject, or as the Subjects of the Work, or Grace, or Light."<sup>14</sup>

In this sense, Saint Irenaeus of Lugdunum states that:

"The sight of God is always a revelation made by the will of God. The face of God that no one can see without dying becomes in the eschatological times the source of life for people will see God to live, becoming immortal through vision and progressing now on the path to God. God appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai as a presence, as a friend. In fact, the One who appeared to Him was the Word, but Moses could not see Him and asked Him to see more clearly the one He spoke with"<sup>15</sup>.

St. Athanasius states that "Adam's sight if he had managed to preserving divine resemblance by contemplation of God, he would have destroyed any possibility of altering his wicked nature and would have become incomprehensible forever"<sup>16</sup>. Saint Basil the Great says:

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<sup>13</sup>Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, Filocalia 3, Traducere, introducere și notede Pr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, edit. Apologeticum, București 2005, p.69

<sup>14</sup>Prof. Pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Semnificația luminii dumnezeiești în spiritualitatea și cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe*, în rev. *Ortodoxia*, nr. 3-4. an 1976, p.435

<sup>15</sup>Vladimir Lossky, *Vederea lui Dumnezeu*, Editura Deisis, București 1995, p.34

<sup>16</sup>Turcescu Lucian, *Sfântul Grigore Palama teologia trinitară*, în „*Studii Teologice*”, nr. 4-6, 1995, p. 67

"Through Christ is the ascension of the emotions, the deification of the weak, and the fulfillment that is in progress. He is the one who, shining sharply in those who are cleansed of all uncleanness, and turning into spiritual persons through communion with Himself. We can contemplate God in the Holy Spirit. Like the sun when a clear eye shines, the Holy Spirit will show you the image of the Unseen. In the delightful contemplation of this image you will see the ineffable beauty of the Archetype. In the Holy Spirit we see the image of the Son and through him we see the Archetype, the Father. God's whole view will be Trinitarian, a view of the Holy Spirit, through the Son, directed toward the Father"<sup>17</sup>.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus (328-390) claims that:

"Seeing God is contemplation of the Trinity, fully participating in His light. Those who will unite with the whole Spirit will be the heirs of the Perfect Light and the contemplation of the Holy Trinity. This is the heavenly kingdom."<sup>18</sup>

On the rational path, man starts from effect to cause. It's knowledge of the world. The contemplation of the good and beautiful realities in the world leads to the acceptance of the existence of a Creator who, by analogy, receives some definitions similar to those of the created world. This is theologically expressed by the concept of cataphatic knowledge. By cataphatic knowledge, we are actually formulating the attributes of God; his loving exits in the face of man as an expression of uncreated divine energies. The attributes of God in Orthodox theology are identified by divine works or energies. Father Stăniloae states in this sense that:

"We do not know the attributes of God except in their dynamism, and to the extent that we share them. But this does not mean that God Himself remains passive in His simplicity and the varied motion is projected upon us by Him"<sup>19</sup>.

Rational knowledge is not purely natural, because it is based on the supernatural revelation, but does not make use of all its content. So, the one who walks through the rational, cataphatic knowledge of God is led to the apophatic one, but this is expressed by the terms of the cataphasis. For this reason, the Holy Fathers often go into the talk of God from one to the other (cataphatism/ apophatism). The fact that God is beyond any affirmation and negation does not make His connection impossible with us. And that's why our great theologian says, "*God is forever a mystery to man, but a mystery from which he irradiates more and more light, more love and life lived by man, more and more sense*"<sup>20</sup>.

In ascetic and mystical theology, the sight of God's glory or light is superior to rational, affirmative and negative theology. It is superior to apophatic theology through spiritual living. This involves an over conceptual knowledge. But it is not forced by thought, but all those created and their ideas are covered by the true vision of divine light, above all. Through the view above the spiritual fathers understand the deifying work, so as an active view of it. That is why I know that the Divine Subject or the Person who produces this working view is working in it. This advance is lived as the harsh state of the Holy Spirit. Apophatic is a direct relationship with the Person of the Holy Spirit in Christ, but also as the love of the heavenly Father.

Father Professor Dumitru Stăniloae shows that God has not created a world frozen in meaningless rationality, but a world destined to advance toward a goal: holiness. That is

<sup>17</sup>Vladimir Lossky, *Vederea lui Dumnezeu*, ed.cit, p. 68

<sup>18</sup>Vladimir Lossky, *Vederea lui Dumnezeu*, ed.cit, p. 70

<sup>19</sup>Pr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol I, Editura IBM al BOR, ediția a II-a, București, 1996, p. 105

<sup>20</sup>Pr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*, vol 1, ed. cit., p.180

why knowledge is not regarded as an end in itself, but as a means, a set of teachings, instruments and methods, which must lead to the mystical union with God, to deification, and this process is both cataphatic, especially in apophatic. The knowledge of God, rationally inferred by the contemplation of creation, is required to be complemented by a superior apophatic knowledge. Patristic thought shows that the most visible sight in the Spirit is only those who come to the real and living union with God - the Holy Trinity expressed in the theandrical framework of the Church.

In a recent study dedicated to the theology of the icon, Father Professor Stefan Buchiu, while expressing his cultic and mystagogic character, says:

"The cosmological and mystagogical value of the icon derives from the synthesis it creates between the created and uncreated plan. It is based on the theological principle of perichoresis, or the interpenetration of the natures in Christ. Godhead and humanity intertwine communicating their specific attributes to each other, as the cosmos seen with the unseen intersects through the icon, making them close and inward to each other. The reverse view of the icon renders those seen, weak to share the eternal ones of God, and shows that the meaning of the sharing is from the background of the icon to its destination, that is, this world. St. Maximus the Confessor that the world is an icon of God, indicating the meaning of communion between intelligible to sensitive, as we see in the *Mistagogia* that the navy as a constituent part of the Church shares the holiness of the altar. From this we see that the icon is completely unknown only from a mystagogical perspective. The saints are those looking outward, that is, their reality assimilates our perception of the flesh and places it in a view beyond the narrow limit of the physical eye. By detracting from the icon, the saints become partakers and present to the world we see as we live, being together fighters with those in the Fighting Church here. Hence the steady role of mediators between Christ and our people helping to achieve subjective salvation in each"<sup>21</sup>.

The Church, as the mysterious, sacramental body of Christ, through the Holy Spirit is holy and sanctified. The icon is a means of knowing God, understood as a theology of the revealed word, but expressed in pictures as a holy and sanctifying presence. That is why the icon is a preaching of the truths of Christian revelation within the ecclesial, and especially in the liturgical, doxological framework.

"The ecclesiastical value and sacramental ritual of the icon refers to man's effort to maintain and grow in Christ, that is, to the likeness of the icon more and more to its Archetype. The church is a space for the genesis of the icon of both the seen and, above all, the invisible icon. It is the environment in which the icon draws an outline and the absence of which cannot even obtain identity"<sup>22</sup>.

The holy icons in the Church also highlight the archetypal state of man, holiness and saints acquired through the ascetic and mystical life understood as a likeness to God. Theologically man is an iconic being.

In this sense, man as a living icon of God is "created in His image" (Genesis 1: 26-27; 5,1,3; 9,6). "*The face has the indestructible presence of grace inherent in human nature*"<sup>23</sup>. The iconic manifestation of man is perfectly represented in the Incarnate Person of the Holy Trinity, in the Son of God. The man created by the "image of God" through the Holy Mysteries, through union with Christ who has reached the likeness of God, is represented by the icons - the Saint. This is the perfect man, the man of the divine plan that is revealed with glory in the Church and who remains present to be the One and Medial

<sup>21</sup> Pr. prof. Ștefan Buchiu, *Valoarea teologică a icoanei*, p. 4, a se vedea [http://patriarhia.ro/images/pdf/Patrimoniul/Valoarea\\_teologica\\_a\\_icoanei.pdf](http://patriarhia.ro/images/pdf/Patrimoniul/Valoarea_teologica_a_icoanei.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Pr. prof. Ștefan Buchiu, *Valoarea teologică a icoanei*, p. 7

<sup>23</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *Femeia și mântuirea lumii*, București, Ed.Christiana, 1995, p.64

Model to God for all Christians. The icons also show that man - as a face of God, is a relational being that cannot live autonomously without God, because logically the image cannot be conceived without participation in his Model, the image being fulfilled by the inclusion in the progressive state of the resemblance to its Archetype, by the grace of the Holy Spirit. But "What is the image or image in the most general sense?" Sergei Bulgakov following St. Gregory of Nyssa says:

"The face is a correlative notion with that of its image, that is, its prototype or the original. Therefore, it is first necessary to understand the nature of the face from its relationship with the prototype. Between the chip and the prototype there is both a certain identity and an essential difference, the result of this concomitance is the similarity of"<sup>24</sup>.

Man is a community being fulfilling himself through relationship and collaboration with the divinity and his peers living in grace the fullness of existence<sup>25</sup>. The human consciousness with God through grace in the ecclesial space makes the functions of the image to be realized in the likeness of His Model. This reality expresses the holy icons that reflect the living presence of Christ the God-Man. Thus, the entire life of the Church converges to the divine-humanity of the Person of Christ and to His saving work, committed in the whole humanity assumed as a body<sup>26</sup>. So, the icon embraces mysteriously and paradoxically both the face and the prototype because its foundation is Christ incarnate, sacrificed, resurrected and elevated to heaven in divine glory. That is why the icon is a representation of the transcendent in the immanent, but also of the immanent in the transcendent.

## CONCLUSION

In Orthodox theology, the icon is the reality of God's knowledge and vision. Icon is the expression of the love of God expressed to the utmost through the work of Christ, the Logos, the Creator and the Savior.

The icon in Christian church life and worship has various roles. Firstly, the sacerdotal role because it is holy and sanctifying, thus becoming a reality of the grace of the Holy Spirit. Hence the gods' piety to the cult of the icons. By honoring the holy icons, by living in prayer and in daily life, the Orthodox Christian enters into a relationship with God, which he perceives as a living and working presence through His Saints. Hence, the icon is also an archetype, or rather a model, if we understand it by the reality of the Christological work. Also, the icons have an instructive-educational role, preaching through images the revealed truths of faith, and this didactic activity is fulfilled by the educational-moralizing purpose given by the fulfillment of virtues. Whether in a harp, moralizing, cultic or aesthetic role, the icons meet the need of man to understand the concrete, the material reality that encompasses the spiritual reality through the harsh energies. Thus the icons, through the holy persons represented, show the image of the deified man, therefore theology also speaks of an eschatological character that reveals the Parousia or the second coming of Christ.

In the Orthodox Church the icons, as harsh presence, are considered windows to heaven, and the realities of God's knowledge and vision. In ecclesial, ecclesial icons enhance spiritual perception and guide believers to the kingdom of God, pregnant with the life of communion and love specific to the Church.

<sup>24</sup>Serghei Bulgakov, *Icoana și cinstirea Sfințelor icoane*, București, Ed. Anastasia, 2000, p.90

<sup>25</sup>Vladimir Soloviov, *Fundamentele spirituale ale vieții*, Traducere de Diac. Ioan I. Ică, Editura Deisis, Alba Iulia, 1994, p.88

<sup>26</sup>Cristoph Schonborn, *Icoana lui Hristos*, ed.cit., 1996, p. 173

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## THE NOMINAL REMEMBRANCE OF BELIEVERS (LIVING AND DEAD) DURING THE EVENING SERVICES

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### ABSTRACT

*Unfortunately, about the nominal remembrance of believers, aloud, during the evening service (that is, at Vespers) was written very little in our country, and not in a decisive manner. That is why I want to emphasize that the analysis of this theme calls for a much larger type of research, which the present study does not consider; However, we will try to point out some aspects of this usance.*

*What can be said about this practice is that within the structures of Byzantine rite the remembrance of the living and the dead during the evening service has “survived” only in the rule of the Lity, which indeed, was “included” in the Vespers structure but also in the Compline’s.*

**Keywords:** Vespers; evening service; remembrance; believers; liturgical practice;

### 1. THE NOMINAL REMEMBRANCE OF BELIEVERS (ALIVE AND DEAD) DURING THE EVENING SERVICES – OVERVIEW

About the nominal remembrance of the faithful during the evening service (ie at Vespers) was written relatively little in our country, but not only<sup>1</sup>, and not in a decisive manner<sup>2</sup>. That is why we want to emphasize that the analysis of this theme calls for a much larger type of research, which the present study does not consider; It is therefore up to those interested to deepen, if they wish, all these characteristics.

However, we will try to analyze some aspects of the nominal remembrance of believers during the evening service (especially at Lity<sup>3</sup>), Recalling only a few things about

<sup>1</sup> Among the few studies that recall this usage, but not encountered in Byzantine rites, is the work of Fr. R. Taft, *O Istorie a Liturghiei Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur (A History of the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom), Volume IV. DIPTICELE*. Translated by Cezar Login, Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea Publishing, 2008; see also N. Preda, “Litia mică pentru cei morți” - rânduială de tip eminent palestinian (“Small Lity for deceased people” - practice of eminent Palestinian type), Bucharest: Granada Publishing House, 2016, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> In our opinion, the lack of general interest on this issue is due first of all to the few existing sources, but also to the fact that the subject seems unfortunately, in the opinion of the specialists, not too important.

<sup>3</sup> “LITY (λίτή, ἡ - liti, i = Prayer, procession) – it is a religious service (Orthodox), which is performed in monasteries in the evening service (Vespers and Vigil) and more rarely in the morning service (Matins)”, Fr. Prof. PhD. E. Braniște and Prof. Ecaterina Braniște, *Dicționar enciclopedic de cunoștințe religioase (Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Religious Terms)*, Caransebeș: Diocesan Publishing, 2001, p. 261.

the current practice and some uses, such as that mentioned by Saint Simeon of Thessalonica († 1429), that of Lavra of Saint Savas († 532) and that of Egeria<sup>4</sup>.

First of all, I would like to point out that what is undoubtedly about this practice is the fact that in Byzantine rites, the remembrance of the living and the dead<sup>5</sup> during the evening service “survived” only in the order of the Lity, which indeed, was “included” in the Vespers structure<sup>6</sup> but also in the Compline’s<sup>7</sup>.

## 2. THE NOMINAL REMEMBRANCE OF BELIEVERS (LIVING AND DEAD) DURING THE EVENING SERVICES – OUTSIDE BYZANTIUM

Note that the commemoration of the faithful (probably the living and the dead) during the evening service is also found in the liturgical structures outside Byzantium, such as, for example Egypt, as Fr. Robert Taft emphasizes, usage that he recalls in the context in which he speaks of the intercessions indicated in the liturgical anaphoral, which, in my opinion, is a decisive one:

“... we must bear in mind that the Egyptian liturgical forms are interspersed with prayers of intercession, often using a “standard” liturgical vocabulary including a set of expressions common to the liturgical Greek language of all traditions, not only within the long anaphoral precessions before *Sanctus*<sup>8</sup> and diptychs<sup>9</sup> correctly named so, but also in the Enarx and in the Liturgy of the Word<sup>10</sup> within the Eucharist, not to mention the Incense sacrifice of Morning and Evening”<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> See Edward G. Farrugia, *Dicționarul Enciclopedic al Răsăritului creștin (Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Christian East)*. Translated from Italian by Adrian Popescu, Vasile Rus, Ioan Muntean and Andrei Mărcuș, Târgu Lăpuș: Galaxia Gutenberg Publishing, 2005, pp. 264-265.

<sup>5</sup> It’s more about a “request” in which are also remembered those who are asleep in the general way, a section that appears in the litany of Lity, as we shall see.

<sup>6</sup> But if we observe the structure of the evening service explained by Egeria, we see that the procession (Lity) was actually part of the evening service (ie, the service of Vespers), and therefore, had no need to be “included” or “framed”; Unfortunately, about the evolution of these liturgical structures and how they “migrated”, as we’ve already mentioned, little was written, which is why it is quite difficult to express fair assumptions.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Fr. Prof. PhD. E. Braniște, *Liturgica Specială pentru institutele teologice (Special Liturgy for Theological Institutes)*, Bucharest: Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1985<sup>2</sup>, p. 76.

<sup>8</sup> “SANCTUS. - Chant de louanges et de triomphe, exécuté par le chœur après la préface de la Messe, et récité par le Célébrant et ses Ministres”, R. Lesage, *Dictionnaire pratique de Liturgie romaine*, Paris: Bonne Presse, 1952, p. 962.

<sup>9</sup> “DIPTYCHS (δίπτυξ – *diptix* și δίπτυχος – *diptihos* = Folded in two, in two parts) - two wooden covers linked with hinges that can close like a book. On the inner parts of these covers are painted icons or are written the names of the living and of the dead for whom the priest prays at the Divine Liturgy, After completing the great prayer of the Holy Sacrifice (the Anaphora). This prayer of general intercession, for the living and the dead, which the priest does after the Epiclesis (the Eucharistic Prayer) bears the name of diptychs (from the fact that the names of those they pray for are registered in these registers, in the form of closed covers)”, Fr. Prof. PhD. E. Braniște and Prof. Ecaterina Braniște, *Dicționar enciclopedic... (Encyclopedic Dictionary...)*, pp. 139-140.

<sup>10</sup> “La liturgie de la Parole constitue à présent le premier des grands pôles qui forment l’ossature de la messe, avec cet autre pôle, essentiel: la liturgie du sacrifice (à partir de l’offertoire)”, *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique de la Liturgie*, sous la direction de Domenico Sartore et Achille M. Triacca. Adaptation française sous la direction d’Henri Delhougne. Volume I. A-L, Turnhout: Brepols, 1992, p. 367; In the Byzantine cult, *The Liturgy of the Word* is equivalent to the first part of the Byzantine Liturgy called *The Liturgy of the Catechumens*.

<sup>11</sup> Robert F. Taft, *O Istorie a Liturghiei Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur. Volumul IV. DIPTICELE... (A History of the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. Volume IV. DIPTYCHS...)*, p. 65.



About this liturgical structure called “The Incense Sacrifice of Morning and Evening” (“l’offerta mattutina e serale dell’incenso”)<sup>12</sup>, father Robert Taft<sup>13</sup> and G. Winkler<sup>14</sup> say, on the basis of the structure of these ordinances, that they originate from the ancient liturgical forms of cathedral type (Or more accurately they are “reminiscences” of an old cathedral-type order)<sup>15</sup>; Unfortunately, father Robert Taft does not give any insight into the cathedral-type tradition to which these structures belong.

In the composition of this order of service (“The Incense Sacrifice of Morning and Evening”) we compare therefore topics such as “Grande intercessione”<sup>16</sup> and two other categories, which indicate “short intercessions” (“Incensazione dell’altare, con brevi intercessioni” and “Incensazione e brevi intercessioni”)<sup>17</sup>, at the beginning and at the end of the order, both closely related to the so-called incest ritual (that is, immediately after it)<sup>18</sup>.

### 3. THE NOMINAL REMEMBRANCE OF BELIEVERS (ALIVE AND DEAD) DURING THE EVENING SERVICES OF BYZANTINE RITE

#### A) Lavra of St. Savas

Returning to the Byzantine ritual structures, we would like to point out that in the old practice of the Lavra of Saint Savas it is recalled, the remembrance of both the living and the dead in Lity [see Sinai Codices 1096<sup>19</sup> (dated in the 14th century)]<sup>20</sup>; This usage<sup>21</sup>, seems to be at the origin of the current practice which has “suffered”, it is true, some significant changes in that the remembrance of the living is made only in Lity<sup>22</sup>, and of the dead only at *Lity for the dead*.

<sup>12</sup> Robert F. Taft, *La liturgia delle ore in oriente e occidente. Le origini dell’ufficio divino e il suo significato per oggi*, Roma: Edizioni Lipa, 2001, p. 312.

<sup>13</sup> “Questo ufficio contiene ciò che sembrano essere resti di uffici di cattedrale più antichi...”, *Ibid.*, p. 313.

<sup>14</sup> “Winkler ha identificato nell’offerta serale copta dell’incenso il residuo di un antico vespro di cattedrale”, *Ibid.*, p. 316; see also page 316, note 24.

<sup>15</sup> Note that the particularities of these structures are recorded by Fr. R. Taft In a subchapter entitled: “II. RESTI DI CATTEDRALE” (cf. *La liturgia delle ore in oriente e occidente...*, p. 313).

<sup>16</sup> Robert F. Taft, *La liturgia delle ore in oriente e occidente...*, p. 313, row 7; This intercession called also “great” follows the incest ritual.

<sup>17</sup> Robert F. Taft, *La liturgia delle ore in oriente e occidente...*, p. 313, row 6 and respectively 23.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Robert F. Taft, *La liturgia delle ore in oriente e occidente...*, p. 313.

<sup>19</sup> “1096. Τυπικόν. Cod. membr. 20X14; 3 centim. saec. XIV”, V. Gardthausen, *Catalogus codicum Graecorum Sinaiticorum*, Oxonii: E Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1886, p. 222; “Sinai 1096 (XII-XIII centuries)”, N. Uspensky, *Slujba de seară în Biserica Ortodoxă (Evening Service in the Orthodox Church)*. Translated by Cezar Login, Cluj-Napoca: Patmos Publishing, 2008, p. 92; “II. № 1096. Τυπικόν τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἀκολουθίας τῆς ἐν Ἱερουσαλύμοις εὐαγοῦς λαύρας τοῦ ὁσίου θεοφόρου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Σάββα. Ркп. той же библ. [Архимандритъ Антонинъ опредѣляетъ XII-XIII в.]”, А. Дмитриевский, *Описание литургическихъ рукописей, хранящихся въ библиотекахъ Православнаго Востока. Томъ III. Τυπικά*, Петроградъ: Типографія В. Θ. Киршбаума, 1917, p. 20.

<sup>20</sup> “Then the priest remembers and reads the names of the living and dead Christ lovers which are written in the diptychs”, N. Uspensky, *Slujba de seară... (The Evening Service...)*, p. 93.

<sup>21</sup> The old practice of mentioning during Lity “of the living and of the dead”, written in the *Typikon* from St. Sava Monastery, is, fortunately, also remembered by the so-called *Great Efschológion*, edited in Athens by N. Παπαδόπουλος, in 1927 (One of the “reference” studies in liturgical research), at Lity, right after the request: “Ἐτι δεόμεθα ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ἀρχιεπισκόπου (ἢ Ἐπισκόπου) ἡμῶν (τοῦ δεῖνος)...”, thus: “Μετὰ ταῦτα μνημονεῦει ὧν βούλεται, ζώντων καὶ τεθνεώτων”, cf. *Εὐχολόγιον τὸ Μέγα*, Ἀθήναι: Ἐκδ. Σαλιβέρου, 1927, p. 16.

<sup>22</sup> In the *Romanian Hieratikon*, the remembrance of “the living” appears at Lity, after the request: “*We still pray for the Lord God to hear the voice of our prayer, the sinners, and to have mercy on us*” (“Ἐτι δεόμεθα ὑπὲρ τοῦ εἰσακοῦσαι Κύριον τὸν Θεὸν φωνῆς τῆς δεήσεως ἡμῶν τῶν ἀμαρτωλῶν, καὶ ἐλεῆσαι ἡμᾶς), thus: “*Then he reads, in low voice, the names of the living*”, cf. *Liturgier (Hieratikon)*, Bucharest: Publishing House of the Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 2000, p. 51; the form of the last

### B) *Service books (the Hieratikon)*

Reminiscences of the old liturgical practice of the Church (ie, the Savas' type), concerning the “*remembrance of the living and of the dead*” at Lity, are found, “to a certain moment”, in the earlier editions of the Romanian *Hieratikon*, thus:

- a) “*Then low he remembers who he wants, alive or dead*”<sup>23,24</sup>.
- b) “*Then low he remembers who he wants, alive and dead*”<sup>25,26</sup>;
- c) “*(The priest remembers those who have brought the Lity and who he wants)*”<sup>27,28</sup>.

Note that starting with the 1937 edition of the *Hieratikon*, the Lity already appears as a “separate subchapter” (pp. 39-48), not as in the previous editions (for example 1921, 1927), included in the Vespers, and will remain so until the last edition of the *Hieratikon* (2012).

Moreover, it can be seen in the books of worship (*Hieratikon*) the “unusual” modification of the Lity structure (we refer first and foremost to the evolution of nominal remembrances of living and dead believers as structural elements), “operated” Probably for less known reasons and without taking into account, of course, the “healthy development” and the primary significance of this order.

### C) *Saint Simeon of Thessalonica*

It is also very important to mention Saint Simeon of Thessalonica, recalling in the context in which he describes the Lity, the remembrance of “all believers”, not to mention whether they are dead or not: “εὐθὺς τὰ τῆς λιτῆς ὀπισθεν τοῦ ἄμβωνος γίνεται, εἰς ἰλέωσιν Θεοῦ ὑπὲρ πάντων πιστῶν”<sup>29</sup>.

edition of the *Romanian Hieratikon* is: “[If he wants to mention the living, he will add the request: *We still pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, research, forgiveness and forgiveness of the sins of God's servants (N) and to forgive them for all their voluntary and involuntary sins.* And the choir answers: *Kyrie eleison* (three times)]”, cf. *Liturghier (Hieratikon)*, Bucharest: Publishing House of the Biblical Institute and Orthodox Mission, 2012, p. 60; to note that today’s remembrance of “the living” at Lity Tends to become of “relative” use, but which “seeks” to still preserve, “the old structure” (See the form of the earlier editions of the *Hieratikon*, for example the one in 1937).

<sup>23</sup> *Dumnezeștile Liturghii ale Sfinților noștri Părinți: Ioan Gură de Aur, Vasile cel Mare și Grigorie Dialogul (Divine Liturgies of Our Holy Fathers: John Chrysostom, the Basil the Great and Gregory the Dialogue)*, Bucharest: The Printing House of the Church Books, 1921<sup>5</sup>, p. 33.

<sup>24</sup> The remembrance of “the living and the dead” appears at Lity, after the request: “*We still pray that the Lord God will hear the voice of our prayer, the sinners, and will have mercy on us*”, cf. *Dumnezeștile Liturghii... (Divine Liturgies...)* (Bucharest, 1921), p. 33.

<sup>25</sup> *Dumnezeștile Liturghii ale Sfinților noștri Părinți: Ioan Gură de Aur, Vasile cel Mare și Grigorie Dialogul (Divine Liturgies of Our Holy Fathers: John Chrysostom, the Basil the Great and Gregory the Dialogue)*, Church Typography of the Holy Cernica Monastery, 1927<sup>5</sup>, p. 37.

<sup>26</sup> The remembrance of “the living and the dead” appears at Lity, after the request: “*We still pray that the Lord God will hear the voice of our prayer, the sinners, and will have mercy on us*”, cf. *Dumnezeștile Liturghii... (Divine Liturgies...)* (The Holy Monastery of Cernica, 1927), pp. 36-37.

<sup>27</sup> *Sfintele și dumnezeștile Liturghii ale sfinților noștri Părinți: Ioan Gurădeaur Vasile cel Mare și Grigorie Dialogul (Divine Liturgies of Our Holy Fathers: John Chrysostom, the Basil the Great and Gregory the Dialogue)*, Bucharest: The Printing House of the Church Books, 1937, p. 41.

<sup>28</sup> The remembrance “of those who brought the Lity etc.” is shown in Lity within the request: “*We still pray for the mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, research, and forgiveness of the sins of God's servants the glorious Christians...*”, cf. *Sfintele și dumnezeștile Liturghii... (Divine Liturgies...)* (Bucharest, 1937), p. 41; Unfortunately, the expression “and who he wants” is not very clear; it could easily include the dead.

<sup>29</sup> PG 155, p. 633; “And Lity is performed immediately after Anvon (!), as to God tame for all believers”, T. Teodorescu, *Saint Simeon the Archbishop of Thessalonica. Treaty of All Dogmas of Our Orthodox Faith, after the True Principles Set by Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Followers*. Reprinted after the original, translated

The mention of Saint Simeon of Thessalonica, although at first glance it would seem “poor”, if we think strictly to the practical part of the ordinance<sup>30</sup>, nevertheless, it presents two essential aspects (realities), such as the reason of the Lity (taht of *taming God*) And the concrete indication of those who share the “mercy” of God (that is *all believers*)<sup>31</sup>.

D) *Jerusalem (Egeria)*

A last mention of the remembrance of the believers during the evening service (Vespers), which we have already mentioned, is that given by Egeria; unfortunately, not even this old exposition specifies whether during the evening service were mentioned the living as well as the dead.

In order to “complete” the “form” of this old practice, we think we should also remember something about the current use, according to which during the Lity are mentioned only the living.

#### 4. THE CURRENT LITURGICAL PRACTICE OF THE SINGULAR REMEMBRANCE OF THE LIVING DURING THE LITY

Therefore, in the context of the analysis of the current practice, it must be stated, first of all, that the remembrance of the faithful (the living) has “survived” until today in the structure of the Lity, although it remains inexplicable how was “dropped” the primary practice of remembering all believers (alive and dead) during the evening service; as to how the remembrance of the dead was “transferred” from the Lity to the *Lity for the dead* (a “somewhat” recent liturgical order) unfortunately, there is no exact exposure either in springs or in specialized studies.

In our opinion, the actual practice of remembrance within the evening service (those from the Lity), which seems to “lose” from its former complexity, could be the result of the so-called evolution of liturgical forms (structures) from complex to simple, hypothesis “launched” in the liturgical research by C. Giraud, who considers the long and complex structures as primary ones<sup>32</sup>.

Nevertheless, the old liturgical practice of remembering the living and the dead during Lity is a fundamental aspect of the worship ordinances, especially since we find it, as we have said, until today in the structure of Lity.

As far as the current practice of the Lity is concerned, we would like to draw attention to a fact that specialists emphasize very little or not at all, and which, for this reason, it will impose itself in the present practice, namely the nominal remembrance during Lity only of the living, and not of those who are dead, as in primary practice (see the Lity ordinance recorded in Codex Sinai 1096), and which seems to be inconsistent with the structure of the Lity itself, in which the following text (request) appears:

“We still pray (...) for the rest, relief, forgiveness of sins, and the joyful remembrance of all those who, before, have moved to the right faith, our parents and brothers and sisters who rest here and everywhere”<sup>33</sup>.

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from Greek in 1765, and amended in the days of the High Lord of the United Principalities of Romania in the year 1865, Alexandru Ioan I, Bucharest: Toma Teodorescu Typography, 1865, p. 228.

<sup>30</sup> Note that Saint Simeon does not give here either the structure of the Lity (perhaps well-known at that time) nor does he detail the type of nominal remembrance, probably for the same reasons.

<sup>31</sup> In our opinion, this phrase can encompass both the living and the dead.

<sup>32</sup> *L'epiclesi eucaristica. Proposta per una soluzione "ortodossa" della controversia tra Oriente e Occidente*, Roma: Dispense Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2002-2003, p. 22, note 3.

<sup>33</sup> *Liturghier (Hieratikon)*, Bucharest, 2000, p. 50.

In our opinion, this request, which attests, on the one hand, the length of this service ordinance, but also that its structure is an authentic one that retains primary elements, clearly depicts the “primary” vision of the Church Fathers on the Lity, which includes all believers, a perspective later portrayed by Saint Simeon of Thessalonica, who considers the Lity’s<sup>34</sup> ultimate reason to be “*to tame God for all believers*”<sup>35</sup>.

## 5. THE LITY AND THE LITY FOR THE DEAD - “CLUES” OF A COMMON INITIAL LITURGICAL STRUCTURE

The reason for which the Church considered that a separate ordinance should appear for the dead, that is what the current books of worship call *the Lity for the dead*, has its foundation, without a doubt, in the old practice from the Lavra of Saint Savas, although the significance of the present demand inserted into the structure of the Lity, in which the dead are also mentioned, should not be ignored.

In conclusion, it should be noted that what we definitely miss is the way in which the “actual” transition from the usual Lity from the church porch will take place (originally, at the tomb of Saint Sava), the Savas’ type monasteries, during *the Lity for the dead* also done in the porch of the church.

Therefore it remains posterior studies to confirm or refute this hypothesis, which seems to have a fair reason, given the old structures and ordinances of service, as well as the current ones.

Equally important appear to be the insights on both the place and the time of the so-called *Lity for the dead* (ordinance which will include par excellence nominal remembrance of the dead), as well as more precise indication of liturgical days in which it could have been as well as more precise indication of the liturgical days in which it could have been performed<sup>36</sup>, particularities mentioned otherwise by *The Great Typikon* of Saint Sava, but about which, unfortunately, other sources and specialized studies do not remember anything.

The one who signals some decisive indications about the time and place of the performance of an ordinance named by him “as if for the Lity” is Saint Simeon of Thessalonica; these particularities could “illustrate”, in our opinion, if not the evolution of these structures, at least a “form” of the transition from one ordinance structure to another, that is, from the Lity of the church feasts and from Saturday evening to the so-called “Lity” of the ordinary days (a structure we do not know much about):

“Εἰ δὲ κοινὴ ἐστὶν ἡμέρα, λιτὴ οὐ γίνεται. Τὸ ἀπολυτικίον δὲ λέγεται, κατερχομένου τοῦ ἱερέως εἰς τύπον λιτῆς ὀπισθεν τοῦ ἄμβωνος, ψαλλομένου τοῦ, <<Θεοτόκε Παρθένε>>”<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> Talking about the structure and primary meaning of the Lity, Fr. Prof. E. Braniște highlights new meanings: “The old prayers of the procession lities of the former Christendom have been preserved in use so far, but were included in the divine service in churches and became the first part of today’s Lity. They have an accentuated penitential character, that is, they express with persistence the feeling of repentance and prayer for forgiveness of sins, because in the conception of the ancient Christians, the misfortunes, for the removal of which they pray, were considered to be the consequences or punishments for sins”, *Liturgica Specială... (Special Liturgy...)*, p. 82.

<sup>35</sup> T. Teodorescu, *Sfântul Simeon Arhiepiscopul Tesalonicului... (Saint Simeon the Archbishop of Thessalonica...)*, p. 228.

<sup>36</sup> Perhaps during the ordinary days after Vespers, as already “anticipated” by St. Simeon of Thessalonica, in the morning after Matins (indication of religious books) or after the First Hour, as recorded by *The Great Typikon* of Saint Sava.

<sup>37</sup> PG 155, p. 633; <<And if it is ordinary day there is no Lity, but the Troparion is said, when the priest descended behind the pulpit as if for the Lity and singing: “Mother of God, Virgin”>>, T. Teodorescu, *Sfântul Simeon Arhiepiscopul Tesalonicului... (Saint Simeon the Archbishop of Thessalonica...)*, p. 228.

This “service structure” that Saint Simeon recalls may be an intermediate stage in the evolution of the Ordinance of the Lity, but about the form of this “procession”, very interesting, Saint Simeon does not give us details, but he simply calls it “as if for the Lity”; moreover, the troparion that he indicates, “providentially”, is precisely the one that is being sung during Lity nowadays, that is “*Mother of God, Virgin...*”; what needs to be emphasized is that in this context St. Simeon no longer remembers any nominal remembrance of believers.

In our opinion, it is very likely that this very structure (procession) of the ordinary day has been the origin of the so-called *Lity for the dead*, which is also being performed during the ordinary days, or it may represent a “typology” of the “processions” of the past which were based on the processions from the Lity; however, it is very difficult to say which of these structures were the primary ones.

Another interesting detail that Saint Simeon records is the place where the “processions” indicated by him used to take place (both those from Lity and those from the procession “as if for the Lity”), both being performed behind<sup>38</sup> the pulpit<sup>39</sup>.

Even though we can not precisely determine the space indicated by the phrase used by Saint Simeon when he speaks of the place for performing the Lity (“behind the pulpit”), we think, however, that it is very likely the church’s *narthex*; but the secondary meaning of the word “pulpit” can not be ignored either, which in the old books of service, as Fr. Prof. Ene Braniște notices, meant *narthex* or *porch*; surprisingly, here too, the word “pulpit” (meaning *narthex* or *porch*) is also used in the context in which the ordinance of the Lity is mentioned<sup>40</sup>.

Unfortunately, our statements remain only simple assumptions, given the lack of obvious clues from sources and studies, which is why those interested could analyze these topics in the future in order to bring to light the full meaning of these ordinances and services structures.

In other respects, we would like to point out that a testimony of the “transition” we have mentioned in the precedence (probably another stage in the evolution of these structures) or, why not, a reminiscence of the old common practice of the “processions” from Lity, can be also the alternative singing of the sticheron from the Lity at the *Lity for the dead*:

“In the evening after the dismissal of the Vespers, or in the morning after the dismissal of the Matins, and after the church singers say: For many years, the priest immediately takes the censer with incense and the epitachelion and the eclesiarch takes the candlestick with the candle lit, walking in front of the priest; and when the church singers walk, following them,

<sup>38</sup> “εὐθὺς τὰ τῆς λιτῆς ὀπισθεν τοῦ ἁμῶνος γίνεται” and “Τὸ ἀπολυτικίον δὲ λέγεται, κατερχομένου τοῦ ἱερέως εἰς τύπον λιτῆς ὀπισθεν τοῦ ἁμῶνος”, PG 155, p. 633.

<sup>39</sup> <<PULPIT (ἄμβων, ὁ – *amvon*, d. ἀναβαίνω – *anavaino* = to climb, to get up) – is today a small balcony on the north wall of the church, inside the nave, closer or farther from the altar, placed at some height, serving for church servants, who go up in the pulpit to read the gospel and preach the sermon (...) *Amvon/ Pulpit* is also called the middle of the enlarged sole; in the old books of service, pulpit meant a narthex or a veranda, porch (v. *Mineiul pe Martie*, Buda, 1805, f. 94, r. col. 12: “We go out in the pulpit and perform the Lity”>>, Fr. Prof. PhD. E. Braniște and Prof. Ecaterina Braniște, *Dicționar enciclopedic... (Encyclopedic Dictionary...)*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>40</sup> “And after *Glory to God’s highest*: We go out in the Pulpit, and we perform the Lity, as accustomed”, *March Menaion*, Buda: the Princely Publishing House of the University of Peșta, 1805, p. 94r, lines 19-21; this is the case of the Lity ordinance from March 25th (the Annunciation), (“at night”), being included in the *Service of the Great Compline*, cf. *March Menaion*, Buda: the Princely Publishing House of the University of Peșta, 1805, p. 94r.

they sing a dismissal, which is from the Lity; and another time, another dismissal, changing them one after the other, also from the Lity of the patron saint who is celebrated. And reaching the porch of the Church”<sup>41</sup>.

Note that this peculiarity of the alternative singing of the dismissals from the Lity of the patron saint of the Church during the procession of *the Lity for the dead*, is not explicitly recorded in *The Great Typikon*<sup>42</sup>, although it is quite new in its own way, but appears in our books of worship, such as *Panikhida*<sup>43</sup>. But where it came from, it’s hard to say.

## 6. THE REAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CURRENT LITURGICAL PRACTICE OF NOMINAL REMEMBRANCE OF BELIEVERS DURING LITY

Returning to the current practice during the Lity and its understanding, We ask how much more we perceive from the primary “vision” of the Fathers of the Church, since this fundamental characteristic of the Lity, to include all believers, “seems” not to say too many to the Christians today, although our Church preserves, to a certain degree, all these structures (ordinances).

I believe that only a healthy catechesis about these liturgical realities, as if “forgotten” today, could bring extra light into their understanding.

## CONCLUSION

On the nominal remembrance of believers, aloud, during the evening service (ie, at Vespers) was unfortunately very little written in our country, and not in a decisive manner.

What we can say, without a doubt, about this practice, is that in the Byzantine rite structures, the remembrance of the living and the dead during the evening service “survived” only in the ordinance of the Lity, which, rightly, was “included” in the structure of Vespers, but also in that of Compline’s.

Also, the ancient liturgical practice of the remembrance of the living and the dead during Lity is a fundamental aspect of the worship ordinances, especially as we find it, as we have said, until today within the structure of the Lity.

Regarding the current practice during the Lity and its understanding, we wonder how much we perceive from the primary “vision” of the Fathers of the Church, since this fundamental characteristic of the Lity, to include all believers, “seems” not to say too many to the Christians today; in our opinion, this usage, which seems to “lose” from its former complexity, could be the result of the so-called evolution of liturgical forms (structures) from complex to simple.

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<sup>41</sup> *Panikhida or Memorial service together with the Little Lity. In which all the ordinance is encompassed when memorial is given to the dead*, Bucharest: Printing House of Church Books, 1922<sup>3</sup>, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> Even if we do not know exactly where this usage was “borrowed” from, it should be noted that from the context of many such statements, recorded in the Great Typikon, one could “infer” this practice without any difficulty, as we will see.

<sup>43</sup> “*Panikhida* is also called the church book embodying the funeral service and other services that are done for the dead (memorial services); originally this book was part of the Euchologion”, Fr. Prof. PhD. E. Braniște and Prof. Ecaterina Braniște, *Dicționar enciclopedic... (Encyclopedic Dictionary...)*, p. 337.

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## THE PASSAGE INTO ETERNAL LIFE AND THE SEPARATION OF THE SOUL FROM THE BODY IN THE CHRISTIAN HYMNOGRAPHERS' THINKING

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### ABSTRACT

*Immediately after death, the soul plunges into a light at the same time tender and lucid, allowing the soul to see his life again, to understand its innermost depths. It is that sensation of both wellness and pain that you experience every time a spiritually brilliant being is scrutinizing your soul, easily penetrating the ugliness of your character. This purifying sleep is not at all a state of unconsciousness. Death sets the person free from this leather costume in which we were enfolded the moment we went out of the paradisiac condition and by means of which we have been directed from transparent participation toward the universe. The shapes, the faculties, the senses of the body, aspired by the infinite, become interiorized and it is no longer the soul inside the body, but the body inside the soul. The senses that have become spiritualized, the perfect memory permit true personal meetings, not just between the dead, but also between the dead and the living. The place of these encounters can only be Christ, this centre toward Whom all the lines converge, Christ in Whom we are all one another's limbs. The prayer of the Church facilitates and accompanies the exode of the soul.*

**Keywords:** hour of death; eternal life; soul; body; hymnography.

### INTRODUCTION

The first truth confessed by our daily experience in a completely true manner is that necessarily we are all going to pass through death to the eternal life. We see it, we confess it, yet we do not believe it; the reason is that we would like to live forever, and what we want we hope for, because this thing is present in man since his creation, the soul being the one that, by the attribute of eternity, present in him, as image of God, wishes to attract the body as well into this immortality, man longing therefore after the paradisiac happiness, lost a long time ago, but brought back to us by our Savior Christ.

Death is the deepest and most significant fact of life, lifting even the last mortal over the day-to-day life and platitude. It is only death that raises the issue of the meaning of life, in its deepest sense. Life has meaning because there is death<sup>1</sup>. Death proves to be the only exit permitting the passage from the bad time into eternity, eternal life being accessible only by it. Consequently, man puts his last hope in it, where from the significance and the importance of death, but also its most prodigious paradox. Therefore, life is noble only

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Cosmin Santi, *Eshatologia după cărțile de cult ortodoxe*, Editura Galaxia Gutenberg, Târgu Lăpuș, 2012. p. 86.



because it supposes death, which testifies that man is meant for another life, a supreme life, without it the existence being an ordinary and absurd one. Between life in time and life in eternity there is a gap that cannot be crossed except by the act of death, by the anguish of the break-up.

The teaching of the 12 Apostles shows, regarding the way of death, that „first of all it is bad and full of curse; crimes, adulteries, lust, debaucheries, trickeries, idolatries, witchcraft, charms, kidnappings, false testimonies, cheating, sneaky heart, slyness, pride, evilness, cheekiness, greed, profane words, envy, impudence, arrogance, self-importance, lack of fear; the people who belong to death are persecutes of the good ones, haters of the truth, lovers of lies; they do not know the reward of justice, they do not stick to goodness or to the good judgment; they are not vigilant for the good but for the bad; goodness and patience are far away from them; they love vanities, they look for bribes, they give no charity to the poor, they cannot stand those who are miserable, they do not know their Creator, they are killers of children, they ruin God’s creature, turn their back on the needy, they oppress the one on the rocks; defenders of the rich, hypocrite judges of the poor, full of all sin”<sup>2</sup>.

Is man afraid of death? Yes and no, depending on how seriously he asked himself this question. In the past, the philosophers used to say that they are not afraid of death, but of its eternity, an erroneous thinking, because death is not eternal, but just a passage to an eternal life, good or bad, depending on the acts committed in the earthly life. The great philosopher Goethe once launched an idea according to which *you die and become (Stirb und Werde)*, namely becoming by death<sup>3</sup>.

„Truly, awesome is the mystery of death, how the soul gets separated against his will from the joints, and, along with the being, the very natural connection, by the will of God, is severed. This is why we pray to Thee: those who have departed from us, give them rest in the tents of Your righteous ones, You, giver of life, Lover of men”<sup>4</sup>. „I keep crying and wailing when I think about death and I see in the tombs our beauty, the one created in the image of God, laying inert: awesome, without greatness and without a face. O, wonder! What mystery is this, what has been done to us? How have we offered ourselves to rottenness? How have we taken upon us the yoke of death?”<sup>5</sup>.

## 1. THE HOUR OF DEATH, A MOMENT SEPARATING THE TEMPORAL FROM THE ETERNITY

Up to the eternal life, man has to go beyond the awesome hour of death, namely the concrete moment of the separation of the soul from the body, of the life from the body. There is fear of death because we are aware that beyond, there is no time and space, these two walking sticks we are using to drag ourselves along in life, and so, we mistakenly confuse the conscience of death with the fear of death. Yet, in order to learn how to die, you first need to learn how to live, taking the commandments and the advice of our Savior Christ and of His Church to be your guide.

„The separation of the soul from the body is a frightening and awesome mystery for everyone; because the soul goes away weeping, while the body is covered, being given to the earth. Therefore, we, too, aware of the death of the body, let us run with tears to our Savior,

<sup>2</sup> *Scrierile Părinților Apostolici*, translation, notes and indexes by Fr. Dr. Dumitru Fecioru, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1995, pp. 29-30.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Mircea V. Homescu, *Scrutând moartea... ca idee și fenomen*, in „Altarul Banatului”, XLIV (1994), no. 7-9, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Octoiul Mare, care cuprinde slujba Învierii pe opt glasuri*, Tipografia cărților bisericești, București, 1952, Glasul al IV-lea, Sâmbătă dimineață, La Stihovă, Stihirile morților, Stihira I, p. 366.

<sup>5</sup> *Molitifelnice, care cuprinde slujbe, rânduieli și rugăciuni săvârșite de preot la diferite trebuințe din viața creștinilor*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2002, Rânduiala Înzmormântării Mirenilor, Stihirile Sfântului Ioan Damaschin, Stihira a VIII-a, glasul al VIII-lea, p. 229.

calling out: remember us, when You have come into Your kingdom”<sup>6</sup>. „How am I spending my time carelessly? How am I wasting the time of my life with no vigilance, without taking into account my innumerable sins, or the dread of the fearful death and the incorruptible judgement? O, who shall save me from the eternal fire? Unless You were merciful to me, You Yourself all-good God”<sup>7</sup>.

At the hour of death, „we shall need many prayers, many people to help us, many good deeds, much mediation from the angels, along our whole journey through the air. If when we go to a foreign country or an unknown city we need a guide, all the more we shall need guides and helpers to show us the way through the invisible hierarchies of angels of the air who are called persecutors and publicans and tax-collectors”<sup>8</sup> (Saint John Chrysostom).

The hour of death is the beginning of immortality. To know and to accept that you will die is almost a virtue. How fine were our Italian ancestors feeling when they were saying: „*Homo toties moritur, quoties amittit suos*”<sup>9</sup>, namely „man suffers as many deaths as he loses relations”. This is why we, the Christians, are praying as follows:

„Master Holder of Everything, God of our fathers and Lord of mercy, Maker of the mortal and of the immortal nation and of all the human nature, which is built and then destroyed again; Creator of life and of death, of the living here and of the passage to there; Who measures the years of life and orders the hour of death; Who takes to hell and out of it; Who binds into powerlessness and looses into power; Who orders the things of use here and usefully orders the things to come; Who has encouraged by the hope of resurrection those hurt by the pin of death, You Yourself, Master of all, God, our Savior, hope of all the margins of the earth”<sup>10</sup>. More often than not we accuse death of coming unexpectedly, of taking us by surprise. „You have gathered up no repentance, you, repentless soul, why are you delaying it? The separation of death and the end is drawing near; it has come as a thief”<sup>11</sup>.

Yet, it is not really so, because man, from the moment he is born, dies a little every day, and when death comes, it is but a final act, a moment of a stage that has been accompanying us throughout our life, as a poet was once beautifully saying „I am translating the breath of death right in the heart of death”<sup>12</sup>. True is the fact that man ought to die every day with Christ, killing the sin in him, and also resurrect each day with Christ, by faith and good deeds, to a new life of virtue. From this perspective, looking at life with the eyes of the man estranged from God, we consider death always too early for the young and too late for the old, which is not true; it is just our impression, an impression often pushing man to despair. We always need to pray as during the Holy Liturgy, with the prayer of the Litany, which says:

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, Rânduiala Înmormântării Preoților și a Diaconilor de mir, Fericirile, Stihira a III-a, glasul al II-lea, p. 273.

<sup>7</sup> *Octoiul Mare*, Glasul al VIII-lea, Duminică seara, la Doamne strigat-am, Stihirile de umilință, Stihira I, p. 651.

<sup>8</sup> *Profeții și mărturii creștine pentru vremea de acum (selecție de texte de la Sfinții Părinți și autori contemporani)*, vol. 2, Editura Cartea Ortodoxă, Alexandria, 2006, pp. 116-117.

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Mircea V. Homescu, *art.cit.*, pp. 14-17.

<sup>10</sup> *Penticostarul, adică sfintele slujbe de la Duminica Paștilor până la Duminica Tuturor Sfinților*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1999 Luni după Rusalii, la Vecernie, Rugăciunea a cincea, p. 334.

<sup>11</sup> *Mineii pe Iunie*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba-Iulia, 2001, Ziua a douăsprezecea, la Utrenie, la Stihavnă, Și acum..., glasul al VI-lea, p. 115.

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Mircea V. Homescu, *art.cit.*, p. 18.

„A Christian ending to our life, painless, blameless, peaceful and a good defense before the dread Judgment Seat of Christ, let us ask”<sup>13</sup>.

But, the question is: if the memory of death is so useful for the soul, „why doesn't God show to us the hour when we shall be leaving this world? If we knew when we would die, then we would be living in sin up to our last moment. And we would repent shortly before our death. As a result, however, we would be living in sins and would leave unjustified just as well. Similarly, if we had known the hour of our death, we would have died before our hour. Our life, while waiting for this dreadful moment, would have become tormented and unbearable. We can believe that we would not have been able to bear the knowledge of it. For this reason, God, Who loves man so much, out of His love for man, does not disclose to us the hour of our death”<sup>14</sup>.

„O soul, the end is drawing near, and you are not taking care, you are not getting ready. Time is getting shorter, get up, the Judge is near the doors; as a dream, as a flower, the time of life is going away. Why are we agitating ourselves in vain?”<sup>15</sup>. „O my soul, o my soul, wake up, why are you asleep? The end is drawing near and you will grow anxious; but arise, so that Christ the Lord Who is everywhere and fulfils everything may have mercy on you”<sup>16</sup>. „Weep, shed tears, o soul, come back, repent; the day is near; the Judge is by the doors; get ready to answer and call out: I have done what is evil in Your sight, merciful, kindhearted, good God, have mercy on me”<sup>17</sup>.

Saint Gregory the Dialogist writes in his *Homilies* on the Evangelists the following: „We need to think deeply about how dreadful the hour of death shall be for us, about the awe that will shroud our soul then, about how we will remember all our sins and we will forget all the joys, about the perspicacity of the Judge. Then the dirty spirits will sieve through all the acts of the soul of the deceased; then, they will put before him all the sins to which they pushed him, in order to prove him their accomplice in the work of unholiness. But why are we speaking only about the sinful soul, when they also come on the most elected of the mortals and try to claim their part of victory over them. Out of all men, only One has been able to state fearlessly, before His passions: „I will not speak with you much longer, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on Me” (John 14, 30)<sup>18</sup>.

At the same time, God ordains when and how this moment will take place for each one of us, but God does not predestine us, on the contrary, man can freely choose to go one way or the other in life; God does nothing else but to take care of man by the act of His

<sup>13</sup> *Liturghierul, care cuprinde dumnzeieștile liturghii ale sfinților noștri părinți: Ioan Gură de Aur, Vasile cel Mare, și Liturghia Darurilor mai înainte sfințite, precum și rânduiala Vecerniei, Utreniei, Dumnezeieștii Proscomidii, Liturghiei cu arhiereu etc.*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2012, Liturghia Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur, Ectenia Cererilor, p. 210.

<sup>14</sup> Arhim. Vasiliu Bacoiani, *Sufletul după moarte*, translation by Țârlescu Ion Andrei, Editura Bunavestire, Galați, 2002, p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> *Triodul, care cuprinde slujbele bisericesti de la Duminica Vameșului și Fariseului până la Sfânta Înviere*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2000, Marți în întâia săptămână a Sfântului și Marelui Post, La Pavecerniță, Canonul cel Mare alcătuire al Sfântului Părintelui nostru Andrei Criteanul Ierusalimiteanul, Cântarea a 4-a, Stihira a III-a, glasul al VI-lea, p. 131.

<sup>16</sup> \*\*\*, *Ceaslov*, ediția a II-a, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1993, Troparele și Condacele Triodului, Joi, în a cincea săptămână a Marelui Postului, Condacul, Glasul al VI-lea, p. 187.

<sup>17</sup> *Triodul*, Marți dimineața în a doua săptămână a Sfântului și Marelui Post, Tricântarea, Cântarea a 2-a, Stihira a II-a, glasul al VIII-lea, p. 224.

<sup>18</sup> Sfântul Grigorie Dialogul, *Omilii la Evanghelii, 39 la Luca 19, 42-47* apud *Profeții și mărturii creștine pentru vremea de acum (selecție de texte de la Sfinții Părinți și autori contemporani)*, vol. 2, Editura Cartea Ortodoxă, Alexandria, 2006, p. 117.

Providence, using the divine attributes, such as His Almightyness and His Omniscience, by which He knows the end of man as time and modality. For example, the martyrs' torments are apocalyptic. God defended Saint Eleftherios from many and dreadful torments: bed of fire, hungry lions, ashes ablaze, copper oven, to finally let him die a martyr's death, being beheaded. God could have stopped his executioner, yet His impenetrable wisdom judged that for the saint this moment and this way of dying are the most adequate for him to leave this world<sup>19</sup>.

„Another world is waiting for You, o soul, and the Judge will disclose your hidden and bad things; therefore, do not remain in these things down here, but arise, saying to the Judge: God, have mercy on me and save me”<sup>20</sup>.

Saint John of Damascus says that when man reaches his last moment, he sees that he will get a reward for his actions: „People's actions are judged, according to their quality, in the balance, after man draws his last breath”<sup>21</sup>.

Therefore, „thinking at the hour of the end, o soul, and fearing the cutting of the fig tree, diligently put to work the talent given to you, o wretched soul, being vigilant and saying: Let us not remain out of Christ's room”<sup>22</sup>. „Alas, my darkened soul! Why won't you stop sinning? Why won't you put an end to your laziness? Why won't you remember the dreadful hour of death? Why won't you fear with your entire being our Savior's dread Judgment Seat? What do you want to say to defend yourself or how are you going to account for your acts? Your acts stand as a witness, rebuking you, your acts give you away, denouncing you. Therefore, o soul! Your time has come, run, arise and faithfully call out: Lord, I have done what is evil in Your sight; but I know, man-loving God, Your goodness; good Shepherd, do not send me away from Your right side, out of Your great mercy”<sup>23</sup>.

The soul, when the moment of its departure from the body is drawing near, goes through unsuspected and amazing trials:

➤ fear of the unknown: by death, the soul settles himself alone in the other life, yet on his own he cannot pass into his abode, where he is to be living alone. Consequently, the soul is afraid of this unknown, his torments being moderated even since his departure from the body, when his company comes to see him off; the righteous is taken by the angels, the sinner is taken by the demons;

➤ rapid separation: the body and the soul are like a couple in which the two love each other; therefore, when the separation moment comes, the soul cries and is in pain, does not want to leave the body, is separated hastily; it is the will of God for this couple to be destroyed, to be broken from the middle; „at this moment man feels as if he were skinned alive, suffers as women do when labor time has come at child birth”<sup>24</sup>.

„Great crying and mourning, great weeping and hardship is the separation of the soul. Then come hell and perdition because of the transitory life, which is lifeless shadow, deceitful dream appearing like an illusion, the torment of life on earth. Let us run away from all earthly sin, to inherit the celestial things”<sup>25</sup>. „When the soul is kidnapped by force from the body, by scary angels, he forgets about all his relatives and acquaintances and is preoccupied by the future things, the judgments that will come on vanity and the much

<sup>19</sup> Arhim. Vasiliu Bacoiani, *op.cit.*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>20</sup> *Triodul*, Stihiri de umilință, glasul I, Duminică seara, la Doamne Strigat-am, Stihira a III-a p. 695.

<sup>21</sup> Sfântul Ioan Damaschin apud Arhim. Vasiliu Bacoiani, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>22</sup> *Triodul*, În Sfânta și Marea zi Marți în Săptămâna Patimilor, Denia de Luni seara, la Utrenie, Condac, glasul al II-lea, p. 559.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, Duminica Lăsăturii sec de carne, La Vecernie-Sâmbătă Seara, la Stihovă, Slavă..., glas VIII, pp. 40-41.

<sup>24</sup> Cuv. Nichita Stithat apud Arhim. Vasiliu Bacoiani, *op.cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>25</sup> *Molitfelnic*, Rânduiala Însmormântării Mirenilor, Stihirile, Stihira a V-a, glasul al II-lea, p. 237.

tormented body”<sup>26</sup>. The Church has a special prayer for those whose soul comes out with difficulty: “Lord, unbind the soul of Your servant (Name) painlessly from his body..., and untie Your servant from this unbearable pain and bitter powerlessness...”<sup>27</sup>.

➤ vision of demons: Demons are impatiently waiting for the last moments of our death. For them, this is the last and best chance to do harm to our soul. „The most awful darkness of death is troubling my soul, and the devils’ claims always amaze and terrify me; save me from all these, good Bride of Christ, with Your might, Virgin not tempted by wedding, and set me on the shore of salvation and in the never setting light of the Saints”<sup>28</sup>. „Fearing the hour of the end and the terrible claims of the devils, I, a sinner, call out to You, with all my soul, with pain: Lord, my Master, by Your might crush their traps and barriers, and do not let Your servant fall a pray to their evilness. See my sadness and heed my trouble, and heal the pains of my wretched soul, most merciful God, Who bestows great mercy on the world”<sup>29</sup>. „Save, o Immaculate, my wretched soul, and have mercy on this soul, who is slipping, because of the multitude of sins, into the chasm of perdition, and at the dreadful hour of death, save me from the devils speaking evil of me, and save me from all torment”<sup>30</sup>.

It is important that, during the bitter moments of death, our man-loving God does not let man alone. Otherwise, man would sink in black despair, in depression. When man’s soul comes out, man suffers, he is tormented. For this reason, during these moments, it is good to help the one in such a danger, by heartfelt prayer, by calling out to the All-good God. „Now weep for me, a wretched sinner, all the ends of the earth, and shed tears all together, because terrible decision has come from up high: that my hands and feet be tied together and that I be cast out”<sup>31</sup>. „Cry for me, weep for me, angelic hosts and you all, Christ-loving mortals, because, mercilessly, my soul is being separated from the body”<sup>32</sup>. „When You will please, o Immortal, to separate my soul from the bonds of the body, by Your command, then have mercy on me and send to me a kind angel with benevolent looks, to take me and defend me from the powers of darkness, to encourage me, so that I may travel easily straight up and arrive unpunished to Your dread Judgment Seat, to worship You, All-good God”<sup>33</sup>.

For this reason, it is good for man to be prepared for the hour of death, by getting reconciled with those who have something against him, but especially by confessing his sins and partaking of the Holy Communion, because, little after the hour of death, he will go through unexpected trials: painful departure from the body, the terrible toll houses and the defense in front of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But there are moments when the soul does not come out easily and this state of fact torments man. This happens when the person lying on his death bed has been cursed by

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, Stihira a VIII-a, glasul al II-lea, p. 238.

<sup>27</sup> *Aghiasmatar, care cuprinde slujbe, rânduieli și rugăciuni săvârșite de preot la diferite trebuințe din viața creștinilor*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2002, Slujba la ieșirea grea a sufletului, Rugăciune pentru cel ce se luptă greu cu moartea, p. 182.

<sup>28</sup> *Octoiul Mare*, Glasul al IV-lea, Marți seară, la Doamne strigat-am, Stihirile Crucii, Stihira a VI-a, p. 321.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, Glasul al V-lea, Vineri seară, la Doamne Strigat-am, Stihirile de umilință, Stihira a II-a, p. 445.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, Glasul I, Polunoșnița, Canonul Sfintei Treimi, Sedealna, Slavă... Și acum..., p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> *Molitfelnic*, Slujba la ieșirea cu greu a sufletului, Canonul-alcătuire a lui Andrei al Cretei, Ierusalimiteanul, Cântarea a 8-a, Stihira I, glasul al VI-lea, p. 179.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, Cântarea a 4-a, Slavă, glasul al VI-lea, p. 176.

<sup>33</sup> *Octoiul Mare*, Glasul al VI-lea, Luni seară, la Doamne strigat-am, Stihiri de umilință, Stihira a III-a, p. 489.

someone to have a bad end and, again, when God gives the person who is about to die a last chance of repentance<sup>34</sup>.

„Poor me, for my unruliness! Alas for me, in my misery! For I hold out my hands to my friends and I shed tears from my eyes, but there is no one to have mercy on me”<sup>35</sup>. Yet, however, referring strictly to the hour of death, we need to have in view that, although all our life is a continual war on earth and we need to fight ceaselessly, until the end of our life, the most important day of our fight remains, nevertheless, the last hour of death, because whoever falls at that moment, will no longer get up. For this reason, this unique moment of man’s life must find you as well prepared as possible to fight bravely. „Alas, there is so much fight for the soul when he gets separated from the body! Alas, how he sheds tears then and there is no one to have mercy on him at that time! Lifting his eyes to the angels, he prays in vain; holding out his hands to men, there is no one to help him”<sup>36</sup>.

The inimical devils have the habit of attacking at the moment of death by four dangerous claims: against faith, by despair, by vain glory and various imaginations and transformations of the devils into angels of light. If you are attacked against faith, do not let unfaithfulness slip into your heart, take out the intentions of the devil who wants, by war, to do you harm at that hour, and pray a long time to God and keep your heart strong and unshaken. Do not lose, by any means, your heart in those moments, because you will see in front of your eyes acts by which you offended God, you will see all your sins, and then ask God to forgive you and hope to obtain His forgiveness. But, at that hour, do not boast with vain glory, thinking about the good and beautiful deeds that you did in your life, because we are still “useless servants, having done only what we had to do” (Luke 17, 10).

It is only in this way that we shall be able to go over these hard trials, it is only in this way that we will weaken the enemy’s power at the moment of death and, in this way, the way will be open to us to pass from this earth and exile to the heavenly Jerusalem<sup>37</sup>. „From now on I will no longer fear, Master Christ, the return into the earth, because You, by Your Resurrection, for Your great goodness, have lifted me, the forsaken one, from the earth to the height of incorruption”<sup>38</sup>.

About the hour of death, Saint Cyril of Alexandria speaks in detail in his discourse on the departure of the soul: „What fright and torment are waiting for you, o soul, on the day of death! Then you will see the terrible, savage, cruel, merciless and shameless demons, like dark beings surrounding you. Just to see them is worse than any torment. The soul, seeing them, is filled with anguish, becomes disconcerted, struggles, tries to hide, and falls at the feet of God’s Angels. The Holy Angels hold him; going with him through the air and moving up, they get to the toll houses guarding the road from earth to heaven and keeping the souls and preventing them from going higher”<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> Arhim. Vasiliu Bacoiani, *op.cit.*, pp. 34-38.

<sup>35</sup> *Molitfelnic*, Slujba la ieșirea cu greu a sufletului, Canonul-alcătuire a lui Andrei al Cretei, Ierusalimiteanul, Cântarea a 4-a, Stihira I, glasul al VI-lea, p. 176.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, Rânduiala Înarmorântării Mirenilor, Stihirile Sfântului Ioan Damaschin, Stihira a II-a, glasul al II-lea, p. 228.

<sup>37</sup> Sfântul Nicodim Aghioritul, *Războiul nevăzut*, Editura Egumenița, Galați, 2008, pp. 193-198.

<sup>38</sup> *Octoiul Mare*, Glasul al VI-lea, Duminiță dimineață, alt Canon al Prea Sfintei de Dumnezeu Născătoare, Peasna a 5-a, Stihira a III-a, p. 471.

<sup>39</sup> Sfântul Chiril al Alexandriei apud Sfântul Ignatie Brancianinov and Teofan Zăvorățul, *Cuvânt despre moarte*, Editura Pelerinul Român, Oradea, 1993, p. 29.

Regarding this moment, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus says: „One ought to live for the age to come and make this life a ceaseless remembrance of death”<sup>40</sup>.

Saint Athanasius the Great, in his turn, exhorts: „Every hour remember that you shall leave this place and every day have death in front of your eyes”<sup>41</sup>. And Saint John Climacus says: “Let the thought about death be with you both when you go to sleep and when you wake up”<sup>42</sup>. The Holy Fathers exhort us to live every day as if it were our last day.

Saint John Chrysostom sees the time of the hour of death as salvation for the soul, because “our body, before being destroyed, lets out the soul living in it as if from an old house about to collapse, for him to be placed again, with even more glory, in the new house that is being built”<sup>43</sup>. „Leaving everything else aside, o soul, think about your last hour and pay attention to yourself, getting ready for departure, for fear that death, coming unexpectedly, might take you by surprise, finding you unprepared. Therefore, pray to the Lord, forever vigilant and crying”<sup>44</sup>.

For the saints, this separation is easy and an occasion of joy. St. Theognostus says that „the soul getting separated from the body full of confidence and taking it out as a jacket, experiences an ineffable and untranslatable joy. For, getting what he had been hoping for, he takes it out with no sadness”<sup>45</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS

The suffering and torment endured at the departure of the soul from the body are not always the sign of a sinful love for the body, of „philautia”, „the bad love for the body”, as Saint Maximus the Confessor calls it, and the root of all the sinful passions. First of all, there is the natural suffering produced by the tearing up of the human nature, which is breaking up into the parts from which it was created, consequently breaking up the unity of the human person<sup>46</sup>. „Alas, there is so much fight for the soul when it gets separated from the body! Alas, how he sheds tears then and there is no one to have mercy on him at that time! Lifting his eyes to the angels, he prays in vain; holding out his hands to men, there is no one to help him. Consequently, my beloved brothers, knowing the brevity of our life, let us ask from Christ: give rest to our departed ones, and have great mercy on our souls”<sup>47</sup>. „Behold, now my soul is painfully getting separated from my miserable body. Therefore, do not bury it in the ground, for it is not worthy of it; but, dragging it out, throw it to the dogs”<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Sfântul Grigorie de Nazianz apud Jean-Claude Larchet, *Creștinul în fața bolii, suferinței și a morții*, translation from French by Marinela Bojin, Editura Sofia, București, 2006, p. 234.

<sup>41</sup> Sfântul Atanasie cel Mare apud Jean-Claude Larchet, *Creștinul în fața bolii, suferinței și a morții*, translation from French by Marinela Bojin, Editura Sofia, București, 2006, p. 235.

<sup>42</sup> Sfântul Ioan Scărarul apud Jean-Claude Larchet, *Creștinul în fața bolii, suferinței și a morții*, translation from French by Marinela Bojin, Editura Sofia, București, 2006, p. 235.

<sup>43</sup> Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Problemele vieții*, translation by Cristian Spătăreanu and Daniela Filioreanu, Editura Cartea Ortodoxă-Egumenița, Galați, 2007, pp. 92-93.

<sup>44</sup> *Octoiul Mare*, Glasul I, Vineri seară, la Doamne Strigat-am, Stihira a II-a, p. 87.

<sup>45</sup> Sfântul Teognost, *Capete despre făptuire și vedere*, 61 apud Jean-Claude Larchet, *Tradiția Ortodoxă despre viața de după moarte*, translation from French by Marinela Bojin, Editura Sofia, București, 2006, p. 75.

<sup>46</sup> Jean-Claude Larchet, *Tradiția Ortodoxă despre viața de după moarte*, translation from French by Marinela Bojin, Editura Sofia, București, 2006, p. 75.

<sup>47</sup> *Triodul*, Stihiri de umilință, glasul al II-lea, Vineri seara, la Doamne strigat-am, Slavă... a morților, alcătuire a lui Ioan Damaschin, p. 705.

<sup>48</sup> *Molitfelnic*, Slujba la ieșirea cu greu a sufletului, Canonul-alcătuire a lui Andrei al Cretei, Ierusalimiteanul, Cântarea a 6-a, Stihira a II-a, glasul al VI-lea, p. 177.

We need to understand that man's life on this earth is short and getting shorter day by day. Yet, the future life has no end. As the soul goes over the threshold of death, so he will enter the eternity, at the end of ages. For this reason, man needs to get ready for the eternity awaiting for him, sparing no effort and no time. At the hour of death, there is no time for thinking and preparation; this work is the work of a whole life, moment by moment. Just as a lamp cannot give light without oil, similarly a Christian cannot enter the Kingdom without the oil of good deeds. And he must be vigilant that this oil may never be missing from him, so that he may not be like the crazy virgins, who were not sent to the wedding room (Matthew 25, 1-13). Therefore stay alert, because you know neither the day nor the hour (Matthew 25, 13). The preparation for the eternal life will not take place in a moment and the weeping of the hour of death is not enough, although man's repentance and return to God at the last hour have their value<sup>49</sup>. „You Who will come and judge the human nation, most righteous Judge, in the dread hour, do not send me condemned in the fire of the Gehenna, but have mercy on me and save me”<sup>50</sup>. „The mind will not find it easy to accept all these... Yet a faith able to prevail over the weaknesses of the mind will believe and receive this truth”<sup>51</sup>. „It is specific of faith to believe even in things it has not seen yet”<sup>52</sup>. „Eternal life is the fruit and the crown of faith in Christ and the latter will come in no other way to the human soul”<sup>53</sup>.

At the funeral service we hear the exhortation: „Come and behold, all of you, the alien and frightening sight known to all, the vision showing itself now, and no longer think about the transitory things, because today the soul is getting separated from the body, moving into the eternal world, going a way it has never walked before, and to the incorruptible Judge, in the presence of the angelical hosts; and dreadful is that judgment where we shall all be seen naked: some ashamed, others crowned”<sup>54</sup>.

„Maybe many of those who believe, but do not have an unshaking and confident faith are so that one can say about them that they have faith in Christ and that they will receive death and will die some time. Yet, dying they will not remain in death, but will win life. However, whoever, having acquired steadiness and confidence, has faith as his habit is truly alive and faithful and shall never die”<sup>55</sup> (Saint Cyril of Alexandria).

Consequently, death is the birth of man from the transitory earthly life into the eternal life. During the accomplishment of the mystery of death, we shed our body, and with our thin, esoteric spiritual being, we pass into another world, on the realm of the beings of the same kind as the souls. The soul departed from the body is invisible and inaccessible, all we can see being only the body suddenly emptied of life, or the inanimation of the time when the mystery of death occurs. Any man has the experience of death. Far from avoiding reality, taking refuge in illusory dreams, the biblical revelation, regardless of its stages that

<sup>49</sup> Jean-Claude Larchet, *Creștinul în fața bolii, suferinței și a morții*, translation from French by Marinela Bojin, Editura Sofia, București, 2006, pp. 237-238.

<sup>50</sup> *Octoiul Mare*, Glasul al I-lea, Marți dimineață, alt Canon al Sfântului Ioan Botezătorul, Peasna a 8-a, Stihira a III-a, p. 50.

<sup>51</sup> Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Comentar la Evanghelia de la Ioan* apud Fr. Conf. Dr. Petre Comșa, *Sfinții Părinți, acoperământul propovăduirii*, Editura ASA, București, 2006, p. 169.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>53</sup> Sfântul Chiril al Alexandriei, *Comentariu la Evanghelia Sfântului Ioan* apud Fr. Conf. Dr. Petre Comșa, *Sfinții Părinți, acoperământul propovăduirii*, Editura ASA, București, 2006, p. 169.

<sup>54</sup> *Molitfelnic*, Rânduiala Înarmorământării Preoților și a Diaconilor de mir, după Laude, alte stihiri idiomele, Slavă..., glasul al VI-lea, p. 297.

<sup>55</sup> Sfântul Chiril al Alexandriei, *Comentariu la Evanghelia Sfântului Ioan* apud Fr. Conf. Dr. Petre Comșa, *Sfinții Părinți, acoperământul propovăduirii*, Editura ASA, București, 2006, p. 169.



we choose to examine, begins by looking it in the face with lucidity: the death of our dear ones, which, once the goodbye moments are over, brings sorrow in the hearts of those left behind (Genesis 50, 1); death awaits everyone, for everyone will see death (Psalm 89,49; Luke 2, 26; John 8, 51). Death is the common lot of all the people, the way of all flesh (1 Kings 2, 2). Yet, we have Christ's victory over death, which is a victory over death and corruption, as physical phenomena; it is a victory over sin and sinful passions, triggered and amplified by the specter of death. Its meaning will not become clear except at the end of the centuries, at the general resurrection. By the redeeming work of Christ, the punishment of death has been lifted. There will still be death until the general resurrection, at the end of the centuries, yet it no longer rules over those united with Christ by the Holy Mysteries and by the accomplishment of His divine commandments. The bodies still die, yet death is no longer annihilation, but rest. Therefore, in the supreme act of our Lord Christ, an act of victory over death, and in His Resurrection from the dead, we do not see only the simple resurrection of the man Jesus, but our wonderful, real and definitive passage in the Christ crucified and resurrected from „death to life, from the earth to heaven”, the moment of the resurrection of the dead, the passage to the eternal life, a fundamental, spiritual passage of the whole world into another level of existence, into the new immortal life of communion with the resurrected Christ and, in Him and by Him, with the entire Holy Trinity: „We worship You Immaculate, Good One, asking You to forgive our sins, Christ our Lord; because willingly You have agreed to be lifted with Your body on the cross to save Your creatures from the slavery of the enemy. For this, we thankfully say to You: You have filled everything with joy, our Savior, Who have come to redeem the world”<sup>56</sup>.

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## HESYCHASM – THE RETURN TO THE PEACE OF THE SPIRIT

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### ABSTRACT

*Hesychasm is the spiritual way of living characteristic of Eastern Christianity. It started out in the monastic area and then spread out among the other believers, giving them all the possibility to have access to the highest form of mysticism. Hesychasm relies on two fundamental principles of the Christian-Orthodox doctrine: that of man’s deification in Christ, supported and formulated by the Greek Church Fathers, and the practical experience of the Desert Fathers, who put into practice the continual prayer. The prayer “of the heart” is an expression of the Holy Spirit, an exercise needed to enter in communion with the essence of life, of union with God. Hesychasm is nothing else but a form of recovering the peace of the Spirit, a spiritual way finding its attainment in the intimate communion with God.*

**Keywords:** hesychasm; prayer; peace; transfiguration; spirituality;

### INTRODUCTION

In the Orthodox spirituality, the word “hesychia” (gr. ἡσυχία = silence, quiet, calm, peace<sup>1</sup>) has a double meaning: on the one hand, it can refer to the hermit, namely to the one who chose the silence of the wilderness as a place for prayer and spiritual endeavors, but, on the other hand, it can designate a form of interior, continual prayer having as a purpose the intimate communion of the believer with God.

This last sense makes out of hesychasm a manner of spiritual life specific of the Eastern Christians, a manner that “*radically separates the East from Rome*”<sup>2</sup>, yet it is also a chance for all the Christians, both Eastern and Western, to have access to the meeting with God by means of this opportunity of returning to the peace of the Spirit. This is obviously about a:

“method of spiritual life, because Jesus’ prayer cannot be considered only a simple persistent prayer, comparable to those recommended by the Catholic piety, although it is not impossible for the Western method of «aspiration» to have descended from the same traditional vein going up to the Desert Fathers. The Jesus Prayer is, however, joined to a doctrine of spiritual life that the Byzantine and Slavic believers consider the heart of the Orthodoxy: hesychasm.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tomás Špidlik, *Arta de a purifica inima*, Rom. transl. Vasile Rus, Ed. Galaxia Gutenberg, Târgu-Lăpuș, 2003, p. 85;

<sup>2</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *Ortodoxia*, Ed. I.B.M.B.O.R., Bucuresti, 1993, p. 28;

<sup>3</sup> Placide Deseille, *Nostalgia Ortodoxiei*, rom. transl. Dora Mezdrea, Ed. Anastasia, București, 1995, p. 151;

Being a superior form of religious life, this hesychasm became generalized in the sphere of the monastic life to then spread on to the life of the Christian people. It offers all the people the possibility to have access to the highest form of mysticism.

We understand from here that even those who live in the middle of the world can realize that union with God that the hermits or the improved monks attain. God can reveal Himself to each man in turn to the extent to which he is purifying his soul. Consequently, the criterion of the union with God is not at all the social environment someone is coming from, but the degree of cleanliness of the soul.

Nichifor Crainic said that:

“the prayer of the mind plays in the Orthodox spirituality a role of first order. In the historical development of this spirituality, it is a permanent summit to which all the wills for perfection aspire”<sup>4</sup>.

*The Jesus Prayer* has been and is a way by means of which the Christian can reach the state of focus and inner peace allowing the soul to be receptive to the ocean of love given by God. *Hesychia* is in itself an exercise of development of the inner life by continually invoking Jesus’ name.<sup>5</sup>

## 1. HISTORICAL STAGES OF HESYCHASM

Hesychasm emerged in the monastic environment (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries) and went through an actual organization in the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries when it manifested itself as a profound theological and especially spiritual renaissance.

Beginning with the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the spiritual effort of the monks living in the Egyptian Desert, the so-called hermits, was divided into inner prayer and asceticism, trying to create a certain harmony between them. Yet, even since this first stage of development of hesychasm there appears a deviation from the harmonious way of intertwining prayer with the ascetic effort, initiated by certain monks, called *Euchites*, *Messalians* or *praying people*, who wanted to dedicate themselves completely to prayer and for this reason they did not want to work, living by begging. This heresy made certain theologians of the early period of Christianity become suspicious about hesychasm. Even in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the hesychasts were accused of Messalianism in the well-known dispute with Barlaam of Calabria.<sup>6</sup> For this reason, the Church Fathers rigorously recommend manual work combined with prayer (“*Ora et labora!*”), this being also helpful for the poor.

At the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Evagrius Ponticus theorizes the spiritual experience of the Desert Fathers, presenting in a synoptic manner the essential stages of the hesychast approach:

1. Corporal asceticism, within which the believer experiences fasting and vigil;
2. Mental asceticism, namely the watch over one’s thoughts, a stage during which the fight is waged against pride, anger, envy etc.
3. Pure prayer, which supposes “*the mind’s talk with God*”, a state in which the mind can lean out “*beyond the self, to the Master, and speak with Him, without anyone’s mediation*”<sup>7, 8</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Nichifor Crainic, *Sfințenia – împlinirea umanului (Curs de Teologie Mistică, 1935-1936)*, Ed. M.M.B., Iași, 1993, p. 127;

<sup>5</sup> Preot Prof. Dr. Ion Bria, *Dicționar de Teologie Ortodoxă*, Ed. I.B.M.B.O.R., București, 1994, p. 213;

<sup>6</sup> Ierom. Asist. Dr. Vasile Bârză, “*Disputa messaliană - doctrină, istoric, influențe*”, in *Revista Teologică*, no.1/2009, p. 95;

<sup>7</sup> Evagrie, *Filocalia 1, Cuvânt despre rugăciune*, c 3, p. 75.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the Messalian heresy gathers momentum, spreading out in the Oriental provinces of the Empire. Their doctrine excluded the Holy Mysteries and the ecclesial life, as they were saying that the Holy Baptism is useless, just like the other Mysteries, as it was wiping away the sins, but not their root. According to them, all the people, since Adam's fall, are possessed by a demon exhorting them to do evil. Only continual prayer, united to asceticism, has the power of chasing away the demon and making the Holy Spirit descend in the soul, making man live the feeling of certainty and plenitude, and acquire the power to discern the spirits, the gift of prophecy, revelations, the capacity of seeing demons, but also the contemplation of the Holy Trinity with the eyes of the body. At the same time, they were saying about the Holy Eucharist as well that it is inefficient, which makes us believe that they were also contesting the real presence of our Savior in the Eucharist.<sup>9</sup>

The Council of Ephesus, of the year 431, condemns the Messalian movement. This thing led to a diminution of the area of dissemination of hesychasm in the Byzantine Empire, continual prayer being contemplated with suspicion by those who were not yet making the difference between the radicalism of the Messalian conception and the hesychast doctrine. Thus, the hesychast movement takes refuge at the margins of the Empire:

- in the **Sinai Desert**, where it is supported by Saint John of the Ladder (†649), who in his work *The Ladder of Heaven* speaks about *hesychia* and *hesychast*, recommending the “*monologic*” prayer: “*Jesus*”. He was saying that “*the hesychia (the peace) of the body is a good order and establishment of the customs and of the senses*”<sup>10</sup> and that it supposes “*leaving aside all the thoughts and dropping all worries, even blessed*”<sup>11</sup>;
- in **Palestine**, preached by Saint Barsanuphius the Great, along with his disciple Dorotheus of Gaza, they insisting on the total truth in God;
- in **Syria**, where Saint Isaac the Syrian (the hermit who became Bishop of Nineveh, and then re-became a monk) insisted on the transformation undergone by the one who practices the hesychast prayer, offering him a new vision on what surrounds him. He was saying about the hesychast prayer that “*just as there is nothing to be like God, similarly there is no thing or work like the preoccupation with God in peace and quietness*”<sup>12</sup>.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, at Constantinople, Saint Symeon the New Theologian resumes the principal hesychast themes and integrates them in the framework of the cenobitic life. Practically, he is the one who reconciles the monastic life of the monastic communities with inner prayer, saying that there is no impediment preventing the possibility of practicing a in the monastery a contemplative and continual prayer, having as fruit the aware and radiant experience of the Holy Spirit.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Marie-Hélène Congourdeau, “*Une grande spiritualité orthodoxe: l'hésychasme*”, see the web address: [https://www.clio.fr/BIBLIOTHEQUE/une\\_grande\\_spiritualite\\_orthodoxe\\_1\\_hesychasme.asp](https://www.clio.fr/BIBLIOTHEQUE/une_grande_spiritualite_orthodoxe_1_hesychasme.asp), accessed on Wednesday, 22.04.2015;

<sup>9</sup> Antoine Guillaumont, “*Messaliens*”, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Tome X, Ed. Beauchesne, Paris, 1980, col. 1080-1082.

<sup>10</sup> Ioan Scărarul, *Scara Raiului*, Rom. transl. Metropolitan Nicolae Corneanu, Ed. Învierea, Timișoara, 2004, p. 264;

<sup>11</sup> Ioan Scărarul, *Scara Raiului*, p. 270;

<sup>12</sup> Isaac Sirul, *Cuvinte către singuratici*, part II, recently discovered, “*Cuvântul 30, I*”, Introductory study and translation by: deacon Ioan I. Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2003, p. 343;

<sup>13</sup> Marie-Hélène Congourdeau, “*Une grande spiritualité orthodoxe: l'hésychasme*”;

After the successful return it had thanks to Saint Symeon the New Theologian, hesychasm went through a new decline period given the spiritual formalism that accompanied the political climax of the Empire. It will undergo a renaissance in the 13<sup>th</sup> century after the great tribulations suffered by the Byzantines between 1204 and 1261, when Constantinople was conquered by the Crusaders and remained under Latin occupation. Saint Nicephorus the Hesychast, a hermit of Mount Athos, is one of the artisans of this rebirth, being one of those who advise the ones who practice the prayer of the heart to do it by correlating it with the respiration. Along with Saint Nicephorus, the metropolitan Theoleptos of Philadelphia preached during this epoch the importance of the prayer of the heart.

Hesychasm is faced during its history with a dispute triggered by a Greek monk, of Calabria, named Barlaam, who accused the hesychasts of false mysticism and superstitions. Barlaam claimed that the Tabor Light, which the hesychasts, is a created light, not identified with God, because it is limited and temporary, just like a creature. If it were identical with the divinity, he said, it would be eternal and invisible. Saint Gregory Palamas (1296 – 1359) states, against Varlaam, that:

“the Tabor Light is not created, but is a divine, eternal emanation, it is a divine work, a combination between eternity and ephemerality, between the world up there and the one down here.”<sup>14</sup>

Actually, Saint Gregory Palamas is the one who manages to synthesize in his theological writings the entire spiritual-pneumatic experience of the Orthodox Christianity, explaining its theological foundation.

“Grafted on the Evangel “of the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21: 20), founded on the prayer life of “the wounded of Christ’s love” (Paul Evdokimov), the theology of Saint Gregory Palamas reaffirmed, at the end of the Middle Ages, the vigor and resurrection-giving power of the Orthodox Church spirituality”<sup>15</sup>.

Growing more and more in size, the dispute between Barlaam and Saint Gregory Palamas led to the summoning of a council in Constantinople (1341) in whose framework the theologians analyzed and decided in favor of hesychasm. Discontent, Barlaam goes over to Catholicism and continues to criticize the hesychastic movement even more vehemently.

In another council held also in Constantinople, in the year 1531 (in whose framework Barlaam was condemned along with other adversaries of the hesychast doctrine), hesychasm was defined as doctrine of the Eastern Church.

After going through an important organization at Athos in the 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries, hesychasm spreads out in monasteries in Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania and Russia, having an important influence on the monastic and liturgical life, as it was not separated from the liturgical or sacramental spirituality. Although the hesychast texts were meant for monks and apply best in their living environment, Nicodemus of Mount Athos, collector of philocalical writings, claims that *the prayer of the heart* can be experienced both by monks and by lay people, as in the Orthodoxy there are no two models of spirituality.<sup>16</sup>

We need to mention the fact that within the hesychastic spirituality there were several trends, one of them, proposed by Saint Macarius the Egyptian insists on *guarding the heart*.

<sup>14</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, Prof. Ecaterina Braniște, *Dicționar Enciclopedic de Cunoștințe Religioase*, Editura Diecezană, Caransebeș, 2001, p. 225;

<sup>15</sup> Episcop Teofan Sinaitul, Vicar patriarhal, “*Cuvânt înainte*” in vol. *Rugăciunea lui Iisus*, Ed. “*Orthodoxos Kypseli*”, București, 1992, pp. 7-8;

<sup>16</sup> Preot Prof. Dr. Ion Bria, *Dicționar de Teologie Ortodoxă*, p. 213;

“Actually, in the Orthodox spirituality, the heart (kardia) is not the physical organ, but the spiritual center of man, created in God’s image, the deepest and truest self, the inner altar where one enters in a state of kenosis and sacrifice and where the union with Christ takes place. The heart gives unity to the human person. Therefore, “the prayer of the heart” creates an existential state of unity and integrity of the person.”<sup>17</sup>

## 2. HESYCHASM – THE PRAYER OF TRANSFIGURATION

The fact that Jesus’ prayer, in order to manifest its miraculous effects, needs to be uttered incessantly relies on our Savior’ exhortation to be vigilant and pray, an exhortation that Saint Paul the Apostle repeats as follows: “*Pray continually!*” (1 Thessalonians 6: 17). “*Continual prayer is man’s only means of accomplishing himself in his own humanity, in his own humanness.*”<sup>18</sup> We actually know that Jesus’ presence in us is the engine of any good action: “*Apart from me you can do nothing. The one who abides in me and I in him bears much fruit*” (John 15:5). The constant repetition of Jesus’ name maintains the soul focused and keeps it safe from sinful deviations.

“*The spiritual essence of Jesus’ prayer consists in the tendency to demonstrate experimentally the elevating truth that our bodies are and can be temples of the Holy Spirit. It is the prayer of transfiguration, which is the sublime feature of our Orthodoxy.*”<sup>19</sup>

Saint Ignatius Bryanchaninov says that “*it is impossible to clean the heart and chase away from it the unclean spirits without frequently calling Jesus Christ.*”<sup>20</sup>

Hesychasm relies on two great doctrinal principles: that of man’s deification in Christ, supported and formulated by the Greek Church Fathers, and one practically resulted from the experience of the Desert Fathers who put into practice both incessant prayer and vigilance.<sup>21</sup> The hesychast Fathers considered the theory and the practice of Jesus’ prayer, the meditation in silence on Jesus’ name and the state of peace produced by it not as a goal in itself but as a state favorable to the practice of virtues.

The essential elements of the hesychast spirituality are, according to Saint Symeon the New Theologian, being aware of and feeling the grace, and according to Saint Gregory Palamas, the immediate or direct contemplation of God’s grace under the form of the uncreated divine energies. According to the hesychast tradition, the body needs to participate to the spiritual efforts of the spirit.

“The hesychast asceticism is not looking for suffering and sadness, but for the power to bring about, by abstinence, resistance to the dissipation of the mind and vigilance of the heart to what is essential.”<sup>22</sup>

The Jesus Prayer has been called in various ways:

“guarding the mind, vigilance, watchfulness, work of the mind, prayer of the mind – these are various names for one and the same endeavor of the soul, according to the various ways it takes on. The endeavor of the soul turns, in its time, into endeavor of the spirit. The endeavor of the spirit is still the endeavor of the soul but shadowed by the divine grace.”<sup>23</sup>

The hesychast is that person who acquired has inner peace and quiet and lives:

<sup>17</sup> Preot Prof. Dr. Ion Bria, *Dicționar de Teologie Ortodoxă*, p. 214;

<sup>18</sup> Alexandru Mironescu, *Calea inimii. Eseuri în duhul Rugului Aprins*, Ed. Anastasia, București, 1998, p. 11;

<sup>19</sup> Nichifor Crainic, *Sfințenia – împlinirea umanului (Curs de Teologie Mistică, 1935-1936)*, p. 144;

<sup>20</sup> Sfântul Ignatie Briancianinov, *Despre rugăciunea lui Iisus. Experiențe ascetice*, vol. I, Rom. transl. Adrian and Xenia Tănăsescu-Vlas, Ed. Sofia, București, 2004, p. 254;

<sup>21</sup> Placide Deseille, *Nostalgia Ortodoxiei*, p. 152;

<sup>22</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *Vârstele vieții spirituale*, rom. transl. Pr. Prof. Ion Buga și Anca Manolescu, Ed. Humanitas, București, 2006, p. 120;

<sup>23</sup> Sfântul Ignatie Briancianinov, *Despre rugăciunea lui Iisus. Experiențe ascetice*, p.253;

“in a state of continual receptiveness. He is listening to the voice of prayer in his own heart but understands that this voice is not his, but Someone Else is speaking to him from the depths.”<sup>24</sup>

To hear God’s voice, the one who prays must keep silent, watch and be vigilant. An Orthodox writer from Finland wisely said the following words about prayer: “*When you pray, your «ego» must keep quiet ... Keep quiet and let prayer speak*”<sup>25</sup>. Referring to the one who are beginners in prayer, Saint Gregory of Mount Sinai says that they cannot chase away their thoughts alone, but they can be chased away only with God’s help. Even those advanced on the way leading to the union with the divinity wage the war against the thoughts only with the help of the arms offered by the Almighty God. Thus, when thoughts that are harmful for the soul struggle to gain dominion over us, we need to call: “*the Lord Jesus, frequently and persistently, and they will run away. Because, unable to bear the heat of the heart sprung from prayer, they run away as burnt by fire*”<sup>26</sup>. Saint Gregory Palamas said about those who chose the way of the prayer of the mind that:

“they need to be free from sinful passions and need to have set themselves free from the connection with the things in the middle, (in between themselves and God), because it is only in this way that they can reach untroubled prayer; and those who have not reached this measure (of freedom from sinful passions) but are endeavoring towards it, need to go past the slavery to pleasure (sweet slavery to sinful passions), to become totally free from sinful passions”<sup>27</sup>.

To set out to the target searched for by means of the prayer of the heart, according to Saint Symeon the New Theologian, you first need to win three things:

“lack of preoccupation towards the justified and unjustified things, namely death to everything; clean conscience keeping yourself free from blame from your own conscience; and freedom from sinful passions, not leaving yourself attracted by anything of this century or of the body.”<sup>28</sup>

### 3. THE NAME OF GOD – SPRING OF ETERNAL LIFE

The Jesus Prayer or *the prayer of the heart* originates in the biblical conception on God’s Name. The Holy Scripture reveals to us that God’s name is but one of His attributes by which He reveals Himself and by which He manifests His presence. When someone invokes Jesus’ name, he becomes worthy of receiving God in his heart.

The power of the Jesus prayer consists precisely in the miracles the Apostles were performing with the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were healing diseases that were incurable for the human powers, resurrecting dead people, chasing away demons etc. This happened as well when the Apostles Peter and John, going to pray at the temple in Jerusalem, met a lame man who was waiting to receive something. Saint Peter addresses him as follows: “*Silver and gold I do not possess, but what I do have, this I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk!*” (Acts 3: 6). This miracle scandalized the Jews in the Sanhedrim so that they ordered that the Apostles should be put under guard, and the next day they were interrogated being asked the question: “*By what power or by what name did you do this?*” (Acts 4: 7). Then Saint Peter the Apostle, illumined by the Holy

<sup>24</sup> Episcop Kallistos Ware, “Puterea Numelui. Rugăciunea lui Iisus în spiritualitatea ortodoxă”, in vol. *Rugăciunea lui Iisus...*, p. 13;

<sup>25</sup> Tito Colliander, *Le Chemin des ascetes*, Ed. Abbaye de Bellefontaine, p.13, apud *Ibidem*;

<sup>26</sup> Sfântul Grigorie Sinaitul, “Despre cele două feluri ale rugăciunii”, in vol. *Rugăciunea lui Iisus...*, p. 63;

<sup>27</sup> Sfântul Grigorie Palama, “Despre rugăciune”, in vol. *Rugăciunea lui Iisus...*, p. 65;

<sup>28</sup> Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog, “Despre al treilea fel de rugăciune”, in vol. *Rugăciunea lui Iisus...*, p. 75;



Spirit said: *“let it be known to you all and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this*

of the old monks who have succeeded in regaining and multiplying God's grace in man by a manner of living that we barely know nowadays.

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\*EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND RELIGION STUDIES

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH AND SCIENCE IN THE MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS

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### ABSTRACT

*Even though on Religion and Science opposition an impressive amount of blood has been shed, today many scientists, philosophers, and theologians throughout history have seen compatibility or independence between the two domains of thinking. The complex but enduring relationship between the sciences and diverse world religions has now transformed itself into what some are calling a new scholarly field of science and religion. In the last two decades public awareness of and interest in this complex and often contentious relationship between science and religion has reached an unprecedented level. All religious traditions and all forms of scientific work have something to gain as well as lose in the process of mutual interaction, and the historical record demonstrates profound and longstanding engagement between science and religion in all literate cultures.*

**Keywords:** *science; religions; faith; conflict; interaction; harmony; Christianity; Orthodoxy; Islam; Hinduism; Buddhism;*

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most disputed chapters in the last millennium human debate is that of the relation between religion and science, or between the model of faith and that of human reason concerning the true knowledge of man and universe. In fact, this very relationship between the two domains of knowledge has been a subject of study since classical antiquity, addressed by philosophers, theologians, scientists, and others. Perspectives from different cultures and historical epochs are so diverse, with some characterizing the relationship as one of *conflict*, others describing it as one of *harmony*, while others proposing little *interaction*.

Both science and religion constitute complex social and cultural endeavours that vary across cultures and have changed over time.<sup>1</sup> And there is an undisputable fact that most scientific and technical innovations prior to the scientific revolution were achieved by societies organized by religious traditions. Elements of the scientific method were pioneered by ancient pagan, Islamic, and Christian scholars. Therefore, at a very first glance one can notice some very relevant samples. Thus, during the so-called *Islamic Golden Age* foundations for the scientific method were laid by Ibn al-Haytham.<sup>2</sup> In Christianity, the

<sup>1</sup> Mikael STENMARK, *How to Relate Science and Religion: A Multidimensional Model*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2004, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> It is this very tradition that provides the historical context for the work of Ibn al-Haytham (Latin Alhacen, cca. 1040) on the foundations of Euclidean geometry, leading him in the process to prove theorems in non-

renowned scholastic Roger Bacon, who is often credited with formalizing the scientific method, was a Franciscan friar.<sup>3</sup>

On the same time, the *Eastern Religions* played also a crucial role for that matter. *Hinduism* has historically embraced reason and empiricism, holding that science brings legitimate, but incomplete knowledge of the world. *Confucian* thought has held different views of science over time. Most *Buddhists* today view science as complementary to their beliefs. While the classification of the material world by the ancient Indians and Greeks into air, earth, fire and water was more philosophical, medieval Middle Eastern used practical and experimental observation to classify materials.<sup>4</sup>

Thereafter, events in Europe such as the Galileo affair, associated with the scientific revolution and the Age of Enlightenment, led scholars such as John William Draper (19th century) to postulate the famous and oft-disputed *conflict thesis*, holding that religion and science have been in conflict methodologically, factually and politically throughout history. This thesis is held by some contemporary scientists such as Richard Dawkins, Steven Weinberg and Carl Sagan, and some creationists. The conflict thesis has lost favour among most contemporary historians of science.<sup>5</sup> As the American historian and sociologist of science Steven Shapin has put it:

”in the late Victorian period it was common to write about the ‘warfare between science and religion’ and to presume that the two bodies of culture must always have been in conflict. However, it is a very long time since these attitudes have been held by historians of science.”<sup>6</sup>

Many scientists, philosophers, and theologians throughout history, such as Francisco Ayala, Kenneth R. Miller and Francis Collins, have seen *compatibility* or *independence* between religion and science. Biologist Stephen Jay Gould, other scientists, and some contemporary theologians hold that religion and science are non-overlapping *magisteria*, addressing fundamentally separate forms of knowledge and aspects of life. Some theologians or historians of science, including John Lennox, Thomas Berry and Ken Wilber propose an interconnection between science and religion, while others such as Ian Barbour believe there are even parallels.

But, rigorously, both concepts of “*science*” and “*religion*” are a recent invention: the latter emerged in the 17th century in the midst of colonization and globalization and the Protestant Reformation,<sup>7</sup> while the former emerged in the 19th century in the midst of attempts to narrowly define those who studied nature,<sup>8</sup> and the phrase “*religion and science*”

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Euclidean geometry, including a formulation of what is today called the Strong Hilbert Axiom of Parallels. And it is this very environment of large-scale feverish mathematical research that explains the appearance of decimal fractions in Arabic writings some six centuries before one finds them in the Latin West. Syed Nomanul HAQ, “Science in Islam”, in: *Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, Oxford University Press, 2010. See also: *Islam & Science*, Vol. 7 (Winter 2009), No. 2, p. 153.

<sup>3</sup> Brian CLEGG, *The First Scientist: A Life of Roger Bacon*, Carroll and Graf Publishers, New York, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> *Science and Islam*, Jim Al-KHALILI, BBC, 2009, apud *Relationship between religion and science*. See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relationship\\_between\\_religion\\_and\\_science#cite\\_note-First\\_Scientist,\\_Clegg-4](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relationship_between_religion_and_science#cite_note-First_Scientist,_Clegg-4)

<sup>5</sup> The conflict thesis, at least in its simple form, is now widely perceived as a wholly inadequate intellectual framework within which to construct a sensible and realistic historiography of Western science. Cf. C.A. RUSSEL Ferngren, G.B., ed., *Science & Religion: A Historical Introduction*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Steven SHAPIN, *The Scientific Revolution*, University of Chicago Press, 1996 p. 195.

<sup>7</sup> Peter HARRISON, *The Territories of Science and Religion*, University of Chicago Press, 2015, p. 79.

<sup>8</sup> David CAHAN, ed., *From Natural Philosophy to the Sciences: Writing the History of Nineteenth-Century Science*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

loomed large in the 19th century due to the reification of both concepts. It was in the 19th century that the terms “Buddhism”, “Hinduism”, “Taoism”, and “Confucianism” came to birth.<sup>9</sup> In the ancient and medieval world, the etymological Latin roots of both science (*scientia*) and religion (*religio*) were understood as inner qualities of the individual or virtues, never as doctrines, practices, or actual sources of knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

## 1. RELIGION AND SCIENCE IN CHRISTIANITY, DICHOTOMY OR ALLIANCE?

Western culture was born from the encounter of Greek philosophy with the Judeo-Christian religion. This encounter has also shaped our present sense that rational Christianity was not directly interested in investigating the world. It assimilated Greek rationality mainly because it had to construct its own theology on Greek concepts and language.

This assimilation was far from being only passive. The Christian God became the guarantor of rationality but, on the other hand, the Greek idea of rationality has infiltrated the very concept of God. The God of the philosophers, understood as a “closure of the world,” has become a God of religion and worship.

*Cooperation* and *conflict* are the very essence of the relation between Christianity and the sciences. Cooperation, since both Christianity and science has their roots in Greek rationality; conflict because the fundamental Christian claim that God has entered into human history goes beyond the scientific method. In the eyes of Christian theology the world’s rationality is but God’s Logos immanent in the world.<sup>11</sup>

Christian theology was born in the period of the Church Fathers not as a product of intellectual curiosity but out of the need to practice and preach the new religion. There were two choices: either to be happy with common sense tenets or to undertake a process of rational reflection, and this meant using the resources of Greek philosophy. The first possibility was resignation rather than a choice. Two great personalities played an important role in this process: Origen paved the way, and Augustine established the standards for future generations.<sup>12</sup>

### 1.1. History of science and religion in Christianity

The very beginning of the famous dichotomy is identified with the Enlightenment (18th century) and the French Encyclopaedism, even if its germs are to be found in the anthropocentric vision of the Renaissance.

“This attitude, which maintained for a long time the representatives of the two paradigms of thinking on schizoid positions, has its peak in the nineteenth century, that witnessed the emergence of evolutionary theories or of Pierre-Simon Laplace’ cosmology, and in the twentieth century, which brought with it the radicalized secularization of communist regimes (who used the theoretical framework of dialectical and historical materialism). The two “camps” have long been in irreconcilable-antagonistic positions, very few bridges spanning between them”.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Jason Ananda JOSEPHSON, *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, University of Chicago Press, 2012, p. 45.

<sup>10</sup> Peter HARRISON, *The Territories of Science and Religion*, p. 103.

<sup>11</sup> George V. COYNE & Michael HELLER, *A Comprehensible Universe. The Interplay of Science and Theology*, Springer-Verlag, New York, 2008, p. 33.

<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to follow the laborious adaptations of the Greek model of the world to the needs of Christian theology. The greatest challenge was the biblical doctrine of creation. Early Christian writers, while not abandoning the original biblical meaning, did not, on the other hand, resist the Greek instinct to seek the “mechanisms” of the world’s origin, and they elaborated the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. It was also a reaction against Gnostic teaching that the “principle of evil” is inherent and resident in matter. *Ibid*, p. 34.

<sup>13</sup> Alexandru-Corneliu ARION, “The origin of the world from science and religion perspectives”, in: *Icon of Faith, International Journal of Interdisciplinary Scientific Research*, Year 3, No. 6, June, 2017, pp. 38-39.

The more important than the historical considerations in the conflict between the two domains of knowledge are the philosophical obstacles, especially the epistemological ones, which religion and theology pose to the sceptics of science. The main problem is that religious ideas seem not to be experimentally tested. In other words, they apparently escape the rigors of public scrutiny, while science always obeys the ideas of open experimentation. If an empirical research shows that a scientific hypothesis is wrong, science puts it aside and looks for alternatives, subjecting them to the same rigorous verification process. But can we do the same thing with religious teachings? Theists, for example, continue to believe in God, no matter what they observe around them, including enormous suffering and evil. The followers of scientific scepticism say that religion does not have the solid probity of science. The God-hypothesis, for example, seems to be totally out of any falsification, so it cannot be accepted by the 'courthouse' of science. On the other hand, within the many debates among the representatives of the two paradigms of knowledge, there have been several important names of philosophers of science or physicists who have pleaded for the Christian origin of modern science.<sup>14</sup>

But, after all, throwing a diachronic eye on the matter, the fundamental *question* facing the Christian scholar in any discipline can be seen as a specific form of a general query that was posed within two centuries of Christ's death by the Carthaginian father Tertullian (c. 155-230): "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church?" As the phrasing implies, Tertullian's attitude towards Greek philosophy was generally negative, though he acknowledged a legitimate role for reason within the bounds of religion. Other patristic authors looked more favorably on pagan philosophy and literature, especially Origen (c. 185-254), who required his students to read nearly every work available to them at the time and found some truth in most of them. The moderate position of Augustine of Hippo (354-430), who considered reason a divine gift resting on the foundation of faith, was by far the most influential on later Christian thinking.<sup>15</sup>

For nearly twelve hundred years Christian scholars were not confronted with the full force of Aristotle's sophisticated naturalism. On the other hand, they did have Plato's *Timaeus*, a dialogue about creation in which a god imposes mathematical form on undifferentiated matter. Although the differences between Plato's story and Genesis are significant, there are enough similarities that Plato was readily seen as a pagan prophet of Christianity. Plato's rejection of purely natural and unintelligent causes in forming the world, coupled with his belief in the immortality of the soul and the superiority of mind over matter, made him highly attractive to Christian writers. The relative ease with which Platonic

<sup>14</sup> We mention, *inter alia*, the Romanian physicist Basarab Nicolescu and the French philosopher Alexandre Kojève. See: Alexandru-Corneliu ARION, „Întâlniri cu Realitatea”. *Repere pentru dialogul contemporan dintre teologie și cultură* (“Encounters with Reality”. *Landmarks for contemporary dialogue between theology and culture*), Preface by Prof. Dr. Lucian Turcescu, Cetatea de Scaun, Târgoviște, 2017, p. 439-440.

<sup>15</sup> Although he cautioned Christians not to devote too much energy to the study of nature, which cannot lead to salvation, Augustine recognized Greek scientists as reliable authorities on natural matters and cautioned Christians against making nonsensical claims about nature, based on some presumed meaning of scripture, for this would only cause people to laugh at the ignorance of Christians. For details: David C. LINDBERG, and Ronald L. NUMBERS, eds. *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

elements could be incorporated into a Christian world view – and vice versa, depending on who was doing the philosophizing – gave considerable support to the handmaiden model.<sup>16</sup>

The situation changed dramatically with the reintroduction into Northern and Western Europe of a large body of Greek scientific and medical works. This process began around 1000 C.E. and led within two centuries to the appearance of universities dominated by Aristotelian natural philosophy, strongly flavored by the ideas of Islamic scholars who had worked with translations of Greek texts for hundreds of years.<sup>17</sup>

In the later middle ages and continuing into the Renaissance, partly in reaction to the hold Aristotelianism had gained on the universities, Platonism enjoyed a revival. Many Renaissance thinkers followed Plato by emphasizing mathematics as the key to understanding nature, but differed fundamentally from Plato in their belief that the physical world perfectly embodies God's geometrical design; Plato had taught that physical objects are only imperfect "shadows" of the perfect forms. The difference was a consequence of the Christian doctrine of creation: An omnipotent God would carry out the plan of creation to perfection.<sup>18</sup> By the right use of geometry, one might literally read the mind of God and discover the deepest secrets of creation. Inspired partly by his neo-Platonist beliefs and strongly encouraged by church authorities to publish his ideas, the quiet and conservative Copernicus advanced a radical new theory of the universe that placed the Earth in motion about a stationary sun. J. Kepler found this theory attractive for several reasons, including his belief that the three parts of the Copernican universe symbolized the Trinity – the central sun with its emanating light representing God the Father, the starry sphere God the Son, and the intermediate space God the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup>

In defense of the new astronomy, Kepler (a German Protestant) and Galileo (an Italian Catholic) both employed the Augustinian principle of accommodation to justify the figurative interpretation of biblical references to the motion of the sun. The Bible, they argued, speaks in a human way about ordinary matters in a way that can be understood by the common person, using ordinary speech to convey loftier theological truths. Thus, the literal sense of texts making reference to nature should not be mistaken for accurate scientific statements, but the wise interpreter could show how the book of scripture did not really contradict the book of nature.<sup>20</sup>

More than a century later, Christian thinkers were reluctant to cite scripture on scientific matters, no doubt because the age and origin of the Earth had become topics of

<sup>16</sup> Arthur PEACOCKE, *Theology for a Scientific Age: Being and Becoming–Natural, Divine, and Human*, rev. edition, Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1993, p. 96.

<sup>17</sup> The influence of Ibn Rushd (known in the West as Averroës, 1126–1198), an extreme rationalist who elevated Aristotle over traditional Islamic teaching, was especially important in this connection. Christian scholars were now faced with a powerful, systematic body of natural knowledge, comprehensive in scope and secular in spirit, and they responded in various ways. Cf. John POLKINGHORNE, *Belief in God in an Age of Science*. New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 1998.

<sup>18</sup> For Christian neo-Platonists like Nicolas Copernicus (1473–1543), Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), and Johannes Kepler (1571–1630), God was eternally thinking geometric thoughts. *Ibid*, p. 136.

<sup>19</sup> Edward B. DAVIS, "Christianity, History of Science and Religion", in *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, J. Wentzel Vrede VAN HUYSTEEN, editor-in-chief, Thomson Gale, Macmillan Reference, USA, 2003, p.125.

<sup>20</sup> Citing rules established by the Council of Trent in response to Protestant reformers, Catholic authorities found this unacceptable and ordered Galileo not to teach the new astronomy. Galileo, who often treated opponents arrogantly, ignored this warning and published a vigorous attack on traditional astronomy in which he thoughtlessly insulted his friend, Pope Urban VIII, and Galileo was sentenced to house arrest by the Inquisition in 1633. Cf. Roland Mushat FRYE, "The Two Books of God", in *Is God a Creationist?*, Roland Mushat Frye, ed., New York: Scribner, 1983, p. 268.

serious scientific discussion. Many natural historians and theologians saw in the books of nature and scripture essentially the same story, going beyond the general assumption of harmony to endorse a strong *agreement*, arguing for close parallels between Genesis and geology and sometimes inventing elaborate hermeneutical schemes to achieve harmonization.

But with the acceptance of Darwinian evolution, however, this type of agreement fell out of favor, though some conservative Protestants still embrace it, and no single approach to theology and science has generated a wide enough following to function as its replacement. The first American Darwinian, Asa Gray (1810-1888), thought that his acceptance of evolution had no bearing on his belief in the miracles of Christ and the doctrines affirmed by the Nicene Creed, thus holding a compatibilist or complementarian view of theology and science. At the same time, Gray tried to rebuild natural theology along evolutionary lines – a combination that has never been common, although a number of orthodox and neo-orthodox thinkers in the following century held some type of complementarian position.<sup>21</sup>

From the 1870s to the 1920s, many Protestant scientists and theologians and some Roman Catholics believed that higher biblical criticism, as well as natural science, mandated the formulation of a new theology stressing divine immanence, God's everyday working in and through the processes of nature.<sup>22</sup>

Both world wars had a devastating impact on such an optimistic view, leading the English logician Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) argued that the very possibility of modern science depended upon the unconsciously held belief, derived from medieval theology, that the created order must be intelligible, thus finding an inextricable link between theology and science. He also developed a highly sophisticated process metaphysics that has profoundly influenced some important modern theologians, philosophers, and scientists. Motivated partly by a desire to embrace evolution and even more by a desire to mitigate God's responsibility for suffering, process theologians believe that God has only limited power to influence natural and human events, rather than the omnipotence needed to create the world *ex nihilo*.

The world and God are seen as coeval entities evolving together, and many contemporary process thinkers follow Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000) in affirming *pantheism*<sup>23</sup> rather than traditional theism. Ironically, perhaps the greatest challenge to process theology comes from the modern science it seeks to embrace, but from the evolution of the cosmos rather than the evolution of life.

<sup>21</sup> Robert BOYLE, *A Free Enquiry into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature* (1686), ed. Edward B. Davis and Michael Hunter, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

<sup>22</sup> Some liberals took this further, including several modernists from the 1920s who denied miracles and special revelation and essentially identified God with the laws of nature, thus completely rejecting divine transcendence. Liberals saw morality as the essence of religion; asserting the fundamental goodness and perfectibility of humanity, many also believed that the science of eugenics would help them establish the kingdom of God on Earth. See: Ian BARBOUR, *Religion in an Age of Science: The Gifford Lectures, 1989–1991*, Vol. 1. San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1990, p. 235.

<sup>23</sup> "*Pantheism*" is a constructed word equivalent of the Greek terms "pan", meaning all, "en", meaning in, and "theism", meaning God. Pan-en-theism considers God and the world to be inter-related with the world being in God and God being in the world. It offers an increasingly popular alternative to both traditional theism and pantheism. Pantheism seeks to avoid either isolating God from the world as traditional theism often does or identifying God with the world as pantheism does. *Traditional theistic* systems emphasize the difference between God and the world while *pantheism* stresses God's active presence in the world and the world's influence upon God. See John CULP, "Pantheism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/pantheism/>



“Since the mid-1960s, astronomers have discovered a wealth of evidence favoring the Big Bang theory of cosmology; evidence suggesting not only that the universe had a ‘beginning’ but also that the laws of nature were exquisitely tuned for the presence of living things. Many think that a universe with these features seems more consistent with *creatio ex nihilo* than its denial”.<sup>24</sup>

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, a good number of leading Christian scientists and theologians including some who combine that role such as Ian Barbour (1923-2013), Arthur Peacocke (1924-2006), and John Polkinghorne (1930- ), are engaged in a growing international conversation about issues of interest to both communities, and the range of opinion reflects disagreements about the nature of God, the nature of humanity, and the nature of nature.<sup>25</sup>

## 1.2. Science and religion in Orthodoxy

In the first centuries of Christianity, the attitude to the sciences was established in the context of its encounter with classical Hellenistic culture. Since Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215), philosophy and the sciences were considered human activities cooperating in ultimate truth, as useful tools in order to defend faith and make it demonstrable, and important for Christian education. The Greek Fathers asserted that scientific knowledge is incomplete in itself and must be supported by wider views of reality, which are accessible through faith. Knowledge and the sciences thus have their foundation in faith.<sup>26</sup>

Today it is clear that the impetuous energies of the human-minded spirit begin to quench, so that we do not signal – only very sporadically – the “tantrums” of the scientists against the adepts of religious thinking. For at the epistemological level in the dispute of science *versus* religion, it is becoming increasingly clear that the scientific model, blocked for centuries in its reductionist prejudices, seems to be now intuitively bringing near the prospects of a deeper knowledge, of the spirit of the theological demarche.

The encounter between theology and culture is rather a way of life manifested by the assumption of certain methodological landmarks. Today, we are more than ever aware that theology can affirm a “culture of Spirit” (R. Noica) as space of the encounter between divine grace and human knowledge, between the word of God and the human word. The Religion-Science dialogue, where the two are equal partners of that dialogue, without mingling and without separation, calls for the effort of theological interpretation of culture, because what can give consistency to culture, as fruit of the mind and human sensibility, is not human reason alone, but the divine-human reason, whereon theology is built.

The information explosion from the beginning of the third millennium, the scientific discoveries located near the border with fiction, the globalization of such a heterogeneous world, the preservation of the identity of each nation raises as many questions as to a future that everybody desires full of love and peace. It seems that the only landmark that remains to most of us in a more and more troubled world is faith.

But as we turn to faith, we ask ourselves more often: how can we believe in the reconciliation between an incredibly advanced science and a faith that seems to turn us back to the past? That is presumably a question that has long stirred the Western world, but to which we, the Romanians hardly dare to think now, after the collapse of communism. The

<sup>24</sup> Edward B. DAVIS, “Christianity, History of Science and Religion”, p. 126.

<sup>25</sup> See also John H. BROOKE, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991; Edward B. DAVIS, “The Word and the Works: Concordism and American Evangelicals”, in: *Perspectives on an Evolving Creation*, ed. Keith Miller. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002.

<sup>26</sup> Fr. PhD. Alexandru-Corneliu ARION, “The origin of the world from science and religion perspectives”, p. 40.

elusion of the present data of the science-religion ratio results in the violent confrontation of traditional cultures and religions, threatened in this way with the evanescence or at least taking over the reins by a global culture and world religion, both based on the same denominator, i.e. on an absolute mediocrity. In this context, the dialogue between science and Orthodox theology can contribute to the reconfiguration of globalization itself, which can achieve less schizoid or spiritual traumatic accents. Orthodoxy, at least in its patristic foundations and in those of contemporary theologians as well as, has always been open to the understanding of nature by integrating it into the divine act.<sup>27</sup>

## 2. RELIGION AND SCIENCE IN ISLAM

The word *Islam* means “surrender or submission” to God’s will. It also means “peace.” In a sense, it is through submission to the divine will that a human attains inner peace. One who submits to the divine will is called *Muslim*.<sup>28</sup>

In the nineteenth century, the Muslim world’s encounter with *modern science* took the form of a double challenge, simultaneously material and intellectual. The Ottoman Empire’s defense against the military rise of Western countries, followed by successful colonization, made it necessary to acquire Western technology, and, therefore, the science behind it. The pressure of modern science on Islam has remained very strong. The West appears as the model of progress that the Muslim world has to reach, or at least follow, through the training of technicians and engineers and through the massive transfer of those technologies that are key to development. But more than anything else, the encounter of Islam with modern science stimulated philosophical and doctrinal thinking, provoked in some fashion by an inaugural event, the famous lecture titled “Islam and Science,” which Ernest Renan (†1892) delivered at the Sorbonne (in 1883). In the lecture, where he expressed his own positivist perspective, Renan criticized the Muslims’ utter inability to produce scientific discoveries, as well as their supposed inability to think rationally.<sup>29</sup>

Intellectual Muslims of the time, who were in contact with the Western intelligentsia, considered the lecture offensive. Those intellectuals then championed the idea that Islam never experienced a rupture between science and religion, whereas Christianity, and especially Catholicism, had known a long period of conflict with science. They argued that modern science is nothing other than “Muslim science” developed long ago in the classical era of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates, and finally transferred to the West in thirteenth-century Spain, thanks to translations that later would make possible both the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.<sup>30</sup>

From an Islamic standpoint, science, the study of nature, is considered to be linked to the concept of *Tawhid* (the Oneness of God), as are all other branches of

<sup>27</sup> For details: Alexei NESTERUK, “Christianity, Orthodox, issues in Science and Religion”, in *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, J. Wentzel Vrede VAN HUYSSTEEN, ed., pp. 130-131; Fr. Alexandru-Corneliu ARION, *Encounters with Reality. Landmarks for contemporary dialogue between theology and culture*, pp. 28-95.

<sup>28</sup> In the Qur’an, the word Muslim refers not only to humans but also to other creatures and the inanimate world. Cf. Abd Al-Rahman AZZAM, *The Eternal Message of Muhammad*, Cambridge, UK: Islamic Texts Society, 1993, p. 42.

<sup>29</sup> Bruno GUIDERDONI, “Islam, contemporary issues in Science and Religion”, in *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, p. 465.

<sup>30</sup> Alparslan ACIKGENC, *Islamic Science: Towards a Definition*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1996; Also, Alexandru-Corneliu ARION, „*Rolul Islamului în cultura Europei*“ (“The role of Islam in European culture”), in „Annals“ of „Valahia“ University, Târgoviște, Faculty of Theology, 2004, pp. 238-252.

knowledge.<sup>31</sup> In Islam, nature is not seen as a separate entity, but rather as an integral part of Islam's holistic outlook on God, humanity, and the world. The Islamic view of science and nature is continuous with that of religion and God. This link implies a sacred aspect to the pursuit of scientific knowledge by Muslims, as nature itself is viewed in the Qur'an as a compilation of signs pointing to the Divine.<sup>32</sup>

Ibn al-Haytham († 1040)<sup>33</sup>, an Arab Muslim, was an early proponent of the concept that a hypothesis must be proved by experiments based on confirmable procedures or mathematical evidence – hence understanding the scientific method 200 years before Renaissance scientists. Ibn al-Haytham described his theology:

“I constantly sought knowledge and truth, and it became my belief that for gaining access to the effulgence and closeness to God, there is no better way than that of searching for truth and knowledge”.<sup>34</sup>

With the decline of Islamic Civilizations in the late Middle Ages and the rise of Europe, the Islamic scientific tradition shifted into a new period. Institutions that had existed for centuries in the Muslim world looked to the new scientific institutions of European powers. This changed the practice of science in the Muslim world, as Islamic scientists had to confront the western approach to scientific learning, which was based on a different philosophy of nature.<sup>35</sup> From the time of this initial upheaval of the Islamic scientific tradition to the present day, Muslim scientists and scholars have developed a spectrum of viewpoints on the place of scientific learning within the context of Islam, none of which are universally accepted or practiced. However, most maintain the view that the acquisition of knowledge and scientific pursuit in general is not in disaccord with Islamic thought and religious belief.<sup>36</sup>

In addition, the Islamic *metaphysics* underlying epistemology and ethics is deeply marked by the dialectic of the visible and of the invisible. Phenomena are the signs of divine action in the cosmos. In fact, God is present in the world, the creation of which God ceaselessly “renews” at every moment (*tajdīd al-khalq*). The articulation of this form of “opportunism” with causality – and modern science’s determinism and indeterminism – remains to be elaborated.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, one has to provide content to the term *Islamic science*. The issue is simultaneously one of ethics (personal and collective), of epistemology, and of the metaphysical *Weltanschauung* it presupposes. When passing from theory to practice, each current of thought must face specific problems resulting not only from its specific position but also from the Muslim world’s economic and social difficulties. What remains to be established is the degree to which the most ambitious project – that of Islamic science as *Sacred Science* – can amount to more than a nostalgic glance at the past and move on to the stage of its actual implementation by a spiritual and intellectual elite. The future of the

<sup>31</sup> Muzaffar IQBAL, *Science & Islam*, Greenwood Press, 2007, pp. 67-68.

<sup>32</sup> Toshihiko IZUTSU, *God and Man in the Koran*, Weltanschauung, Tokyo, 1964, p. 97. It was with this understanding that science was studied and understood in Islamic civilizations, specifically during the eighth to sixteenth centuries, prior to the colonization of the Muslim world.

<sup>33</sup> He is one of the principal Arab mathematicians and, without any doubt, the best physicist.

<sup>34</sup> C. PLOTT, *Global History of Philosophy: The Period of Scholasticism*, Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi, 2000, p. 465.

<sup>35</sup> Muzaffar IQBAL, *Science & Islam*, p. 79.

<sup>36</sup> Seyyid Hossein NASR, “Islam and Modern Science” (A Lecture). URL=<http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ip/nasr1.htm>

<sup>37</sup> Isma’il Raji Al-FARUQI, ed., *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan*, Washington, D.C.: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982.

Islamic civilization's contribution to the development of universal knowledge is tied to the answer that will be given to that question.<sup>38</sup>

### 3. RELIGION AND SCIENCE IN HINDUISM

Modern science was brought to India during the 1800s by the British as a part of the colonization process. The goal of science in the colony was not the advancement of science but rather the exploration of natural resources, flora, and fauna to feed the needs and demands of Britain and its ongoing industrial revolution.<sup>39</sup>

Traditionally, Hindu thinkers approach the still unresolved mystery of the universe by looking back to Brahman (the Divine) as somehow associated with the creation or production of the universe. Scientific theory has speculated that the universe may arise from a quantum vacuum state, which is a peculiar mixture of emptiness and activity. Ancient sages had similar thoughts. The Sanskrit concept of *zero*, when applied to Brahman, is identified with both fullness and emptiness. Zero also makes possible advances in mathematics and modern digital technology. The universe is ontologically characterized by the term *Brahman* from the root *brh* "to expand." The *rishi* (old sages) thought of the universe as an "expanding Brahman," which is consistent with contemporary cosmological thinking.<sup>40</sup>

Traditional Indian thought is characterized by a *holistic* vision. Instead of breaking experience and reality up into isolated fragments, the Indian thinkers looked at the whole and reconciled tensions and seeming contradictions within overarching categories. Thus the poets of the *Rigveda* speak of *vishva-jyoti*, cosmic light as the principle and source of everything, and of *rta*, the universal cosmic order connecting and directing all particular phenomena and events. The Upanishads organize the world by relating everything to the *pañcabhutas* (five elements: earth, water, light, wind, ether) and identify in Brahman an all-embracing reality-principle. The name of the major deity of later Hinduism is *Vishnu*, the "all-pervading," whose body is the universe. Nature (*prakṛti*) was never seen as mere object, but always as productive agent. Religion was a natural part of the universally accepted order of things.<sup>41</sup>

But what is of much interest for our paper is that research in the history of Indian science is still in an early stage and much work remains to be done. New material is regularly published in the well-established *Indian Journal for the History of Science, Vedic Science*, and other periodicals. Thus, Indian mathematics developed out of the requirements for the Vedic *yajña*. The *Yajurveda* knows terms for numbers up to  $10^{12}$  (by comparison the highest number named by the Greeks was  $10^4$ ). Later on the Indians coined terms for numbers up to  $10^{24}$  and  $10^{53}$ . Algebra, in spite of its Arabic name, is an Indian invention, and

<sup>38</sup> Nasim BUTT, *Science and Muslim Societies*, London: Grey Seal, 1991, p. 208; Leif STENBERG, *The Islamization of Science: Four Muslim Positions Developing an Islamic Modernity*. Lund, Sweden: Lunds Universitet, 1996.

<sup>39</sup> In the colonial context of India there was also discrimination against deserving Indian scientists who were relegated to positions below their entitlement and paid half the salary of their British counterparts. Cf. William HALBFASS, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988.

<sup>40</sup> The current idea of a Big Bang in which very dense matter explodes into an expanding universe is seen to be prefigured by the Upanishadic notion *bindu* – a dimensionless point that is a unity of both static and dynamic forces, the dynamic expressing itself as the universe of multiplicity while essentially remaining a unity or order (*rta*). Harold COWARD, "Hinduism, contemporary issues in Science and Religion", in *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, p. 402.

<sup>41</sup> D.M. BOSE; S.N. SEN and B.V. SUBBARAYAPPA, eds., *A Concise History of Science in India*, New Delhi, India: Indian National Science Academy, 1984, p. 235.

so are the *zero* and the decimal system, including the “Arabic” numerals. The names of some great Indian mathematicians and some particulars of their accomplishments are known.<sup>42</sup>

*Vaisheshika*, one of the six orthodox *darshanas*, offers a theory of atomism more ancient than that of the Greek philosopher Democritus, and a detailed analysis of *visheshas*, qualities and differences, after which the system is named. The *Vaisheshika-sutra* describes the formation of physical bodies from atoms through dyads and triads in a strict cause-effect series. The positioning of the atoms determines the qualities of a body. *Vaisheshika* also developed the notion of *impetus*, a concept that appeared in Western science only in the fourteenth century.<sup>43</sup>

India’s spiritual fame in the West is of long standing. During the fourth century b.Ch. Alexander the Great, intrigued by the proverbial wisdom of the *brahmins*, sought out the company of what the Greeks called *gymnosophists* on his Indian expedition (eventually replacing his mentor Aristotle by Kálanos, an Indian sage). Six centuries later, the philosopher Plotinus joined the expedition of Emperor Gordian in order to meet the famed Indian sages.<sup>44</sup>

By the late twenty-first century, there are thousands of Indian scientists with a Hindu background. Most do not see a conflict between their religion and their science, but some do notice a difference in orientation. Some have been led to astounding discoveries through the application of ancient Hindu insights to new fields of enquiry. Thus the biologist Jagdish Chandra Bose (1860–1937) used the Upanishadic idea of the universal *Atman* to conduct groundbreaking research in plant physiology. The traditional Hindu holistic and personalistic orientation could serve as a necessary corrective to mainstream Western science<sup>45</sup> with its Cartesian legacy of an impersonal mechanistic worldview and a purely pragmatic, analytic approach to nature.

#### 4. RELIGION AND SCIENCE IN BUDDHISM

The fundamental Buddhist ideas of interdependence and impermanence are based on a rational apprehension of the world that can be likened to the modern scientific method. Because of this basic shared approach, Buddhism and science does not come into serious conflict. The primary concern of Buddhism is to relieve human spiritual suffering and not to clarify the laws of nature. Thus Buddhists have freely adopted the practical scientific technologies of each epoch and place. For Buddhists, scientific technology is neither good nor evil. However, Buddhism recognizes that a self-centered application of technology can harm the integrity of other life forms, and hard to these can in turn harm human beings.

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<sup>42</sup> Thus Aryabhathiya I (fifth century C.E.), a link in a long chain of unknown earlier master mathematicians, knew the rules for extracting square and cubic roots. He determined the value of  $\pi$  to four decimals and developed an alphabetical system for expressing numbers on the decimal place value model. For details, see: T. Renga Rajan IYENGAR, *Hinduism and Scientific Quest*, Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997.

<sup>43</sup> However, the other *darshana* with which it has been paired, *Nyaya*, concerned with epistemology and logic, declares that such analysis is necessary for obtaining spiritual liberation. Cf. Brajendranath SEAL, *The Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus*, Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass, 1958.

<sup>44</sup> No less a modern Western scientist than Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger (1887–1961), who won the Nobel prize for physics in 1933, has paid tribute to that “other” science: “The subject of every science is always the spirit and there is only that much true science in every endeavor as it contains spirit”. Erwin SCHRÖDINGER, *My View of the World*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1964, p. 495.

<sup>45</sup> Klaus K. KLOSTERMAIER, “Hinduism, History of Science and Religion”, in *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, p. 409.

Buddhism emphasizes the holistic relationship of life and the harmonious coexistence of all beings and all things.<sup>46</sup>

Historically, Buddhists have placed highest value on a supermundane wisdom that is beyond secular attachments and have encouraged compassionate acts toward all living beings. For Buddhists, there was no need to take part in practices such as sacrificial rituals, divination, or astrology, which have been popular in the societies of the various countries Buddhism has entered. The natural sciences also never became a significant part of Buddhist practice, although Buddhists were eager to introduce into their practices the knowledge of medicine and pharmacology, as well as more practical scientific technologies from paper and ink making to metallurgy, sculpture, and architecture. Such practical knowledge provided them with advanced skills in building temples, carving and casting statues, and printing scriptures, all of which helped in spreading the teaching of Buddhism. As it was already pointed out, the concepts of zero and fractions were first discovered in India. And the very discovery of zero is considered to be related to the Buddhist concept of impermanence or *anatman* (no-self).<sup>47</sup>

Science focuses on the external world and seeks to analyze objectively the phenomena of the universe, including human beings, to clarify the principle behind each phenomenon and to apply its discoveries to society to bring comfort to human lives. On the other hand, Buddhist teaching focuses mainly on the inner self as it faces the reality of suffering. The Buddhist path aims at pinpointing and eradicating causes of suffering for the sake of the accomplishment of the totality of the individual human being and that being's peace of mind. Therefore, Buddhism, which focuses on the individual, did not develop a standpoint of observing the universe and natural phenomena objectively, and Buddhism did not attempt to formulate a mechanical model of the universe.<sup>48</sup>

Buddhism and science have increasingly been discussed as compatible, and Buddhism has entered into the science and religion dialogue.<sup>49</sup> The case is made that the philosophic and psychological teachings within Buddhism share commonalities with modern scientific and philosophic thought. For example, Buddhism encourages the impartial investigation of Nature, the principal object of study being oneself. Some popular conceptions of Buddhism connect it to discourse regarding evolution, quantum theory, and cosmology, though most scientists see a separation between the religious and metaphysical statements of Buddhism and the methodology of science.<sup>50</sup> In 1993 a model deduced from Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development was published arguing that Buddhism is a fourth mode of thought beyond magic, science and religion.<sup>51</sup>

Buddhism has been described by some as rational and non-dogmatic, and there is evidence that this has been the case from the earliest period of its history, though some have suggested this aspect is given greater emphasis in modern times and is in part a

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<sup>46</sup> James A. AUSTIN, *Zen and the Brain: Toward an Understanding of Meditation and Consciousness*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998.

<sup>47</sup> Ronald Y. NAKASONE, *Ethics of Enlightenment*, Freemont, Calif.: Dharma Cloud Publishers, 1990, p. 158.

<sup>48</sup> Jeremy W. HAYWARD and Francisco J. VARELA, eds., *Gentle Bridges: Conversations with the Dalai Lama on the Science of Mind*, Boston and London: Shambhala, 2001.

<sup>49</sup> Amos YONG, *Buddhism and Science: Breaking New Ground (review)*, *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, Volume 25, 2005, pp. 176-180.

<sup>50</sup> Donald S. LOPEZ Jr., *Buddhism and Science: A Guide for the Perplexed*, University of Chicago Press, 2008, pp. 135-138.

<sup>51</sup> Stanley Jeyaraja TAMBIAH, *Magic, Science and Religion and the Scope of Rationality*, Cambridge University Press, 1990.

reinterpretation.<sup>52</sup> Buddhist teacher S.N. Goenka describes *Buddhadharma* as a “pure science of mind and matter”. He claims Buddhism uses precise, analytical philosophical and psychological terminology and reasoning. Goenka's presentation describes Buddhism not so much as belief in a body of unverifiable dogmas, but an active, impartial, objective investigation of things as they are. In science, a theory should be tested in several ways before it can be accepted by the scientific community. The Buddha also recommended, in the *Kālāma Sūtra*, that any teaching and insight given by any teacher should be tested by our own experience before it can be accepted as the truth.

Real insight or right view has the capacity to liberate, and to bring peace and happiness. The findings of science are also insight; they can be applied in technology, but can be applied also to our daily behaviour to improve the quality of our life and happiness. Buddhists and scientists can share with each other their ways of studying and practice and can profit from each other's insights and experience.<sup>53</sup>

The relationship between science and Buddhism is not contradictory, for each can mutually understand the knowledge and wisdom of the other and bring benefits to humans and the Earth. In order to nurture a productive relationship between Buddhism and science, three important attitudes should be maintained. *First*, there must be a transformation of viewpoint from self-centered interests to a universal vision. *Second*, people must respect the values of modern science, yet avoid reducing all existences to material or mathematical formulae. *Third*, people must stop simply discussing problems and start acting to protect living beings and the environment.<sup>54</sup>

In 1989, the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet discussed his idea of the relationship between Buddhism and science when he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize. The problems people face today, such as violent conflicts, destruction of nature, poverty, hunger, and so on, are human-created problems that can be resolved through human effort, understanding, and a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood. The Dalai Lama stated that people need to cultivate a universal responsibility for one another and the planet.

Buddhists and the spiritual leaders of many other religions support the Dalai Lama's vision. Buddhists believe that people should not negate science simply by pointing out the harms created by modern science. Rather, scientists and religious leaders need to make more efforts to cooperate and depend on each other to bring happiness to Earth and humans.<sup>55</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The dialogue between science and religion is one of the most prominent and visible discourses of our time. The complex but enduring relationship between the sciences and diverse world religions has now transformed itself into what some are calling a new scholarly field of *science and religion*. This multifaceted conversation has developed into a

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<sup>52</sup> Judith SNODGRASS, *Defining Modern Buddhism: Mr. and Mrs. Rhys Davids and the Pāli Text Society*, Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, Volume 27, No. 1, 2007, pp. 186-202. Not all forms of Buddhism eschew dogmatism, remain neutral on the subject of the supernatural, or are open to scientific discoveries. Buddhism is a varied tradition and aspects include fundamentalism, devotional traditions, supplication to local spirits, and various superstitions.

<sup>53</sup> Thich Nhat HANH, “Categories View/Events”. Plumvillage.org. Archived from the original on June 4, 2012.

<sup>54</sup> Mary Evelyn TUCKER, and Duncan Ryuken WILLIAMS, eds., *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*, Boston: Harvard University Press, 1998, p. 245.

<sup>55</sup> Sidney PIBURN, ed., *The Dalai Lama: A Policy of Kindness*, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1990; Jeremy W. HAYWARD and Francisco J. VARELA, eds., *Gentle Bridges: Conversations with the Dalai Lama on the Science of Mind*.

sustained and dynamic discourse with direct implications for contemporary culture. This discourse affects all religions, in both their intellectual and social dimensions. It also analyzes, supports, and constrains the global impact of the sciences of our times.

In the last two-three decades public awareness of and interest in this complex and often contentious relationship between science and religion has reached an unprecedented level. Courses in science and religion are now taught worldwide at a great number of educational institutions. Centers for the study of science and religion are actively pursuing the challenges and complexities of this dialogue; local and international societies for science and religion have been, and are being, established. There is also an exploding number of publications, journals, newsletters, and papers. Most recently, the science and religion dialogue has established an impressive new presence on the Internet.<sup>56</sup>

Spectacular advances in the sciences no longer easily threaten religions around the world because the risks and devastating consequences of new technologies have problematized the formerly unquestioned ideal of scientific progress. Scientific advances still challenge basic religious convictions, however, and the intellectual representatives of the world's religious traditions grapple with scientific knowledge more effectively and pervasively than ever before, thanks to the science-religion dialogue. Today sciences as varied as the neurosciences, ecology, and biotechnology raise questions about human beings and the future of our planetary home, perhaps especially for those who possess a sense of the divine. Similarly, chaos theory, quantum mechanics, and the ever-deepening understanding of the role of chance in biological systems conspire to challenge the notions of ultimate reality and divine action espoused by religious traditions and sacred texts.

There are interesting, if controversial, reasons why Christian theologians have often taken the lead in discussing the relationship of the sciences to the religions. An unfortunate side effect of this leadership is that, at certain times and places in recent decades, the dialogue has seemed limited by the caricature that only Christianity fostered modern science. But this version of events is historically inaccurate and deeply misleading. The evidence is that all religious traditions and all forms of scientific work have something to gain as well as lose in the process of mutual interaction, and the historical record demonstrates profound and longstanding engagement between science and religion in all literate cultures. For instance, Niels Bohr, who developed the *Bohr Model* of the atom, said:

“For a parallel to the lesson of atomic theory...[we must turn] to those kinds of epistemological problems with which already thinkers like the Buddha and Lao Tzu have been confronted, when trying to harmonize our position as spectators and actors in the great drama of existence.”<sup>57</sup>

Over and above, all the endeavors from both sides of human attempt to reaching at a better understanding of the Reality we live in, is so emphatically underscored by Romanian-born French physicist Basarab Nicolescu: “If Science and Religion accept to dialogue, then the Blind will see and the Deaf will hear.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> J. Wentzel Vrede VAN HUYSTEEEN, *Preface at Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, p. VII.

<sup>57</sup> Niels BOHR, *Atomic Physics and Human Knowledge*, edited by John Wiley and Sons, 1958, p. 20.

<sup>58</sup> “If Science and Religion accept to dialogue, then the Blind will see and the Deaf will hear”, Basarab NICOLESCU interviewed by Petrișor Militaru and Marius Ene, in: *Transdisciplinarity in Science and Religion*, No. 6/2009, pp. 419-431; See, also: Fr. Alexandru-Corneliu ARION, “Encounters with Reality”. *Landmarks for contemporary dialogue between theology and culture*, p. 451.



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## ORTHODOX THEOLOGY AND EMPIRICAL SCIENCE: KANT AS A BRIDGE TO THE APOPHATIC REVELATION OF THE ORTHODOX EAST

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### ABSTRACT

*The Orthodox theological worldview often finds itself confronted by the unspoken nihilism of empiricism, with little common ground for dialogue. This article establishes that common ground for discursive exchange through exploring the apophatic aspects of Kantian transcendental theology, which in turn can become a bridge to the Orthodox negative theology. Kant drew continental thought along certain foundational lines with his critique of pure reason and transcendental idealism; it was his way to locate empirical science with respect to the perceptual foundations of thought, which are properly understood philosophically. In this project, Kant would seek to secure the Christian faith in the transcendental—i.e., that which underlies all empirical experience. Even so, certain openings to traditional religious mysticism are also to be found in his project, particularly with respect to transcendental theology. This article explores these Kantian foundations for an apophatic transcendental theology in relation to the hesychastic writings of Gregory of Sinai, Gregory Palamas, and Nikitas Stithatos. This in turn becomes a new inroad for dialogue with empirical science.*

**Keywords:** Apophatic Theology; Science and Religion; Immanuel Kant; Transcendental Theology; Hesychasm; Gregory of Sinai; Gregory Palamas; Nikitas Stithatos;

### INTRODUCTION

This article<sup>1</sup> represents a constructive engagement with Kantian epistemology by taking the scholarship of Ayon Maharaj<sup>2</sup> and others forward into a new area of consideration—that of apophatic revelation. Recent scholarship has shown that Kantian epistemology may be open to some forms of mysticism, findings that serve to nuance and correct previous assessments that would have precluded this possibility. Mysticism, in this context, represents a source of epistemological intuition that can inform moral decisions, aesthetic judgements, and reflective understanding. More importantly, at least with respect to this present study, it also represents a source of non-empirical knowledge that is particular to religious and quasi-religious contexts. It is argued that this represents a starting place for new inquiries in the science and religion debate, allowing for Kantian critiques of pure

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<sup>2</sup> Maharaj, Ayon. 2016. "Kant on the Epistemology of Indirect Mystical Experience." *Sophia* 10: 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11841-016-0528-y>

empiricism to be taken further by considering religious sources of non-empirical knowledge that inform the totality of human experience. Specifically, this article takes this opening toward the apophatic, and by this means overcome certain challenges to non-empirical knowledge stipulated by Kant. The discussion then moves to show how this in turn creates an opening to dialogues in the apophatic East, specifically with respect to the Hesychasts Gregory of Sinai, Gregory Palamas, and Nikitas Stithatos.

## 1. THE SCIENCE AND RELIGION DEBATE

Very generally speaking, the questions surrounding the science and religion debate are not about declaring a victor, or even finding a way to harmonize the two sets of truth. For the theologian, it is vouchsafing the sacred from the profane. Scientific knowledge simply cannot be reconciled with the scriptures. Each speak to fundamentally different realities. To be clear, what I am saying is that it is not the truth claims that are in conflict, but the ways of regarding the fullness of reality that stand opposed. This is because science deals exclusively with empiricism, while scriptural truths, and the Patristic commentaries that arise from them, encompass a fuller account of our experiential reality by including the metaphysical as well as the empirical. Even more fundamental to this tension between the scientific and religious worldviews, it must be recalled that Patristic commentaries were written by those possessing a “scriptural mind” (to use Florovsky’s phrase), and who held a deeply liturgical appreciation of life. This is to say, they speak in a language meant for those within the faith tradition itself, and for those who are experiencing psychological effects of virtue and sin. Empiricism, on the other hand, seeks to objectify knowledge to remove all subjectivity—in effect, it decontextualizes and dehumanizes knowledge altogether, creating an epistemological absurdity.

Friedrich Lange of Marburg (1828–1875) points out the problems here. The objectivity of the natural sciences, he quite correctly remarks, resides exclusively in the common sensory organization of the human brain, and this fact explains how different people can report similar observations for the same phenomena<sup>3</sup>. The seeming mechanical materialism of the natural world is therefore, for Lange, not the result of its intrinsic properties but the categorization of sensible intuitions in the mind, as Kant described. So-called scientific objectivity, Lange concluded, is merely shared epistemological subjectivity through the Kantian perceptual manifold. But the mind and the Kantian soul were not limited by the empirical because the mind synthesizes its own inner world through which humanity retains its special cosmological dignity. In this way, Lange attempted to bridge scientific empiricism with the more humanizing traditions of German idealism with his claim that natural science itself exposes

“the same transcendental root of our human nature, which supplies us through the senses with the idea of the world of reality, and which leads us in the highest function of nature and creative synthesis to fashion a world of the ideal in which to take refuge from the limitation of the senses, and in which to find again the true Home of our Spirit”<sup>4</sup>.

As perceptive as this Neo-Kantian critique remains, it must be considered incomplete. These same questions were considered much earlier in history by the Patristic writers of the Orthodox East, whose own engagement with these epistemological issues,

<sup>3</sup> Lange, Friedrich Albert. 1881. *History of Materialism and Criticism of Its Present Importance*. Vol. 3. Trans. E.C. Thomas. London: Trubner and Company; 177, see also 202–4.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 364–5

arguably, encompass more fully the totality of the human experience. But because they have never been reconciled, we are left today with two dichotomous two ways of regarding reality. In this, it is my contention that the science and religion debate is largely one of misunderstanding and miscommunication: if we were to draw a Venn Diagram of actual points of contention on particular truth claims, the overlap would actually be very small. Even so, these points of contention often become the focal point of conflict, and from there the theists and anti-theists fight their fights. This is also what gets the most attention in popular media. But what is really being fought over, however, is not so much the truth claims themselves, but which serves as a better “philosophy of life” for the general public. Little light gets casts in the heated polemics that then ensue.

This article is about creating new common ground for *respectful exchange* by establishing an epistemological opening in which to discuss apophatic theology in a Western philosophical paradigm. This will have the consequence of showing the limitations of the scientific worldview when considering the fullness of experiential reality, and how insights from apophatic theology can redress these shortcomings in contemporary academic discourses.

## 2. TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM

The theological questions surrounding Kantian philosophy are typically framed around the subjects of freedom versus necessity, and, to a lesser extent, the epistemological possibilities for a non-empirical “practical reason” emerging from his transcendental idealism. This later possibility, he argued, could allow for morality and religion in a world seemingly controlled by naturalistic necessity—the empirical character of the world being overcome by an inner ontological freedom. It was his defence of personal agency in the face of the mechanistic laws of science. This was the true threat of modernity according to Kant, and he saw his project as a way to break free from the moral nihilism that emerged from a strictly scientific worldview. Anderson and Bell (2010) describe it this way:

“Kant lived at a time when empirical science had made extraordinary advances. The theories of Newton and others apparently allowed us to explore and predict the movements not only of planets but also of everyday things with which we come into contact. This evident substantial progress in science seemed to contrast with an embarrassing lack of progress in such fields as philosophy and theology. Far from making progress, metaphysical debates (those beyond empirical science) seemed to be stuck in a mire of endless inconclusive disputes”<sup>5</sup>.

But to secure a new and irrefragable foundation for religion, Kant would have to limit metaphysical speculation by conforming it to a science of perception, and then specify precisely how far our reasoning powers may safely extend without losing itself to fictive excess. For Kant, this was to the limits of the synthetic *a priori*. From this defensible foundation, he proceeded to establish a metaphysics of morals, and in this way Kantian epistemology grew to support a philosophy of religion. More on this in a moment. But first, as just mentioned, this is how Kant is usually discussed in relation to religious ethics. My article, on the other hand, explores a different way to examine Kantian philosophy, one which will open a way to apophatic knowledge. To introduce it, however, I will need to delve further into his transcendental idealism.

In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant proved that spatial and temporal awareness are not contained in raw sensory experience but, rather, are the products of the intellect itself,

<sup>5</sup> Anderson, Pamela Sue and Jordan Bell. 2010. *Kant and Theology*. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC; 13

which processes sensory information into recognizable ideas. Epistemology reached its high-water mark with Kant. No previously assumed premise or postulate survived his critical examination. Even the human “soul” had to be grounded in something actually provable, which, in this case, was consciousness itself (whose substance is *a priori* time as the ultimate object of the inner sense). But by beginning with a first principle of rational consciousness, all resulting conclusions regarding reality were necessarily contingent upon an experiencing subject for their existence. Kant could not give the visible world complete independence from our perception of it. In the end, all he could say was that the outer world appears the way that it does due to the particular nature of the human brain, which renders sensory data consistently according to its inner constitution. The mind’s “faculty of representation” thus determines the empirical character of the perceived phenomena. What sense objects are in-and-of-themselves cannot be determined beyond their intelligible properties. Kant therefore declared that the thing-in-itself was unknowable.

While the objects of perception have many intelligible properties, such as weight, volume, texture, hardness, friability, and so on, the idea of a thing-in-itself to account for all these knowable characteristics of empirical objects could only be a supposition of the intellect. The thing-in-itself cannot be proven outside a set of intelligible properties, all of which support the original Cartesian claim about phenomena. In Kant’s epistemology, even the existence of a reality external to self-consciousness could only be granted a provisional and indeterminate existence:

“That there is something real outside us which not only corresponds but must correspond to our outer perceptions can likewise be proved to be, not a condition of things in themselves, but for the sake of experience. This means that there is something empirical, that is, some appearance in space without us, that admits of a satisfactory proof”<sup>6</sup>.

Experiencing subjects require *something* to experience that exists apart from themselves, yet the empirical is always mediated through the spatial and temporal intuitions of the mind. And so, while the object of inner sense (self-consciousness) demonstrates the actuality of the “soul” (the experiencing self), which exists in time, the soul cannot be said to exist apart from the mind’s faculty of representation. Moreover, the form of outer phenomena is determined by the nature of our senses and cognitive faculties, and so Kant, unlike Schopenhauer, cannot give “ideas” existence apart from perception.

Yet it is here we find an unexpected opening to other ways of knowing and experiencing the world. Kant had declared that “*intuitions [from the senses] without [accompanying rational] concepts are blind*”<sup>7</sup>. It is a curious statement and quite noteworthy. What he is saying is that much more comes to the rational mind than the intellect can fully comprehend. Stated another way, Kant is conceding that people are actually blind to the full experience of the natural world because of the brain’s limited perceptual capacities. But those sensory intuitions still exist: we feel them. They just do not correspond to an isolatable and discrete rational concept fully available to the analytical mind.

Nevertheless, Kant did try to examine one of these unconceptualized intuitions, the sublime, which is experienced through a different way of knowing, a pre-rational kind of knowing, an intuitive pure knowing – by way of something Kant calls the “sacred shudder”

<sup>6</sup> Kant, Immanuel. 1950. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysic*. Ed. L.W. Beck. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company; §49, 84

<sup>7</sup>Kant, Immanuel. 2007. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. New York: Palgrave Macmillan; B75/A51

(*Schauer*) felt in the presence of the power of nature<sup>8</sup>. It is an experience in which rational consciousness is obliterated before the inhuman and incomprehensible power of nature. Kant refers to this as the “dynamical” sublime<sup>9</sup>. A similar feeling of raw selfless perception can also arise when confronted with the enormity of a phenomenon – for example, a breathtaking vista overlooking a ravine framed by sheer cliffs. This is the “mathematical” sublime<sup>10</sup>. The sense of self can momentarily evanesce in sheer wonderment and awe in such settings; in effect, the intellect steps aside (as it were) and the sensory experiences are intuited pre-rationally at the periphery of rational awareness. Only later do we come up with words and descriptions that attempt to convey to others what we experienced.

Kant makes clear that the experience of the sublime is not one of sensibility alone; it is not like a “physical reflex” in the mind originating from sensory perception. Rather, the sublime is a real object of understanding and true for all experiencing subjects.

“[W]e are entitled to say is that the [empirical] object is suitable for exhibiting a sublimity that can be found in the mind. For what is sublime, in the proper meaning of the term, cannot be contained in any sensible form but concerns only ideas of reason, which, though they cannot be exhibited adequately, are aroused and called to mind by this very inadequacy, which can be exhibited in sensibility”<sup>11</sup>.

Stated another way, certain sensible experiences are capable of bringing the mental phenomenon of the sublime to the rational mind even though the mind is not capable of fully fathoming the fullness of the dynamic or mathematical aspects. Yet it is still anchored empirically—that is, to an *initial stimuli* from the sensory environment: “*For how should our faculty of knowledge be awakened into action did not objects affecting our senses partly of themselves produce [these] representations [in our mind]?*”<sup>12</sup>. The sublime thus crosses that liminal space between empiricism and metaphysical revelation, and represents a kind of quasi-rational knowledge available for aesthetic reflective judgements, and even synthetic *a priori* applications in moral theology<sup>13</sup>.

Here we have found the first opening to a source of revelation outside the constraints of strict empiricism to be found in the writings of Kant. Yet it is not entirely free from empiricism since the initial stimulus is dependent upon the natural world. It is not, then, the kind of revelation typically thought of in religious experience, such as with apophatic experiences of an ineffably divine reality. Yet it still allows for the *indirect perception* of God to be discovered “*in the beauties of nature, of hearing God’s voice in the Bible[,] or in sermons[,] or in the dictates of conscience, of being aware of God’s providential activity in the events of our lives, of seeing God’s hand at work in salvation history, and so on*”<sup>14</sup>. This is indeed significant. Yet, by itself, remains incomplete. The question now becomes whether that stimuli for the sublime can come from non-empirical sources altogether. Kant, as we will see, remains doubtful if such a proposal can be defended. Yet, I will seek to show that he does lay the groundwork for it.

<sup>8</sup> Hadot, Pierre. 2006. *The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature*. Tran. Michael Chase. Cambridge: Belknap Press; 270.

<sup>9</sup> Kant, Immanuel. 1914. *Critique of Judgment*. Tran. J.H. Bernard. London: Macmillan and Co.; §28.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, §26.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, §23

<sup>12</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason*, Introduction.

<sup>13</sup> See “General Comment” in *Critique of Judgment*.

<sup>14</sup> Alston, William P. 1991. *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; 25.

### 3. TRANSCENDENTAL THEOLOGY

Kant begins with a challenge, writing that all those who want to create a theology based in personal revelation must “*give a satisfactory account how, and by what kind of inner illumination, he believes himself capable of soaring so far above all possible experience, on the wings of mere ideas*”<sup>15</sup>. This is the very challenge this article seeks to overcome, and to do so using Kant’s own epistemological framework. But it must be underscored here that, obviously, Kant thinks such a theology is impossible. It is also a theology that would be necessarily rejected in the Orthodox East, considering the historical battles against Montanists and Gnostics, both of whom claimed special revelation outside Scripture. My article, for its part, does not seek to legitimize such claimed instances of new prophetic revelation; fictive imagination can be easily mistaken for ecstatic revelation, both then and now. This is why the Orthodox Church has remained faithful to both scripture and tradition, while Kant, for his part, would likewise only accept a religion based in sensible experience, or the possibility of such experience, since even “*synthetic a priori knowledge is possible only in so far as it expresses the formal conditions of a possible experience*”<sup>16</sup>. Instead, my article only seeks to show how hesychastic revelation is possible within a Kantian epistemological framework, and what that means for science and religion dialogue with the Orthodox East.

Based on what has been outlined so far, Kantian rational theology would seemingly be limited to a metaphysics of morals adapted for practical applications<sup>17</sup>. But Kant does venture to discuss other possible sources of knowledge. The first is a thought experiment on whether God can be claimed as a First Cause for the cosmological effects that can be known by experience. It is the well known cosmological argument for the existence of God, dating all the way back to Aristotle<sup>18</sup>. Kant is willing to concede this argument from natural theology, but only “as a favour” to those who hold to it to sustain their faith, but he warns that “it cannot be demanded as a right on the strength of an incontrovertible proof”<sup>19</sup>. Kant is very close to agnosticism here, and only concedes that such an idea of God, however tenuously grounded, still serves to give morality a “natural leaning” toward the highest possible theoretical good<sup>20</sup>. But as a philosophical argument, Kant cautions that such speculation cannot lead to “new objects” of knowledge<sup>21</sup>.

The question whether divine revelation is at all possible within a Kantian framework represents a particular philosophical challenge, since, as Kant has said, sensory experience is the necessary beginning of knowledge<sup>22</sup>. Only through sensory intuitions can the *a priori* faculty of representation then add temporal and spatial contexts, and from this basis alone, judgements can be made regarding empirical reality. Yet he also acknowledges that pure *a priori* judgements, independent of all experience, are still possible, such as those produced through mathematical reasoning. This is an important consideration since Kant’s project was to extend and reveal the role of the *a priori* in other realms of knowledge, particularly with respect to moral judgements. But the question of a source of knowledge outside all empirical experience or pure *a priori* reasoning, and which has its origin in divine agency is another

<sup>15</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason*, A638/B666.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, A636/B664.

<sup>18</sup> See Aristotle’s *Physics*, VIII.6.

<sup>19</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason*, A637/B665

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, A639/B667

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, B1.



question altogether. Kant does however address this issue, and his comments, reveal that he does not believe such a claim *is* possible.

First, he indicates that the idea of divine revelation *cannot* be categorically rejected. “For no one can deny the possibility that a scripture which, in practical content, contains much that is godly, may (with respect to what is historical in it) be regarded as a genuinely divine revelation”<sup>23</sup>.

It is an interesting concession to a non-empirical source of knowledge, if it can be taken at face value. Yet, Kant makes it clear that he is not open to new claims of revelation. This is ostensibly because of what he says is the “contemporary state of human insight being what it is,” which appears to be a statement regarding fallen human nature<sup>24</sup>. Kant seems to be saying that the ordinary human being is corrupted by sin, ancestral or otherwise, and thus a person is no longer capable of perceiving such revelation—a position that reveals his particularly Lutheran pedigree. The Orthodox view on human nature is not nearly so pessimistic.

Even so, and judging however by the spirit of his overall project, these concessions to historical Christianity may only be out of deference for its continuing cultural importance, not an acknowledgement that divine revelation was once epistemologically possible by certain specially illuminated individuals. This conclusion is bolstered by a deeper reading on his views on the importance of Holy Scriptures, in that their value resides in to the extent they conform to his own views on rational religion<sup>25</sup>. Because of this, he writes, no historical religion can claim to be the correct one. “There is only one (true) religion; but there can be faiths of several kinds”<sup>26</sup>. The one true religion is rational faith born of pure moral reasoning. He even goes as far as to say that Jesus can only be considered a moral exemplar to the extent he represents pure *a priori* rationality: “Even the Holy One of the Gospel must first be compared to our ideal of moral perfection before he is recognized as one”<sup>27</sup>. The same went for God the Father too. “But whence do we have the concept of God, as the highest good? Solely from the idea that reason *a priori* devises of moral perfection”<sup>28</sup>. Kant’s aim was to reveal the true significance of the Christian faith through rational philosophy; only those truths confirmed by *a priori* rationality could show the way to a higher and divine world. All else, for Kant, was myth and superstition.

Once again it has to be remarked that such views are not shared in the Orthodox East. Kant upholds a Christianity denuded of its glory, and the great failure of his philosophy was the belief that the nature of the divine can be encompassed within rational thought alone. His was a God of the logicians, not that of the crucified Christ. Yet, curiously, Kant also writes there is one other way his transcendental idealism may be employed in the service of a transcendental theology, that of an apophatic corrective for his cold, unfeeling cataphatic logic.

Before proceeding, it needs to be mentioned that “apophatic” has a range of possible meanings. It can signify a corrective used to transcend the limitations of positive statements

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<sup>23</sup> Kant, Immanuel. 2008. *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. San Francisco: HarperOne; 122 (emphasis in original).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>25</sup> Enns, Phil. 2007. “Reason and Revelation: Kant and the Problem of Authority.” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (Oct.): 103-114; 112

<sup>26</sup> *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, 98

<sup>27</sup> Kant, Immanuel. 2012. *Groundwork of a Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Mary Gregor and Jens Timmermann. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Second Section, 23 (emphasis added).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, emphasis in original

concerning the divine or the deity: it is a way of showing deference to the ineffability of God. And so, for example, saying that God is “love” would not be appropriate because the fullness of divine possibility lies beyond every declarative statement, which will always be derived from and limited to human relational experience. In the words of Gregory Palamas, “*Apophatic theology does not contradict or confute cataphatic theology, but it shows that although statements made about God are true and reverent, yet they do not apply to God as they might us*”<sup>29</sup>. Apophatic theology thus attempts greater inclusivity by finding words and expressions appropriate to the divine as well as by offering a way to give a methodological nod to the impossibility of this task. The apophatic thereby safeguards the humility of the exegete. Kant appears to allude to this conception of apophatic theology when he writes,

“Transcendental theology is still, therefore in spite of all its disabilities, of great importance in its negative employment, and serves as a permanent censor of our reason, in so far as the latter [reason] deals with pure ideas which, as such, allow for no criterion that is not transcendental”<sup>30</sup>.

There is a noteworthy tension here between his speculative theology and transcendental idealism. Yet, and this is significant, it is the theology that stands as the corrective over his philosophy, and not the other way around. While Kant cannot make definite claims about otherworldly realities, speculative theology he writes is still vital to orient faith toward the highest good.

“For if, in some other relation, perhaps on practical grounds, the *presupposition* of a supreme and all-sufficient being, as highest intelligence, established its vitality beyond all question, it would be of greatest importance accurately to determine this concept on its transcendental side, as the concept of a necessary and supremely real being, to free it from whatever, as belonging to mere appearance (anthropomorphism in its wider sense), [that] is out of keeping with the supreme reality, and at the same time to dispose of all counter-assertions, whether *atheistic, deistic, or anthropomorphic*”<sup>31</sup>.

This is necessary as a determinate condition to secure moral laws as having obligatory power to guide our behavior through practical knowledge<sup>32</sup>. Only transcendental theology can do this by, as he said, by *censoring* reason—that is, limiting its ability to deny all metaphysical claims about God. This is where an intellectualized belief in God can open up to a living faith, and mere deism moves to embrace true theism<sup>33</sup>. Reason, on the other hand, is needed to dispose of all extraneous and inappropriate speculations about the divine, particularly those that seek to create anthropomorphic conceptions of God. Transcendental theology and speculative metaphysics must work together to establish a living faith guided by practical reason. But this is not quite apophatic theology, not yet anyway.

#### 4. KANT ON MYSTICISM

There is no small amount of academic debate whether Kant was open to the possibility of mysticism. His contemporary, C.A. Wilms, argued that Kantian thought is entirely compatible with mysticism—something that Kant himself would deny in writing, claiming mysticism was merely a “counterfeit philosophy,” and which would also be further

<sup>29</sup> The Philokalia. 1995. Volume IV. Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth. Trans. by G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware. London, United Kingdom: Faber & Faber; “Topics of Natural and Theological Science” 404, §123.

<sup>30</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason*, A640/B668 (emphasis added).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, A641/B669 (emphases in original).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, A634/B662.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, A633/B661; cf., A631/B659

refuted further by Kant's student, Reinhold Jachmann<sup>34</sup>. Even so, the debate has continued, and defenders of the mysticism proposal point out affinities Kant himself expressed for works of the Swedish mystic, Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), in his early work *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* published in 1766. Swedenborg had attempted to create a science of rational psychology based on our knowledge of the sensible body, the immaterial soul, and their interaction. Even so, it should be acknowledged that, in his later works, Kant would become unreservedly hostile toward mysticism: “*Mysticism, which can prosper in a rationalistic age only when it hides behind a system of school-metaphysics, under the protection of which it may venture to rave rationally, so to speak, will be driven by critical philosophy from this, its last hiding-place*”<sup>35</sup>. Despite this, some scholars such as Stephen Palmquist (2000) argue that Kant was a “*closet mystic,*” and that a “*mystical feeling lies at the very heart of [his] Critical philosophy*”<sup>36</sup>. The consensus of scholarly opinion, however, is that Kant was and remained hostile to all forms of mysticism throughout his life—see, for example, Wood (1992), Ward (1972), Smart (1969), and Baelz (1968)<sup>37</sup>.

Recent scholarship has attempted to resolve this confusion with a closer analysis of different kinds of mysticism in relation to Kantian thought. Maharaj (2016) finds that Kant does indeed categorically reject the possibility of direct mystical experiences of super-sensible realities through a claimed special faculty of intuition. But, as Maharaj finds, Kant is open to the possibility of *indirect* mystical experiences of super-sensible realities—being indirect in the sense that they are not revealed in rational knowledge but rather as moral feelings and revelatory experiences that cannot be self-authenticated by critical reasoning. Maharaj gives an example of this from Kant's *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*:

“The persuasion that we can distinguish the effects of grace from those of nature (virtue), or even to produce these effects in us, is enthusiasm [Schwärmerei]; for nowhere in experience can we recognize a supersensible object, even less exert influence upon it to bring it down to us, though there do occur from time to time in the mind movements that work toward morality but which we cannot explain, and about which are forced to admit our ignorance”<sup>38</sup>.

This is where Maharaj ends the quoted passage, since it relates to the scope of his investigation. For my inquiry, however, the remarks made by Kant immediately after are equally as important:

“To wish to observe such heavenly influences in ourselves is a kind of madness, in which, no doubt, there can be method (since those supposed inner revelations must always be attached to moral, and hence to rational, ideas), but which none the less remains a self-deception prejudicial to religion. To believe that there may be works of grace and that perhaps these may even be necessary to supplement the incompleteness of our struggle toward virtue—that is all we can say on this subject; beyond this we are incapable of determining anything concerning their distinctive marks and still less are we able to do anything to produce them”<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> Maharaj 2016; see also Kant, Immanuel. 1996. *Religion and Rational Theology*. Trans. by Allen Wood and George Di Giovanni. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 331.

<sup>35</sup> *Prolegomena*, 83 (emphasis in original).

<sup>36</sup> Palmquist, Stephen R. 2000. *Kant's Critical Religion*. Hampshire, England: Ashgate; 299f., 379; Maharaj 2016.

<sup>37</sup> Wood, Allen W. 1992. “Rational Theology, Moral Faith, and Religion,” in Paul Guyer (ed.) *Cambridge Companion to Kant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ward, Keith. 1972. *The Development of Kant's View of Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell. Smart, Ninian. (1969). *Philosophers and Religious Truth*. London: SCM Press. Baelz, Peter R. 1968. *Christian Theology and Metaphysics*. London: Epworth Press.

<sup>38</sup> *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, Book IV, Part II, Sec.2

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, (emphases added).

Take together, the passages reveal that Kant does believe the effects of grace are indeed real, and that are super-sensible in origin. Yet, he then makes two statements that create an interesting tension. First, he says a method must exist to determine the exact nature of these effects upon our cognition, especially as they relate to virtue. But then he concedes that “we are incapable of determining” any such method using his system of critical philosophy.

This is a true statement about the limits of Kantian rationalism to reach beyond the apophatic veil to grasp the true nature of the divine. While open to the possibility, his philosophy does not possess the means to describe what lies beyond its own rational limits. This is where the apophatic theology developed in the Orthodox East becomes important to this discussion, since it supplies the missing apophatic elements for his cataphatic framework. Put simply, the effects of grace Kant had written about can indeed be “produced”—or, stated more accurately, *solicited*—through Orthodox hesychastic practices. Firstly, though, I will go over the epistemological grounding for their practices.

## 5. AN EPISTEMOLOGY FOR THE UNKNOWNABLE

Orthodoxy did not invent apophatic theology, only transformed it from its pagan forerunners. The most important of which was Plato, who declared that our minds could not hope to fathom the fullness of divine reality: “*The father and maker of all this universe is past finding out; and even if we found him, to tell him to all men would be impossible*”<sup>40</sup>. His writings would be read by the early church, and many found his words to be wise and true<sup>41</sup>. An especially important apophatic theologian who emerged from this tradition was Clement of Alexandria (d. c. 215 CE). Another great influence on Christian apophatic theology was the Neoplatonist philosopher, Proclus (5<sup>th</sup> century CE). In his *Elements of Theology*, Proclus asserts the highest knowledge of reality is not possible for us because human nature is subsequent to that higher reality, and we are thus epistemologically limited in what he can hope to learn:

“For all knowledge which arises through reasoning deals with beings, and in beings possesses the apprehension of truth, since it comes into contact with conceptions, and subsists in intellections. But the Gods are beyond all beings. ... If, therefore, the Gods are superessential, and subsist prior to beings, they cannot be apprehended by either opinion, or by science and discursive reason, or by intelligence”<sup>42</sup>.

What he is saying is that there is an epistemological divide between the “creation” (the human being) and the Creator (God) that prevents us from ever encompassing the totality of the Divine with our minds. Stated in plainer language, any created being is always *lesser* when compared to the fullness of the Creator; the “finite” cannot subsume the “infinite” within itself. Proclus instead held that the epistemological distance between the creations and their Creator must be overcome by other means. He called this secret way to knowing God(s) *theurgy* (θεουργία). It most often refers to special rituals that bring the person into contact with divine reality, an experience that imparts a different kind of experiential knowledge, the noetic, which was higher in a mystical sense than the discursive reasoning of the logical mind. For the church, the *theurgy* of Proclus would become a basis for a theology of the sacraments; it would be how the efficacy of Holy Communion and Baptism could be explained to the faithful.

<sup>40</sup> Timaeus, 28c.

<sup>41</sup> See for example Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* Book V, Ch. XII

<sup>42</sup> *Elements of Theology*, Proposition CXXIII.

Theurgy can also be used to describe Hesychast practices, the origins of which date back to at least the fourth century and the Egyptian hermits “who went into the desert to confront the devil and to get closer to God” through a life of solitude and prayer<sup>43</sup>. It would eventually evolve over the centuries to become a mystical and ascetic way of life focused on true noetic prayer, sometimes referred to as “the prayer of the heart” by the Fathers of *The Philokalia*<sup>44</sup>. Today, it is practiced by the faithful of many faith traditions through the recitation of the Jesus Prayer<sup>45</sup>, especially after the example of the anonymous Russian hermit in the popular work, *The Way of a Pilgrim*. True Hesychast practice, however, follows an even greater ascetic rigor, employs special breathing practices during meditation, and is always performed the guidance of a spiritual Father. The aim, as expressed by Symeon the New Theologian (949–1024) was to attain a state of holiness wherein a vision of “uncreated light” (*aktiston fōs*) of God may be granted through special revelation<sup>46</sup>.

Most importantly for this present discussion, the mystical theology of Hesychasm would be championed in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century by Gregory of Sinai, who was able to document the epistemological and methodological means by this was possible:

“The physical senses and the soul’s powers have an equal and similar, not to say identical, mode of operation, especially when they are in a healthy state [through Hesychast practice, and as opposed to a sinful state of being]; for the soul’s powers live and act through the senses, and the life-giving Spirit sustains them both. [...] They contemplate with clarity the *logoi*, or inward essences of things, and distinctly perceive, so far as possible, the single source of all things, the Holy Trinity”<sup>47</sup>.

Gregory of Sinai goes on to describe the exact regime of practices needed to accomplish this physical and mental feat of mystical asceticism<sup>48</sup>. He summarizes the path as follows:

“Noetic prayer is an activity initiated by the cleansing power of the Spirit and the mystical rites [of the sacraments] celebrated by the intellect. Similarly, stillness is initiated by attentive waiting upon God, its intermediate stage is characterized by illuminative power and contemplation, and its final goal is ecstasy and the enraptured flight toward God.”<sup>49</sup>

The effects of grace from being present to this uncreated light of God would transfigure the Hesychasts bodily, such that they would be able to witness a revelatory mandala of grace in the world through their physical senses—perceiving, as Maximos Confessor would write, the *logoi* of created things<sup>50</sup>. It also imparted spiritual gifts on the practitioner such as true faith, experiential knowledge of God, and steadfastness in a life a virtue. Palamas recalls the words of Plato on *phronesis* (wisdom), who wrote in his 7th Letter, “For it does not at all admit of verbal expression like other studies, but, as a result of

<sup>43</sup> Nicolaidis, Efthymios. 2011. *Science and Eastern Orthodoxy: From the Greek Fathers to the Age of Globalization*. Trans. Susan Emanuel. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press; 93f.

<sup>44</sup> For a survey of these Fathers and their commentary, see *Writings from the Philokalia: On Prayer of the Heart*. 1992. Trans. E. Kadloubovsky and G. E.H. Palmer. London, United Kingdom.

<sup>45</sup> This prayer reads as follows: “Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” The aim is to embed the prayer into constant repetition in the back of one’s mind to achieve the state of being where one “prays without ceasing” as Paul commands in 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

<sup>46</sup> Nicolaidis, 94.

<sup>47</sup> *The Philokalia* IV, “On Commandments and Doctrines,” §98, 233

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, §§99-113.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, §111, 237.

<sup>50</sup> Blowers, Paul M. *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*. Yonkers, New York: St Vladimirs Seminary Press; 54 (*Ambiguum* 7).

*continued application to the subject itself and communion therewith, it is brought to birth in the soul on a sudden, as light that is kindled by a leaping spark, and thereafter nourishes itself*<sup>51</sup>. So too, the Hesychasts must purify themselves through practice of the commandments and a life virtue, so that the uncreated light of God may “alight” in their souls like a leaping spark—an experience that imparts the *phronesis* of virtue.

Further insight is found with Nikitas Stithatos, a disciple of Symeon the New Theologian who lived in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Stithatos distinguishes between the possible sources of insight. Some, he writes, are sensible in origin, drawing from one’s memory alone. They are to be ignored by the Hesychast. “*We have nothing to gain from such images*”<sup>52</sup>. True visions are not mutable like those in dreams or memory, and they are to be treated “with great seriousness” since they yield true insight, fill a person with awe, and inspire greater compunction in one’s soul<sup>53</sup>. Finally, there is special revelation from God that enables a person “to contemplate in a way that transcends [that of] normal sense-perception”<sup>54</sup>. These experiences of direct revelation of spiritual knowledge from God

“have the force of things and thoughts miraculous and divine, initiating us into the hidden mysteries of God, showing us the outcome of our most important problems and [may give an eschatological insight of] the universal transformation of things worldly and human”<sup>55</sup>.

What he is describing are instances of apophatic revelation that gives a person true knowledge outside all constraints of Kantian sense-perception.

As for the question of how someone can become receptive to divine inspiration, Stithatos described the noetic faculties inherent to each person as intellect, reason, noetic perceptive capacity, intuitive knowledge, and cognitive insight—all of which work together in discerning apophatic insight:

“By means of intellection we apprehend spiritual intentions, by means of ratiocination we interpret them, and through noetic perception we grasp the images of divine insight and spiritual knowledge”<sup>56</sup>.

Stated another way, when apophatic revelation alights in the intellect, the higher noetic faculties interpret and conceptualize those insights gathered from that communion with divine reality in hesychastic stillness. In opposition to Kant, Stithatos (like all the Eastern Fathers<sup>57</sup>) held that a person can attain the spiritual purity once enjoyed by Adam and Eve before the fall. This is accomplished through “*the labour of repentance and assiduous ascetic practice*” by the hesychast, through which they “*acquire a disposition that is master of the passions, free from arrogance, not over-curious, guileless, simple, humble, without jealousy or malice, and that takes every thought captive and makes it obey Christ*”<sup>58</sup>. Palamas confirms this same threefold epistemology of sense-perception, rational processes, and noetic faculties<sup>59</sup>. He then goes further to demarcate the line between the cataphatic and

<sup>51</sup> Seventh Letter [341d].

<sup>52</sup> *The Philokalia* IV, “On the Inner Nature of Things,” 124, §61.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, cf. §64.

<sup>56</sup> *The Philokalia* IV, “On the Practice of Virtues,” 81; §10.

<sup>57</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296-373 CE) declared that all that was assumed by God in the Incarnation was healed: “He [Christ] manifested Himself by means of a [human] body in order that ... by His own impassability He kept and healed the suffering men on whose account He thus endured [the Crucifixion]” (*On the Incarnation*, §54). Athanasius’ theology of the Incarnation was codified at the ecumenical council of 451 CE.

<sup>58</sup> *The Philokalia* IV, 83, §17; see also the comments of Palamas in *The Philokalia* IV, 377f., §66.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 375, §63

the apophatic. Even though these faculties coexist in the experiencing subject, divine revelation must obey the same Platonic epistemological constraints mentioned earlier.

“We know that those divine realities of which we desire to speak transcend speech, since such realities exist according to a principle that is [metaphysically] transcendent. They are not outside the realm of speech by some reason of some deficiency, but are beyond the conceptual power innate within us and to which we give utterance when speaking to others. For neither can our speech explain these realities by interpretation, nor does our innate conceptual power have the capacity to attain them of its own accord through investigation”<sup>60</sup>.

Nevertheless, divine revelation still imparts specific knowledge to those who can receive these gifts of grace, including the experience God’s “*divine and inexpressible [uncreated] light, God’s divinity and kingdom, the beauty and resplendence of the divine nature, the vision and delight of the saints in the age without end, the natural ray and glory of the Divinity*”<sup>61</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS

Several points of consideration emerge from the preceding discussion. The Kantian critique of perception reveals that the empiricism of the scientific worldview emerges from an epistemological subjectivity that could only be understood through his transcendental philosophy. Kant then revealed that so much more is open to people than mere scientific knowledge, including the synthetic *a priori* and practical wisdom that emerges from the same. He even found a way to ground the Christian faith in his epistemology—a project that was, however, exceedingly reductionist and closed-off to the fullness of Christian religious experience. As to the question as to whether Kant was a “closet mystic” as some have alleged remains an unprovable point of scholarly contention. What is known is that his epistemology was open to the possibility of divine revelation outside sensory perception and synthetic *a priori* judgements. Ostensibly, Kant acknowledged the divine revelation within the Scriptures could be accepted, but only after rationalistic critiques in line with his own philosophical project—betraying a most curious mixture of Protestant and Rationalist assumptions. Even so, he then declared that this doorway to mysticism needed to remain closed because of fallen human nature.

Here, the theology of the Orthodox East can be employed to reopen the pathway to apophatic revelation within a Kantian epistemological framework. Orthodox theology, following Athanasius of Alexandria, upholds a view of human nature that was healed in the Incarnation and Crucifixion of Christ. And from this foundation, the Hesychasts found a means to make themselves receptive to divine revelation in ways that expand epistemology in harmony with Kant’s own preconditions for metaphysical intuition. This includes both indirect mystical experiences of God in the sublime of nature and Scripture, as well as direct noetic perception of ineffable metaphysical reality through hesychastic experience.

Specifically with respect to questions in epistemology, the Hesychast Fathers of the Orthodox East reveal that divine revelation first be perceived noetically—only afterward do the cognitive faculties come to bear on these non-sensory intuitions arising from the metaphysical transcendent. Even so, it has to be stipulated that what is being perceived is pure noetic experience of ineffable mysteries and, because of this, only a small shadow of which can be reduced to conceptual knowledge within a Kantian framework. This however does not diminish its value—quite the opposite in fact. These insights are essential for the

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 383, §80.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 415, §147.

development of phronetic knowledge and the personal virtue needed to navigate one's way through life, which in Kantian terms would be called practical wisdom. It is also important to note that the apophatic tradition of the Hesychasts does not permit the creation of new Montanist-style heresies because the epistemological divide between what is perceived and what can later be communicated cataphatically; this also signifies the point where apophatic revelation transitions to Kantian epistemology. The upshot is that such revelatory experiences become an aid to the mind in its discernment of noetic, rational, and sensory truths. From here, the way is now open for the Orthodox East to enter into the science and religion debate.

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## FATHER ARSENIE PAPACIOC AND THE PROPER ARRANGEMENT OF SPIRITUAL LIFE. GLIMPSES OF HIS EXPERIENCES IN THE COMMUNIST PRISONS

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### ABSTRACT

*Father Arsenie Papacioc lived his life in the middle of many transformations of the Romanian nation, passing from the “fascination” of the Legionary Movement to “the foolishness” of monastic life. He had the experience of the prisons of different periods of the regimes in Romania, but also of the wilderness, getting to represent the life of the Orthodox Church prior to, under and after the communism. For this reason, Father Arsenie’s life is intertwined with the lives of many remarkable cultural, political and especially ecclesial characters of the history of the Romanian society, from the Patriarch Justinian to the Archimandrites Cleopa Ilie and Ioanichie Bălan, from the community of the monasteries Cozia, Tismana (Cioclovina Skete), Sihăstria, Antim, Slatina, Neamț, Cheia, Căldărușani, Dintr-un Lemn, Cernica and Techirghiol to the members of the Burning Bush Movement, from the multitude of believers to hierarchs of the Orthodox Church of Romania, from the parish of Filea de Jos (then Filea de Sus, as well) and those of Orthodox faith to those of other religious denominations and convictions. Thus, Father Arsenie marked the epoch he lived in by the proper arrangement of his spiritual life at the measure of holiness, receiving many charismata from the God glorified as the Holy Trinity.*

**Keywords:** Father Arsenie Papacioc; communist regime; prisons; wilderness; spiritual life; Orthodox Church; monastic life; The Burning Bush Movement (Mișcarea Rugul Aprins);

### INTRODUCTION

The recollection of the persons who have marked our lives is combined with emotions and feelings animated by honour and gratitude, vivid memories and the formation of milestones by the advice received. Due to these aspects, on the one hand, it is not desired to diminish in any way their personality, and, on the other hand, one ought to cultivate humility and objectiveness, so as not to interpret the things left behind on paper in a manner alien to the spiritual state they had in accordance with the teaching of the Orthodox Church. The abundance of the experiences lived by their side is permanent spiritual food, meant to also satisfy the hunger of those around us, especially when one can note, with great joy, that others, too, have already fed on the same spiritual food for a long while. For this reason, I have chosen to evoke Father Arsenie Papacioc, in the homage year of the Romanian Patriarchate dedicated to those who suffered in the prisons of the communist regime to



A large, empty white rectangular box with a thin gold border, positioned to the right of the IFIJISR logo. This box is likely intended for a title or subtitle.

pains!” Father Arsenie’s family was somewhat rich. It had 12 hectares of land, horses that they used to till the fields, cows producing milk, sheep and goat herds, and all kinds of poultry<sup>6</sup>.

On the day when Anghel was born, on 15 August 1914, there was a solar eclipse<sup>7</sup>. The father, when he saw his son, as he had not been present at the time of his birth, said: “The Sun disappeared and my son appeared!”<sup>8</sup>

Anghel’s childhood was an ordinary one, namely that of a child grown up in the countryside, in full harmony with his family, but also with nature. “We were seven and we spent our time during

“When they analysed the sea water composition, they took a drop. But the way you ask the question, even if you were to take tons of water from the sea, you would still take nothing. And starting with that moment, they began to consider my opinions”<sup>15</sup>.

At the exhortation of the same brother, Anghel began to read all he could find in the collection *The Library for All* (*Biblioteca pentru toți*). He was particularly impressed by the novel *The Miserables* by Victor Hugo [translated into Romanian], so that he was saying about its main character, Jean Valjean, that he had passed “from hell to heaven”. However, around the age of 28, he discovers another reading, namely, the *Egyptian Paterikon*, observing that “a single event of the «Paterikon» concentrates in it the events of a whole novel, be it even «The Miserables»”<sup>16</sup>. From a young age, Anghel began to demonstrate the gift of guiding men, and when he returned to his village, during his holidays, he was “programmed on houses, today in one house, tomorrow in another, having a schedule established several days previously”<sup>17</sup>. At the same time, he shows from an early age the power to forgive those who were unjust to him, later on remembering them at the preparation of the *Proskomedie*<sup>18</sup> for the *Divine Liturgy*<sup>19</sup>. He practiced several sports [football, swimming, athletics (speed, jumps)], including rugby, being called, for his jumps, during the rugby matches, the *Blond Panther*. Due to sport, he also developed a friendship with King Mihai I of Romania († 2017)<sup>20</sup>.

After his military service<sup>21</sup>, Anghel joined the Pyrotechnics Section, the level engineering assistant, at the Faculty of Chemistry in Bucharest, which he graduated in two years. During this time, he joined as a free auditor other courses, including Nae Ionescu’s philosophy courses. Anghel joined this Faculty to get a job at the “Malaxa” Arms Factory, named after the rich businessman Nicolae Malaxa, built on the suggestion of King Carol II, near Tohanu Vechi, in the region of Brașov, with the aim of replacing the armament and military technique import from Czechia. At this factory was also working his brother Radu,

<sup>15</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 26. Actually, Anghel also won a poetical creation contest held by this magazine. He had this poetical talent throughout his life, due to it managing to express in an original manner spiritual realities and exhortations, often using examples, situations and stories found in books from extremely varied domains (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 27).

<sup>16</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>17</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 29.

<sup>18</sup> It is about the moment of the remembrance or the commemoration of the living and the dead at the *Proskomedie*.

<sup>19</sup> For instance, he was walking, during a summer holiday, with other young people of the village on the border of Fundata Lake, rich in a sort of mud that was healing many people. A drunken villager drew near him, called Marinache, came to them, accusing them that they had stolen a bell from one of his sheep, which was not true. They denied it, but he ran after them to beat them. The young men ran away, after they had split into two groups. Some ran towards a little hill nearby and Anghel to the lake. Followed by the villager, when he arrived on the border of the water, Anghel took his clothes off and began to swim. The villager ran after him, on the border of the lake, but when Anghel arrived on the opposite border, two people caught him and held him until Marinache arrived, who hit him several times with a twig. When his father and brothers found out, they wanted to punish Marinache, yet, finally, they did nothing against him, because Anghel had forgiven him. Later on, when Anghel became a priest and remembered those of his village at the preparation of the *Proskomedie* for the *Divine Liturgy*, the first of them was Marinache (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 30-31).

<sup>20</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>21</sup> It took place at Regiment 40 Infantry “Călugăreni” of Bazargic Town (today Tolbuhin, Bulgaria). About Anghel’s achievements in the army, see Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 43-49. It is worth noting that Anghel rises to the rank of sergeant, and he is requested to remain in the army, but he refuses. During his military service, which lasted for two years, he also sculpted a roadside crucifix, made of oak wood, which remained at Bazargic (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 49, 53).

as a foreman<sup>22</sup>. Anghel manufactured the first sample of mercury fulminate in Romania and managed to reduce its manufacturing time to half compared to the Czechs, from whom the armament was imported before the construction of the respective factory<sup>23</sup>.

Due to certain circumstances<sup>24</sup>, Anghel is sent to prison, together with his brother Radu, in the Concentration Camp of Miercurea Ciuc (1938-1940), and after his deliverance (18 April 1940) he went to Zărnești, a locality near Brașov, where he took a job as a lawyer's secretary. For a short while (since August until the beginning of September 1940), Anghel was called to arms at Regiment 40 Infantry, situated at Bazargic, in Bulgaria. During that time, Southern Dobruja (Cadrilater) was handed over. Anghel reacted, protesting against the handing over of this region without any fight, but he was "incarcerated". Returning to Zărnești, Anghel was appointed head of the Legionary Movement for the Zărnești small rural district, namely for the county subregion including thirteen localities, then he was elected mayor of Zărnești Town (October 1940)<sup>25</sup>. Being just 26, he was the youngest mayor in Romania (1940-1941)<sup>26</sup>.

Following the "legionary rebellion" of January 1941, during which mayor Papacioc had been involved in no armed incident at all, the new authorities issued a warrant on his name. He presented himself in front of the authorities willingly, being condemned to six years of correctional prison. He spent only several months in Brașov Penitentiary (until August 1941), then he was freed as he requested to go to the front<sup>27</sup>.

For the period of the years 1941-1946, I shall return with details in the second part of this study, and for this reason I shall move on to the moment when Anghel Papacioc took his monastic vows, namely after his deliverance from the Aiud Prison, on 8 September 1946. He had been imprisoned by Marshal Ion Antonescu's regime and was set free by the communist regime.

As he himself confesses, Father Arsenie had vowed, together with a high school friend, to go both of them to the monastery, when they were 13 years old. His friend got married, yet he cultivated his promise, both when he was in prisons, and when, being free, he enjoyed professional success and social recognition. All these made him affirm that "at the monastery you need to go as a winner, not as a loser"<sup>28</sup>. His mother, Stanca, had not really agreed to this desire that he had, yet she had moved to the Lord while Anghel was in the Aiud Prison. His relatives did not agree to his decision either, but he did not let himself influenced, regarding his joining the monastic life as the reaching of "the summit from which we can see much farther, [perceiving] the other world, where self offering means living in the spirit of God"<sup>29</sup>, thus going beyond belonging to any kind of ideology.

It was 13 January 1947 and Father Arsenie recalls:

<sup>22</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 50.

<sup>23</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 51. As a reward, he received a bonus, and this salary increase allowed him to afford a Ford with two drivers. The car number was 144 on the level of Romania, namely this was the 144<sup>th</sup> car in Romania (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 51).

<sup>24</sup> They will be shown in the second part of this presentation, highlighting Father Arsenie's prison years, detention places etc.

<sup>25</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 59.

<sup>26</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 60. About Anghel's feats, in the context of the Vienna Award (1940), see Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 60-65.

<sup>27</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 66-68.

<sup>28</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 90.

<sup>29</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 92.

“I went to the Patriarchate to honour Saint Demeter. These were the first holy relics I was honouring, I was very moved, yet I had not lost my senses. When I went out of the church and I saw the free sky, I felt such a thrill inside, that I felt I could jump into that free sky, I had that foolishness for Christ. And I was not mistaken!”<sup>30</sup>

This decision was reinforced to him by several signs:

1) He had been asked by a colporteur to give a book to the shop assistant from the book shop that was “down the street leading to the Patriarchate”. He did not know the shop assistant, and in front of the shop there were two women. He gave the book to the shop assistant and, going some 30-40 meters away, one of the women came after him, telling him that the respective shop assistant was calling him.

“I went back to him, he handed over a book to me and said: “Keep your promise!” This was all that he said. You can realize, I did not know him, he did not know me, he did not know what I was thinking, what my most secret promises were. This was yet another sign that I needed to go on”;

2) As he was walking down the street, a photo adhered to the sole of his foot. Lifting it, he saw on it a representation of the Turin Shroud. Anghel considered this fact as yet another sign that he needed to continue “on the road he had set on”, and he kept this photo throughout his life in a *Small Euchologion (Aghiasmatar)*, a book that he always took with him;

3) At the same time, Angel met on the street his former army captain, who had become a major in the meantime. He proposed to him to remain in the army, but Anghel refused, letting him know that he wished to become a monk<sup>31</sup>.

All these events and the way he left for the monastery represent what Father Arsenie affirmed after years:

“I left for the monastery out of foolishness for Christ. I went to become a monk with a lot of zeal, yet if there is no foolishness for Christ, you cannot resist. Here you lose yourself in order to be able to find yourself, in an angelic position”<sup>32</sup>.

Remarkable is the itinerary covered by Anghel Papacioc, which I shall present in brief, which could be the topic of another study. He first goes to Frăsinei Monastery, where he is not received, the old starets Simeon telling him:

“I won’t take you, brother. I see you are a little more educated and I cannot ask you to take care of the oxen. And then, what will the brothers say: you are keeping this one in the office, while you are asking us to do the hard works!”<sup>33</sup>

From Frăsinei he left for Cozia Monastery, where he is received (15 January 1947)<sup>34</sup> and he is entrusted the mission of verger<sup>35</sup>. Many things marked him there, including the veneration of the Holy Relics of Saint Pahomie, who had been a hermit in those places<sup>36</sup>. The Security had him under permanent surveillance at Cozia, having him declare any travel and checked almost monthly. During that period, brother Anghel and his starets, Father Ghermano (Gherman Dineață), were appointed to teach the discipline *Education* at the

<sup>30</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 93.

<sup>31</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 94.

<sup>32</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 94.

<sup>33</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 95.

<sup>34</sup> Părintele Arsenie, *O clipă inima*, p. 11.

<sup>35</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>36</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 98-99.

school set up in the vicinity of Turnu Monastery. Brother Anghel taught the students *About Christ (Despre Hristos)*, for a trimester, after which the school director required him to change the topic and teach about communist materialism. Brother Anghel refused and resigned, in exchange, the starets accepted compromise for a salary of 200 lei, which represented an important sum during that time. In front of this situation, brother Anghel had the courage to reprimand his starets: “How did you accept, Father Starets, to abjure Christ?” Since that moment, the starets changed his conduct towards Anghel, whom he was calling *an angel* (in Romanian: *înger*). He moved him from his cell into one that had a stone wall washed by the waters of the Olt River, so that in winter the entire wall got full of ice. Although Anghel had already proved his spiritual maturity, and the Fathers of Cozia Monastery and even the Starets of the nearby monasteries often came to him for advice, Father Ghermano, to get rid of him, sent him to Comanca, a locality situated two kilometres away from Caracal. There was a 300 hectares estate, belonging to six monasteries, each monastery sending, in turn, a monk or a nun, to oversee the estate management. Among the six monasteries there was also Tismana. The Starets of this monastery, Father Gherasim Iscu, when he saw Anghel there, reproached the starets of Cozia: “How can you keep such a man here?!” He even proposed Anghel to come to Tismana, yet he answered that he is not going anywhere without his starets’ blessing<sup>37</sup>.

“Usually, the brothers would stay at Comanca for one month”, Anghel stayed there for 16 months, finally obtaining Father Ghermano’s blessing to go, after he had saved the wheat harvest of the six monasteries, which the communists wanted to take<sup>38</sup>. In August 1948, Anghel went to Tismana Monastery, where he remained only for a day, because Father Starets Gherasim Iscu sent him to the Cioclovina Skete. There he lived on his own, for five months, his mission being to take care of twenty beehives. The spiritual life at the skete was not devoid of temptations, to which one can add the communists’ attempts to arrest him. Thanks to the wolves, he escaped the arrest, but Father Gherasim Iscu did not, and so he passed to the Lord in prison<sup>39</sup>. Brother Anghel was proposed by the new starets of Tismana for the tonsure in the monastic life. The exarch of the monasteries in the Archiepiscopate of Craiova, coming to inspect the skete, even proposed him as a spiritual counsellor of the Seminary of Mufleni, Craiova. Bishop Firmilian approved the appointment, yet the Security was against it, with the result that Anghel was obliged to leave the Archiepiscopate of Craiova<sup>40</sup>.

In January 1949, brother Anghel was at Sihăstria Monastery, where he had arrived on the advice of Father Gherontie Bălan, an acquaintance from Cozia whom he met once more in Bucharest. Father Cleopa Ilie, the starets of the monastery, ordered that he should no longer be called “Brother” Anghel, but “Father” Anghel, because he had noticed that he had a great influence over the believers. For this reason, Father Cleopa let him stay on his chair

<sup>37</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 100-101. About the miracles lived here, see Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 101-103. Impressive is the event with a she-goat, which he had taken to feed on its milk. Anghel would go into a barn, where he would pray. Once, entering there as he was used to, this she-goat, which had remained outside, made such noise that he decided to let it inside the barn. He bent its front knees and put the animal by his side during his prayer. The next day, when he entered the barn, at prayer time, this she-goat came by itself, got itself on its knees and stayed there without making any noise. This impressed Anghel, who would take advantage spiritually of any situation (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 102).

<sup>38</sup> About this episode, see Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 103.

<sup>39</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>40</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 106.

from his cell porch, entrusting him with the mission to teach people in his absence<sup>41</sup>. Standing out for having attained a special spiritual height, although just a rassophore<sup>42</sup> (for two years), Anghel was sent alone in the wilderness, according to a secret council of the most advanced Fathers of Sihăstria Monastery: Cleopa Ilie, Paisie Olaru, Ianuarie, Casian and Macarie. Anghel had pre-tasted “the sweetness of the wilderness” at the age of 27, when he stayed for a few months by the side of a hermit Father in the Piatra Craiului Mountains<sup>43</sup>. At his departure for the second experience of the living in the wilderness (the winter between the years 1948-1949, therefore at the age of 34), Father Cleopa gave him a bag full of bread crumbs, and Father Paisie 18 pieces of sugar, whose “spiritual sweetness” was felt by Father Arsenie throughout his entire life<sup>44</sup>.

After a while, brother Anghel was sent, as obedience, to the Biblical Institute of Bucharest. In the morning he was a sculptor at this Institute, and in the afternoon he was a verger at Antim Monastery, where he also had his cell. During this time, he knew the important representatives of The Burning Bush Movement (1945-1948), like the Fathers Benedict Ghiuș, Sofian Boghiu, Petroniu Tănase, Agaton Tudor (Sandu Tudor) etc. or the intellectuals Alexandru Codin Mironescu, Paul Sterian, the composer Paul Constantinescu, the writers Vasile Voiculescu and Ion Marin Sadoveanu, the architect Constantin Joja, the professor Alexandru Elian and many others<sup>45</sup>. The tonsure in the monastic life took place on the day of 26 September 1949, at Antim Monastery, yet on behalf of Sihăstria Monastery. Father Sofian Boghiu read the prayers of the respective service, Father Benedict Ghiuș tonsured him, and Father Tănase Petroniu, who drew sorts for his monastic name (Arsenie), was his God-father in his monastic life<sup>46</sup>.

Father Cleopa Ilie was, during that time, the starets of Slatina Monastery, where he wanted Father Arsenie. Things were so arranged, by the divine oikonomia, that Father Arsenie left for this monastery, in the month of June of the year 1950. In the meantime, he is ordained deacon at the Calamfidești Monastery, near Rădăuți, and on 26 September 1950, so, exactly one year after his tonsure as a monk, he is ordained as a priest at Agafton Monastery, near Botoșani<sup>47</sup>. Father Cleopa would say: “I have proposed him for priesthood. He was as clean as he had come out of his mother’s womb!”<sup>48</sup> Immediately after having received the Holy Mystery of Priesthood, Father Arsenie was appointed confessor and professor at the “Nicodemus the Sanctified” (“Nicodim cel Sfințit”) Seminary of Neamț Monastery (1950-1952)<sup>49</sup>.

After the episode of his arrest (December 1951), Father Arsenie returned at Slatina Monastery, where he was in 1952. Given the Security pressures, Father Cleopa and Father

<sup>41</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 107.

<sup>42</sup> Namely a robe-bearer.

<sup>43</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 111.

<sup>44</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 111-112; *Iată Duhovnicul. Părintele Arsenie Papacioc*, vol. 2, edition arranged by Hieromonk Benedict Stancu, Editura Sophia, București, 2006, pp. 26-27 (= *Iată Duhovnicul*, vol. 2); Arhim. Arsenie Papacioc, *Epistole*, Editura Accent Print, Suceava, 2015, p. 225.

<sup>45</sup> See Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 113-115.

<sup>46</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 116-117. Great was his joy when he noticed that Saint Arsenios is celebrated on 8 May, as Saint John the Evangelist, also celebrated on the day of his tonsure as a monk, making him say to himself: “The Apostle of love is following me!” (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 117).

<sup>47</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 118.

<sup>48</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 118, note 142.

<sup>49</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 120-121; *Părintele Arsenie, O clipă inima*, p. 12.



Arsenie withdraw for two years in the Stănișoara Mountains (1952-1954)<sup>50</sup>. The two went out of the wilderness on the order of Justinian Marina the Patriarch, pressed by the communist regime, which was accusing the monks of the wilderness that they were giving help to the people who opposed the respective regime. They went to Slatina Monastery<sup>51</sup>, then to Bucharest (June 1954), being called by Justinian the Patriarch, who hosted them in the Palace, to save them from prison<sup>52</sup>. Father Arsenie constantly appreciated Patriarch Justinian, about whom he would say that he was “very brave”, and whom he personally defended against the accusations that he would have been the man of the regime, as he had understood “his cautious and intelligent attitude” in front of the communist regime. “War is a game of intelligence, yet war is still war”, as Father Arsenie would say<sup>53</sup>. The Patriarch sent the two Fathers at the monasteries Țiğănești, Pasărea, Căldărușani, Suzana, Zamfira and Cheia, to reinvigorate the spiritual life. At Pasărea Monastery they were arrested, during the service of the Mystery of the Holy Oil, but they were freed by the nuns, over a hundred, arrived with working tools at the Police Section<sup>54</sup>.

Father Arsenie considered it inadequate for them to go from monastery to monastery, thus ignoring the local spiritual fathers. On his proposition of having a monastery where the two could live and be found by anyone for advice, Slatina Monastery was chosen, where the two had also been before. Father Cleopa was appointed starets, and Father Arsenie hegumen (1955), while around them emerged a community of 120 dwellers<sup>55</sup>. Due to these monks’ training, of whom many had, later on, an important role in the life of the Church, Slatina Monastery was called *Spiritual Academy (Academie duhovnicească)*, and the local metropolitan also put under their spiritual supervision other monasteries, namely Sihăstria, Sihla, Râșca, Rarău and Cămărzani, so that all of them, having Slatina Monastery as their

<sup>50</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 123; *Iată Duhovnicul*, pp. 35-41. It should be mentioned that Father Arsenie was at his third experience of the wilderness. His first experience took place during the period September 1941 - February 1942, and the second during the winter of the years 1948-1949. In relation to the experience of the wilderness and that of the prison, Father Arsenie affirms: “I have been asked by many where it was harder: in prison or in the wilderness, because I have lived in the wilderness as well. In prison, those who did not believe in God suffered torment and they felt bad. Because there was no invisible force to stop a little the wild impulses of cruelty, of hate, pressing in on man continually. That was missing. In the wilderness, however, the devils one is fighting against were afraid of God and it was easier, despite all the whims of the weather: winter, snow, wild beasts, tension [was present] there, too. Yet, there was, however, a note of freedom. Because you all do not know how precious freedom is and why God left it to us. There is nothing as precious with God as the time he is giving to us to live. Because to breathe in and out is still from God. And then the Lord Christ had great prudence to say that «no hair moves unless such is My will»” [Părintele Arsenie Papacioc, “Nu contează decât maniera în care mori” (“The only thing that matters is the way you die”), in *Mărturisitorii. Minuni. Mărturii. Repere*, edition supervised by Lucian Voicilă, Editura Lucman, București, 2010, p. 118].

<sup>51</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 131-132.

<sup>52</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 132.

<sup>53</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 132.

<sup>54</sup> See Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 133.

<sup>55</sup> Among them were the Fathers Paisie Olaru, Petroniu Tănase, Emilian Olaru, Gherontie Bălan, Dosoftei Murariu, Iustinian Stoica, Roman Braga, hierodeacon Antonie Plămădeală, future hierarch of the Romanian Patriarchate, monk Marcu Dumitrescu etc. In relation with them was also Father Daniil (Sandu) Tudor of Rarău Skete (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 135, 138, 151). Father Arsenie was the confessor of Father Andrei Scrima, who, before going to India, came to Slatina Monastery, to take a blessing, see Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 147.

headquarters, were called *The Community of Saint Theodore the Studite (Obștea Sfântului Teodor Studitul)*<sup>56</sup>.

In the spring of the year 1955, the Fathers Arsenie Papacioc and Cleopa Ilie took part in the action of the Romanian Patriarchate meant to enlighten and fight the Stylites in Moldavia, but they were also involved, together with other Fathers, in drafting a text directed against the Monastery of Vladimirești<sup>57</sup>.

After the period of detention in Suceava, Bucharest, Jilava and Aiud (1958-1964), Father Arsenie was not received in any monastery. The Metropolitan of Moldavia refused him, due to the fact that Father Arsenie was 50 years old and was under the restrictions of the *Decree* 410 of the year 1959. In Bucharest, Patriarch Justinian tried to send him to Cernica Monastery, yet the Security, by the Department of Cults, permanently opposed this fact, fearing his presence near Bucharest<sup>58</sup>. Under these circumstances, Patriarch Justinian sent him to the Metropolitan of Ardeal (Transylvania), Teofil, who received him *very well* and entrusted to him the parish of Filea de Jos Village (1965), and a year later also Filea de Sus Village (1966), where he managed, with his pastoral tact, to bring everyone back to the Orthodox faith<sup>59</sup>.

In July 1967, Patriarch Justinian called Father Arsenie at Cheia Monastery, where he appointed him starets and confessor, so that he was coming back at the monastery after nine years (six years of prison and three years of pilgrimage)<sup>60</sup>. In December 1971, Father Arsenie was moved to Căldărușani Monastery, where he was given the mission of treasurer and cashier<sup>61</sup>. After nine months, in September 1972, he is moved, under the pressure of the Security, at Dintr-un Lemn Monastery, as a confessor and celebrant<sup>62</sup>, where he remained until 9 October 1974, when the communist authorities asked him to go to Cernica Monastery<sup>63</sup>. During that time, some archeological discoveries had been made on the bank of the Ialomița River, also visited by the president of the country Nicolae Ceaușescu<sup>64</sup>. The road was passing by the Balaciu Monastery, then in ruin, and Ceaușescu, seeing it, gave order to be restored also with the State contribution. Father Arsenie, who had been ordained

<sup>56</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 134. About the order cultivated at Slatina Monastery see Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 135-136.

<sup>57</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 143. For this text, see *Iată duhovnicul. Părintele Arsenie Papacioc*, Editura Sophia, București, 2010, pp. 228-302. As far as the practice of Father Ioan Iovan of Vladimirești Monastery regarding mass confession and, especially, the frequent Divine Communion see Lect. dr. Ion Marian Croitoru, "Deasa sau rara participare a credincioșilor la Dumnezeiasca Împărtășanie? Dezbateri euharistică în Ortodoxia românească de la jumătatea secolului al XX-lea", in *Euharistie, Spovedanie, Martiriu, Lucrările Simpozionului internațional al Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă din Cluj-Napoca (3-5 noiembrie 2014)*, vol. II, coordinators: Vasile Stanciu, Adrian Podaru, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2015, pp. 363-404; for another analysis of "the spiritual phenomenon" of Vladimirești and Sihastru see also Cristian Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă în primul deceniu comunist*, Editura Curtea Veche, București, 2005, pp. 251-257.

<sup>58</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 208-210.

<sup>59</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 212-213.

<sup>60</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 218-219.

<sup>61</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 230.

<sup>62</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 234.

<sup>63</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 249. This change was also due to the Security, which imposed to Patriarch Justinian to move Father Arsenie. In relation to this moment, Father Arsenie affirmed: "The Patriarch protected me, as far as he is concerned, as much as he could. He would say: «This Father defended me in prison, while others were denigrating me, and so how could I move him?» But he had no choice, it was impossible to reach any agreement with the communists" (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 248).

<sup>64</sup> The type of these archeological discoveries is not specified in the text (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 249).

as a celebrant at Cernica Monastery, was envisioned as overseer of this restoration, which, because of the great costs, no longer took place<sup>65</sup>. However, the Father is appointed, in 1976<sup>66</sup>, celebrant and confessor at “Saint Mary” Skete of Techirghiol, later on turned into Monastery, where he will remain until the end of his earthly life (19 July 2011)<sup>67</sup>. The Security informers seized Father Arsenie Papacioc’s work, affirming about him that “he enjoyed very much popularity in the county and in the country”, many believers “waiting for him at the cell by the church”<sup>68</sup>.

## 2. GLIMPSES OF FATHER ARSENIE’S EXPERIENCES IN THE COMMUNIST PRISONS

In the social, cultural and spiritual context of a chaotic epoch deprived of spiritual senses, the young Anghel joined the *Legion of the Archangel Michael (Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail)*, in 1933, being part of the Iancu Jianu “nest” (“cuibul” Iancu Jianu), which also included Misleanu Commune. He was attracted by the Christian dimension of the Movement, namely by the principles that guided the *Legion*:

“the knowledge and accomplishment of the commandments of the Evangel, the reading of the Psalter, going to church, the confession of sins, the Holy Communion, fasting, common sense, love for our fellow, charity”, all these being “obligatory for those who wanted to call themselves legionaries”<sup>69</sup>.

As Father Arsenie testified, the *Legion* helped him “enormously”, promoting

“an education that was committing you to something. This got me out of a latent state of young man who wanted something and did not know what. And the Legion appeared, with enthusiasm, with valiance, patronized by the Archangel Michael”.

In contact with this Movement, the young Anghel was able to delineate a spiritual ideal for himself, which he followed his entire life:

“We had no other ideal except to be granted by God the happiness to die ripped and persecuted for the spark of Truth that we know we have in us, for whose defense we will set out to battle the rulers of darkness like grim death. This is my motto!”<sup>70</sup>

Yet, Anghel knew how to maintain a balance, and did not let, as far as he was concerned, the Legionary Movement go above the Christian teaching. For this reason, he did not agree to the crimes committed. “Many mistakes were made in the Legionary Movement,

<sup>65</sup> See Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 249-250.

<sup>66</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 262. It has been affirmed that Father Arsenie got to Techirghiol rather due to some intrigues, because he was going to be starets at Cernica Monastery (“Părintele Arsenie Papacioc, apostolul iubirii neamului românesc. Portret”, in *Atitudini. Îndrumar de gândire și trăire ortodoxă*, 3/18 (2011), pp. 20-21; Părintele Arsenie, *O clipă inima*, p. 12, note 1).

<sup>67</sup> On that day I was in Veria (Greece), where I was transcribing, together with Father Matei Vulcănescu, the dialogue that Father Arsenie had had with the Greek Professors Father Georgios Metallinos and Dimitrios Tselengidis, in the morning of the day of June 1, 2010.

<sup>68</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond informativ, dosar 185003*, vol. 3, f. 409, apud Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 265.

<sup>69</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 38.

<sup>70</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 38. One of the principles of the education received was the keeping of the physical and spiritual cleanliness, namely of the virginity by the unmarried and of the conjugal fidelity by those who had a family. Father Arsenie held on to this principle all his life, and when he was a mayor in Zărnești, being present at a festive opening of a meeting of a Legionary Movement women group, said: “If among you there is any girl who is not a virgin or any married woman who has ever cheated on her husband, she should leave the group at once! It was all that I said and they all shivered” (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 62).

because murder was encouraged”, but the Father had no idea about “what was behind these crimes or the inner plotting, which people were talking about”. However, Anghel met valuable people in the framework of the Movement, who were going to be models of morality, courage and heroism for many young people, animated by the movement’s team work spirit and the exhortation to sacrifice<sup>71</sup>.

During his military service, Anghel interrupted his activity in the *Legion*, and then he resumed it, while working at the Armament Factory near Brașov. In 1938, Carol II instated a dictatorship, and on the occasion of a reunion of the legionary elite, attended by about 90 persons, he gave the order that about half of them be killed. Anghel had been convoked as well, but due to God’s providence he had to be elsewhere<sup>72</sup>.

The first detention of Father Arsenie was as a layman, for two years (1938-1940), in the Prison or Labour Camp of Miercurea Ciuc, following a false denunciation regarding his brother, Radu, whom he was working with at the Malaxa Armament Factory. The denunciation was that Radu could have shut Carol II, while the latter was visiting the respective factory. The investigation took two years, finally revealing the innocence of the Papacioc brothers, Anghel remaining in prison all of this time<sup>73</sup>. However, Anghel turned this situation as well to his spiritual advantage. “I used to go to the attic of the building and pray profoundly..., and the devil would torture me terribly. He came in front of me several times and there I fought him. Yes, I wrestled with him for hours on end”, he told a detention mate. He was just 25 years old<sup>74</sup>. Many Legionnaires were imprisoned in the Labour Camp of Miercurea Ciuc, where they took care to maintain an atmosphere of “permanent prayer”. They would manufacture little necklace crosses, roadside crosses and icons, and for one hour, day and night, each inmate would pray or read from the *Holy Scripture*, *Psalter*, stopping only when he was replaced. “At night, the collective prayer was concluded”, according to the testimony of Mircea Eliade, who was also with him in the same labour camp, during the same period, “with an impressive «God is with us» («Cu noi este Dumnezeu»), sung by 300 voices”<sup>75</sup>.

The second detention was because of the “legionary rebellion” of January 1941. He took part, as mayor of Zărnești locality, to the Brașov event, where he brought a group of people, yet with no shooting of any bullet<sup>76</sup>. However, he was arrested by the new authorities and condemned to six years of correctional prison, in the Brașov Penitentiary<sup>77</sup>. During this detention, Anghel made a *chapel*, to which he also sculpted the holy doors. Moreover, he got to become the prison leader, even

<sup>71</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 38-39. About Anghel’s participation in the Legionary Movement and its camps, see Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 39-42.

<sup>72</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 53.

<sup>73</sup> Radu will be killed by shooting, together with nine legionnaires, in the night of 21 to 22 September 1939, under the false pretext that they wanted to evade. The ten could have included Anghel or anyone else. This is why Father Arsenie would say, later on, to his pain mates from Aiud, that Saint Nicholas kept him safe from death, then, at Miercurea Ciuc. Moreover, after his deliverance, his brother’s killer got to be his subordinate. Anghel could have done any thing to him, even kill him, yet he preferred to act by reference to God: “But I thought: if I leave him alone and do not take revenge, God will owe me one; and so I relaxed” (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 56-58).

<sup>74</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 55.

<sup>75</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 55; Fabian Seiche, *Martiri și mărturisitori români din secolul XX*, Făgăraș, 2010, p. 39.

<sup>76</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>77</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 67.

“as inmate. How much trust did people have in me and how they were listening to me! Not just in administrative matters, but especially in matters of living and soul. At my door there was a true pilgrimage and I almost had no time to listen to everyone and give the proper advice. I was asking myself, then: what do these people find in me, to be looking for me?”<sup>78</sup>

This detention only lasted for a few months, Anghel being delivered in August 1941, following his request to go to the front<sup>79</sup>. After his deliverance, Anghel came to Regiment 40 Infantry, to be sent to the front. Father Anghel recalls:

“The soldiers’ Distribution Center was in Fetești. I was distributed to battalion 40 with which I was supposed to go to Odessa. I left to join them and before getting to them, the battalion joined the fight and they all were decimated. I was distributed to another battalion, still in Odessa. I left again and before I got there, the battalion joined the fight and again they were all killed. Then I returned to Fetești. The colonel in charge of all these distributions said: «This man is protected by God lest he should die!» And so they discharged me. I wanted to go to the monastery and this is why God was protecting me”, Father Arsenie would say, after many years<sup>80</sup>.

Nevertheless, the authorities were trying to imprison him again, and even kill him. For this reason, Anghel hid himself in the mountains, first at Piatra Craiului<sup>81</sup>. Living in a cabin, one day a family comes along over there, with just one daughter. The discussions were beautiful, and he confessed to the young family his desire to become a monk. 17 years later, that man will be in the position of torturer of the Father in the trial of the Burning Bush lot<sup>82</sup>. In the Mountains of Piatra Craiului, Anghel met a hermit, with whom he spent two months. He stayed in the mountains for several months, from September 1941 until February 1942<sup>83</sup>.

During the spring of the year 1942, Anghel went at Timișoara<sup>84</sup>, intending to cross the border and go to Germany, because many legionnaires had managed, in this way, to escape the authorities that were after them<sup>85</sup>. His attempt to cross the border did not succeed. It was the month of July 1942. He is caught, arrested and taken to Brașov, where he was judged and condemned to six years of prison. He was 28 years old. He was first taken to a labour camp in Vaslui. The detainees were put into chains with rivets, to prevent their escape.

“I had chains with rivets, not with lock. When my turn came to be enchained, he couldn’t. First he was unable to put the rivet, the second time a chain link broke loose, the third time the hammer handle broke. When he saw it, the man hammering the rivets said angrily that he was no longer going to enchain me. I asked him to put the chains on me because, otherwise,

<sup>78</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 67.

<sup>79</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 68.

<sup>80</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 68.

<sup>81</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 69.

<sup>82</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 70.

<sup>83</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 69-71.

<sup>84</sup> During his stay in Timișoara, Anghel did the drawing of Saint Paul the Apostle, holding a sword in his left hand, the *Evangel* to his bosom and the pointer of his right hand pointing to heaven. The explanation of the drawing is written at the bottom, where Anghel put the quotation from *Colossians 3: 2: Set your minds on what is above, not on the things that are on earth*. During that time, he also read the *Egyptian Paterikon*, a reading that will be useful to him in the years of prison (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 72). I shall mention that I also have a photo of this drawing, which the Father himself gave to me. Actually, Father Arsenie used to give those who stayed a while in his cell one copy of his drawings. “They were like a business card for him or, maybe, like a lure using which he could catch those sincerely longing for better, for more beautiful” (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 295).

<sup>85</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 71.

they would kill us both. For as long as I prayed inside me, he was not able to put me in chains, but when I saw him getting angry for being unable to enchain me, I stopped praying and then he was able to enchain me”<sup>86</sup>.

After an exhausting trip by train, the detainees arrived in Vaslui, where, going down, they went to and fro, and Anghel found himself alone in the train station, with the chains on his hands and feet. In the mean time, a truck had come, and, embarking the detainees, took them to the other part of the town, where the labour camp was.

“I had gotten terribly scared, the Father would recall, because I was afraid lest they should accuse me of attempted escape. Never have I been afraid of freedom as much as then. I went out of the train station quickly and I took directly to the center of the road crossing the city, in the sight of everyone, carrying my chains as visibly as possible, in order not to be met hidden among the people and be accused that I wanted to escape. The people were amazed and crossed themselves, but I was minding my way. Since then I remember Vaslui as the longest town in the country, with a single interminable road, at whose end I arrived after a forced and straight march, and my colleagues, when they saw me, jumped with joy that I had not been shot. They loved me a lot and, for the joy of recovering me, held me on their arms for the blacksmith to cut the rivets from the chains”<sup>87</sup>.

Vaslui was followed by Aiud or Antonescu’s prison, where, for “an ideal and much love for the nation”, as Father Arsenie confessed, “Church servants and thousands and thousands of believers were under locks and heavy chains, under barbed wire and under the most devilish disdain and human hate, with no signs that they would go out or the slightest relief”<sup>88</sup>. The detainees divided themselves into three groups<sup>89</sup>.

The first group was looking “by all means for a political solution” and wanted “to be informed about everything that was going on in the country”. The second group, smaller as dimension, was formed of those “who had become indifferent and were willing to make compromises to get out of prison”. The third group was even smaller, called the *mystics*’ group, who assumed their presence in that place, understanding that “it was for their own sins and the sins of the people they loved that they were there and that they have the duty to repent, to pray and to do the Evangel’s actions as much as they could”<sup>90</sup>. This last group included: Anghel Papacioc, Traian Trifan, Traian Marian, Valeriu Gafencu, Virgil Maxim, Ion Ianolide, Marin Naidim, Constantin Pascu, Iulian Bălan, Father Vasile Serghie, Constantin Dumitru (future Father Marcu from Sihăstria) and others<sup>91</sup>. It ought to be mentioned that the Security was considering Anghel as the respective group’s “religious theorist”<sup>92</sup>, because he would follow the line drawn by the respective group, namely “a line of Christian and Romanian conduct for all the political detainees, valid not just for the period of Antonescu’s dictatorship, but also for the entire life of those imprisoned as model of attitude”<sup>93</sup>.

<sup>86</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 73.

<sup>87</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 73; Pr. Prof. Ion Buga, *Minipatrologie contemporană*, București, 1994, pp 34-35.

<sup>88</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 74; Arhim. Arsenie Papacioc, *Scrisori către fiii mei duhovnicești*, Mănăstirea Dervent, Constanța, 2001, p. 142 (= Arhim. Arsenie, *Scrisori*).

<sup>89</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 73-74.

<sup>90</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 74.

<sup>91</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 74, note 76.

<sup>92</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 75, note 81.

<sup>93</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 74-75; Virgil Maxim, *Imn pentru crucea purtată. Abecedar duhovnicesc pentru un frate de cruce*, Editura Antim, 2002<sup>2</sup>, p. 180 (= Maxim, *Imn*).

Thus, Anghel Papacioc delineates, together with Traian Trifan and Traian Marian<sup>94</sup>, the new conduct to follow, namely, “vertically, that is towards spiritual perfection, as opposed to the horizontal line, which represented the political activity”. His opinion will be, therefore, that the Legionary Movement should no longer be overlapped with the Christian teaching, and his argumentation was as follows: “in the political realm often an intervention is needed, in which the authority and moral person of the Church cannot indulge”<sup>95</sup>. He saw a collaboration between the Church, by its spiritual people, and the adequate political groups, but the latter ought to be led by living Christians<sup>96</sup>. Consequently, one can notice that Anghel had given up the political activity even since the years 1942-1944, even before the instauration of the communist regime in Romania<sup>97</sup>. On 8 September 1946, he is freed from Aiud, but Romania was under communist regime since 1944<sup>98</sup>.

In the prison of Aiud, the *mystics*’ group’s life was focused on prayer, both personal and in common (night vigils, the service of *The Hours*), accompanied by study programme, meditations and exegetic discussions. The seal of their Christian living can be observed as well from the fact that they had a special prayer for their persecutors:

“Lord, Jesus Crist, You, Who have suffered for the entire human nation and have forgiven all those who repent for their sins, make it so that none of the ones who hate and persecute us may suffer anything bad, because of us, at Your judgement. But turn their souls to the conscience of the Truth and give them true repentance, so that Your all-holy Name may be glorified through them as well. As for us, make us worthy to confess You, the true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for the glory of Your Name and the salvation of our souls. Amen!”<sup>99</sup>

Anghel Papacioc stood out among all the group members, being “exceptionally zealous for attaining the stages of virtuous, pure, holy life, and a fervent animator for hesichastic prayer”<sup>100</sup>. He “was a monk in lay clothes and when he was praying, he no longer heard and saw anything around him. This state characterized Father Vasile Serghie as well. They were completely absorbed by prayer”<sup>101</sup>. About what he lived there, Father Arsenie confesses over the years:

“I bless that time. I have spent years in the wilderness, but there I did not have the possibility to deepen the things of eternal nature, of divine nature, as in suffering. Suffering also united us. Those of us who have managed to know one another on the cross have remained united. The image of my prison is together with this small group in which I felt very good. Among us there was great unity. All of them were ready to die. These people, Gafencu, Trifan, Marian, all of them, Maxim, Pascu and the others, I would sanctify (canonize) them all. Was, any of them, better than the other? What matters is the way you receive suffering. I would sanctify them all, because they were sincere and because they did not hesitate in sacrificing themselves. They were all sacrificing. They all went, one by one. With a joy hard to explain,

<sup>94</sup> Anghel knew these two even since his mandate as a mayor in Zărnești. Traian Trifan had been the prefect of Brașov, and Marian Traian the mayor of Brașov, Anghel having good relations with both of them (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 61).

<sup>95</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 75.

<sup>96</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 75.

<sup>97</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 75, note 78.

<sup>98</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>99</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 77; Maxim, *Imn*, p. 91.

<sup>100</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 77; Maxim, *Imn*, p. 110

<sup>101</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 77; Maxim, *Imn*, p. 107.

during the Proskomedia I remember them all as fighters, next to the great voivodes of the country”<sup>102</sup>.

We ought to signal that the regime in prisons grew worse beginning with the spring of the year 1943. The detainees were arranged one per cell and supervised rigorously, food got worse, they began to be punished physically, isolated in punishment rooms or at *Zarcă*, namely in a place considered a sort of “prison in prison”, with a tough regime, even an extermination regime. In *Zarcă*, the detainee was obliged to stand up or stand on the bed side from 5 in the morning till 22 in the evening. If anyone was ill, he had no medical care, and food was scarce. “No grain of bean, no grain of wheat, no piece of potato was allowed. At the window, blocked shutters. There was also a wood ratio: three splints, and in winter, in the morning, the liquid in the sanitary tube had a layer of ice in it”<sup>103</sup>. Anghel passed through this *Zarcă*<sup>104</sup> several times, impairing his health<sup>105</sup>.

After 23 August 1944, when the Russian troops entered the country, a period of several months followed, dominated by chaos and uncertainty, yet some rights were also granted to the *political detainees*, who were allowed to stay together in cells according to their preference, read the *Holy Scripture*, confess their sins once a week, do different works inside, but also outside the prison, and the priests imprisoned had the right to serve in the prison chapel. The detainees in Anghel’s group were trying to spend their time in prayers and spiritual conversations.

“To make a program of study, meditation and prayer”, Virgil Maxim narrates, at that time a cell colleague of Anghel Papacioc<sup>106</sup>, “we set ourselves meeting hours or days; instead of the guards closing us, we made ourselves inner locks. When you found the door locked, you knew that there the lamp of the heart was lit and was burning for Christ. You returned on the day and at the hour indicated on the door”<sup>107</sup>.

For a while, in the cell with the two stayed Father Vasile Serghie as well, who was also their confessor. One day, Father Vasile had a moment of great spiritual torment, realizing that the Holy Mystery of Priesthood was greater than him, and he was trying to avoid accomplishing his service as a priest. Then, Anghel Papacioc, drawing close to him, with tears in his eyes, said to him:

“«O, Father Vasile, now you really are a good Priest! Now, when you live with the conscience of your unworthiness!» «For God’s power is made known in powerlessness and God gives grace to the humble». «How good it would be, if each priest were to live with this conscience of his unworthiness. With how much attention, with how much fear and trembling he would accomplish his service of apostle of Christ on earth?!» Falling into each other’s arms, they were crying; tears of reassurance and encouraging joy came together on their cheeks... Anghel Papacioc was then mysteriously a priest and a monk!”<sup>108</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 78; *Sfântul închisorilor. Mărturii despre Valeriu Gafencu, adunate și adnotate de Monahul Moise*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2017<sup>2</sup>, pp. 43-44.

<sup>103</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 78; Ion Ianolide, *Întoarcerea lui Hristos. Document pentru o lume nouă*, edition arranged by Mănăstirea Diaconești, Editura Christiana, București, 2006, p. 47, note 9.

<sup>104</sup> One can see, therefore, that *Zarca* was not the invention of the communist regime, but of Antonescu’s regime, but during the communists’ time the conditions become even tougher.

<sup>105</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 78.

<sup>106</sup> He needed permanent help, so that Virgil Maxim remained to take care of him (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 79; Maxim, *Imn*, pp. 107-108).

<sup>107</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 81; Maxim, *Imn*, p. 107.

<sup>108</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 82; Maxim, *Imn*, pp. 115-116.



During the time of this detention, Anghel sculpted different decorative or liturgical items: a beautiful frame, declared “the most beautiful work in the entire prison museum”, which the then prison director took for himself, to frame his portrait, although it was meant for the portrait of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej; several oil icon lamps, including the one that he had in his monastery cell from Techirghiol. Called “the never-sleeping icon lamp”, which he kept permanently lit, the Father explained to those visiting him its symbolism: the candle was delimited in two areas by a belt, which unites and separates, at the same time, the two worlds, celestial and terrestrial, but also the two parts of the human being, soul and body. The belt is considered, in this composition, the symbol of power, which makes the connection respectively between heaven and earth, and between soul and body. The icon lamp is set in a pedestal, put on the wall and which has represented on it some crosses. In the lower area of this pedestal there are three broken crosses, symbolizing the fact that the Truth is persecuted in the world, and the cross above them, situated in the upper area, is straight and overflows with rays downwards, illustrating that the Truth is to prevail in the end, because the fight is from down here, on the earth, but the victory comes from up High, from Heavens<sup>109</sup>.

Anghel Papacioc is delivered from the Aiud prison on 8 September 1946<sup>110</sup>, finding the Romanian society, as mentioned also above, under the dominion of the communist regime.

After he received the ordination as a priest (26 September 1950), Father Arsenie was appointed confessor and teacher at the Seminary of Neamț. Followed by the Security, he is arrested, in December 1951. After his deliverance, Father Arsenie went to Slatina Monastery, where he can be found in 1952<sup>111</sup>. By their living, the Fathers Cleopa Ilie and Arsenie Papacioc attract many believers. This thing bothered the Security, which began threatening them. Father Arsenie was taken to different Security centres of Suceava County, was thrown into dirty, cold and deserted rooms, under the threat of death. In this context, the two Fathers Cleopa and Arsenie decided to retreat in the mountains nearby the monastery,

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<sup>109</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 85-86. Anghel's achievements in sculpture were several: the holy doors for the chapel of the Brașov prison (realized during the period 1941-1942); the entrance doors of Turda Bank (before his deliverance from Aiud, in 1946); other holy doors for some churches in Bucharest (after the deliverance of 1964); the ark according to the model of the church of Curtea de Argeș Monastery, at the realization of the project participating several detainees (for their names, see Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 86; Maxim, *Imn*, p. 118), having many sculpture models (about 45-47) realized in miniature by Anghel Papacioc and his disciples Iulian Bălan, Petru Foti and Sebastian Avram. Finished in April 1946, the ark was donated to the “monastery of virgin nuns of Vladimirești”, where it actually arrived, yet it disappeared after 1955, when the respective monastery was abolished. It is supposed to have been taken by the Russians. It ought to be mentioned that the ark was seen, in Bucharest, also by the sculptor Ion Jalea, colleague of Anghel Papacioc at the School of Arts and Trades, who exclaimed: “If Anghel had not been imprisoned, he would have prevailed over all of us” (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 87-88; Maxim, *Imn*, p. 118). Father Arsenie sculpted his monastic cross as well (1949), much appreciated in the epoch, but also later. He sculpted a similar cross for his God-father in the monastic life, who was Father Petroniu Tănase (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 115-116). Later, Father Arsenie made a drawing in pencil, representing death under the form of a skull. He multiplied this drawing and gave it to his spiritual sons, to teach them the meaning of death (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 146-147). At Dintr-un Lemn Monastery, Father Arsenie made a few other drawings: *Prefacerea Sfintelor Daruri* (*The Transformation of the Holy Gifts*) or *Epicleza* (*Epiclesis*); *Crucea din care ies raze de jur împrejur* (*The Cross Overflowing with Rays*) (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 244-245).

<sup>110</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 88.

<sup>111</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 123.

namely in the Mountains of Stânișoara<sup>112</sup>. Father Arsenie spent two years in this wilderness (1952-1954), as mentioned in the first part of this study as well, and what they were living made him exclaim:

“Great is the power of humility! Great is the power of the Holy Fathers! The wilderness means by all means a state from beyond the human being, from beyond high human calculations, because the spiritual life is not a calculated life, it is a life lived without words”<sup>113</sup>.

The two Fathers’ life of hermits was stopped at the pressure of the Security on Patriarch Justinian, who called them to Bucharest (June 1954), to help them escape prison. After a while, the Fathers Arsenie and Cleopa returned to Slatina Monastery (1955). Yet, the activity undertaken here was not on the liking of the Security, which had observed that among the dwellers of Slatina Monastery and of the monastic settlements belonging to it there were also people who had taken part in the spiritual meetings of Antim Monastery, in the framework of the Burning Bush Movement. To this fact one can add two more that reinforced the suspicions of the Security: 1) the presence in Bucharest of the Fathers Arsenie and Cleopa in the homes of Alexandru Mironescu and Constantin Joja, members of the Burning Bush; 2) the consideration of religion as a danger for the communist regime<sup>114</sup>. Consequently, the Security did several arrests, along the year 1958.

Father Arsenie was arrested at Slatina Monastery, in the night of 13-14 June 1958, on a rainy and cold weather. It was past midnight, and the monastery community was at the office of *Matins*. 98 security officers, descended from three trucks and two cars, endowed with raincoats, armament and strong lanterns, surrounded the monastery and the church. At two o’clock in the morning, when the office came to an end and, according to the order of the monastery, the first to get out of the church was the celebrant, who had been Father Arsenie, and then the starets, the verger opened the great doors and, all of a sudden, flashlights were turned on in their eyes: “Anghel Papacioc, where is he? Here I am, sir!” He was surrounded by arms, to the horror of all the monks, and taken to his monastic cell, and the same was done with all the monks. All night, till morning at 10, Father Arsenie’s cell was ransacked. Important documents, copybooks with notes and remarks, many books were confiscated to him. In the morning, realizing the ridicule of the situation they had created, the officers apologized to Father Arsenie, who told them: “The mountain quivered and a mouse came out”<sup>115</sup>. Together with the Father was also arrested brother Constantin Dumitru (future Father Marcu), being taken to Suceava, where the hearing and the research of the materials taken from the cell began. Initially, they accused Father Arsenie of having had connections with the partisans in the mountains, yet, finding no evidence, they continued to search through his copybooks. After the research, they put him in a room that had an area of one square meter and was about five meter tall. Because of a chair that was there, he could not move and he was dressed only in his robe. He had to sleep on the concrete floor, because on that chair it was impossible<sup>116</sup>. On the second day, the detainees who were in Suceava

<sup>112</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 123.

<sup>113</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 124-125. About Father Arsenie’s living in this wilderness, see Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 124-132.

<sup>114</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 153-154.

<sup>115</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 155-156; it is a paraphrase to the verse *Parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus* of Horace’s *Ars poetica*, see *Mic dicționar enciclopedic*, Editura Enciclopedică Română, București, 1972, p. XXIII.

<sup>116</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 157.

were put in a truck, blindfolded, and transported to Bucharest, cramped and without the possibility of making any move. In Bucharest, the Father was imprisoned in the Security cellars and, in very tough conditions, the investigation began<sup>117</sup>. Father Arsenie never detailed the torments endured in prison, and his expression, “how unbearable was the investigation”, hid in it those sufferings that cannot even be described, thought or understood by those who did not live them<sup>118</sup>.

Father Arsenie’s hearings took 90 days, being accompanied by terrible pains and tortures, to find out something from him by force.

“For me”, Father Arsenie confessed, “who was better known, it was more difficult, because they wanted me to tell on others as well, to judge and imprison them, too. But I did not do such a thing, God forbid!”<sup>119</sup> “They would kill you and beat you, only to say like them”. Touching are Father Arsenie’s thoughts and experiences in those moments: “It was the pain that you were looking at your dangerous fellows, because they had no fear of God. And I was looking at their loss. Because I was no longer wondering about the problem of my life, the way they had started to slap, and to hurt, and to accuse, it was impossible to think that you were going to live. And then you accepted death by all means. And then you no longer suffered the chains... You were saddened by the fact that it was your fellows who were doing these things. I, who in a way had known the fight against the devil previously, said that «these are more dangerous because they have no fear of God... the devil had fear of God!»<sup>120</sup> And I had to bear by all means that my enemies are my fellows. If you are the man of God, He knows about anything and the more you let yourself in His will, the more He will defend you. But surely you, too, all the more you need to love God and your fellow. And one cannot say that my fellow is my enemy. These spiritual states were coming like thunderbolt through your heart and through your reason. But, indisputably, those were the elements that were keeping you present in every moment. But one cannot do without sacrifice. One cannot do without the cross, this was what it was, this is what I recommend and this is how I want to live by all means. And cross means bearing what you do not like! People’s great mistake in the world is that they will not bear suffering and do not understand that it is the only action, the only preoccupation, the only living against everything that is bad from under the devil’s patronage”<sup>121</sup>. For this reason, Father Arsenie affirmed: “Nothing helped me more than suffering in life. Only suffering is the supreme chair of theology. I am sure that the angels were jealous of us, because they do not have this suffering exceeding our nature”<sup>122</sup>.

<sup>117</sup> About the methods used, see the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania (Comisia Prezidențială pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România), *Raport final (Final Report)*, București, 2006, [http://media.hotnews.ro/media\\_server1/document-2007-12-20-2118604-0-raportul-tismaneanu.pdf](http://media.hotnews.ro/media_server1/document-2007-12-20-2118604-0-raportul-tismaneanu.pdf) (02.01.2018).

<sup>118</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 159, note 186.

<sup>119</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 160.

<sup>120</sup> I remember that when I visited the Jilava Prison, guided by Marcel Petrișor, and I was together with Father Georgios Metallinos, participating all together at the International Symposium *Moartea martirică (Martyric Death)*, organized by the “Saint Irene” (“Sfânta Irina”) Foundation, during the period 11-12 October 2010, in Bucharest, Father Georgios, heeding the suffering and torments the political detainees had been submitted to, as described by Marcel Petrișor, declared: “Not even the devil has been able to imagine so many methods of torture and terror. Man can become unimaginably evil to man”.

<sup>121</sup> Arhim. Arsenie Papacioc, *Veșnicia ascunsă într-o clipă*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2004, pp. 57-58 (= Arhim. Arsenie, *Veșnicia*). It ought to be mentioned that one of the investigators was that man who had come, 17 years earlier, at the cabin on Mount Piatra Craiului, with his wife and their daughter aged around 10-12, who had appreciated young Anghel so much back then and had seen him “as an angel”, being unable to understand his desire to become a monk, see Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 69-70, 161.

<sup>122</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 162.

Until the investigation was finished and the verdict was pronounced, Father Arsenie was taken to Jilava Penitentiary, where the Burning Bush lot was imprisoned<sup>123</sup>. The trial took two days and they were judged at night, “without defence”, as the Father confessed<sup>124</sup>. The reasons of Father Arsenie’s condemnation to “20 years of forced labour and 10 years of civic disenfranchisement”<sup>125</sup> were: his spiritual living, having the experience of the hesichastic life and of the Jesus Prayer, acts that the communist regime characterized as “mysticism and obscurantist bigotry”; his participation to the Burning Bush Movement, which the same regime considered “subversive association”; the accusation that in his youth he had been a legionnaire, although Father Arsenie had moved away from the policy of the Legionary Movement even since the time of the Aiud Prison, to which one can add the fact that, having joined the monastic life, he had renounced the world and everything in it<sup>126</sup>. After his condemnation, Father Arsenie was taken away from Jilava and led, for the second time in his life, to Aiud. During the first months of prison, the Father was “very grieved” for those he had left outside and who maybe needed him, but, later on, turning his “face to the inside”, he observed that also in prison there “were so many people with the same needs and the same life as those outside”<sup>127</sup>. When Father Arsenie arrived at Aiud, the penitentiary was going through a series of changes, delineated especially after the year 1962 and whose aim was to begin an action of “homicide” from a moral perspective of the political detainees, correlated to the “extermination by hunger” or by the punishment of the detainees in the terrible “isolation rooms”<sup>128</sup>. This action will be called “the reeducation from Aiud”, and at its center was the destruction of all the values, aiming to make the detainees utter blasphemy against the Christian teaching and the Church, to make them abjure Jesus Christ and to make them admit their docility to the communist ideology<sup>129</sup>.

Many years later, Father Arsenie affirmed that only God made him come out alive from the prison of Aiud, transformed into a sort of monastery in which some even attained the state of holiness, since “prison itself is a great [spiritual] endeavour”<sup>130</sup>. Many of Father Arsenie’s recollections are memorable, yet, to make a profitable use of time, I shall remind of just one. Father Arsenie served the *Divine Liturgy* daily, managing to improvise, simply and practically, all the necessary things. Instead of epitrachelion, he made a rope chain, which, in the morning, before starting the office, he would bless and pass with a lot of piety over his neck, and after having finished the office, he would wind around a button of his coat. The fireplace took the place of the Holy Table, and the Holy Cross was made up of two

<sup>123</sup> Among those imprisoned and who were part of the respective lot there were: Hieroskemamonk Daniil Sandu Tudor (Alexandru Teodorescu), the Fathers Arsenie Papacioc, Benedict Ghiuș, Adrian Făgățeanu, Roman Braga, Dumitru Stăniloae and Sofian Boghiu, the painter Felix Dubneac, the doctors Vasile Voiculescu and Gheorghe Dabija, the students Văsâi Gheorghe, Nicolae Rădulescu, Emanoil Mihăilescu and Dan Pistol, the scholar Alexandru Mironescu and his son Șerban [Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 164; Ahim. Andrei Tudor, Mariana Conovici, Iuliana Conovici (ed.), *Am înțeles rostul meu... Părintele Arsenie Papacioc în dosarele Securității*, Editura Humanitas, București, 2014, p. 122 (= *Am înțeles rostul meu...*)].

<sup>124</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 165.

<sup>125</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 166. Finally, the Father was condemned to 40 years of prison, out of which 20 years served (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 167).

<sup>126</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 165-166.

<sup>127</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 168.

<sup>128</sup> Vezi Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 172-173.

<sup>129</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 169; see also Demostene Andronescu, *Reeducarea de la Aiud. Peisaj lăuntric. Memorii și versuri din închisoare*, Editura Christiana, București, 2009.

<sup>130</sup> *Ne vorbește Părintele Arsenie*, vol. 1, under the supervision of Archim. Ioanichie Bălan, Editura Episcopiei Romanului, 1996, p. 98.

minute sticks, kept undone, in order not to let anyone notice, in the inside pocket of his coat. He matched these sticks very carefully on the fireplace, before the start of the office of matins, putting in front of them a thicker stick, in order not to be seen through the peeping hole. The Holy Disk was, sometimes, made of stone, at other times made of a piece of wood, which he wore very carefully in the back pocket of his pants, and a nail was used as spear (liturgical knife). The mug of water took the place of the Holy Chalice in which he put water instead of wine. The Holy Lamb was taken from the upper part of the loaf of bread received as daily share. The only thing he missed was the Holy Antimension. At the beginning, he had had a little piece of the Holy Relics of Saint Mercurius, but he lost them in a search in Jilava. Up to 7 in the morning, when the opening was announced, the office improvised so was ready, and those in the cell communed, one by one, with a piece of bread and a sip of water. The Father would perform the office as in the church, having the conviction that God, seeing their endeavour, could turn the bread and the water into His very Body and Blood. “It was not Holy Communion, but was more than the Anaphora”, the Father affirmed when he remembered those times<sup>131</sup>, keeping himself in a state of humility.

While those in his cell enjoyed both the Holy Mystery of the Confession (Penance), and the Divine Communion, those in other cells could benefit, by Morse code, only of the Holy Mystery of the Confession. The Father also told them that if they should get out alive from prison they should go and confess their sins again, while, if they died in the Lord in prison, the Holy Mystery of the Confession, received by Morse code, would remain valid<sup>132</sup>.

Due to the fact that the detainees were moved instead of one another, Father Arsenie had the occasion to stay in the cell with many personalities, although, as he himself confessed, “any detainee was a personality”<sup>133</sup>. In April 1960, the leadership of the Aiud Prison opened, on the name of Father Arsenie, an individual surveillance file, being put down in it, during the communist regime, all the places of his pilgrimage<sup>134</sup>. The Father was reinforced by the grace of God and managed to overcome suffering beyond any description (for instance, haemorrhoid operation without anaesthesia, having a continual pain for 70 days<sup>135</sup>) and isolation in “the most difficult part of the prison, Zarca”, created precisely for the detainees to be liquidated using biological means. “Everything was death regime”, the Father affirmed, in 1991<sup>136</sup>. Those who survived this regime felt “God’s help” in their hearts,

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<sup>131</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 176-177, 188-189; *Iată duhovnicul. Părintele Arsenie Papacioc*, Sfânta Mănăstire Dervent, 1999, pp. 16-17. I have received this book from Father Arsenie himself, on 30 December 1999, who also wrote for me the following dedication: “Love the whole world as it is and, surely, the good God will love you as you are”.

<sup>132</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 178.

<sup>133</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 181.

<sup>134</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 183, 213. Father Arsenie affirmed after 1990: “I have suffered and lived in a continual fear and strain of soul throughout the communist period” (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 213).

<sup>135</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 185.

<sup>136</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 192-193. It was a noted fact that, in isolation room, people would die in three days. Father Arsenie was put in isolation room for three days on several occasions and did not die, another time he was in isolation room for five days, then for seven days, getting out alive. The Father was punished even to ten days of isolation, starting with the date of 24 December 1963. During this punishment, Father Arsenie lived two miracles: exhausted, after three days spent in that Tartarus, he no longer resisted and sat down, which meant sure death because of the cold air draft, but he felt someone, actually, an Angel, who pulled him by his legs and told him: “Get up, Arsenie, if you do not want to die! Here one cannot sleep! Your time has not come yet!”; at night, the wife of the prison director, Gheorghe Crăciun, had a nightmare, so that he delivered everyone from the ten “punishment boxes” (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 198-199; Arhim. Arsenie, *Veșnicia*, p. 62). In another similar situation, when the Father was imprisoned in the cooler room and

a help without which “one could not have lived. It is very hard, as the Father expressed himself, to be able to say the complexity of the sufferings in heavy chains, in a regime of people completely devoid of heart and of God”<sup>137</sup>.

At the end of the month of July 1964, Colonel Gheorghe Crăciun himself read to the detainees in *Zarcă*, namely those who had opposed re-education and the denial of the faith in Jesus Christ, the amnesty decree, saying to them openly: “You those from *Zarcă* have won!... You have won! You have won! God, you have won!”<sup>138</sup> Father Arsenie was freed on 1 August 1964, being no longer imprisoned later on<sup>139</sup>.

Taking into consideration the life of Father Arsenie Papacioc between the years 1938-1964, one can note that he had the experience of the arrest over 40 times and stayed in prison, in total, for 14 years, as he himself confessed<sup>140</sup>.

Until December 1989, the Security permanently kept an eye on Father Arsenie Papacioc, giving him several edifying code names [*Călugărul II (The Monk II)*, *Viteazul (The Brave)* or *Căldăraru (Tinker)*, *Bărbosul (The Bearded)* or *Izolatul (The Isolated)*, *Duhovnicul (The Spiritual Father)*]<sup>141</sup> etc.] and setting all kinds of objectives or traps (infiltration of agents among his spiritual sons and daughters, correspondence censorship, installation in secret in the cell of audio recording means, secret perquisitions in his cell etc.), because they wanted to find out every thing that the Father was thinking and doing, with the obvious aim of restraining or even annihilating his activity and influence in society, under the accusation of betrayal of the communist regime. It ought to be mentioned that in September 1978, the Security decided the conclusion of the personal surveillance file, but preserved the informative surveillance, although it had acknowledged officially that the Father was an authentic monk, who did not aim to do politics under the monastic mask<sup>142</sup>. Actually, the Intelligence Services [the *Safety Services (Serviciile de siguranță)* and, later on, the *Security Services (Serviciile de Securitate)*] permanently supervised Father Arsenie Papacioc, even since his first arrest in 1938 and until 1989, with the result that many documents were put together regarding Father Arsenie, summing up over 3,500 pages in the *Information Fund (Fondul Informativ)*, gathered in eight files, namely 15 volumes<sup>143</sup>.

### 3. TEACHINGS AND PIECES OF ADVICE FROM FATHER ARSENIE PAPACIOC’S SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

In 1990, after the fall of the communist regime and the so-called Revolution, there were voices in the press which, referring to the communist period, ostentatiously asked the question: “Where was the Church?” To this tendentious question, Father Arsenie’s answer was firm:

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felt his end near, but was praying insistently, our Saviour Jesus Christ appeared to him, in divine light and heat, dressed in detainee uniform, in stripes, and was suffering Father Arsenie’s “suffering” (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 199-200).

<sup>137</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 193.

<sup>138</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 204; Anca Bujoreanu, *Sfinți martiri și mărturisitori români din secolul XX*, Editura Adenium, Iași, 2014<sup>2</sup>, p. 176.

<sup>139</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 204-205.

<sup>140</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 72, 129, 205.

<sup>141</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 232, 250; *Am înțeles rostul meu...*, pp. 21-23.

<sup>142</sup> ACNSAS, *Fond informativ, dosar 185003*, vol. I, ff. 256-257, apud Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 278; *Am înțeles rostul meu...*, p. 23.

<sup>143</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 278. To these pages one can add about 2,500 pages in the *Criminal Fund (Fondul Penal)* and about 150 papers in the *Documentary Fund (Fondul Documentar)*, see *Am înțeles rostul meu...*, p. 13.

“in cruel prisons, terrible humiliations, pagan beating, insults full of venom... Hundreds and thousands of priests, living monks, faith brothers, wore heavy chains, chains hammered on anvil in hidden cellars. They pulled our beards out and they were carrying us by the beard as animals by the bridle. They submitted us to terrible hunger intending to exterminate us... They asked us to abjure Christ and His Saints and we did not abjure, God forbid!... They asked for these renunciations insistently and systematically, isolated and put into cooler rooms for them to be able to obtain at least a word against the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we did not give up... Here was the Church: in prison. Here, where there were thousands of Christians requesting spiritual strengthening, forgiveness of sins, encouragements and hopes that we were giving to them by knocking on the wall (Morse code). We got out of prisons, those of us who did, happy that we had been helped by the good God... We came out beardless, with no flesh on us, toothless, with our eyes hidden in our orbits, yet still shining. We came out without the look of clerics”<sup>144</sup>.

In front of these sufferings, Father Arsenie’s conviction was, among others, that “any move, any incident is no incident”. Each of us “is guided by God so mysteriously and anonymously, to act properly. We have been saved from many misfortunes, each of us, because God ordained that the blow should not hit us”<sup>145</sup>. Therefore, any man is under God’s oikonomia or providence, but, depending on his spiritual position, his life can agree with or be contrary to this divine oikonomia or providence. When he was arrested in 1958 and taken from Suceava to Bucharest, in the Uranus Prison, Father Arsenie was searching for the east in his cell, to pray. “The tram passing down the street was somehow reflected on the cell wall. I kept on thinking how it was that the Sun could reflect on the cell wall, but I was not sure. Then I remembered Alexandru, telling me: «Wherever you turn your face, may God help you!»” He had seven children and no company hired him, because of the obligation to pay a sum of money for each child. Father Arsenie, knowing his situation, would call him to Slatina Monastery, assuring the necessities of life to him.

“And I would give him a bit of everything. All that I was giving him was from my monastic cell. After I had given him, I would look through the cell and I could see that nothing was missing. Alexandru would always tell me a word: «Father, wherever you turn your face, may God help you!»” Then, in prison, the Father remembered these words of Alexandru and said to himself: “it makes no difference where the east is, since Alexandru told me this. Here is what he was prophesying about to me!... And then I started such crying... But I kept my courage throughout the prison years, although hard years followed with the Aiud Prison”<sup>146</sup>.

“Only suffering is the supreme chair of theology”, Father Arsenie often affirmed<sup>147</sup>, who considered that sacrifice is

“the essence of Christianity. You sacrifice a pleasure, a pain, a desire, to let there be peace. In order to burn, the wax candle sacrifices wick and wax, while the oil icon lamp sacrifices oil. This is why candles are lit in church, to remind us of sacrifice. One cannot live without sacrifice, one must renounce something to win the day. Peace is four times greater than justice. If you make peace, you win four; if you make justice, you win just one”<sup>148</sup>.

Father Arsenie cultivated the string of all the virtues and the varied bouquet of the ascetic actions, yet he always highlighted the “benefactions of charity”, which he practiced permanently. He was convinced that

<sup>144</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 205-206.

<sup>145</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 21.

<sup>146</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 158-159.

<sup>147</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 162.

<sup>148</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 298-299.

“charity is one of the great preparations for eternity. To break something out of you. You see, charity is all the Scripture... It has been said that charity rose against justice and charity prevailed... The poor are biblical characters, they will never disappear from the face of the Earth. They are let by God for the rich to have the possibility to be saved as well, by being charitable... God makes many miracles, but you will never see the miracle of God telling lies. If God says that he returns a hundredfold to those who are charitable, this is so. And if this does not happen, it means that the one who gave was not sincere, or gave with a pinch of heart, or gave for who knows what other reasons”<sup>149</sup>.

During his military service, the general came for inspection and asked the soldiers, arranged in line, “what battle plan means”. No one knew the answer, except for Anghel, who said:

“Battle plan means precise determination of your position, then of the enemy’s position, calculation of the distance between you and the enemy and type of armament used”. However, “this tactics, I have used it in the spiritual life as well, this is why some have called me: the military monk. First, the precise determination of your position means knowing what position you are fighting your life battle from: that of layman, monk, cleric. The enemy’s position refers to the identification of the one you are fighting against. In the spiritual world, the enemy is the devil. For we are not battling, as Saint Paul the Apostle says, against body and blood, but against the powers of darkness. The distance is the one that separates you from the sin nearest to you, because Saint Anthony the Great says: «The greatest sin is the one nearest to you». You are not going to battle a sinful passion that is not waging war against you at the moment, you are going to fight the sin that has dominion over you now. The armament is fasting, prayer, charity, state of cheerfulness, patience, silence, education of love to those around, innocence”<sup>150</sup>. “It is through man that man is saved. To be able to save someone, we need to fix ourselves, to be a departure point of our Saviour by which He may save the one next to us. Man through man. It is like a cannon placement. The canon, if it has no placement made of earth, has strong recoil and throws you off, but since it has its stops in its fixed position. So, man is a sort of placement that God makes use of towards other men”<sup>151</sup>.

During his stay at Antim Monastery, where he was also tonsured into monk (1949), yet on behalf of Sihăstria Monastery, Father Arsenie had contacts with the representatives of the Burning Bush Movement. An impulse for this Movement was given by Father John Kulăghin, also known under the name of “the Foreigner” (“cel Străin”), who brought with him a rare book on the practice of the prayer of the mind, called *Sbornic*. Translated in Romanian, the book will circulate in manuscript. Father Arsenie, being a monastery brother, was not for an excessive theorizing of this prayer, which was supposed to be a mysterious one, of the heart. When someone knocked on his cell’s door and asked him for the *Sbornic*, he said: “I will give you gladly!” Yet, he returned with a prayer rope, which he gave to the willing young man, with the exhortation: “Shut up and say!”<sup>152</sup>

<sup>149</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 305-306.

<sup>150</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 44. The same position regarding the need for a battle plan can be met as well with Saint Paisios the Aghiorite: “In the spiritual endeavour it is necessary to mark the weak points of our character, our weaknesses and, then, try to hit there. Because if you know concretely the points the enemy is in, you move safely. You put the map down and you say: «The enemy is here and here. We need to get to obtain these and these points. From there we shall ask for reinforcement, here we need these arms» etc. This means that you can develop a plan. But in order to find out where the enemy is, you need to watch and search, instead of sleep” (Cuviosul Paisie Aghioritul, *Cuvinte duhovnicești. III. Nevoință duhovnicească*, translation from Greek by Ieroschim. Ștefan Nuțescu, Editura Evanghelistos, București, 2003, p. 153).

<sup>151</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>152</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 115.



Actually, the prayer that Father Arsenie incessantly said was the prayer of the mind or of the heart, also called the Jesus prayer or the prayer of the one thought. God had given to him the gift of this prayer, a fact felt by many of those who came in touch with the Father<sup>153</sup>. I found out about this thing later on, from some recollections of Father Arsenie, even since the time when I was in high school at the Theological Seminary in Bucharest. However, it was only during my studenthood that I was going to become aware of the importance of this prayer for the spiritual life, and the one who spoke to me most convincingly about this prayer was the Professor Virgil Căndea. He spoke to me about the practice of Father John the Foreigner, accompanied by his disciple Leonte or Leontie Calmăc<sup>154</sup>, to give his blessing to those who wanted to practice the prayer of the heart, because, according to the experience of Father John the Foreigner, this prayer cannot be practiced without the advice and blessing of someone who is familiar with it. Following these discussions, I arrived, one day, at Father Arsenie Papacioc, at the exhortation and advice of Professor Virgil Căndea, to ask from him for a blessing to practice the Jesus prayer. I was in a spiritual connection with Father Arsenie since the summer of the year 1986<sup>155</sup>. I told Father Arsenie: “Father, I have come to you to give me your blessing to say the prayer of the mind or of the heart! Who told you that this thing is necessary?”, the Father asked me. “Mister Professor Virgil Căndea!”, I answered. He smiled with contentment and gave me his blessing on the top of my head, saying to me: “Say it once and for all!” I was amazed. “What does this thing mean, Father?” He explained to me: “That is, say it everywhere, even in the bathroom when you go for your natural urges, and any time, and never stop saying it!” Actually, the Father affirmed that “we need, above all, not people who say prayers, more or less regularly, but people who feel the prayer”, namely the prayer of the mind or of the heart.

“We have been called to get down not from the mind, but with the mind. The aim is not «the prayer of the heart», but «the prayer of the mind in the heart», because the different forms of understanding, including reason, are a gift from God and need to be used in His service, not rejected. This «union» of the mind with the heart means the restauration of our fallen and fragmented creature, the restauration of our original integrity. The prayer in the heart is a return in Paradise, earnest and anticipation of the time that is to come, something that, in the time that is right now, is never fully accomplished. The Jesus prayer helps us see Christ in every man and each man in Christ, makes out of each of us “a man for the others”. The way of the Name is open, generous, not limited by rigid and immutable rules. Prayer is work; to pray is to be working in the highest degree, and for our breath to become one with the Divine Breath, which supports the Universe”<sup>156</sup>.

According to the experience of Father Arsenie, one ought to be looking for intensely lived prayer moments, during which man’s entire being should be concentrated on the meeting with God, so that our feeling may not be stolen to any thought or state of sin.

“I, personally”, Father Arsenie affirmed, “am not for the tipikon prayer. That prayer has its special use, especially disciplinarily. Man must not be dogmatic. He must be dogmatic as

<sup>153</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 284-285. For instance, Father Constantin Galeriu affirmed as well this thing about Father Arsenie, see *Părintele Arsenie Papacioc. 1914-2014.*, p. 55.

<sup>154</sup> About the portraits of the two, see Alexandru Mironescu, *Calea inimii. Eseuri în duhul Rugului aprins*, Editura Anastasia, București, 1998, pp. 29-36.

<sup>155</sup> It was my first holiday as high school student at the Theological Seminary, which I was spending at the Priestly Sanatorium in Techirghiol. I was working at the respective Sanatorium, which was in the same location as the “Saint Mary” Skete. The community was made up of nuns, and the celebrant priest and their father confessor was precisely Father Arsenie Papacioc. See above also note 2.

<sup>156</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 286-287.

procedure, regarding the desire to become pneumatized. We do not necessarily need a tipikon prayer. We need a continual presence of the heart, this continual state of love, of relation with God, this is the essence of prayer. Because even a deep silence means a deep prayer. And a deep prayer means a deep silence... I am rather for a continual spiritual sparkling. For this reason, ... any moment can be a time and any sigh can be a prayer. Sighing is not done like this: «Ugh!», but you do it to God, as going from the deep towards Him. This is how He will show Himself to us. Because He does not show Himself to a sharp mind... but only to him who has a clear heart, to him who has the heart towards Him, continually”<sup>157</sup>.

By these words, Father Arsenie did not annul the tipikon or the external manifestation of faith, but thought, based on his own experience,

“that it is not the multitude of prayers or prostrations which is the most important, «although even those will be written somewhere», but the state of presence (watchfulness) which man needs to have permanently, «because prayer is a necessarily useful means, yet the watchfulness is an aim attained»”<sup>158</sup>. “One must not push the «pedal» of endeavour too much, but an intensity of it. It is not time that can decide, but the quality of the living, by a continual spiritual disposition, not giving room to opaque bitterness; by a sincere and hard-pressed regret, which will bring a truer humility, so well received unto forgiveness and so beneficial unto new hopes and revelations above human reason, with which God’s love enriches the humble man more than the one strait-laced into a sadness and tough endeavour. The Lord Christ gives Himself with more pleasure to a wounded, yet repentant and humble, heart than to a heart with fasting and prayer, but which of course is asking for its right. Saint Basil the Great says: «The widow or the virgin have no other rank in heaven than the one set by their humbleness!»”<sup>159</sup>

In the process of cultivation of the spiritual states, the advice of Father Arsenie is not to neglect the prayer to our guardian Angel. Even since the time spent in the wilderness of the Stânișoara Mountains, Father Arsenie understood the help of the guardian Angel, for which reason he affirmed in his old age (93 years old): “This is it, we have guardian Angel! And it is not just him that is helping us, because they, all the Angels, in their nature are one. And if we are in relation with our guardian Angel, [then] we are in relation with all the Angels, miriads and miriads”<sup>160</sup>. Father Arsenie had acquired many charismata, by which he was helping those fallen in different sins and vices to stand up and not be discouraged:

“Do not get discouraged! Here is the entire subtle fight of the holy «Paterikons» and a great mystery of the spiritual life, namely to stand up, not to remain under the heavy and terrible stone of the fall. I am telling you a great word, according to the spiritual order there is no longer fall, there is only rising. No calamity means anything and nothing is lost as long as the faith remains up, as long as the head is raised again and the soul does not abdicate”<sup>161</sup>.

One must note that Father Arsenie cared very much for the *Proskomedie* and for God’s work through it. The Father even would say that the *Proskomedie* is “the greatest thing in heaven and on earth”<sup>162</sup>, and “«Liturgy» without «Proskomedie» is a rationalized thing, is a symbol, is no longer a Truth”<sup>163</sup>. Consequently, he would commemorate the diptychs with great responsibility, taking out for each name a particle on the Holy Disk.

<sup>157</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 140.

<sup>158</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 141; *Ne vorbește Părintele Arsenie*, vol. 2, edition supervised by Archim. Ioanichie Bălan, Editura Episcopiei Romanului, 1997, p. 35.

<sup>159</sup> Arhim. Arsenie, *Veșnicia*, p. 49.

<sup>160</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, pp. 125-126.

<sup>161</sup> Arhim. Arsenie, *Scrisori*, p. 58; Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 269.

<sup>162</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 271; see also Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 141.

<sup>163</sup> Arhim. Arsenie Papacioc, *Singur Ortodoxia*, Constanța, 2005, p. 15 (= Arhim. Arsenie, *Singur Ortodoxia*).

Personally, I have heard him affirming about the spiritual role of the remembrance of the name and of taking out a particle for each name. “The «Divine Liturgies»” are, according to the conviction of Father Arsenie, “beyond the human mind, the greatest work in God’s creation and it, namely the creation, rejoices the most at this [work]”<sup>164</sup>. For this reason, suggesting the grace-giving work of the *Divine Liturgy*, Father Arsenie expressed himself: “Can you realize what it means for a people that it has «Liturgy»? What it means for a people that it has Orthodoxy?”<sup>165</sup>

Towards the end of the year 2000, Father Arsenie had a surgical intervention, and at the hospital the doctors asked him to tell them a word about medicine. “And I said”, the Father tells:

“As technique, I am very pleased with what I see here. But the secret would be this, dear doctors: put the ill man in the situation of participating himself to his recovery as well. If only the ill person believes in the prescription and the medicine given to him, and has to a certain extent trust and great hope of salvation, he can be healed”<sup>166</sup>.

“Our Orthodox Church carries us safely on the road of salvation and, because of the depths of the beauty of its teaching, it has many enemies”<sup>167</sup>. Father Arsenie “saw”, by the suffering and tribulations lived, “the power and the truth of the Orthodox Church”<sup>168</sup>, which he considers “the actual Church”.

It is not “divided, people are divided, people have separated themselves. The Church is only one, and that is all, and only the Orthodox Church explains in truth the teaching of our Saviour Jesus Christ”<sup>169</sup>. “The Truth is Christ, the Orthodox Church, since people have interpreted and will interpret infinitely: the roads, the ways that lead to salvation and it is just one: this one kept on without any change, and even with zeal and with living, the Orthodox Church”. It is the “one which patronizes the road to our salvation by all means, in the Orthodox style, as set at the Councils regarding the respective dogmas”<sup>170</sup>.

About Romania and the Romanian nation, so seriously put to the test, Father Arsenie had a vision of a rare optimism:

“It is a country of divine future. It led no offensive, but only defence wars. Because it is not the one who hits that is victorious, but the one who is patient. The Romanian nation will have, in my opinion, a great mission. Why? Not because it had a Stephen the Great in Moldavia, a Michael the Brave, whom I support with all my soul, in Wallachia<sup>171</sup> and a Vlad the Impaler. Not for this. But because the Romanian nation did not forget the banging of the bells”<sup>172</sup>.

For this reason, the Father’s exhortation was that every priest, be he a monk or a priest for the laypeople, should do his service as a priest, because, paraphrasing Saint Philaret of Moscow, “a country stays alive by her spiritual fathers”<sup>173</sup>.

<sup>164</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 272.

<sup>165</sup> Arhim. Arsenie Papacioc, *Cuvânt despre bucuria duhovnicească. Convorbiri*, Editura Eikon, Cluj-Napoca, 2003<sup>2</sup>, p. 91.

<sup>166</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 313.

<sup>167</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 202.

<sup>168</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 202.

<sup>169</sup> Arhim. Arsenie, *Singur Ortodoxia*, p. 61, 75.

<sup>170</sup> Arhim. Arsenie, *Singur Ortodoxia*, pp. 9, 34-35.

<sup>171</sup> Named also the Romanian Country.

<sup>172</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 277.

<sup>173</sup> Saint Philaret of Moscow affirmed: “give me good spiritual fathers and I will change the face of the world” (Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 283).

Although he was proposed many times high ranks in the Church, especially after 1989, Father Arsenie refused them<sup>174</sup>. He represents that spiritual father and Church servant speaking with the Holy Fathers' authority, because he was living in their spirit and prolonged, in this way, their thinking in the present, having in view man's contemporary conditions and needs<sup>175</sup>.

And because we are at a Symposium organized by the Faculty of Orthodox Theology and Education Sciences, I ought to conclude my presentation of Father Arsenie with Christ's exhortation which he felt mysteriously regarding the priestly service, throughout his life:

“When you celebrate the Holy Liturgy”, priest, “thousands of angels fill the Church, adoring Me and glorifying Me. They are My servants, but you are «My priest». You order Me to come down from heaven and be born in your hands. Oh, how your holiness ought to be greater than the Angels' holiness! Together with Me you are a mediator between God and man. Priest, you have the desire to obtain for the people the graces they need! But how could God listen to you, if you are His enemy? I have come to throw fire on earth and you are the ignited torch that will take it in the souls. But how are you to kindle this fire in the souls, if your heart is of ice? My greatness itself depends on your victory. Could I have entrusted to you such great power without giving you the grace to acquire it with diligence?... By dignity I have made you somewhat god, yet I have let on you the burden of the human weaknesses, for My power to be made apparent in your weaknesses. I have made you a destroyer of sin, but leaving you in its danger, a sharer of the supernatural life, but in danger of losing it yourself, out of the fear that My gifts' greatness should not fill you with pride and make you forget that you are nothing... By ordination into priest you were made a partaker of My dignity of head of the Church. The grace of baptism gives you the power to live as a good Christian. The grace of ordination helps you to accomplish your service as a priest with holiness. Before, you were just a simple believer, you were busy first of all with your personal salvation. Now you are a partaker of the dignity of the Head, your heart embraces the whole Church. Your priestly dignity goes above that of the Cherubim and Seraphim, but the grace received by ordination is proportional to this dignity. In My Church I have performed two great miracles: I have created the Theotokos (the Lord's mother) and priesthood. Although a simple creature, My Mother has been made worthy to give birth to a God. And you, My priest, you are a weak mortal. By the grace of ordination, you have been given the power to give birth to Me, with worthiness, on the Holy Altar and in the souls. This grace gives you the right to all the help that you need to be holy and to represent Me, with worthiness, among the people... Pray, entrust yourself to My Mother, the eternal help, the priests' empress! She will help you to listen to My voice. Oh, how bound you are to Me and to My Mother!... Beware of making of the chair of the truth a stage on which to pretend daily your own esteem and to scold the believers. You need to know to scold firmly but gently, without ruining the remedy with the venom of your own lack of patience. Simplicity and benevolence will win more souls for Me than scholarly speeches. Gentleness and humility will give you the key to the most closed hearts... Don't be a small soul, put your trust in the grace you have received at your ordination! Make it bring fruits of “holiness” for you and others! Oh, if only you knew how many graces I decreed for you on the day of your ordination! If only you could understand how many rights your priesthood is giving to you upon My heart and upon the riches it comprises!”<sup>176</sup>

<sup>174</sup> See Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 15, note 10.

<sup>175</sup> Mitropolitul Serafim, “Părintele Arsenie – duhovnicul trezviei și al iubirii”, in *Am înțeles rostul meu...*, p. 7. Father Arsenie was part of what the Romanian intellectuals, like Alexandru Duțu, called the “pneumatic hierarchy” or, rather, the “pneumatic”, namely spiritual, “priesthood”, in whose hands was the shepherding of the Church believers during the communist regime (Alexandru Duțu, *Ideea de Europa și evoluția conștiinței europene*, All Educational, București, 1999, p. 217).

<sup>176</sup> Arhim. Arsenie, *Scrisori*, pp. 148-152.

In relation to the service of priest, Father Arsenie recommended not just to the priests and monks but also to the lay people to wear a beard, which he considered, based on the confession of “Saint” Clement of Alexandria, as “emanating a great magnetic power and having a special influence on the thinking”, being in “close connection with the innermost substrata of faith”<sup>177</sup>.

“Everywhere, knowledge keeps heaping up, yet to no avail. The Orthodox Church does not press mainly the “knowledge” pedal, but rather the “living” pedal. It has been possible to note that by living you know much and do not know where you know from. And the theologians come, in order to freshen up, to the livers, who are simple according to people’s inventory, have no knowledge, but have a continual presence with God. If the branch calls for sap abundantly, it will be given abundantly”<sup>178</sup>.

Therefore, important is for the believer to be a branch in the wine, namely in Christ, because the Saviour is the *Way, the Truth and the Life* (*John* 14: 6). Commenting on these words of our Saviour, Father Arsenie affirmed: “If there is no way, there is no walking, if there is no truth, there is no knowledge, if there is no life, there is no living”<sup>179</sup>. During the Lent of the year 2003, Father Arsenie held a conference at the Cultural Centre of Constanța, attended by about 3,000 people. To conclude, the Father said at the end of the conference:

“The Truth, Who is Christ, is the touchstone, it is around this Truth that everything revolves. To fight this Truth, all sort of philosophies, trends, ideas have emerged, which bring nothing new except for a new vocabulary, new words, but do not clarify anything, because Christ’s truth is complete and they do nothing except to hit against this Truth”<sup>180</sup>.

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<sup>177</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 149.

<sup>178</sup> Arhim. Arsenie, *Veșnicia*, p. 126.

<sup>179</sup> Alpetri, *Viața Părintelui Arsenie*, p. 311.

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## THE HOMILETIC PROFILE OF FATHER SOFIAN BOGHIU (1912-2002) – COMMEMORATING 15 YEARS SINCE HIS REPOSE IN THE LORD

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### ABSTRACT

*A remarkable spiritual personality, unanimously acknowledged, the archimandrite father Sofian was known and appreciated especially for three qualities or gifts that God had bestowed upon him: as a worthy church painter, preacher and chanter with a divine calling. His rare kindness, his modesty, his composure, his endless patience and his theological culture are features that make up his spiritual portrait. The homiletic activity conducted by the archimandrite father produced a volume entitled Collected Speeches. Sermons and Meditations, which includes together many of the sermons and meditations through which Father Sofian fervently preached the Savior's Gospel and its embodiments in the lives of Christians. His sermons have a regular form, and consist of three parts – the introduction, usually very short, intended to present the topic to the audience, followed by the body of the sermon which covers several pages, and the conclusion, which often includes an exhortation based on teachings extracted from the respective sermon. The three composing parts are not separated formally, but rather they derive naturally from one another.*

**Keywords:** father Sofian; Collected Speeches; Sermons and Meditations; Antim Monastery; sermons;

### PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Among the spiritual fathers who have enlightened the spirit of the Romanian people and have kept it in the true faith, like kindled candles, in an age when the forces of darkness worked diabolically to estrange it from God, father Sofian Boghiu<sup>1</sup> has a well-deserved

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<sup>1</sup> He was born on November 7th, 1912 in Bassarabia, Cuconeștii-Vechi village, Bălți County. At the age of 14 he joined the monastery Rughi-Soroca, between the years 1928-1932 he attended Church singers' School at the monastery of Dobrușa-Soroca, then the monastic Seminary at the Cernica Monastery (1932-1940). On December 25<sup>th</sup>, 1937 he was tonsured to join monastic life, changing his name from Serghie to Sofian, and on August 6th, 1939 he was ordained a deacon at the Cathedral in Bălți by Metropolitan Bishop Tit Simedrea. He attended the Fine Arts Academy in Bucharest between the years 1940-1945, as well as the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest (1942-1946), obtaining a degree in theology with the thesis entitled *Chipul Mântuitorului în iconografie (The Savior's Image in Iconography)*. In 1945 he was ordained a priest at the Antim monastery in Bucharest, taking part in the meetings of the *Rugul Aprins (Burning Bush)* between the years 1945-1948. On June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1950 he was appointed abbot of the Antim Monastery, and between the years 1954-1958 he led the monastic community at the Plumbuita Monastery. In 1958 he was arrested and imprisoned for “plotting”, and sentenced to 16 years' forced labor, but released after the general amnesty in 1964. In 1967 he returned as

place, having sustained for almost six decades, the spiritual life of the Antim Monastery in Bucharest, as its abbot, chaplain, preacher and servant of this holy place of worship. A remarkable spiritual personality, unanimously acknowledged, the archimandrite father Sofian was known and appreciated especially for three qualities or gifts that God had bestowed upon him: as a worthy church painter, preacher and chanter with a divine calling. We could also add to this moral portrayal his singular meekness, his modesty and calm, his boundless patience and his rich theological culture accumulated in time<sup>2</sup>.

As His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel asserted, father Sofian:

“was the torch that revived souls, especially during the harsh years of the communist regime. He stretched out his arms to embrace the despondent people, giving reassurance to those whose hope failed, imparting light and guidance upon those prey to confusion, bringing revivifying freshness and joy to the lives of those who followed his fatherly advice. Through his life and service, as priest and preacher, chaplain and shepherd, celebrant and painter, he was a reflection of the Great Shepherd, instilling in his deeds the virtues of the service of Christ: humbleness, gentleness, wisdom, but, above all, love for God and for human beings”<sup>3</sup>.

Convinced that redemption can be attained only by complete commitment to faith, even to the utmost sacrifice, the archimandrite father immersed himself in the process of reinvigorating the spiritual life of the Christians through sermons, meditations, religious lectures, catechesis, and by intensifying the liturgical program. Having a sound theological background, as well as the qualities of a chaplain, he was sought not only by the simple Christians “*but also by those belonging to the contemporary cultural and intellectual elite, evincing a great ability to respond to the problems and challenges of the times in which he lived*”<sup>4</sup>.

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abbot of the Antim Monastery and after an eventful course of 90 years of life he passed away on September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2002. He wrote many books and articles: *Pictura murală și iconografia neobizantină în Biserica Ortodoxă Română (Mural painting and Neo-Byzantine Iconography in the Romanian Orthodox Church)*, in „M.B.”, year XXXVI (1986), no. 3, pp. 49-57; *Rugul Aprins și temnița (the Burning Bush and the Prison)*, in „Vestitorul Ortodoxiei”, year VIII, no. 157, 15 June 1996; *Dialoguri despre rugăciune (Dialogues on Prayer)*, in „Vestitorul Ortodoxiei”, year IX, no. 172, 15 January 1997; *Ne vorbește Părintele Sofian (Father Sofian speaks to us)*, Publishing House of Sihăstria Monastery, Vânători-Neamț, 1997; *Taina Spovedaniei ca eveniment în viața Bisericii astăzi (The Mystery of Confession as an event in today's Church life)*, in „Vestitorul Ortodoxiei”, year X, no. 198-199, February-March 1998; *Cea mai desăvârșită pace este pacea lumii (The most perfect peace is the peace of the world)*, in „Vestitorul Ortodoxiei”, year XII, no. 239-240, 15 January 2000; *Mitropolitul Antim Ivireanu (The Metropolitan Bishop Antim Ivireanu)*, in „B.O.R.”, year XXXVI (2000), no. 7-12, pp. 306-334; *Chipul Mântuitorului în iconografie (The Savior's Image depicted in Iconography)*, The Byzantine Publishing House of Bucharest, 2001; *Smerenia și dragostea, însușirile trăirii creștine (Humbleness and love, the qualities of Christian living)*, Bucharest, 2001; *Sfântul Antim Ivireanu și Mănăstirea Tuturor Sfinților (Saint Antim Ivireanu /of Iberia and the Monastery of All Saints)*, Byzantine Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Archim. Ioanichie Bălan, *Convorbiri duhovnicești (Spiritual Conversations)*, vol. I, Editura Episcopiei Romanului și Hușilor, 1993, p. 408.

<sup>3</sup> † Daniel, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, „Cuvânt înainte” (Foreword), in *Un iconar de suflete – Părintele Sofian Boghiu (A painter of souls – Father Sofian Boghiu)*, Archim. Mihail Stanciu and Protos. Veniamin Goreanu (eds.), *Basilica Publishing House* of the Romanian Patriarchate, Bucharest, 2009, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Protos. Veniamin Goreanu, „Vrednicul slujitor al lui Hristos, părintele Archimandrit Sofian Boghiu (The worthy servant of Christ, father archimandrite Sofian Boghiu (1912-2002))”, in vol. *Un iconar de suflete – Părintele Sofian Boghiu (A painter of souls – Father Sofian Boghiu)*, Archim. Mihail Stanciu and protos. dr. Veniamin Goreanu (eds.), *Basilica Publishing House*, Bucharest, 2009, p. 48.



The sermons delivered in the Iberian church were met with great interest and pleasure by the audience. With his warm, soft voice the father managed to captivate the listeners of all walks of life, because his speech was easily understood by all attendants.

## 1. VOLUMES OF SERMONS

The homiletic activity of the archimandrite father materialized in the volume entitled *Buchet de cuvântări. Predici și meditații (Collected speeches. Sermons and Meditations)*<sup>5</sup>, which brings together some of the sermons and meditations through which

"father Sofian tirelessly and arduously preached the Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ and its experience in the life of the Righteous Church"<sup>6</sup>.

On reading the 40 sermons collected in this volume – 2 exegetic homilies, 25 thematic sermons and 13 panegyrics – we easily realize ‘the amount of time and spiritual effort which the Archimandrite Father Sofian put in his work in order to come to grasp the profound meanings meant to restore the soul of the teachings of the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ’<sup>7</sup>.

Some of the sermons have explanatory titles illustrating the theme: *Despre Sfânta Împărtășanie (On the Holy Communion)*, *Praznicul Schimbării la Față (the Feast of the Transfiguration)*, *Despre desăvârșire (On Perfection)*, *Despre păzirea poruncilor (On Keeping the Commandments)*, *Providența divină (On the Divine Providence)*, *Despre Judecata particulară (On the particular judgment)*, *Despre iertare și împăcare (On forgiveness and reconciliation)*, *Despre apostolate (On apostleship)*, *Despre suferință (On suffering)* or *Sfătuire către cei ce se spovedesc (Advise to those who confess)*. We can find several sermons for the same liturgical day, while some sermons for certain Sundays and holidays are missing. At times, the titles of the sermons are reiterated because they were delivered for the same Sunday, but the nuances added by father Sofian from one sermon to the next are quite visible.

## 2. SOURCES USED

Even at the first glance it can be noticed that the sermons of the archimandrite father show careful labor in elaborating and explaining the themes, with frequent resort to the Holy Scripture, the Holy Fathers (Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Great, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, the *Paterikon*), the religious books (*The Triodion*, *The Pentecostarion*), at the same time introducing original and unique formulation. Additionally, we note the fact that the author also turns to the universal literature by referring to: Cicero, Voltaire, Lamartine, Newton, Tyndall and Kepler.

What impresses us in all these speeches is the powerful experience of the actual and effective presence of God in the Church, in those who overcome their own weaknesses; such is the sermon for the commemoration of Venerable Mother Paraskevi, the saint who, as a child, attended the church and heard the words of the Holy Gospel “*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me*” (Luke 9, 23), thus deciding to dedicate her life to our Savior, leading the harsh existence of a hermit, nourishing herself with prayer, guiding herself according to the words of the Saint Apostle Paul: “*I discipline my body and make it my slave; so that, after I have preached to others, I*

<sup>5</sup> EIBMBOR, Bucharest, 2006, 288 p.

<sup>6</sup> †Teoctist, „Precuvântare” (Preliminary Speech), to Archim. Sofian Boghiu, *Buchet de cuvântări. Predici și meditații (Collected Speeches. Sermons and meditations)*, EIBMBOR, Bucharest, 2006, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> †Teoctist, „Precuvântare (Preliminary Speech)...”, p. 5.

*myself will not be disqualified*” (I Corinthians 9, 27). Praising the holy life of the Venerable Mother, father Sofian asserts:

“The Holy Paraskevi, thus spiritually prepared, incessantly praising God for the comfort she experienced to the fullest, in all her solitude and poverty, started from there towards Jerusalem. With the Lord’s aid she reached the destination of her journey. With great devotion she bowed before the Holy Sepulcher and before all the sacred places that had once been connected to the lives of the Savior and of the Lord’s Mother”<sup>8</sup>. He presents her to us as a model of holiness, worthy of being followed: “A paragon of sacred zeal, a paragon of faith in God and kindness towards people and a paragon of steadiness in doing good is for us Saint Paraskevi, she who is of most help to us, those who seek her aid with confidence”<sup>9</sup>.

### 3. STRUCTURE

The sermons of the Archimandrite Sofian have a common form, consisting of three parts – *the introduction*, usually very short, meant to inform the listeners about the theme that is going to be discussed, followed by *the body*, covering many pages, and the *ending*, which most of the times includes an exhortation based on the teachings extracted from the respective sermon. The three parts that constitute the sermon are not indicated by particular forms of address, but they follow one another naturally. A case in point is the speech delivered on the occasion of the feast of the *Lord’s Transfiguration*, which begins as follows:

“Every year, on August 6<sup>th</sup>, we celebrate one of the greatest Christian holidays – the Lord’s Transfiguration on Mount Tabor. This Feast is truly great because there, on Mount Tabor, the Savior Himself revealed, as in a flashlight, His Godly Glory before the Apostles. Until such time, the Holy Apostles had only witnessed in awe His wonders, which were great and powerful signs of His godliness. But in their souls they considered the Savior still a man – a great prophet, the greatest sent by God amidst humans of all times. Yet, the events on Mount Tabor on the occasion of the Transfiguration, made the Holy Apostles comprehend that their great Teacher was not only a godly man, but the True God. What they witnessed experienced by on Mount Tabor will never be forgotten. Chronologically, this event occurred in the Savior’s final year on earth, just a few months before His crucifixion”<sup>10</sup>. Other times, the introduction renders the feeling of a story continued before our eyes: “Great events had changed the world. One hundred years had passed since the eternal God, He who had made all things, was incarnate and born in the Bethlehem of Judea. One hundred years had passed since the Christian era had begun for mankind...”<sup>11</sup>.

In some sermons, the author organizes the *body of his sermon* based on various questions to which he provides the answers: “*But can we ask ourselves: – What meaning does this even have for the Saint Apostles and for us? – What does the Savior teach us, people of today, through this event?*”<sup>12</sup> We often find in this approach an explanation of the word of the Scripture by means of a model that is logically structured, revealing how much father Sofian Boghiu cared for order, as is the case of the sermon on the Sunday of John of the Ladder:

<sup>8</sup> Archim. Sofian Boghiu, „Pomenirea Sfintei Cuvioase Parascheva” (Commemoration of the Venerable Saint Paraskevi), in vol. *Buchet de cuvântări... (Collected speeches)*, p. 200.

<sup>9</sup> Archim. Sofian Boghiu, „Pomenirea Sfintei Cuvioase Parascheva...” (Commemoration of the Venerable Saint Paraskevi), in vol. *Buchet de cuvântări... (Collected speeches)*, p. 205.

<sup>10</sup> Archim. Sofian Boghiu, *Praznicul Schimbării la Față (The Feast of the Transfiguration)*, in vol. *Buchet de cuvântări (Collected Speeches)...*, p. 127.

<sup>11</sup> Archim. Sofian Boghiu, *Pomenirea Sfântului Ioan Evanghelistul (The Commemoration of St John the Evangelist)*, in vol. *Buchet de cuvântări...*, p. 189.

<sup>12</sup> Archim. Sofian Boghiu, *Praznicul Schimbării la Față...*, in vol. *Buchet de cuvântări...*, 128-129.

“Mount Horeb is known in the Holy Scripture particularly for four events: 1. At the foot of the mountain God showed himself to Moses in the form of the burning bush, not consumed by fire; 2. It was the rock of this mountain that Moses struck with his rod and God made water come out from the rock for his people; 3. On the top of this mountain Moses stood with his arms raised in the form of a cross, while Joshua Navi fought the Amalekites; 4. In one of the caves in this mountain, God showed himself to the Prophet Elijah, when he had fled from the persecution of King Ahab and Jezebel, who wanted to have him killed”<sup>13</sup>.

*The ending* offers, at times, an exhortation towards faith and spiritual perfection, demonstrating the author’s wish to indicate the path by which the Christians can attain redemption. Thus, in the ending of the *Sermon before the Exaltation of the Holy Cross*, we read the following:

“The icons and liturgies of the holy churches await us. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is summoning us, he who is present in the homes of Christians but especially on the Holy Altars and in the Holy Mysteries. He calls upon us, telling us all and each of us individually: Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest» (Matthew 11, 28). Let us listen to His gentle voice and his relentless calling and be worthy of His aid, His kindness, His comfort, His peace, Amen!”<sup>14</sup>. Also, *the Sermon on the Feast of Saint John the Evangelist* ends as follows: “The bond between the Savior and us Christians is illustrated by the bond between the vine and its sprouts, or that between the body and the soul. By thoroughly reading the pages filled with grace, light and Godly love, written by Saint John in his Gospel, let us experience great joy. In the end, another exhortation: I give this to you so that you may read it carefully and fulfill, to the best of your powers, the command of love for God and for your fellow people. Because, as the same John says, in the first of his three epistles: «Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love... If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God» (I John 4, 8,16). Amen”<sup>15</sup>.

In other cases, the father concludes his sermon by an invocation:

“Come, My Lord Jesus, Savior, and ban from us all that is inimical and all that is against us. Comfort our life, Lord, have mercy on us and on the world You have created and redeem our souls as the Kind and Loving Master that you are”<sup>16</sup>. Or: “Give us, Lord, the power of comprehension, as you gave Thomas, so that we may know You and believe in You as Thomas did, and we shall call to You from the bottom of our souls «My Lord and God» and by believing, we shall live our life in Your Name, Lord Jesus Christ”<sup>17</sup>.

*On the Divine Providence, On Prayer or Advice to those who confess* are titles of meditations or teachings that the father insisted on bequeathing to his disciples and followers, as valuable sources of guidance and advice:

“Confession must be without shame in telling your sin as you have committed it, that is, by revealing it in all its severity. Confess all your bad habits and do not blame one or another,

<sup>13</sup> Archim. Sofian Boghiu, *Duminica Sfântului Ioan Scărarul(Sunday of Saint John of the Ladder)* in vol. *Buchet de cuvântări... (Collected Speeches)*, p. 64.

<sup>14</sup> Archim. Sofian Boghiu, *Duminica dinaintea Înălțării Sfintei Cruc (The Sunday before the Exaltation of the Holy Cross)*, in the vol. *Buchet de cuvântări.. (Collected Speeches)*, p. 144.

<sup>15</sup> Archim. Sofian Boghiu, *Pomenirea Sfântului Ioan Evanghelistul (Commemoration of John the Evangelist)*, în vol. *Buchet de cuvântări...*, p. 196.

<sup>16</sup> Archim. Sofian Boghiu, *Duminica dinaintea Nașterii Domnului (Sunday before the Birth of the Lord)*, în vol. *Buchet de cuvântări...*, p. 175.

<sup>17</sup> Archim. Sofian Boghiu, *Duminica Tomii (Thomas' Sunday) (I)*, în vol. *Buchet de cuvântări...*, p. 96.

but blame yourself before God and the priest and show to him all the wounds of your sin...”<sup>18</sup>.

**The style** is fluent, concise and clear, its main feature being the biblical nature, because each sermon strongly reflects the spirit of the Holy Scripture. By using a homiletic style, abundantly enriched with rhetorical devices, the preacher’s penchant for the melodic and sublime voice of words crowned by multiple meanings is revealed; this is meant to warm the hearts of audience. Among these, the most frequent are the *epithets*: “good man, noble and very gentle”, “burning thirst”, “the good and merciful Mother of the Lord”, “blessed and sacred spring”, “healing grace”, “unspoken joys”, “impaired health”, “old and concealed sins”, “the meanest and most ardent desires”, “unshattered trust”, “just as kind and readily helpful”, “The mother of us, baptized earthmen”, “powerless glance”, “clear mind”, “desperate calls”, “powerful faith”, “fervent prayer”, “terrible plight”, “persistent and forceful prayer”, “lively and endless bond”, “more precious gift”; *enumeration*: “many suffering people of all kinds, men, women and children, some kings and queens, many nobles and commoners, many poor and many rich healed”, “troubled by a restless hate, envy, greed”, “darkens the mind, shakes the will, petrifies the tenderness of love, smothers good sense”, “I have made one or many mistakes, I have eaten or drunk too much, I have committed a crime or a bad deed, I have fostered meanness in my soul towards my fellow men, I have despised the principle of good sense”, “special prayers, liturgies and the Holy Mysteries”, “fasting and abstinence and prayers”, “yesterday, today and forever”, “he fell silent, rejected the Apostles and rejected the woman”, “her deed, her steady faith, her deep prayer, her sincere, convincing prayer”, “confronted by troubles, illness, shortage and suffering”; *comparison*: “a bigger and more beautiful church than the one built before by Emperor Leon”, “their poison flows from the soul into the body just like germs spread in the blood”, “guarding ourselves against sin like we guard ourselves against poison or fire”, “I honor her as well, as I would a true mother”, “desperately, the mother runs”, “we shall be aided and comforted just like that poor woman was”, “let us pray in faith and with perseverance, like the woman of Canaan prayed”; *personification*: “with it we can taste the joys of life in a useful way”, “his soul is sick”, “sin first paralyzes our inner forces”, “the soul of that poor mother was torn apart by grief”, “her immense grief taught her to pray so fervently”, “the answer shall be tardy”; *metaphor*: “her motherly kindness”, “their poison overflows from the soul into the body”, “a sun inside the heart”, “the Great Unmercenary Doctor who does not accept any pay”, “His earthly establishment”, “from the bottom of the heart”, “the slayer hidden within”, “he who knows the hearts”, “the spring and reason of our life”; *inversion*: “her poor daughter”, “grief so terrible”, „name so sacred”, „heartbreaking grief”, “great disdain”, “so great her grief”.

**The plain language**, carefully selected, comprehensible to all listeners, is, in fact the liturgical language, the language of the believers, of the church books and of the Holy Scripture. It particularly avoids neologisms and foreign words, the sentences are short and the author does not entangle himself in lengthy arguments. When evoking sins, certain failures or the effort to rise again, he always counts himself among the sinners, preaching humbly, placing himself within the issues and not from a distance or with reprimand.

He speaks as a simple man, aware of his own sins and weaknesses, not just as priest and preacher who, by nature of his mission, must often have an impressive appearance..

<sup>18</sup> Archim. Sofian Boghiu, *Sfătuire către cei ce se spovedesc (Advise to those who confess)*, în vol. *Buchet de cuvântări...*, p. 269.

Thus, together with the substantial messages, his simplicity and humbleness constitute characteristic features of the sermons included in the volume mentioned above.

## CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the speeches of father Sofian Boghiu is to enlighten and set the soul free, in other words, to heal those who have fallen victims to sin, attracting them towards the Church of Christ, because “here, we mystically encounter our Savior, the Mother of Our Lord, all the Celestial Forces, the Holy Apostles and all His friends, prophets, confessors, hierarchs, pious men, because the friends of God are certain Saints, who have not strayed from His Holy Commandments”<sup>19</sup>. We must remark the persuasive force of his speeches, relying on the text of the Scripture and giving powerful examples of preaching in the teachings of the Gospel of our Savior, Jesus Christ, not in an abstract form but in a very concrete manner, related to the realities of the Christians’ lives and their religious and moral aspirations.

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<sup>19</sup> Archim. Sofian Boghiu, *Duminica lui Zaheu (Zacchaeus’ Sunday)*, in vol. *Buchet de cuvântări.. (Collected of speeches)*, p. 33.

## ALEXIOS I KOMNENOS AND HIS CHURCH POLICY

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### ABSTRACT

*Alexios I Komnenos has been characterized as a gifted military leader. Nevertheless, apart from his military career and after he took the throne, Alexios proceeded to certain measures in order to revive an empire in condition of decline. Alexios established himself as a defender of Orthodoxy, since he helped monasticism, fought heresies and supported the building or renewal of foundations, such as monasteries and churches. In this paper, I deal with Alexios' church policy and how he defended Orthodoxy.*

**Keywords:** Komnenoi; Foundations; Monasticism; Diegesis Merike; Dogmatic Panoply;

### INTRODUCTION

Alexios I Komnenos (1057-1118) was son of Ioannis Komnenos and Anna Dalassene. In 1076, he married the daughter of a rich Italian man, but she died one year after their marriage and in 1078, he married Eirene Doukaina with whom he had children. He became emperor in 1081, but before that he had a significant military career.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Alexios was very skillful in military things and had sound knowledge of war techniques. His daughter, Anna Komnene, mentions in the *Alexiad* his skills and ability in these fields.<sup>2</sup> According to Magdalino, Alexios was a soldier with simple ideas,<sup>3</sup> while other descriptions portray him as a military backwoodsman.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, Byzantine seals provide us with further evidence on his military action, as certain inscriptions on seals show that they belong to people that could be identified with some of Alexios' commanders.<sup>5</sup> Alexios was an outstanding young general, as Frankopan writes, who led a coup against the emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates.<sup>6</sup>

Alexios' military skills can be also seen in his victorious campaign against Bohemond. The latter had been defeated and forced by Alexios to sign the embarrassing Treaty of Devol.<sup>7</sup> According to the Treaty, Bohemond would acknowledge Alexios as the

<sup>1</sup> Κωνσταντίνος Βάρζος, *Η Γενεαλογία των Κομνηνων: τόμος Α'* (Thessalonica, 1984), 87.

<sup>2</sup> Annae Comnenae, *Alexias*, ed. H.-G. Beck, A. Kambylis, R. Keydell (Berlin 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos* (Cambridge, 1993), 186.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Mullett, 'Introduction: Alexios the Enigma', *Alexios I Komnenos Papers*, edited by Margaret Mullett and Dion Smythe (Belfast, 1996), 1-11.

<sup>5</sup> Vujadin Ivanisevic and Bojana Krsmanovic, 'Byzantine Seals from the Ras Fortress', *Recueil des Travaux de l'Institut d'études Byzantines L*, 2013, 449-460. See also Ivan Jordanov, 'Seals of the Personages from the *Alexiad* Found in Veliki Preslav', *Vestnik Volgogradskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta. Seria 4. Istoriâ, Regionovedenie, Meždunarodnye Otnošenîâ* 2016; 21, 19-31.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Frankopan, 'Kinship and the Distribution of Power in Komnenian Byzantium', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 122, No 495 (2007), 1-34.

<sup>7</sup> Nicholas L. Paul, 'A Warlord's Wisdom: Literacy and Propaganda at the Time of the First Crusade', *Speculum*, Vol. 85, No. 3 (2010), 534-566.

lord of the lands he conquered in Syria and he would never challenge Byzantine authority in the future.<sup>8</sup> According to Frankopan, Bohemond was a great propagandist against Alexios. He attracted followers with stories of his exploits and urged his people to take the Cross and set out for Jerusalem, but attacking the emperor of Constantinople first. In order to justify action against fellow Christians, he sent a letter to the Pope underlining a long list of supposed heresies perpetrated by the Orthodox Church.<sup>9</sup>

Also, in 1090s, Alexios turned to the recovery of Anatolia, while a number of Aegean islands, Cyprus and Crete were recaptured in 1092.<sup>10</sup> The recovery of Western Anatolia was an attempt greatly assisted by the passing of the armies of the First Crusade through Anatolia in 1097.<sup>11</sup>

However, apart from these references to his military skills, as we are going to see Alexios was also a benefactor of the Orthodox Church during his reign. One could say that Alexios helped the Church and was a defender of Orthodoxy. As Armstrong states, Alexios was close to holy-men and monasticism because of political reasons,<sup>12</sup> but still his contribution is very important.

According to Pentcheva, in 1081, Alexios succeeded the Macedonian dynasty which brought a chaos in the empire, rejected the civil aristocracy and established his family as the new dynasty. Alexios promoted a campaign in defense of Orthodoxy and attacked heretical movements, although sometimes Orthodoxy had been used as an excuse for the condemnation of his political enemies. In addition, his dynasty promoted the new image-type icon of the orans Virgin with the hovering medallion, since it was seen as an expression of the dogma of the Incarnation and Orthodoxy.<sup>13</sup>

Alexios' reign could be seen as a decisive change in the system of government, attracting the interest of several Byzantinists. His reign suggested new policies, social, political and economic changes, while it was also a critical crossing between east and west.<sup>14</sup> Frankopan declares that Alexios' government was significantly based on domestic politics, as Alexios appointed his confidants and supporters to the highest positions, while he used his family as a protective ring around himself, showing some sort of overwhelming control.<sup>15</sup> It could be said that Alexios' church policy encouraged other members of the family to support Orthodoxy. There are several monastic establishments set up by members of the imperial family, like the church and monastery of the Saviour Pantepoptes established by Anna

<sup>8</sup> Paul, 'A Warlord's Wisdom', 537.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Frankopan, *The First Crusade* (Harvard, 2012), 189.

<sup>10</sup> Jason T. Roche, 'In the Wake of Mantzikert: The First Crusade and the Alexian Reconquest of Western Anatolia', *History*, Vol. 94, No. 2 (314) (2009), 135-153.

<sup>11</sup> Roche, 'In the Wake of Mantzikert', 145.

<sup>12</sup> Pamela Armstrong, 'Alexios I Komnenos, Holy Men and Monasteries', *Alexios I Komnenos Papers*, edited by Margaret Mullett and Dion Smythe (Belfast, 1996), 219-231.

<sup>13</sup> Bissera V. Pentcheva, 'Rhetorical Images of the Virgin: The Icon of the "Usual Miracle" at the Blachernai', *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* No. 38 (Autumn, 2000), 34-55.

<sup>14</sup> Frankopan, 'Kinship and the Distribution of Power in Komnenian Byzantium', 1.

<sup>15</sup> Frankopan, 'Kinship and the Distribution of Power in Komnenian Byzantium', 2-3, 7. Frankopan gives a detailed description on how members of the Komnenian family were involved in the government. Apart from the *Alexiad*, there is another source dealing with the dynasty. This is John Zonaras' *Epitome Historion*, which gives an explicit commentary on Alexios and the whole family. For example, both sources give an extensive commentary on Anna Dalassene's powers and responsibilities, when Robert Guiscard attacked the empire in the early 1080s.

Dalassene, or the Kosmoteira monastery of the Mother of God founded by Alexios' son, Isaac Komnenos.<sup>16</sup>

### 1. FOUNDATIONS AND MONASTICISM

In the *Alexiad*, Anna Komnene gives a detailed description of *Orphanotropheion*, focusing on the philanthropic aspect of her father's character.<sup>17</sup> *Orphanotropheion* had been reconstituted after the latter's initiative and it was not only a place for orphan children, but a place for poor people too. Although founded by Justin II, Alexios renovated the building.<sup>18</sup> Magdalino describes *Orphanotropheion* as 'a second city within the royal city', drawing a parallel with *oikos*; a building of Constantine IX Monomachos which consisted of a palace, a monastery, a law-school, poor-houses, old-age homes, hostels and a hospital.<sup>19</sup>

Apart from *Orphanotropheion*, Alexios proceeded with other foundations. Although the idea of the foundation of Christ Philanthropos and Theotokos Kekharitomene belongs to his wife, in fact Alexios supported these foundations.<sup>20</sup> As Choniates declares, this double monastery was a foundation by Alexios himself based on the fact that the emperor had been buried there and it was a clearly Komnenian foundation.<sup>21</sup> Also, according to an epigram, Alexios was among the benefactors of the monastery of Mokios. Although the epigram connects the building of the monastery to Manuel, Alexios was a great patron who established a community of monks.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, while Blachernai palace was a foundation before Alexios' reign,<sup>23</sup> he renewed Blachernai church, because of a miraculous icon of the Virgin that was rediscovered.<sup>24</sup> As Cotsonis asserts, by the eleventh century, all the levels of society turned to images for guidance and devotion and Alexios was such an example. He turned to the habitual or usual miracle, involving this Marian icon in the church of Blachernai.<sup>25</sup>

Magdalino declares that Alexios supported monasticism, while Hagia Sophia emerged in Alexios' years and played a permanent role in the twelfth-century Church. In addition, he sponsored the monastery of Patmos.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the monastery of Patmos was a

<sup>16</sup> Frankopan, *The First Crusade*, 72. See also Charalambos Bakirtzis, 'Warrior Saints or Portraits of Members of the Family of Alexios I Komnenos?', *British School at Athens Studies*, Vol. 8, Mosaic: Festschrift for A. H. S. Megaw (2001), 85-87. Bakirtzis focuses on the programme of iconography in the church of the Panaghia Kosmosoteira that presents certain distinctive figures, reflecting the wishes of Isaac Komnenos, who was the founder.

<sup>17</sup> Comnenae, *Alexias*.

<sup>18</sup> Lyn Rodley, 'The Art and Architecture of Alexios I Komnenos', *Alexios I Komnenos Papers*, edited by Margaret Mullett and Dion Smythe (Belfast, 1996), 339-358.

<sup>19</sup> Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 115.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium Under the Comneni, 1081-1261* (Cambridge, 1995), 274. The *typikon* of the foundation of the monastery should be read as a careful selection of whom the empress Eirene though deserved prayer and who she did not. Thus, it is not a surprise that there is no mention of Adrian, Alexios' younger brother, as he plotted against him. In any case, Kekharotimene is a prime example of official Komnenian history and image (Frankopan, 'Kinship and the Distribution of Power in Komnenian Byzantium', 31-32).

<sup>21</sup> Rodley, 'The Art and Architecture of Alexios I Komnenos', 344-345.

<sup>22</sup> Rodley, 'The Art and Architecture of Alexios I Komnenos', 345.

<sup>23</sup> Rodley, 'The Art and Architecture of Alexios I Komnenos', 347.

<sup>24</sup> Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 116.

<sup>25</sup> John Cotsonis, 'Narrative Scenes on Byzantine Lead Seals (Sixth-Twelfth Centuries): Frequency, Iconography, and Clientele', *Gesta*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (2009), 55-86. It is also interesting to note, that as Cotsonis writes, in the *Alexiad*, Anna Komnene writes that while her father was absent from the capital in August, her grandmother, Anna Dalassene, issued a seal with images of the Transfiguration and the Dormition, as they were both major liturgical celebrations of that month.

<sup>26</sup> Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 318.



basic factor in links between Constantinople and other Christian communities, like these of Syria and Palestine.<sup>27</sup>

Commenting on the patronage of literature, Mullett declares that Alexios was not a renowned patron of the different genres. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that there might have been some use of hymnography and hagiography and there were several holy men under Alexios' reign.<sup>28</sup> Alexios has been characterized as *philomonahos*, because of his strong relationship with Cyril Phileotes. Alexios cared indeed about monks and hermits and saw them as representatives of God on the land. The fact that he visited Cyril Phileotes twice, between 1091-1096 and in 1105, shows his interest in the monastic community.<sup>29</sup> Alexios followed the route of his mother, as Anna Dalassene also appreciated the role of monasticism. After she read about Cyril Phileotes, she wanted to meet him. Apart from gifts and offers to the monk, Dalassene asked his blessing.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly to his mother, when Alexios heard about Cyril Phileotes, he wanted to meet him too. Langis provides us with interesting information about the attitude of the emperor during this meeting, as he only sat when the monk told him to do so. Alexios mentioned that it was God who trusted him to rule the empire, while respecting monks is among his responsibilities, as monks serve God and they deserve praise and compliments.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, Cyril Phileotes could see that Alexios was truly *philomonahos*. When the emperor would fight Franks, Cyril prayed for Alexios' victory. He also gave him his blessing and had a dream about the fight.<sup>32</sup> We should bear in mind also, that when Alexios visited Cyril Phileotes, the latter praised him for his social and religious work, stressing *Orphanotropheion*.<sup>33</sup>

Alexios helped hermits and monasteries in other ways too: by giving food, clothes and all the necessary equipment.<sup>34</sup> His respect to monks and his active role in monastic life shows his positive contribution to monasticism. When Alexios learnt that Cyril Phileotis was sick, he decided to visit him again, this time with his whole family. In the meantime, Alexios considered the monk the only person who could tell him the right route to defeat Turks.<sup>35</sup>

In 1096, in order to improve the condition of the monasteries and other buildings, Alexios proceeded to certain decisions. Thus, he provided the Patriarch with the right of *epiteresis* (oversight) and *diorthosis* (correction) over all the Church's buildings, while at the same time the Patriarch could visit any building to inspect for possible faults. In addition, the monasteries were given an *epidosis* (financial benefits) and the Patriarch had the right to ask from their holders to restore damages.<sup>36</sup>

Although *kharistike* was a measure that prevailed before his reign, Alexios kept it. *Kharistike* was the lay patronage of the monasteries and *kharistikarioi* were in charge of the monasteries' protection. However, Alexios saw after consultation with the Patriarch Nicholas Grammatikos, that he should proceed to some changes in order to reduce the

<sup>27</sup> Rosemary Morris, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium: 843-1118* (Cambridge, 1995), 272.

<sup>28</sup> Margaret Mullett, 'The Madness of Genre', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 46 *Homo Byzantinus: Papers in Honor of Alexander Kazhdan* (1992), 233-243.

<sup>29</sup> Ματθαίος Λάγγης (ed.), *Βίος και Διδαχαί Οσίου Κυρίλλου του Φιλεώτου* (Athens, 1998), 13.

<sup>30</sup> Λάγγης (ed.), *Βίος και Διδαχαί Οσίου Κυρίλλου του Φιλεώτου*, 14, 82.

<sup>31</sup> Λάγγης (ed.), *Βίος και Διδαχαί Οσίου Κυρίλλου του Φιλεώτου*, 273-275.

<sup>32</sup> Λάγγης (ed.), *Βίος και Διδαχαί Οσίου Κυρίλλου του Φιλεώτου*, 170-171.

<sup>33</sup> Λάγγης (ed.), *Βίος και Διδαχαί Οσίου Κυρίλλου του Φιλεώτου*, 280-282.

<sup>34</sup> Λάγγης (ed.), *Βίος και Διδαχαί Οσίου Κυρίλλου του Φιλεώτου*, 286-287.

<sup>35</sup> Λάγγης (ed.), *Βίος και Διδαχαί Οσίου Κυρίλλου του Φιλεώτου*, 299-300.

<sup>36</sup> Morris, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium*, 274.

likelihood of monasteries' abuse by their patrons, as -very frequently- they were independent and treated monasteries without the proper respect. Consequently, Alexios established lay *archontes* at large monasteries, since monks should be devoted to their divine action and their duties should be primarily ecclesiastical.<sup>37</sup>

As measure, *kharistike* gave lay patrons not only the right to access monasteries, but establish themselves. Monasteries became independent, and the patrons had nobody to supervise their action. Inevitably, there were people close to the Church who could not accept this situation. John of Oxeia attacked *kharistike*, mentioning that lay patronage caused several problems to monasteries. His purpose was the improvement and control of monasteries' condition. According to John of Oxeia, patrons treated monasteries unacceptably and this should change.<sup>38</sup>

In 1096, Nicholas Grammatikos set up a commission consisting of deacons and officers, intending to visit monasteries and see their condition. Nevertheless, *kharistikarioi* did not allow them to access the houses, and possible abuses remained unrevealed. Thus, the members of the commission returned to the emperor, and asked him if they had, really, the right to access the monasteries. Alexios ordered that abbots or lay patrons who were guilty for trading and abuse in the monasteries should be dismissed. Also, he commissioned the Patriarch to create *adelphata* (corrodies) in the monasteries to supervise the condition of the monasteries more effectively.<sup>39</sup>

## 2. DIEGESIS MERIKE

*Diegesis merike* is a collection of letters compiled in Constantinople in 1180 and it deals with some problems on Mount Athos in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>40</sup> *Diegesis merike* is a useful source on some further measures by Alexios. We should focus on three specific scandals taking place on Mount Athos: the first one is a demand by the *hegoumenos* of Lavra, John Balmas, with a group of monks for the removal of Vlach herdsmen from the mountain. The second one is some monks' complaints about the presence of children and eunuchs on the mountain; and finally the case of Symeon the Sanctified who return to the mountain after Alexios' intervention.<sup>41</sup>

John Balmas reacted, because Vlach herdsmen used to live on the mountain with their families. Although some monks welcomed Vlachs at the end of the eleventh century, another group of monks under the orders of the *hegoumenos* of Lavra complained to the Patriarch Nicholas Grammatikos. The Patriarch did not order the removal of Vlachs and then Balmas issued a forged patriarchal *entole*, that monks must force the herdsmen to leave. When Alexios heard about this, he asked John Chortaitinos to investigate the case. However the latter refused to do that, because the Patriarch was in his deathbed and was afraid of his curse. The case ended after Balmas, who also heard about the physical condition of Nicholas Grammatikos, revealed the true event.<sup>42</sup>

As Gkoutzioukostas writes, frequently the emperor appointed commissioners to hear cases and then sign any decisions. Such an example is Alexios' *chrysobullos logos* (1084), according to which the emperor gave authority to the *protoanthypatos* and *krites of the*

<sup>37</sup> Morris, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium*, 274.

<sup>38</sup> Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium*, 65.

<sup>39</sup> Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium*, 64-65.

<sup>40</sup> Morris, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium*, 275.

<sup>41</sup> Morris, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium*, 279.

<sup>42</sup> Morris, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium*, 275-278.

*hippodrome*, Michael Rhodios, to investigate the dispute between the Great Lavra Monastery and the emperor's brother, the *pansebastos protosebastos* Adrianos. The *judge of the hippodrome* wrote a synopsis of his decision; a *parasemeiosis*. Then the monks asked the emperor to give formal consent to this decision with a *chrysobullos logos* securing their rights.<sup>43</sup> Michael Rhodios' story is an interesting one, as he is mentioned in other contemporary documents like *krites of Boleron, Strymon and Thessalonike*. In fact, he is cited in a *chrysobull* of Alexios dated in July 1104, because the emperor commissioned him to settle a land dispute.<sup>44</sup>

Although *Diegesis merike* does not show the Patriarch issuing a formal order, there is evidence in a document from the Archives of the Protaton, dated between 1178-9 that refers to a monk who left the monastery, because of Grammatikos' prohibition on mixing between Vlachs and the rest of monks. But even if we consider that the Patriarch issued, indeed, this kind of *entole*, Alexios showed his opposition to the removal of Vlachs and requested further investigation.<sup>45</sup>

Second, the appearance of children and eunuchs on the mountain caused the reaction of some monks who complained to the emperor. Alexios rejected their suggestion and he called them 'false hesychasts', as they left their monasteries without permission from the *protos*. In addition, Alexios informed the Patriarch on this event.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, Symeon the Sanctified had been removed from Mount Athos, but the emperor ordered his immediate reinstatement. As a result, the *protos*, although reluctantly, accepted Symeon back. In fact, Alexios was very close to Symeon, as the latter worked for the emperor when he was still *megas domesikos*. The relationship between the two men was a basic reason for Alexios to order Symeon's return to Athos.<sup>47</sup>

### 3. AGAINST HERESIES

The trial of John Italos in 1082 was an important step against heresies.<sup>48</sup> For Alexios, mystical teachings and theories were a great threat for the Church, and the content of Italos' theory was such a teaching. By condemning John Italos, Alexios showed that he would not accept any teachings undermining Orthodoxy. It is interesting to note, that he also added new *anathemata* to the *synodikon* (statement of faith against heresies) condemning Italos and his pupils.<sup>49</sup> This new addition should be seen as a way to fight particularly Italos. Anna Komnene gives a very interesting description of John Italos in the fifth book of her *Alexiad*. She declares that he did not read philosophy in depth and he did not have learned teachers (*ἐν ἀπαιδεύτῳ ἦθει καὶ βαρβαρικῷ οὐκ ἠδύνατο φιλοσοφίας εἰς βάθος*); he was daring and barbarous (*θράσους ὦν μεστός καὶ ἀπονοίας βαρβαρικῆς*), but his doctrine had some popularity during these years, causing some turbulence in the Church.<sup>50</sup>

Pentcheva declares that John Italos was responsible for the education of the elite class. By presenting himself as a guardian of Orthodoxy, he attempted to establish a programme for the legitimacy of the dynasty. Among others, John Italos was accused of

<sup>43</sup> Andreas Gkoutziokostas, "Judges of the Velum" and "Judges of the Hippodrome" in Thessalonike (11th c.)', *Byzantina Symmeikta* Vol. 20, 2010, 67-84.

<sup>44</sup> Gkoutziokostas, "Judges of the Velum" and "Judges of the Hippodrome" in Thessalonike (11th c.)', 76.

<sup>45</sup> Morris, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium*, 275-278.

<sup>46</sup> Morris, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium*, 278.

<sup>47</sup> Morris, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium*, 280.

<sup>48</sup> Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium*, 50.

<sup>49</sup> Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium*, 51-52.

<sup>50</sup> Comnenae, *Alexias*, 161-162.

introducing Neoplatonic logic to explain the Orthodox mysteries, like the Incarnation. He was condemned as unorthodox and the last session in his trial took place on the Sunday of the Feast of Orthodoxy, which celebrates the victory over Iconoclasm in 843.<sup>51</sup> After his statements were anathematized, they were included in the list of heresies in the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*.<sup>52</sup> By setting the trial and condemning John Italos, Alexios presented himself as a defender of Orthodoxy ‘from the rank of the famous iconophiles of the past’.<sup>53</sup>

If the heresy of Italos could only be seen as a pretext for a politically motivated trial, the case was different for the Bogomils, as Pentcheva claims. According to Bogomils, the material world was created by the fallen son of God, Satanael, and Christ, God’s other son, brought the possibility of salvation.<sup>54</sup> They declared that Christ was not incarnate in the Virgin, but he crept through her right ear and put on a body that seemed physical. Then, he went out again and was found laying in the crib. Consequently, by refusing the dogma of the Incarnation, the Bogomils constituted a real threat and they were rejected in the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*.<sup>55</sup>

Anna Komnene in the fifteenth book of the *Alexiad* mentions *Δογματική Πανοπλία* (*Dogmatic Panoply*), as Alexios’ basic way to fight heresies in Byzantium. His decision to proceed to this measure could be seen as a decisive step to keep the authority of Orthodoxy. Although Anna connects the *Dogmatic Panoply* mainly to the Bogomils, in fact Alexios intended to eliminate other heresies too.<sup>56</sup> As Magdalino mentions, Alexios commissioned the monk Euthymios Zigabenos to compile the *Dogmatic Panoply*, against heresy in general. That was an attempt to attack and eliminate doctrinal outsiders, such as Jews, Muslims, Bogomils, Paulicians, and Monophysite Syrians.<sup>57</sup>

Anna Komnene characterizes Basil, the leader of the Bogomils, as disregardful (*ἀσεβής*), giving some details of Basil’s and his pupils’ persecution by her father. Anna describes Basil as a person who tried to corrupt the ideals of Christianity, through his teaching. Although initially she states that she feels shame to speak about a topic like that, she considers necessary to refer to the basic elements of this heresy. As a result, Alexios’ decision for Basil’s *καθαίρεσις* (dismissal) was a right one, according to Anna.<sup>58</sup> After Basil’s trial in 1097 and because Basil did not recant his beliefs, he was burnt on the pyre in Constantinople. While this public condemnation intended to undermine the influence of the Bogomils, Alexios’ political power was strengthened, as well.<sup>59</sup>

Before the death of his brother, the *sebastocrator* Isaac in 1102, Alexios established the preachers’ order (*didaskaloi*), intending to attack the heresy of the Bogomils. According to Angold, Alexios’ measure diverged from the initial plan, as *didaskaloi*’s duties were

<sup>51</sup> Pentcheva, ‘Rhetorical Images of the Virgin’, 50.

<sup>52</sup> Pentcheva, ‘Rhetorical Images of the Virgin’, 50.

<sup>53</sup> Pentcheva, ‘Rhetorical Images of the Virgin’, 50.

<sup>54</sup> Pentcheva, ‘Rhetorical Images of the Virgin’, 51.

<sup>55</sup> Pentcheva, ‘Rhetorical Images of the Virgin’, 51.

<sup>56</sup> Comnenae, *Alexias*. According to Mullett, Alexios was not known for his patronage of literature, although more recent research attempts to show a different version. However, he commissioned others to produce certain writings: an alphabet by Stephen Physopalamites, Euthymios Zigabenos’ *Dogmatic Panoply* and some conventional occasional poetry by Nicholas Kallikles, a court poet. It is also interesting to note the *Mousai*, which was his own composition of paraineseis in dodecasyllables for his son John (Mullett, ‘The Madness of Genre’, 238-239).

<sup>57</sup> Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 367.

<sup>58</sup> Comnenae, *Alexias*, 489.

<sup>59</sup> Pentcheva, ‘Rhetorical Images of the Virgin’, 51.

mainly academic and not pastoral.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, Magdalino expresses a similar view, declaring that *didaskalos ton ethnon* failed to supervise the catechism to Christianity.<sup>61</sup> In any case, one would say that the protection of Orthodoxy was a priority for Alexios. Apart from the *Dogmatic Panoply*, he added *anathemata* to *synodikon*, strengthening his persecutions against heretics. The condemnation of Basil the Bogomil and John Italos could be seen as evidence that Alexios defended the authority of the Orthodox Church vigorously.

### Criticism

When Alexios would fight Normans in 1081, he ordered the confiscation of the Church's treasures for the financial support of this war. Although he asked the opinion of holy men and spiritual people, the reaction came from the official Church and was led by the Bishop of Chalcedon, Leo. Leo accused the Patriarch, considering him responsible for the confiscation of the Church's treasures. Leo continued his attack, asserting that Garidas was connected to Messalianism. Although the Patriarch was innocent, Alexios replaced him with Nicholas Grammatikos, but still Leo was dissatisfied. It could be said that the real reason for Leo's reaction was his opposition to Alexios' policy in general. The confiscation of the Church's treasures was only one reason, as Leo was a permanent opponent of the emperor's policy. The result of this contradiction was finally, the synod of Blachernai in 1094 that confirmed Alexios' victory, while Leo had been exiled.<sup>62</sup>

As Pentcheva writes, in the theological writings of Leo one can see the idea of *empyschos graphe*. Leo expresses a very radical position on religious representation, while his defense of images was prompted by his contradiction with Alexios that lasted from 1082 to 1094. Leo opposed Alexios' policy of raising funds for military purposes by means of confiscation of Church's property. Although Leo's statements were meant to protect Church property, his views were very extreme and reflected a particular trend towards the veneration of the images.<sup>63</sup> As Frankopan states, in 1082 Alexios swore on oath that he would never take treasures from the Church again, but three years later he took precious ecclesiastical objects, breaking his promise. This Alexios' decision caused a furious reaction against him, although his daughter, Anna, attempts to defend him.<sup>64</sup>

John Oxeites, who -as we have seen- showed his opposition to Alexios' lay patronage and *kharistike*, was another of Alexios' greatest enemies. In 1091, Alexios called a Council for contributions from the church in order to face the Pecheneg invasion. John presented a memorandum, asserting that any disasters in the empire constitute divine punishment, because of Alexios' sinful administration.<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, Theophylact, Archbishop of Ohrid, was a great supporter of Alexios' military profile and policy and belonged to Alexios' circle. The emperor commissioned him to collect the *kanonikon*; a tax that should be paid by the clergy and the laity to the Bishop.

<sup>60</sup> Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium*, 60.

<sup>61</sup> Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 326.

<sup>62</sup> Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium*, 46.

<sup>63</sup> Pentcheva, 'Rhetorical Images of the Virgin', 43. In relation to that, Cotsonis focuses on two seals depicting Anna Komnene and her husband, Nikephoros Bryennios, and sets the questions why these two saw inscriptions as denoting greater personal piety than figural imagery. Vitalien Laurent suggests, as Cotsonis writes, that this practice, appearing in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, reflected the debate over images between Alexios and Leo (Cotsonis, 'Narrative Scenes on Byzantine Lead Seals', 69).

<sup>64</sup> Frankopan, *The First Crusade*, 72.

<sup>65</sup> Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 269.

Because of some difficulties in collecting, Alexios issued a *prostagma* authorizing Theophylact in charge.<sup>66</sup>

Theophylact was against the emperors who followed unmilitary policy. This is why he praises Alexios' decision to adopt a different, military policy and he also celebrates his military prowess, bravery, prudence, philanthropy and mildness in his speeches.<sup>67</sup> Theophylact compares Alexios to his predecessors, concluding that Alexios showed that he is more competent than them. Also, in his encomium to Alexios, Theophylact refers to the common action of the emperor with his mother, Anna Dalassene, stating that it was very advantageous for the empire.<sup>68</sup> As opposed to John Oxeites and Leo who criticized the emperor's policy, Theophylact praises Alexios' skills, similarly to Cyril Phileotes, who also mentions Alexios' social and religious work.<sup>69</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In general, defending Orthodoxy was a priority in Byzantine Empire. Byzantium saw itself as the Oecumene, the Orthodox Empire that promoted right-thinking Christianity.<sup>70</sup> As Davies asserts 'the state and the church were fused into one indivisible whole...'; this suggested a kind of Caesaropapism which had no equal in the West.<sup>71</sup> In fact, according to Treadgold, Byzantium lives in the Eastern Orthodox Church and its devotion, rituals and mysticism.<sup>72</sup> This could not be different for Alexios, as he saw himself as a defender of Orthodoxy.<sup>73</sup> Besides, within the empire, Orthodoxy was dominant from cultural and political perspective.<sup>74</sup> Constantinople had many hundreds of churches and monasteries, since the Byzantine Empire was founded on a strong Christian culture.<sup>75</sup> Alexios' measures to defeat certain heresies and other decisions he made to help the Church established the idea that Komnenoi were the guardians of Orthodoxy. Apart from any political power and authority defining him as the supreme political leader, the emperor was the chosen one and the representative of God (*θεός επίγειος*). He was responsible for the protection of his subjects, the Church and the Christian religion.<sup>76</sup> Even a war should be seen as a decision of the emperor to protect the Church and Christians.<sup>77</sup>

Foundations such as *Orphanotropheion*, Christ Philanthropos and Theotokos Kekharitomene, the monastery of Mokios and Blachernai church which are either renewed or founded during Alexios' reign show his intention to be a defender of Orthodoxy. By

<sup>66</sup> Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium*, 61.

<sup>67</sup> Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 419.

<sup>68</sup> Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 422.

<sup>69</sup> According to Frankopan, John Komnenos plotted against his uncle, with his motivations being unclear. The one who informed Alexios about this John's conspiracy was Theophylact of Ohrid (Frankopan, 'Kinship and the Distribution of Power in Komnenian Byzantium', 16).

<sup>70</sup> Steven Runciman, 'Byzantium, Russia and Caesaropapism', *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, Vol. 2 (1957), 1-10.

<sup>71</sup> Norman Davies in Warren Treadgold, 'The Persistence of Byzantium', *The Wilson Quarterly* (1976), Vol. 22, No. 4 (1998), 66-91.

<sup>72</sup> Treadgold, 'The Persistence of Byzantium', 67.

<sup>73</sup> Pentcheva, 'Rhetorical Images of the Virgin', 51.

<sup>74</sup> Aristotle Papanikolaou, 'Byzantium, Orthodoxy, and Democracy', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (2003), 75-98.

<sup>75</sup> Jonathan Harris, *The End of Byzantium* (Yale, 2010), 24.

<sup>76</sup> Athina Kolia-Dermizaki, "'Holy War' In Byzantium Twenty Years Later: A Question of Term Definition and Interpretation', *Byzantine War Ideology Between Roman Imperial Concept and Christian Religion*, edited by Johannes Koder and Ioannis Stouraitis (Vienna, 2012), 120-132.

<sup>77</sup> Kolia-Dermizaki, "'Holy War' In Byzantium Twenty Years Later', 122.

reconstructing *Orphanotropheion*, Alexios helped church communities, monastic communities and disadvantaged people. Other buildings, like Christ Philanthropos and Theotokos Kekharitomene could be also seen as an attempt of his to help these communities.

His relationship with Cyril Phileotes is also proof of his contribution to Orthodoxy. In *Βίος καὶ Διδαχαὶ Οσίου Κυρίλλου του Φιλεώτου* there is an encomium to the emperor by the monk, praising his social and religious work. There are at least two references to Alexios as *philomonahos*:

Κάποτε λοιπὸν ὁ εὐσεβέστατος καὶ πολυμακάριστος βασιλεὺς μας Ἀλέξιος ἐπεσκέφθη κάποιον Μοναχόν, ὡσάν φιλομόναχος ὅπου ἦτο ὁ ἄνθρωπος τοῦ Θεοῦ.<sup>78</sup>  
Καὶ διὰ τὴν λέγεται ἡ ἀλήθεια ὁ Αὐτοκράτωρ ἦτο πάρα πολὺ φιλομόναχος.<sup>79</sup>

Indeed, Alexios saw monks as people with spiritual power. The fact that he asked Cyril's advice before his attack to Franks shows his appreciation and respect. In addition, the responsibilities given to Patriarch (*epiterisis* and *diorthosis*) could be seen as Alexios' measures to benefit monasteries. Although John Oxeites reacted to Alexios' *kharistike*, one should also note that Alexios' target was to reinforce the role of monasteries, while the *Dogmatic Panoply* was a certain way to keep the authority of the Church unaffected by the action of certain heresies.

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<sup>78</sup> Λάγγης (ed.), *Βίος και διδαχαὶ Οσίου Κυρίλλου του Φιλεώτου*, 253.

<sup>79</sup> Λάγγης (ed.), *Βίος και διδαχαὶ Οσίου Κυρίλλου του Φιλεώτου*, 282.

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