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Preface

The 12th issue of *Icoana Credinței (Icon of Faith)*, *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Scientific Research (IFIJISR)* encompasses a group of articles on various themes, dedicated to the areas of Theology, Philosophy, and Religion.

The commencing paper: “JESUS PRAYER, THE KERNEL OF THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY”, by Fr. Prof. PhD Alexandru-Corneliu **ARION**, under the form: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner” shows that the practice of the heart prayer consists in giving way to the burning of the heart by grace and by practicing unceasingly the virtue of watchfulness (nepsis). Jesus prayer is becoming means for the union of the mind with the soul, and thus, with God, due to the frequent practice of it, that would divert the soul from sinful deeds and draw it to an essential self-knowledge. The Name of Jesus, present in the human heart, communicates to it the power of deification (theosis). The next paper belonging to Rev. Prof. PhD. Leontin **POPESCU** is “SUFFERING, AS A TESTIMONY OF FREEDOM”. Almost all thinkers in the history of mankind exhibited a real interest in the issue of evil and suffering that accompany man’s life from his birth to death. Many a thinker, from different perspectives, have tried to unravel the mystery of suffering, to reach a deep understanding of it or, even, to identify ways to remove it. Pain, suffering and fear for death are part and parcel of the most profound religious anthropology. Suffering, evaluated individually, may be considered as a paradigm for mankind and this is due to its inseparable link with existence and, consequently with freedom.

Assoc. Prof. PhD. Ion Marian **CROITORU** signs the paper: “MESSAGES OF THE THREE HOLY HIERARCHS – BASIL THE GREAT, GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN, AND JOHN CHRYSOSTOM FOR THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD”. The author presents their contribution to the growth of the Church’ teaching, through the formulation of a theological Weltanschauung, that represented a radical change in the core thinking of man of their time. The three hierarchs highlight the fact that the Christian faith is founded on the holy-spiritual experience of the grace-based work of the Holy Trinity and is expressed by dogmas and concrete ascetic and liturgical forms, creating a manner of a totally new way of living.

The subsequent paper, signed by Rocco A. **ASTORE**, Lecturer of Philosophy, bears the title: “A SHORT REJECTION OF THE INNATE IDEAS OF DESCARTES THROUGH THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL SCOPE OF HUME”. Descartes asserts that the so-called inherent idea of God derives from God and that the mind can establish this notion as well as the surety of its supposed innate ideas of immortality and identity. But Hume’s Empiricist understanding of ideas challenge the Cartesian view that notions like God, and soul may be so innate.

The next article unfolded by Assist. Prof. PhD Florin **VÂRLAN**, is entitled: “FROM THE MEMORY OF HISTORY: EVAGRIUS PONTICUS AND HIS WRITINGS IN THE PREOCCUPATIONS OF PATRIARCH IUSTIN MOISESCU”. In fact, he presented his outstanding PhD thesis: “Evagrius Ponticus. Life, Writings and Teachings”, in 1937 in Athens, under the guidance of the distinguished Greek patrologist Dimitrios Balanos. Prof. PhD. Marian **BUGIULESCU** signs the paper: THE PRESENCE OF SAINT APOSTLE ANDREW IN SCITYA- A HISTORICAL REALITY OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH. Lastly, Lecturer Assist. Adrian **IGNAT** signs the paper SCIENCE AND RELIGION ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS”.

The central idea present the scientific and religious community should cooperate for the benefit of society and the environment.

June 2020

Prof. PhD Alexandru-Corneliu **ARION**,
Co-editor of ICOANA CREDINȚEI.

Jesus Prayer, the kernel of the Orthodox Christian spirituality

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Motto: «For as the more the rain pours down upon the earth, the more it softens the earth; so too the holy name of Christ, when it is invoked by us without thoughts, the more constantly we call upon it, the more it softens the earth of our heart, and fills it with joy and delight.» (*Philokalia*: Hesychius of Jerusalem)

ABSTRACT

In the Eastern spiritual tradition the contemplation is made with the help of the Jesus prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, the sinner”, which becomes the prayer of the mind in its higher phase when words are no longer used, but the mind is occupied by this prayer together with the heart. This combination was the work of Hesychasm. The hesychast is one who devotes himself to the prayer of silence, to prayer that is stripped, so far as possible, of all images, words, and discursive thinking. Jesus Prayer has become linked to certain physical exercises, designed to assist concentration. Breathing was carefully regulated in time with the Prayer, and a particular bodily posture was recommended: head bowed, chin resting on the chest, eyes fixed on the place of the heart, but these exercises did not constitute the essence of prayer. The Jesus Prayer is not a magic talisman, nor do there exist any bodily exercises that will lead us automatically to union with God. From Sinai and Mount Athos the Jesus Prayer spread not only throughout the Greek East but also to the Slav world and then, through Paissy Velichkovsky, the apostle of the Jesus Prayer, to Romania. He was the first one to initiate this revival on the Slavic monachism, and it is instrumental to notice how this revival flourished on Romanian land. Despite what has been said about it (by some Western detractors), the practice of the heart prayer consists in giving way to the burning of the heart by grace, while at the same time, steadfastly watching over (nepsis) its inward purity. Thus, Jesus prayer becomes a medium for the union of the soul with God, due to the frequent practice of it, that would divert the soul from sinful deeds and draw it to an essential self-knowledge. The Name of Jesus, present in the human heart, communicates to it the power of deification. Shining through the heart, the light of the Name of Jesus illuminates all the universe.

Keywords: Jesus prayer, contemplation, union, mind, heart, grace, bodily posture, breathing, concentration, watchfulness, silence, Hesychasm, Mount Athos.

INTRODUCTION

According to Orthodox Christian tradition it is possible, even in the present life for man to experience his deification as already taking place. In the Orthodox understanding Christianity signifies not merely an adherence to certain dogmas, not merely an exterior imitation of Christ through moral effort, but direct union with the living God, the total transformation of the human person by divine grace and glory – what the Greek Fathers termed "deification" or "divinization" (*theosis, theopoiesis*). In the words of St Basil the Great, man is nothing less than a creature that has received the order to become god: "He was made man that we might be made god."

St Gregory Palamas and the mystical theologians of Byzantium link this experience with the practice of continual prayer, whose aim is perpetual communion with God and hence the vision of divine light. This light is not a created medium nor a symbol of the divine glory, but an uncreated, natural energy deriving from God's essence, which, when manifested and united with man, constitutes for him the surest evidence of his deification and the highest form of his knowledge of God.¹

Prayer is the uplifting of the mind and the feeling of the soul towards God. Through it the soul of the believer breathes in the mysterious atmosphere of life in Christ, it is our conversation with God. Prayer is the ascension of the mind and heart to God. Through it, the human soul ascends to God, but at the same time man descends into himself, into the depths of his inner being to meet God Who is present there, by divine grace, and thus experiencing the presence and work of God in his soul's life. The more intensely this prayer is made, the more sensitive the mysterious feeling of Christ in us becomes. In other words, as we detach ourselves from everything that belongs to the sensitive world, from everything that falls under the senses and is transient, to that extent we reach the contemplation of God in the depths of our soul.

This contemplation is made – in the Eastern spiritual tradition – with the help of the prayer of Jesus: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner", which becomes the prayer of the mind in its higher phase when words are no longer used, but the mind is occupied by this prayer together with heart².

The *Jesus Prayer*³ also known as *The Prayer of the heart* is a short formulaic prayer esteemed and advocated especially within the Eastern churches. The prayer has been widely taught and discussed throughout the history of the Orthodox Church. The ancient and original form did not include the words "a sinner", which were added later.⁴ It is often repeated continually as a part of personal ascetic practice, its use being an integral part of the eremitic tradition of prayer known as Hesychasm. The prayer is particularly esteemed by the spiritual fathers of the hesychast tradition, as a method of cleaning and opening up the mind and after this the heart and bringing about firstly the *Prayer of the Mind* or more correctly

¹ Georgios I. MANTZARIDIS, *The deification of man. St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition*, trans. from the Greek by Liadain Sherrard, with a *Foreword* by Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1984, p. 87.

² Vasile ANDRU, *Isihasmul sau meșteșugul liniștirii (Hesychasm or the craft of tranquility)*, Herald Publishing House, București, 2008, p. 49.

³ In Greek there is: προσευχή του Ιησού (prosevchí tou Iisoú), lit. 'Prayer to Jesus'. Father John Romanides uses Greek: προσευχή εν Πνεύματι (prosevchí en Pnevúmati), lit. 'Prayer by the Spirit', or Greek: νοερά προσευχή (noerá prosevchí), lit. 'noetic prayer'. Cf. Ioannis ROMANIDES, *Jesus Christ-The Life of the World*, translated from Greek, Archived from the original on 13 August 2018. Original: Romanides, John S. (5–9 February 1982). "Jesus Christ-The Life of the World". *The Romans: Ancient, Medieval and Modern*.

⁴ Kallistos WARE, *On the Prayer of Jesus by Ignatius Brianchaninov*, 2006, pp. xxiii–xxiv.

the *Noetic Prayer* (Νοερά Προσευχή) and after this the *Prayer of the Heart* (Καρδιακή Προσευχή). The Prayer of the Heart is considered to be the Unceasing Prayer that the Apostle Paul advocates in the New Testament (1 Thes. 5:17). St. Theophan the Recluse regarded the Jesus Prayer stronger than all other prayers by virtue of the power of the Holy Name of Jesus.

1. THE THEOLOGY OF GOD'S NAME

The angel announced to Mary that her son would be called Jesus, for he would save men from their sins (Mt 1:21; cf. Lk 1:13). The name Ἰησοῦς is the Greek transcription of the Hebrew Yeshua (Jesus), which is itself identical with Yehoshua (Joshua). The first of these two Hebrew words is a contraction of the second, intended to avoid the sequence of the vowels o and u which was repugnant to Jewish ears. The meaning of the name Yeshua, while clear in a general sense, is difficult to establish with any strict precision. The translation “savior” is more or less correct; more exactly the name signifies “salvation of Yahweh” or “Yahweh is salvation.”⁵ Hence the ancient adage “nomen est omen” (lat. “the name is a sign”, “the name speaks for itself”), the name expresses in a certain way the person and his destiny-applies to the angel's Annunciation concerning the name of the child.

Three texts from the New Testament are of special importance for the veneration of the name of Jesus. First of all (following what we believe to be the chronological order) there is St Paul's great text:

“God has given Him a name which is above all names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth” (Phil 2:9-10).

Next, we have the solemn declaration from the *Acts of the Apostles*: “There is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). And finally, in the Gospel according to John we have the secret which Jesus reveals to his disciples:

“Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name ... Whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give it you” (Jn 16:23-24).

The New Testament references to the name of Jesus are too numerous for us to pause at each one of them; but every student, with the help of a concordance, could do so with great profit. The Apocalypse furnishes an especially rich harvest. But it is above all the Acts of the Apostles which could be called the book of the name of Jesus. “In the name of Jesus” the good news is preached, converts believe, baptism is conferred, cures and other “signs” are accomplished, lives are risked and given.⁶ What is involved in this insistence on the name of Jesus is not just the employment of a magical formula, for no one can use this name effectively if he does not have an inner relationship with Jesus himself.

Unfortunately, the English expression “in the name of”, like the Latin *in nomine*, is powerless to render the rich complexity of the Greek terms. In Latin and English, the phrase “in the name of Jesus” is more or less synonymous with “by the authority of Jesus”; “in the name of ...” becomes “by virtue of.” This is to impoverish the New Testament Greek,

⁵ A. DEISSMANN, “The Name of Jesus,” in *Mysterium Christi. Christological Studies by British and German Theologians*, edited by G.K.A. Bell and D.A. Deissmann, London, 1930, pp. 3-27.

⁶ W. HEITMULLER, “Im Namen Jesu.” Eine sprach - und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Neuen Testament, speziell zur altchristlichen Taufe, in W. BOUSSET and H. GUNKEL, *Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments*, Göttingen, 1903, I. Bd., 2. Heft, apud Archimandrite Lev GILLET, *The Jesus Prayer*, Revised edition with a foreword by Kallistos Ware, Bishop of Diokleia, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1987, pp. 27-28.

stripping it of both its realism and its nuances. The Greek text, when referring to the name of Jesus, uses three formulas: ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι, εἰς τὸ ὄνομα, ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι. These three formulas are not equivalent, but each one expresses a special attitude toward the name. In «ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι», one leans “on” the name; it is the foundation on which one builds, the *terminus a quo*, the point of departure toward a subsequent action, the start of a new advance. In «εἰς τὸ ὄνομα», there is a movement “toward” the name, a dynamic relationship of finality which sees the name as the goal to be attained, the *terminus ad quem*. In «ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι», the attitude is static; it expresses the repose which follows the attainment of the goal and a certain interiorization or immanence; our spirit is transported “into” the name, within the name, it is united to the name and makes its abode there.⁷ Father Ferdinand Prat has clearly indicated⁸ the differences between these three formulas, which could provide us with the plan of an entire way of prayer centering around the name of Jesus.

The *Desert Fathers* were well acquainted with the power of the name. St Athanasius reports that St Antony of Egypt (about 356) exorcised a devil by using the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁹ It does not seem that the Desert Fathers practiced the invocation of the name in an organized way. Among the Apophthegmata of the Fathers collected by Bousset, we find only two, of Syrian origin, on the name of Jesus. It is not much. But these monastic circles prepared the way for the Jesus Prayer in another manner. They gave to their private prayers the form of short aspirations. St Augustine wrote about this to Proba: “They say that the brethren in Egypt offer prayers that are frequent but very brief and suddenly shot forth.”¹⁰ The Desert Fathers used the formula *Kyrie eleison* or the verse “O God, come to my aid; O Lord, make haste to help me” (Ps 70:1). It is God who is invoked; there is no special mention of the name of the Son. But suppose that one day this name is associated with ejaculatory prayer, that there is a meeting, a fusion, between name and aspiration-then we shall have the Jesus Prayer.¹¹

2. A SHORT HISTORY OF THE JESUS PRAYER

This combination was the work of *Hesychasm*. Often this term has been given too limited an historical meaning, with the title “Hesychast” restricted to the Byzantine mystics of the 14th century, especially those of the Palamite school. In reality, Hesychasm is a spiritual tradition extending from the 5th to the 18th century.¹² The word *hesychia* was well established as a technical term in the first half of the 7th century when St John Climacus devoted a chapter to it in his treatise *The Ladder* (Ladder 27, PG 88, cols. 1096-1101). But from the 5th century this tradition was already represented by such men as St Nilus of

⁷ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι corresponds to the Hebrew be-shem, εἰς τὸ ὄνομα to the Hebrew le-shem. V. Archimandrite Lev GILLET, *The Jesus Prayer*, p. 27.

⁸ Ferdinand PRAT, *Jésus-Christ, sa vie, sa doctrine, son oeuvre*, Paris, 1933, vol. II, note Z, pp. 564-567.

⁹ St ATHANASIUS, *Life of St Antony* 63, PG 26, col. 933A.

¹⁰ St AUGUSTINE, Epist. CXXX, 20, PL 33, col. 501. These words of Augustine, “orationes ... quodammodo jaculates”, have given rise to the expression “ejaculatory prayer.” They were swift arrows shot toward the heart of God.

¹¹ M. VILLER and K. RAHNER, *Ascese und Mystik in der Viiterzeit. Ein Abriss*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1939, ch. 12, par. 41. Cf. L. REGNAULT, “La priere continue ‘monologistos’ dans la littérature apophthegmatique,” in *Irenikon* 47, 1947, pp. 467-93.

¹² See P. ADNES, “Hesychasme,” in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 7, 1968, cols. 381-99; I. HAUSHERR, in “Hésychasme et prière” (*Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 176: Rome, 1966), pp. 163-237. Cf. Kallistos WARE, “Silence in Prayer: The Meaning of Hesychia,” in Basil PENNINGTON (ed.), *One Yet Two*, Cistercian Studies Series 29: Kalamazoo, 1976, pp. 2247.

Ancyra or the Sinaite, St Diadochus of Photike, and St John the Hesychast whose life was written by Cyril of Scythopolis.¹³

The *Hesychast* is one who devotes himself to the prayer of silence – to prayer that is stripped, so far as possible, of all images, words, and discursive thinking. Connected with this first question was another: what is the place of the body in prayer? Evagrius, like Origen, sometimes borrowed too heavily from Platonism: he wrote of prayer in intellectual terms, as an activity of the mind rather than of the whole person, and he seemed to allow no positive role to the human body in the process of redemption and deification. But the balance between mind and body is redressed in another ascetic writing, the *Macarian Homilies*. These Homilies of Macarius Magnes uphold a more Biblical idea of the human person – not a soul imprisoned in a body (as in Greek thought), but a single and united whole, soul and body together. Where Evagrius speaks of the *mind* or *intellect* (in Greek *nous*), he uses the Hebraic idea of the *heart*. The change of emphasis is significant, for the heart includes the *whole* person – not only intellect, but will, emotions, and even body.¹⁴

Using ‘heart’ in this Macarian sense, Orthodox often talk about ‘prayer of the heart’. What does the phrase mean? When someone begins to pray, at first using the lips, the person must make a conscious intellectual effort in order to realize the meaning of what is said. But if that person perseveres, praying continually with recollection, intellect and heart become united: finding ‘the place of the heart’, the spirit acquires the power of ‘dwelling in the heart’, and so the prayer becomes ‘prayer of the heart’. It becomes something not merely said by the lips, not merely thought by the mind, but offered spontaneously by the whole of one's being – lips, intellect, emotions, will, and body. The prayer fills the entire consciousness, and no longer has to be forced out, but says itself. Such prayer of the heart cannot be attained simply through our own efforts, but is a gift conferred by the grace of God.¹⁵

By the thirteenth century (if not before), the recitation of the Jesus Prayer had become linked to certain physical exercises, designed to assist concentration. Breathing was carefully regulated in time with the Prayer, and a particular bodily posture was recommended: head bowed, chin resting on the chest, eyes fixed on the place of the heart.¹⁶ This is often called ‘the Hesychast method of prayer’, but it should not be thought that for the Hesychasts these exercises constituted the essence of prayer. They were regarded, not as an end in themselves, but as a help to concentration – as an accessory useful to some, but not obligatory upon all. The Hesychasts knew that there can be no mechanical means of acquiring God's grace, and no techniques leading automatically to the mystical state. For the Hesychasts of Byzantium, the culmination of mystical experience was the vision of Divine

¹³ Greek text, ed. E. Schwartz, *Kyrrillos von Skythopolis*. Texte und Untersuchungen 49, 2: Leipzig, 1939, pp. 201-22; French translation by A.J. FESTUGIERE, *Les moines d'Orient III*, 2, Paris, 1963, pp. 13-34, apud apud Lev GILLET, *The Jesus Prayer*, p. 32.

¹⁴ Cf. Norman RUSSELL, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 241 sq.

¹⁵ Timothy WARE (Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia), *The Orthodox Church*, Penguin Books, First published in 1963, Reprinted with revisions 1993, 1997, pp. 51-52.

¹⁶ There are interesting parallels between the Hesychast ‘method’ and Hindu Yoga or Muslim Dhikr; but the points of similarity must not be pressed too far. For details: Pr. Dr. Vasile POP, *Yoga și Isihasmul* (Yoga and Hesychasm), Lidia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003.

and Uncreated Light. The works of St Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022), the greatest of the Byzantine mystics, are full of this ‘Light mysticism’.¹⁷

St *Gregory the Sinaite* († 1346) represents, in the history of the Jesus Prayer the beginning of the Athonite phase. In his treatise *On Stillness and the Two Methods of Prayer*, he sets out the theological foundations of the mystical life in terms that the contemporary reader will find familiar and attractive¹⁸. Thus, the spiritual aspirant should devote himself to the Jesus Prayer in the morning. He will remain seated, with his head lowered. He will pronounce persistently the formula “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me”, bringing both his soul and his intellect (nous) into play, immersing his intellect in his heart. Pronouncing the name of Jesus, he will be nourished by this divine name as by food¹⁹. He will apply himself to giving full meaning to each one of the words. Gregory allows a certain variety in the use of formulas: it is legitimate to alternate between “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me” and “Son of God, have mercy on me”, although one should not change the formula of invocation too frequently, since plants that are often transplanted do not take root. The Jesus Prayer allows us to reach the state described by St Paul: “It is no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me” (cf. Gal 2:20). A place is also to be allowed for psalmody and reading. In fact, we know from Scripture that no one can say that Jesus is the Lord without a special inspiration from the Holy Spirit. One can say “in a pure and perfect way” the words “Lord Jesus” only in the Spirit (cf 1 Cor 12:3). It is better to refrain from using these words than to repeat them thoughtlessly like a child prattling away²⁰. Among all the contributors in the history of the Jesus Prayer (of the Athonite phase), of a prominent role is, undoubtedly, *St Gregory Palamas* (1296-1359), who defended the hesychast saints in the famous dispute against the Calabrian monk Barlaam. St Gregory was not only the author of countless controversial writings, such as the *Triads in Defense of the Holy Hesychasts*, but also the ascetical and mystical author of such works as *Three Chapters on Prayer and Purity of Heart*, *On the Passions and Virtues*, and *Decalogue of the Law according to Christ*.²¹

Gregory did not discuss the Jesus Prayer specifically as a topic on its own, but it is taken for granted in almost all his writings, since he was replying to attacks directly aimed against it. The most original and most controversial aspect of his theology was his understanding of the “uncreated light” and his distinction between the divine essence and the divine energies. It was the Jesus Prayer that led Gregory to develop these ideas, since the vision of the divine light, of the “light of Tabor,” was for Gregory the normal goal of Hesychast prayer and of the invocation of the name. It was in connection with these views of

¹⁷ When he writes of his own experiences, he speaks again and again of the Divine Light: ‘fire truly divine,’ he calls it, ‘fire uncreated and invisible, without beginning and immaterial’. The Hesychasts believed that this light which they experienced was identical with the Uncreated Light which the three disciples saw surrounding Jesus at His Transfiguration on Mount Tabor. Cf. Timothy WARE, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 52.

¹⁸ Cf. the work of Dom Anselm STOLZ, *Theologie de la mystique* (Chevetogne, 1939), English translation by Aidan Williams, *The Doctrine of Spiritual Perfection*, St. Louis/London, 1938, which is in general very sympathetic to the Greek approach.

¹⁹ Following out this line of thought, we might explore the eucharistic use of the name of Jesus, with the Jesus Prayer understood as a form of spiritual communion.

²⁰ Kallistos WARE, “The Jesus Prayer in St. Gregory of Sinai”, in: *Eastern Churches Review*, 4:1, 1972, pp. 3-22.

²¹ A critical edition of Palamas' works is that under the general editorship of Professor Panagiotis K. Christou (3 vols.: Thessalonica, 1962-70). See also the edition of the *Triads in Defense of the Holy Hesychasts* by John Meyendorff, with critical Greek text and French translation (Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense 30-31: 2 vols., Louvain, 1959; 2nd ed., Louvain, 1973); selections in English translation are given in J. MEYENDORFF and N. GENDLE, *Gregory Palamas: The Triads* (The Classics of Western Spirituality: New York, 1983). s

his on the uncreated light that violent conflict developed. We shall not enter into this controversy²², but say only this: there has been a tendency to lose sight of the fact that the Hesychast theory of the vision of the divine light is concerned with the supernatural level and not with the normal psychological order.²³ Gregory Palamas underwent the misfortune of all mystics who have interrupted their prayer so as to engage in disputes about it. It is true that he had been provoked by attacks which were often unjust and insulting²⁴.

Emerging from this conflict, it is refreshing to read a work as full of peace, devotion, and a rare spiritual beauty as the *Century of Kallistos* and *Ignatius Xanthopoulos*.²⁵ The *Century* constitutes a complete rule of life for the Hesychast. The center of this life is the Jesus Prayer. The authors distinguish here a twofold movement: a soaring ascent towards Jesus Christ in the first part of the prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God . . ."; and a return to oneself, "have mercy on me." The rhythm of the respiration is to be associated with this twofold movement.

The repetition of the Jesus Prayer, the Xanthopouloi explain, leads to a feeling of warmth in the region of the heart. So powerful and overwhelming does this feeling sometimes become that the use of the full formula of the Prayer is rendered impossible. The more intense the experience of grace, the more concentrated grow the words of the invocation, until the hesychast is reduced to an almost inarticulate cry, "My Jesus!" (Ἰησοῦ μου):

The holy energy wells up from the heart, seizing hold, as it were, of the heart's affection and stirring the intellect (νοῦς) from its very depths. It becomes so closely united to the divine energy itself that it cries repeatedly: "My Jesus, my Jesus!" For as soon as the heart is opened up, this is all that the intellect cries out: "My Jesus!" The intellect is incapable of saying the whole formula, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me", because of the frequent openings of the heart; and it can only say "My Jesus!" If anyone claims that while in this state he pronounces the whole prayer, he is deceiving himself; for when, as we have said, the intellect becomes attached to the divine energy and penetrates into the innermost depths of the heart, it is no longer able to cry out anything but "My Jesus!"²⁶

The use of the short phrase "My Jesus!" on its own, as this passage makes clear, is not recommended by the Xanthopouloi as a normal practice, but it is something that happens

²² The Orthodox Church's understanding of the light of the Transfiguration is explained by Fr Georges FLOROVSKY, "The Mystery of the Light of Tabor" (in Russian), in *Feuillets de saint Serge* 3 (89) (Paris, 1935), and by Vladimir LOSSKY, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, 1974), pp. 45-69. Consult, also by LOSSKY, *The Vision of God*, 2nd ed., Crestwood, 1983, and *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, London, 1957.

²³ Moreover, this controversy, like the *Filioque* dispute, is the result largely of a misunderstanding between the two sides.

²⁴ But would not the best response to the offensive directed against the Jesus Prayer have been the peaceful influence radiating from the Prayer itself, its deeper exploration and, if so desired, a brief testimony based on personal experience, free from theories and polemic? Whatever the gains for theological speculation from the Hesychast dispute – if anything was gained – for pure spirituality there was only loss. See Archimandrite Lev GILLET, *The Jesus Prayer*, p. 61.

²⁵ Both sought to remain above all monks and contemplatives. They were members of the Monastery of the Xanthopouloi in Constantinople. The Kallistos of the *Century* is the Patriarch of Constantinople, St Kallistos II, who occupied the patriarchal see in 1397 for three months only (not to be confused with his namesake Patriarch Kallistos I).

²⁶ David Balfour (trans), *Saint Gregory the Sinaite: Discourse on the Transfiguration*, 147-8, apud Kallistos WARE, Bishop of Diokleia, *A Fourteenth-Century Manual of Hesychast Prayer: The Century of St Kallistos and St Ignatios Xanthopoulos*, Toronto, 1995, p. 18.

to the hesychast only at exceptional moments, when he is engulfed by the conscious experience of “divine energy” and has approached close to a state of ecstasy.

As an accompaniment to the repetition of the Jesus Prayer, at any rate when it is said in its full form, the Xanthopouloi advocate the employment of a “physical technique” (μέθοδος φυσική). Involving the control of the breathing and the search within oneself for the place of the heart²⁷. In Gregory of Sinai, however, the regulation of the breathing is not just a preparatory technique to establish concentration before prayer itself begins, but it is intended to accompany the actual invocation of the holy name, although it is not explained precisely how the two are to be coordinated.²⁸

Kallistos and Ignatios are at pains to make clear that “the physical technique”, so far from constituting the essence of inner prayer, plays no more than a strictly subsidiary role; it is a useful accessory, but it is in no way obligatory. The Jesus Prayer is not a magic talisman, nor do there exist any bodily exercises that will lead us automatically to union with God. The Prayer is to be recited not mechanically but “with faith”. Without God's grace our human efforts can achieve nothing:

Above all, the intellect can succeed in such an endeavor only with the help of divine grace, conferred upon us through faith by means of the single-phrased (μονολόγιστος), pure and undistracted invocation of our Lord Jesus Christ within the heart. Success cannot be achieved simply through the physical technique described above, involving inhalation through the nose and sitting in a quiet, dark place. Far from it! Such practices were devised by the divine fathers merely as a kind of aid, helping us to achieve mental concentration... But through them the mind also gains the power to pray unceasingly and cleanly without scattering.²⁹

Father Dumitru Stăniloae, the great Romanian translator and commentator of Philokalia, explains this:

„The authors of this writing distinguish between the gathering of the mind in itself and the bringing of grace into the heart. The latter is helped by the unceasing calling of the name of Jesus. Only the former, that is, what man gives, is helped by regular breathing and sitting in a dark place. But through gathering in itself, the mind gains the power to pray incessantly. So that the coming of grace is only the *indirect* result of regular breathing and sitting in an obscure place. We have here something very distinct from the yogic methods, which have a purely natural character and do not seek to intensify the believer's relationship with the person of Jesus. The faithful praying man through interiorization is filled with the love of Christ; he does not simply focus on his own essence, which is ultimately part of the impersonal essence of everything.”³⁰

²⁷ In the earliest Greek texts that speak clearly about this technique (dating from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century) Pseudo-Symeon, *On the Three Methods of Prayer*, and Nikephoros the Hesychast, *On Watchfulness and the Guarding of the Heart* – the control of the breathing and the inner exploration are proposed as a preliminary exercise, which precedes the repetition of the Jesus Prayer rather than being simultaneous with it. Cf. Kallistos WARE, Bishop of Diokleia, *A Fourteenth-Century Manual of Hesychast Prayer*, p. 18.

²⁸ See K. WARE, “The Jesus Prayer in St Gregory of Sinai”, 14-15; Balfour, *Saint Gregory the Sinaite*, 144. Gregory may intend the Jesus Prayer to be said while we hold our breath (i.e. *between* each inhalation and exhalation).

²⁹ Kallistos and Ignatius Xanthopoulos, *The Century 24*, in: *Filocalia sau Culegere din scrierile Sfinților Părinți care arată cum se poate omul curăți, lumina și desăvârși (Philokalia or Collection from the writings of the Holy Fathers that show how man can be purified, enlighten and perfect)*, vol. 8, trans in Romanian, introduction, and notes by Father Dumitru Stăniloae, EIBMBOR, București, 1979, p. 65.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, ft. 96, p. 66. For details, see: Dr. Alexandru-Corneliu ARION, *Panteismul hinduist și învățătura creștină despre Dumnezeu (Hindu pantheism and the Christian teaching on God)*, Enciclopedică Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010, pp. 176-195; 420-432.

From Mount Athos the Jesus Prayer spread not only throughout the Greek East but also to the Slav world. By the first half of the 15th century, if not before, it was being practiced in *Russia*. The Jesus Prayer is mentioned in an instruction for the training of young novices, dating from this period and emanating from the Monastery of the Trinity near Obnora, founded in 1389 by Paul, disciple of St Sergius of Radonezh. It is supposed to be said on the beads of the monastic rosary or prayer-rope. St Nil Sorsky (1433-1508), who had lived on Athos and came under the influence of Gregory the Sinaite, propagated the Jesus Prayer among the “monks across the Volga.” In his works he presents it as an ascetic task, a “labor,” and “action,” and this way of conceiving it has never disappeared from Russian monasticism. The spiritual movement of the “Transvolga” monks, so deeply opposed to the institutionalism, which was to prevail in the Russian Church, had a natural affinity with Hesychasm and with the tendencies represented by the Jesus Prayer.³¹ In the 16th century we find the Prayer well established in Russia.

Paissy Velichkovsky (1722-94), of Russian origin, was the apostle of the Jesus Prayer in *Romania*, where he directed the monastery of Neamt. One of the great names in Orthodox monastic history, he had lived for a time on Athos. He translated the *Philokalia* into Church Slavonic under the title *Dobrotolubie* (“love of the beautiful” becomes in Slavonic “love of the good”). The *Dobrotolubie*³² had an even greater influence upon the Russian people than the *Philokalia* has had upon the Greeks. It was through this collection of texts that not only monks, but simple village people became familiar with the Fathers and with the Jesus Prayer. Paissy also wrote a letter to the “enemies and slanderers of the Jesus Prayer.” In this he says:

“One should know that this divine action was the constant occupation of our fathers who were filled with God. It shone as a sun in many places, in the desert and in cenobitic monasteries: on Sinai, in the sketes of Egypt, on Mount Nitria, in Jerusalem and in the neighboring monasteries, in a word in the whole of the East and later in Constantinople, on the Holy Mountain of Athos, on many islands, and in these last times, through the grace of Christ, also in Russia.”³³

What is more than interesting represents the fact that before the edition of the Greek *Philokalia* in 1782, in the Romanian Principalities had already been available, on a large scale, Romanian translations from philokalic authors such as Peter Damaskin, Diadochos, Makarios, John of the Carpathians, Niketas Stethatos, Kallistos, Mark the Hermit and Ignatius Xanthopol. A 1004-pages translation into Romanian of *Philokalia*, published in 1800 at Neamt, confirms the tradition and the evolution of the local patristic texts, as it presents the first eighteen authors of the Venetian edition, with other texts added.

“It is worth mentioning the fact that the translators do not follow the Greek version from Venice strictly, but they use manuscripts they compiled themselves. This stands testimony to

³¹ See G.A. MALONEY, *Russian Hesychasm. The Spirituality of Nil Sorskij*, The Hague /Paris, 1973, especially pp. 134-44, 269-79. On Russian spirituality in general, see Pierre KOVALEVSKY, *St Sergius and Russian Spirituality*, Crestwood, 1976; I. KOLOGRIVOV, *Essai sur la saintete en Russie*, Bruges, 1953; and above all I. SMOLITSCH, *Moines de la sainte Russie*, Paris, 1967. Cf. also G.P. FEDOTOV, *A Treasury of Russian Spirituality*, London, 1950; *The Russian Religious Mind*, 2 vols.: Cambridge, Mass., 1946, 1966; Elisabeth BEHR-SIGEL, *Prière et sainteté dans l'Eglise russe*, Paris, 1950: revised ed., Bellefontaine, 1982.

³² The work, comprising three parts, appeared in Moscow in 1793. This edition is very rare outside Russia, but there is a copy in the British Museum. Of the 36 texts in the Greek *Philokalia*, only 24 were included by Paissy. See further: “Un Moine de l'Eglise orthodoxe de Roumanie” (Fr André Scrima), “L'avivement philocalique dans l'Orthodoxie roumaine,” in: *Istina* 5 (1958), pp. 295-328, 443-74. Cf. *Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky*, ed. St Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, 1976.

³³ Cf. Archimandrite Lev GILLET, *The Jesus Prayer*, p. 77.

the love and seriousness the texts of the Fathers of the Church were being read in the Paisian monasteries.”³⁴

What makes the Romanian contribution to the spreading of *Philokalia* remarkable was the fact that for the first time the texts of the vigilant Fathers, of the masters of the Jesus Prayer, were being translated into a language that was spoken, thus becoming accessible to readers not having special education. *The Philokalia* of 1782 “could not enjoy the success we would have expected” because of the difficult language, the patristic or Byzantine Greek.³⁵

The cardinal of Czech-origin, Tomáš Špidlík († 2010), one of the best connoisseurs of Orthodox Spiritual Tradition, mentioning the role of the Romanians in the Hesychastic current, asserts the following:

“Paissy Velichkovki was the first one to initiate this revival on the Slavic monachism, and it is instrumental to notice how this revival flourished on Romanian land. The national and religious evolution of this nation is one of the most interesting in the history of modern Europe.”³⁶

Particularly interesting is the fact that the motivation of the Romanian scholars in the Paisian community was predominantly spiritual, rather than cultural. The ascetic texts they translated were read to be experienced, for endeavors aimed at “changing the mind” (μετάνοια) into transfiguration, deification, these books being guidelines for perfection.³⁷

The great French Orthodox theologian, Olivier Clément, noticed that:

“The Romanian Principalities have been and still are a prodigious crossroads of cultures, in contact with the European West and East, as Romania is both Orthodox and Latin: fed on influences of Mount Athos and the Holy Places [...] and gained its unity and status of a modern country thanks to France, whose language is still spoken by its elite.”³⁸

3. Monological concentration

The essence of the practice of silence is the monological repetition, the repetition of a single notion, of a formula of great conciseness: the hesychastic verse. St Varsanuphios warns: “We do not fight with thoughts but focus on something else (monologue repetition) and the thoughts disappear”. The expression ‘monologhistos’, is used by St. John the Ladder for the Prayer of Jesus in its short form. By monologist repetition, the first positive result is to calm the mental agitation, to stop the “attacks” of the senses.

The *second result* is concentrating, fastening attention, fixing, and maintaining it into a point of existence. Thus, purification and emptying (gr. kenosis), premises of

³⁴ Elia CITTERIO, „La scuola filocalica di Paisij Velichkovskij e la Filocalia di Nicodimo Aghiorita. Un confronto”, in T. ŠPIDLÍK, K. WARE, E. LANNE, M. van PARYS et al., *Amore del Bello. Studi sulla Filocalia. Atti del «Simposio Internazionale sulla Filocalia»*, Qiqajon, Bose, 1991, pp. 189-191.

³⁵ Virgil CÂNDEA, “*Locul spiritualității românești în reînnoirea isihastă*” (*The Place of the Romanian Spirituality in the Hesychastic Renewal*), in: *The Romanians in the Hesychastic Renewal. Studies on the Venerable Paisius from Neamt on the 200th Commemoration of His Death sale*, Iași, Trinitas Publishing, 1997, pp. 27-30.

³⁶ Thomaš ŠPIDLÍK, *Presentation*, in: Cuviosul Paisie de la Neamț (Velicikovski), *Autobiografia unui stareț (The Elder Paissy from Neamț, Autobiography of a stareț)*, Foreword by Hieromonk Seraphim Rose, *Introductory study* by Elia Citterio, Edited by the deacon. Ioan I. Ică jr., Deisis, Sibiu, 1996, p. 65.

³⁷ “These books were reserved to the *prayer raisers*, observers of ascesis and contemplation, not to the new modern intellectuals in this country who were wasting their stamina and time with Voltaire and Marmontel.” See Virgil CÂNDEA, *The Place of the Romanian Spirituality in the Hesychastic Renewal*, p. 36.

³⁸ Olivier CLÉMENT, *Rugăciunea lui Iisus (Jesus Prayer)*, Translation from French by Măriuca and Adrian Alexandrescu, Bucharest: The Biblical Institute Publishing, 1997, pp. 9-10.

enlightenment occur, but also introspection or looking in or mirroring inside. This produces the expansion of consciousness, which increases alertness/watchfulness (Greek *nepsis*). Any deviation from alertness or vigilance (such as: trance, halving, vision, or paranormal effects) are errors and deceptions, they must be counteracted, restoring vigilance.³⁹

The consecrated formula or verse repeated in the Prayer of the Mind is “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.” The magnified formula is also widely practiced: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” It has been said, “The hesychastic verse diminishes as it has been progressing.” During practice, the hesychastic verse does not change. Keep the verse received from the guide as well as the way to synchronize it with the breath. The word “have mercy on me” is felt in the beginning as a plea, a request; in the middle, as contentment and gratitude; in the end, as love and communion. A distinction is made between *all-time prayer* (for guarding the mind) and *hesychastic prayer* (for changing the mind: *metanoia*). The former helps the latter. The first prefaces and relaunches the second. They both use the same verse, the same formula. It is just that the requirements and conditions for repeating the verse are different and the result is qualitatively different.

a) Prayer of all times can be said anytime and anywhere, on the street or in the subway, anytime, as a protection of the mind from worldly invasion, street aggression, inner and outer noise.

b) Hesychastic prayer, contemplation (*theoria*) is not practiced anytime and anywhere, but respects the requirements of mental climate, place, time and is done only with guidance.

The method has an obvious simplicity. But the effect is achieved only if you follow rules regarding sitting, synchronizing the verse with breathing, avoiding mental representations, lowering the mind into the heart. But also, through preparing the mind by forgiving everyone, preparing the body by fasting and proper nutrition. However, the biggest difficulty is the rule of perseverance: the decision to repeat daily, at the same time, without omitting a single day. To fulfill the rule of perseverance and all the others come naturally.

How long and how many times does the hesychastic verse entrusted to the devotee by the mentor repeat itself? There is no recipe. *The Russian pilgrim* repeated the verse “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me” 3,000 times a day at the beginning; then, with the permission of the mentor, the number increased to 6,000 times a day, and even more, to 12,000 times a day. Then he noticed that the mind had entered a state of unceasing prayer, and no longer needed to “recite” the verse.⁴⁰

4. JESUS PRAYER, MEDIUM FOR THE UNION OF THE SOUL WITH GOD

From the beginning the command to practice continued and perpetual prayer is at the center of awareness of the Church Fathers. As the Jesuit Irénée Hausherr notes, no Orthodox interpreter ever appears to have dared maintain that this command is an exaggeration; various opinions have been formulated only as regards the way in which continual prayer is to be understood. This was natural, since it is proved by experience that not only for those who are still “in the world,” but also for those who abandon it and its cares, certain basic needs must be fulfilled: and this makes impossible the practice of incessant prayer as a

³⁹ Vasile ANDRU, *Hesychasm or the craft of tranquility*, p. 23.

⁴⁰ V. *Pelerinul rus – Mărturisirile sincere către duhovnicul său ale unui pelerin rus cu privire la rugăciunea lui Iisus* (The Russian Pilgrim – Sincere Confessions to a spiritual father of a Russian Pilgrim concerning Jesus Prayer), Translated from Russian by Archimandrite Paulin Lecca, Sophia Publisher, București, 1998.

specific activity.⁴¹ Hesychasm is known in the West mainly because of the works of Fathers M. Jugie and I. Hausherr, very learned authors, but who, unfortunately, show a strange zeal in defaming the object of their studies. Pausing especially at the external technique of the prayer of the mind, these modern critics strive in their writings to ridicule a practice of spiritual life that is foreign to them. They portray the hesychasts as ignorant and grossly materialistic monks, imagining that the soul is in the navel and that our breath embraces the Spirit of God; the prayer would therefore be a matter of holding our breath and fixing our gaze on the navel, uttering the same words incessantly, in order to fall into an ecstatic state. But this would ultimately be a purely mechanical process, used in order to cause a certain state of mind. In reality, the prayer of the mind, as presented in the ascetic tradition of the East, has nothing in common with this caricature. It involves – it is true! – a bodily side, certain procedures which refer to the mastery of the breath, to the position of the body during prayer, to the rhythm of prayer, but this external discipline has only one purpose: to facilitate concentration.⁴²

Far from mechanizing the inner life, on the contrary, it serves for liberation, for its return to contemplation, permanently removing from the realm of the heart any touch of sin, any thought or image that comes from outside, and this through the power of the holy name of Jesus. St Theophan the Recluse, the famous teacher of the spiritual life and great Russian ascetic writer of the nineteenth century, expressed himself on the purpose of the prayer of the mind in such manner:

“Is being sought, he says, the fire of grace that falls in the heart ... When this spark of God (i.e. the holy grace) is in the heart, the prayer of Jesus revives it and turns it into flame. However, it does not produce this spark, but only gives the possibility to receive it by gathering thoughts, and by directing the soul before the Face of the Lord. The main point is to stand before God, crying out to Him from the bottom of your heart. So must proceed all who seek the fire of grace; as for the words or positions of the body during prayer, they have only a secondary meaning. God looks at the heart.”⁴³

Therefore, despite what has been said about it, the practice of the prayer of the heart, specific to the Eastern Christianity, consists in giving way to the burning of the heart by grace, while at the same time, steadfastly watching over (*nepsis*) its inward purity. Far from seeking ecstasy or enthusiasm state, the mind in prayer must refrain from giving the deity any image:

“Desiring to see the face of the heavenly Father,” says St Nilus of Sinai, “do not strive to discern any image or face during your prayer. Flee from the desire to see in a sensitive form the angels, the (celestial) powers, or Christ; otherwise you take the risk of going mad, mistaking the wolf for a shepherd and glorifying the devils in God's place ... the beginning of wandering is in the will of the mind that tries to grasp the deity in an image or face.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ Georgios I. MANTZARIDIS, *The deification of man. St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition*, p. 90.

⁴² See art. Dr. G. WUNDERLE, „La technique psychologique de l'hesychasme byzantin“, in *Etudes Carmélitaines*, Oct. 1938, pp. 61-67. Cf. also the important hesychastic source, *Century of Kallistos and Ignatius*, published in German trans. by P. Ammann, Wurzburg, 1938. These two articles mark the beginning of more in-depth and impartial studies on hesychasm, unfortunately not rightly appreciated even today in the West.

⁴³ Bishop THEOPHAN the Recluse, *Writings*, vol. V, n. 911 (in Russian), apud Vladimir LOSSKY, *Teologia mistică a Bisericii de Răsărit (The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church)*, Preface by Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Introductory study* and French translation by Vasile Răducă, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2010, p. 222.

⁴⁴ St NILUS of Sinai, *De oratione*, cap. 114-116, P.G., vol. 79, col. 1192-1193, apud Vladimir LOSSKY, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 223.

Prayer is the “result” of thought and of the heart that is fully aware. It could be defined as man’s conscious effort to communicate with God so that he could unify with Him.⁴⁵ But the hardest thing for man is to descend the mind into the heart, seen as the focus of the spiritual life. For as it is said in the famous Russian book on Jesus Prayer, called *Sbornik*:

“When the mind is in the heart, then the union of the mind with the heart takes place, which presupposes the integrity of our spiritual organism... The union of the mind with the heart is the union of the spiritual thoughts of the mind with the spiritual feelings of the heart. The heart is the inner man, or spirit, where we are conscious of ourselves, where the conscience is, the idea of God with the feeling of our hanging on Him, as well as the whole spiritual life with its eternal price”⁴⁶.

The purpose of the prayer of the mind is union with God, Who is Spirit, and, for this reason, that union can be called spiritual. Frequent repetition of prayer will necessarily bring out the habit and will transform it into the second nature, which will eventually attract both the mind and heart into the proper state. If man were to fulfill, without any escape from sight, this one divine commandment concerning unceasing prayer, then he would fulfill all the commandments by the single one, for if he were to perform the prayer continually, at any time, and in any occupation or things, if he secretly called upon the divine name of Jesus Christ— although at first he would do so without any warmth and without zeal, but only by force—, yet on this particular time he would no longer have the respite for the felt and sinful pleasures. The frequent practice of prayer would divert the soul from sinful deeds and draw it to an essential self-knowledge, to union with God!⁴⁷

CONCLUSION

The history of the “Jesus Prayer” – a technical term in Byzantine spirituality which designates the invocation of the name Jesus, whether alone or inserted into a more or less extended formula – has yet to be recounted in a comprehensive way, although there are various studies on points of detail. The subject has an interest that is more than purely historical. While the practice of the Prayer goes back to early times, it still remains very much alive today in the Christian East. It is not generally mentioned in standard treatises on the “ways of prayer,” and yet it is more ancient and more widespread than the methods analyzed in the classic manuals. The famous Romanian writer and theologian, Nichifor Crainic, has written that the Jesus Prayer is the “heart of Orthodoxy.”⁴⁸ The Uniates also use it; Latins have taken an interest in it; there are Anglicans and Protestants of our day who

⁴⁵ In fact, prayer is man’s talking and communicating with God. It is the soul’s life. As the body is alive as long as it breathes and when breathing ceases life ceases, this is what happens with the soul of the man who does not pray, that person is not alive, and the Christian cannot achieve eternal life, as prayer is the key to God’s Kingdom. See Rev. PhD Liviu PETCU, “The Reception of Hesychasm in the Romanian Culture”, in *International Journal of Orthodox Theology*, 7:1 (2016), p. 78.

⁴⁶ *Sbornicul. Culegere despre rugăciunea lui Iisus (Sbornik. Collection on the Jesus prayer)*, vol. I: *Lucrearea minții (The work of the mind)*, trans. in Romanian by Fr. Gheorghe Roșca, Episcopia Ortodoxă Alba Iulia (Alba Iulia Orthodox Episcopate), 1994, cap. 148-149, pp. 102-103.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Sbornik*, pp. 241 sq.

⁴⁸ N. CRAINIC, “Das Jesus gebet,” an article translated from the Romanian by W. Biemel in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 60 (1941), pp. 341-353. The article is conspicuously lacking in critical judgment: the author attributes the invention of the Jesus Prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary. This might be true in some mystical sense but cannot be affirmed as a fact of history.

fervently follow this method of prayer; it is our common patrimony. More than a private devotion, it borders on the realm of liturgy and even penetrates it.⁴⁹

Gregory Palamas rightly considered blessed those who become accustomed to this heavenly activity, for by it they conquer all the temptations of the evil spirits, just as David conquered the proud Goliath. In this way they quench the disorderly desires of the flesh.

“This mental prayer is the light enlightening man’s soul and enkindling his heart with the fire of love towards God. It is the chain uniting God to man and man to God. Oh, there is nothing that can compare to the grace of mental prayer! It makes man a constant converser with God. O truly wondrous and most wondrous work! In the body you are with people, but mentally you converse with God”⁵⁰.

St Maximus the Confessor, Symeon the New Theologian, Gregory of Sinai, and Gregory Palamas figure prominently in the *Philokalia*. Their teaching on deification through participation in the divine light became familiar to a wide monastic readership. St Seraphim of Sarov, the best-known of the Russian nineteenth-century mystics, was seen by more than one of his disciples transfigured by an intense light. ‘Remember the transfiguration of the Lord on Mount Tabor’, the staretz is reported to have said.

“When Moses and Elijah came to him then, in order to hide the shining light of divine grace which blinded the disciples, a cloud, it is said, overshadowed them. In this manner the grace of the All-Holy Spirit of God manifests itself in an indescribable light to all those in whom God manifests its action”.⁵¹

In more recent times a remarkable testimony to the continuity of the same teaching and experience of transfiguration has been borne by St Silouan of Mount Athos and his disciple, Archimandrite Sophrony.⁵² If the repentant sinner perseveres and ‘consciously abides in the Holy Spirit’, says Sophrony, ‘the vision of immortal glory and undying light is vouchsafed to him’ and he becomes a participant in the life of Christ, having become “without beginning” (not in essence, but by grace)⁵³ Such perseverance is directed not towards the pursuit of mystical experience, but to making Christ fully effective in the Christian’s life.⁵⁴

This prayer is particularly useful in modern times when the modern man does not have time to pray. If we start practicing this prayer, we shall discover we have more time

⁴⁹ Archimandrite Lev GILLET, *The Jesus Prayer*, p. 21.

⁵⁰ St GREGORY Palamas, in: *The way of Pilgrim*, fn. 26, p. 147.

⁵¹ Sergius BOLSHAKOFF, *Russian Mystics*, CSS 26. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1977, p. 135.

⁵² Archimandrite Sophrony came to England in 1959 and founded an Orthodox monastery at Tolleshunt Knights in Essex. His books on St Silouan have circulated widely. Less well known is his spiritual testimony (Sophrony 1988) in which he vividly describes his own experience of uncreated light. Interestingly, this is balanced by the equally powerful experience of the mind’s descent into hell. See Norman RUSSELL, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, p. 311.

⁵³ Archimandrite SOPHRONY (Sakharov), *We Shall See Him as He Is*, Trans. Rosemary Edmonds. Tolleshunt Knights: Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 1988, p. 45.

⁵⁴ A curious early twentieth-century aberration in the development of the hesychastic tradition may be mentioned here, the heresy of the *name-worshippers* (*Imiaslavie*), which arose from treating the name itself of God as a separate hypostasis. That the Orthodox Church pronounced it a heresy underlines its opposition to the multiplication of hypostases in the Godhead. Imiaslavie (Russian: Имяславие, literally praising the name) or Imiabožhie (Имябожие) also referred to as onomatodoxy (name-worshippers), is a dogmatic movement which asserts that the Name of God is God Himself. Although it was condemned by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1913, it is still promoted by some contemporary Russian writers. For details, see: <http://onimyaslavie.blogspot.com/search/label/Imiaslavie>

available for prayer than we had ever imagined.⁵⁵ The man strengthens spiritually by reciting Jesus's Name as there is no other being greater in Heaven or on the Earth. About the outstanding importance of heart prayer significantly confessed (to a brother) a Romanian Elder, Father Ghervasie Gașpar from Sihăstria Monastery († 1948): "I am sorry that I must leave this body and have not learned better the Jesus Prayer! In all my trouble this was my only solace."⁵⁶ Orthodox believe that the power of God is present in the Name of Jesus, so that the invocation of this Divine Name acts as an effective sign of God's action, endowed with sacramental grace.

"The Name of Jesus, present in the human heart, communicates to it the power of deification. Shining through the heart, the light of the Name of Jesus illuminates all the universe".⁵⁷

Alike to those who recite it continually and to those who only employ it occasionally, the Jesus Prayer proves a great source of reassurance and joy. To quote the celebrated Pilgrim:

"And that is how I go about now, and ceaselessly repeat the Jesus Prayer, which is more precious and sweeter to me than anything in the world. At times I do as much as forty-three or forty-four miles a day, and do not feel that I am walking at all. I am aware only of the fact that I am saying my Prayer. When the bitter cold pierces me, I begin to say my Prayer more earnestly, and I quickly become warm all over. When hunger begins to overcome me, I call more often on the Name of Jesus, and I forget my wish for food. When I fall ill and get rheumatism in my back and legs, I fix my thoughts on the Prayer, and do not notice the pain. If anyone harms me I have only to think, 'How sweet is the Jesus Prayer!' and the injury and the anger alike pass away and I forget it all. I thank God that I now understand the meaning of those words I heard in the Epistle – *Pray without ceasing* (I Thessalonians 5:17)." (*The Way of a Pilgrim*, R. M. French, pp. 17-18)

So, whenever we say "Jesus," we rest in a plenitude and totality that can no longer be taken from us. The name of Jesus then becomes a bearer of the whole Christ. It brings us into His total presence. The Jesus prayer helps to lift the whole life, body and soul, to a level where the senses and imagination no longer seek for outward change or stimulation, where all is subordinated to the one aim of centering the whole attention of body and soul upon God, in the sense that the world is sought and known in the beauty of God, not God in the beauty of the world (Mother Maria of Normanby, Swiss Orthodox nun). At all times and in every place it is fitting to call upon the name of God; for thus we 'beat the enemies,' says St. John of the Ladder, 'with the name of Jesus,' and a stronger weapon you will not find either in heaven or earth.

The *hesychast*, that is the one who devotes himself to the prayer of silence, senses it like the tremendous silences that surround and elevate us at the end of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony or the Bach' Mass in B Minor. It is a silence that not only rings with the various kinds of music that are consummated in it but seems, momentarily, to call down, to embody and enshrine the Divine presence itself. Only the highest art of prayer informed by the deepest spiritual intelligence and love could lead us to a place where all expression and feeling dissolve in wonder, and wherein one feels and thinks with Jesus' heart and mind.

⁵⁵ Olivier CLÉMENT, *Rugăciunea lui Iisus* (Jesus Prayer), Translation from French by Măriuca and Adrian Alexandrescu, Bucharest, Biblical Institute Publishing, 1997, p. 9.

⁵⁶ See Ioanichie BĂLAN, *Patericul românesc* (Romanian Patericon), 4th edition, Roman Episcopate Publishing, Roman, 2001, p. 215.

⁵⁷ Sergius BULGAKOV, *The Orthodox Church*, Centenary Press, London, 1935, pp. 170-171.

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Suffering, as a testimony of freedom

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ABSTRACT

There is almost no thinker in the history of mankind not to be interested in the issue of evil and suffering that accompany man's life from his birth to his death, just like the shadow never separates from the body. Everybody has tried to unlock this mystery, to reach a deep understanding of it, to uncover its meanings, to identify ways to remove it or, at least, to make it less of an experience. And, in this respect, one may say that pain, suffering and fear of death make up the most profound anthropological basis of the religious concept of life by the fact that these realities show man his limitations, his finite constitution, that of a creature, thus driving him to search beyond his limitations. From this point of view, the suffering of each and every man, assessed individually, may be considered as the paradigm for a history of mankind and this is possible only because suffering is inseparably linked to existence.

Keywords: suffering; illness; sacrament; experience; healing; martyr;

INTRODUCTION

Suffering has been and will be talked about until the end of time. It is our historical condition, it encompasses us, it sometimes overwhelms us, it makes us anxious, frustrated, and rebellious. We are born through suffering and we continue to experience it during our lives. Death itself is often looked upon as suffering. The fear of suffering and, generally, the philosophical reflection on the meaning of suffering have always given rise to one of the greatest questions of mundane human existence disseminated in each historical epoch: *what for? why is suffering necessary? which are the reasons for its existence?* What is the meaning of suffering when confronted with the fundamental and central belief of mankind's religious consciousness, namely how does it relate to the existence of God? Isn't there an irreconcilable difference between existence in suffering and the existence of God believed to be both Good and Omnipotent? Moreover, suffering invalidates the very plan of creation, where “everything was very good” and there was no room envisioned for pain or evil. And in more serious terms, how can one reconcile the suffering of an innocent person and the kindness and omnipotence of God¹, who is called Father? These are the questions that man has faced along his existence on Earth and on which he has spent very much time, thought and material things, hoping to find an answer. Testimonies are to be found in the various successful or unsuccessful attempts at providing answers from within the history of

¹ Dionigi TETTAMANZI, *Nuova Bioetica Cristiana / New Christian Bioethics*, Turin, Piemme, 2001, p. 347.

religions, philosophy, literature and varied human expressive arts during the centuries. Over the time, many religious and philosophical systems have tried to satisfactorily clear up the issue of suffering. Many have attempted to provide a way out of suffering, a sort of redemption by avoiding it. A case in point is the Buddhist way. Noticing that the entire existence is suffering², that, in fact, the very existence means suffering to the point where it identifies with it, they reached the conclusion that the best solution is to flee³, liberating themselves from suffering by liberating themselves from existence. Taking refuge into nothingness, into non-existence, constitutes the only variant for Buddhist thinking in particular, and for the extreme Orient one in general. For the contemporary man, suffering cannot have any spiritual explanation. He looks upon it as natural decay, which does not require any motivation or spiritual explanation; this is why the solution is also natural. Man can find no meaning in it, considers it absurd and identifies his life not with understanding it, but with struggling to avoid it⁴.

On the contrary, Christianity focuses very much on courage, on responsibility and redemption without losing one's identity. Christianity itself is the religion of courage, as true courage implies hope. Courage does not mean quitting when you feel you can't win, but fighting against all the odds that would indicate defeat.

1. SUFFERING AS A TEST OF FREEDOM

We know that suffering inseparably accompanies human existence because of the consequences of the primordial sin on the human nature and then on the entire nature created. Man bears within (himself) this sprout that, due to freedom, can bring about not only suffering and death, but also holiness. To do this, we must distinguish among several types of human experience when we talk about suffering, namely there is physical suffering, of the body, that man experiences through illness, despair and death; there is moral suffering, of the soul, more heart-wrenching than the physical one, caused by discontent, bereft, betrayal, disdain and even one's own mistakes; there is psychological suffering, which often acts as a consequence of physical and moral pain, and which becomes manifest in sadness – the *acedia* that the Holy Fathers talk about, pessimism, discouragement, depression. Thus, there is one thing to experience physical suffering, and a totally different one to experience what we generically call moral suffering, which encompasses sadness and depression, that can only be cured by having man relate to his spiritual nature and find himself as a person in a dialogue with the transcendent⁵.

In other words, when we talk about physical suffering, we think of the body, and, when we talk about moral suffering, we think of the soul. Sometimes, such instances of experiencing suffering overlap, turning into a real social whip, as we can see in the case of natural calamities, pandemics, catastrophe, hunger and war. It is enough, in order to understand the existence of all these forms of human experience of suffering, to think about

² Aldo NATALE TERRIN, "Il dolore e la morte nelle religioni" / "Suffering and Pain in Religions," in: *Sensul vieții, al suferinței și al morții / The Meaning of Life, Suffering and Death*, Alba-Iulia International Symposium, February 29 februarie – March 2, 2008, Alba-Iulia, Reîntregirea Publishing House, 2008, p. 57-69, here pp. 63-64.

³ Maurizio CHIODI, *Etica de la Vita / The Ethics of Life*, Milano, Edizioni Glossa, 2006, p. 309.

⁴ George REMETE, *Suferința omului și iubirea lui Dumnezeu / Man's Suffering and God's Love*, Bucharest, Edit. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române / The Biblical and Romanian Orthodox Church Mission Institute (from now on BROCMI), 2005, p. 11.

⁵ Hierotheos VLACHOS, *Psihoterapie ortodoxă – continuare și dezbateri / Orthodox Psychotherapy – continuation and debates*, Bucharest, Sophia, 2007, p. 148.

the extermination of Jews in Nazi camps, about the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, about ethnic purge, about the abuses committed against millions of innocent children. All these forms of suffering are only particular aspects of the general issue of “evil,” which consists in people being deprived of the good. We are aware that God is not the cause of the evil and the suffering in our lives, but, surely, they are allowed to happen by His Divine Providence. A nagging question arises: why does God allow man, the most beautiful of all creatures, to wallow in adversity, suffering, pain and death? It is very difficult for us to grasp, every time, the real cause of suffering, and this happens because illness and pain hurt the individual in his most intimate experience.

The suffering man must experience inner conflict: how he must understand himself. Using this as a starting point, we must interpret the meaning of suffering. Of course, the question to be asked is exactly this: what is the meaning of suffering? where must we look for this meaning? what is suffering, after all? And if we think from the perspective of a life of faith: why is there suffering in the world, at all, if Christ abolished it by restoring human nature? Here are so many interrogations that require an interpretation of the meaning of suffering. Mention must be made from the very beginning that bodily suffering can never bring about the death of the soul⁶, not even moral suffering can cause that, nor can guilt for sins committed lead to the destruction of the soul. This can only be done by God. But if the soul is suffering, the body is in the same state: it forgets about what is necessary to preserve the biological balance of the individual. And vice versa, if the body is suffering, the soul is suffering as well. Thus, experiencing suffering always addresses the conscience that feels the spiritual and the physical pain to the same extent⁷. In this case, this is not about just a theoretical interpretation. From the point of view of the sufferer, we can notice an experience whose meaning focuses on loss, on failure and collapse of man⁸, of his values, similar to being deprived of everything he was supposed to accomplish in life, slavery, being resigned, somewhat observing the remarks of the antiquity philosopher, Epicurus, who considered illness and pain as a lack of or a void in the soul⁹, but, on the contrary, suffering must be looked upon as an event that must be lived as an experience of checking, of testing freedom, which reveals the path of hope in living one’s life. It is true, suffering places man in crisis, but this crisis does not speak to man only about difficulties, fears and the end, but appeals to what is most profound in man, that is he is called to test himself to see how far or how long or how much he is willing to live as a man, even when experiencing suffering, illness and death¹⁰.

Physical and/or moral pain, particularly experienced over longer time, causes in man a certain state of suffering, which establishes that so-called *status* of man during suffering. This Status of illness or of being sick, at the deepest level, within, can bring about the following experiences¹¹: a) – experiencing a break from objectivity, a tear between

⁶ J. C. LARCHET, *Dumnezeu nu vrea suferința omului / God Doesn't Want Man's Suffering*, p. 104.

⁷ M. CHIODI, *Etica de la Vita / The Ethics of Life*, p. 360.

⁸ D. TETTAMANZI, *Nuova Bioetica ... / New Christian Bioethics*, p. 350.

⁹ Paul RICOEUR, *Filosofia della volonta. I. Il volontario e l'involontario / The Philosophy of Will. I. The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, Genova, Marietti, 1990, p. 107-112.

¹⁰ D. TETTAMANZI, *Nuova Bioetica ... // New Christian Bioethics*, p. 353.

¹¹ Ioan C. TEȘU, "Necazurile, durerile și suferințele – forme ale iubirii milostive a lui Dumnezeu" / "Misfortunes, Pain, and Suffering – Forms of God's Merciful Love, in "Teologie și Viață" / "Theology and Life", no. 9-12 (2012), p. 5-26, here, p. 6; also see: Pavel CHRILĂ & com, *Principii de bioetică. O abordare ortodoxă / Principles of Bioethics. An Orthodox Approach*, Bucharest, Christiana Publishing House, 2008, p. 143.

thought and the suffering body, causing a feeling of otherness and alienation manifested in an inner lack of harmony; b) – when interacting with other people or other things, the sick person experiences, during the status of the illness, a communication and interpersonal relation crisis. Interested in himself, the sick person's universe is reduced to his own room; c) – suffering provides an intense experience of one's own life limit, quality and duration, limit that brings forth the idea of death at the level of the consciousness; d) – experiencing a feeling of being bereft, abandoned, which allows for experiencing sadness, existential emptiness, fear. The suffering that each man experiences directly challenges and tests freedom, and particularly hope, patience, and faith. The Holy Fathers emphasize that both bodily and spiritual suffering equally benefit man when he endures, being content. This is how Saint John Chrysostom advises Olympias the Deaconess: "Don't lose hope! Only one thing is frightening, Olympias, only one trouble must we fear: sin!"¹² and he continues in a letter to the same Olympias:

"Think these over, you as well! And the fuller life is of pain, the more you will have to gain if you endure all while being content. Much reward is to be found not only in bodily pain, such as hits, but also in spiritual pain; and suffering of the soul so much more than that of the body, when the hurt ones endure them while being content. The same way you would be richly rewarded if, for the glory of God, you courageously put up with being whipped or with having your body torn apart, great reward awaits you for the spiritual suffering you are experiencing now. Keep hoping, and you will undoubtedly see again that you will be rid of that pain and you will gain a lot, both then and now, from this pain"¹³. [...] Because enduring illness is the highest form of patience"¹⁴. [...] You? You must rejoice and be happy, for you have exerted the greatest of all virtues, the virtue of virtues. You know, you know well that no virtue equals patience, it is the queen of virtues, the foundation of good deeds, the clear safe haven, peace during war, the calm after the storm, strength amidst plots. Patience makes you tougher than diamonds. Patience cannot be overcome by any sort of weapons, or armies, or war machineries, or arrows, or spears, or legions of demons, or the dangerous phalanges of enemy powers, or even by the devil, with all his army and wit. Then, why are you afraid? Why do you grow sad, when you are ready to lay down your life, if circumstance required? You keep saying that you want to see an end to the evil around you? You will see the end of them as well! You will see it soon, God willing! Dare, thus, to enjoy your good deeds! Don't ever lose hope"¹⁵.

¹² ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Epistolae ad Olympiadem*, in J.P. Migne, PG. 52, col. 542-623, here col. 549: "Entenim una dumtaxat res gravis ac pertimescenda est, o Olympias, una tentatio, nempe peccatum".

¹³ *Ibidem*, col. 571-572: "Haec igitur ipsa tecum perpetuo meditare, et quo ea res cruciatum tibi maiorem affert, eo etiam eam, si grato animo feras, maiorem fructum allaturam esse existima. Non enim corporeae dumtaxat plagae illatae, sed etiam animi dolor omni sermone sublimiores coronas affert, et quidem animi dolor magis quam corporis, cum qui feriuntur, cum gratiarum actione ferunt. Quemadmodum igitur si corpore lacerata verberibusque concisa, forti ac generoso animo id ferres, Deique gloriam hoc nomine praedicares, ingentem hinc mercedem consequeris: eodem modo, cum haec animus tuus patiat, magna hinc praemia exspecta. Expectes vetim etiam fore omnino, ut rursus nos videas, atque hoc dolore libereris, amplumque et uberem huius doloris quaestrum, et post hac et nunc, percipias."

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, col. 592 : "Hoc omnibus rebus adversis gravis esse, ac summus patientiae genus"

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, col. 606-607: "Te vero exsultare ac laetitia diffundi convenit, quia quod virtutum caput est praestitisti. Nosti etiam, nostri profecto nihil esse quod patientiam adaequare possit, verum ipsam potissimum virtutum reginam esse, rerum praeclare gestarum fundamentum, portum tranquillum, in bello pacem, in tempestate tranquillitatem, in insidiis securitatem: quae sectatorem suum adamante firmiorem reddit, hanque naturam habet, ut eam nec arma mota, nec instructi exercitus, nec adhibita tormenta, nec arcus, nec lanceae emissae, nec ipsum daemonum agmen, nec terrificae adversariarum potestatum phalanges, nec denique diabolus ipse cum omnibus suis copiis machinisque in aciem prodiens, detrimento ullo afficere possit. Quid igitur extimescis? Quid excruciaris, cum ipsam quoque vitam, si tempus postularit, aspernari dinturna meditatione didiceris? At urgentium malorum finem cupis. Erit quoque istud, quidem brevi, Deo concedente."

More than suffering itself, there are three things that erode the peace of the suffering man: experience, challenge, and time, duration of suffering. This is why the most frequent understanding of suffering is that it must be grasped as a challenging experience during one's lifetime. Suffering is, above all, a test, because it seems to create a negative, sterile and futile outlook of human aspiration towards happiness and a good life, overlapping moral pain over the physical one¹⁶. It is human nature to look for the good, or, better said, to try and feel well, to share only what one likes. Suffering can cause tremendous emptiness within the soul. But suffering is not its cause, but the way in which we look at reality and perceive it as such. Saint Augustine tells us that accepting or coming to terms with the state of suffering is not the same for all people:

“The same way fire makes gold shine and foam evaporate, the same way yeast and oil do not mix in the same press, the same way the thrasher crushes the straw but peels the wheat, the same fate tests, purifies and sanctifies the good, sentences and destroys the bad. This is why, while experiencing the same suffering, the bad curse God, while the good bless His word. The wind blows over garbage and spreads its smell, but it also blows over the lily and spreads its perfume”¹⁷.

When suffering, conscience is made to look at some “beyond,” as a limit and, in a challenging way, it questions the promise to live: understand and discover the solitude and the individualism of existence, the ontological poverty and emptiness¹⁸. Pain and suffering can create the opportunity of opening a door to a world that we couldn't see, or which was not made for our immediate interest. A new existence is born through pain¹⁹. The question that arises is not how we can eliminate pain, but how we can succeed in living in pain. The sense of suffering does not reside in the fact that someone is suffering, but in how they are suffering, and this understanding will never be found in an appeal to immanence, but always in an appeal to transcendence²⁰. Ultimately, it is a test of faith, which is called to decide upon the existential, final questions. Seen from this perspective, suffering becomes an unexpected master that propositions man's freedom to face the challenge of experiencing suffering²¹. Suffering, as a challenge, offers the possibility of two paths to take, which are not equivalent: the former is that of denial, of rejecting any meaning for the existence of suffering, whereas the latter focuses on man invoking hope as an unconditional act²². Hope is

Gaude igitur et oblectare, atque cogitandis tuis recte factis animum exhilara: nec umquam despera.” Cfr. ST. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Epistolae*, in J.P. Migne, PG., vol. 91, col. 364-650, here *Epistola XVI / Epistle XVI* col. 579: “Hence, let's not become weaker in hardship, honorable father, knowing that misfortune works in patience, patience in testing, and testing in hope, and hope does not bring on shame, providing the kindness for which we suffer.” (“Ne ergo deficiamus in tribulationis, venerande Pater, quos non lateat tribulationem patientiam operari; patientiam autem, probationem; probationem vero spem; spem autem, non confundere: quae firmam habeat, eorum nomine quae perpetimur, aeternorum bonorum beatam possessionem ac dulcedinem”)

¹⁶ J.C. LARCHET, *Teologia bolii / The Theology of Illness*, Sibiu, Oastea Domnului Publishing House, 1997, p. 58.

¹⁷ ST. AUGUSTINE, *De civitate Dei*, in J.P. Migne, PL. vol 41, col. 13-804, here col. 21: “Nam sicut sub uno igne aurum rutilat, palea fumat; et sub eadem tribula stipulae comminuuntur, frumenta purgantur; nec ideo cum oleo amurca conlunditur, quia eadem preli pondere exprimitur: ita una eademque vis irruens bonos probat, purificat, eliquat; malos damnat, vasiat, exterminat”; also see Ioan TURCU, *Suferința în concepția laică și ea creștină / Suffering in Laic and Christian Acceptance*, Bucharest, 1931, p. 147.

¹⁸ J.C. LARCHET, *Dumnezeu nu vrea suferința omului / God Doesn't Want Man's Suffering*, p. 129.

¹⁹ H. VLACHOS, *Psihoterapie ortodoxă / Orthodox Psychotherapy*, p. 145.

²⁰ Viktor FRANKL, *La soferenza di una vita senza un senso. Psihoterapia per l'uomo d'oggi / The Suffering of a Life Without Meaning. Psychotherapy for the Contemporary Man*, Turin, Elle Di Ci Editrice, 1992, p. 92.

²¹ M. CHIOLDI, *Etica de la Vita / The Ethics of Life*, p. 363.

²² Gabriel MARCEL, *Homo viator*, Borla, Rome, 1980, p. 57.

man's answer to experiencing suffering. Hope must not be mistaken for the optimism according to which suffering will come to an end, but true hope goes beyond any condition and determined waiting²³, thus using patience to get rid of any hopeless thought and assuming the conversion to a Christian life²⁴. Suffering, illness, misfortune can become a genuine way of knowing God when man acknowledges the spiritual dimension of his existence. Pain is a new revelation of Christ in man²⁵. Irrespective of who undergoes this process: youth, adults and the old, to all, suffering and misfortune can turn into reasons for profound meditation and repentance²⁶, and, above all, a good opportunity to strengthen faith. By suffering, we remember God, we relate to Him, and we honor the great charism of prayer²⁷ and repentance. It is this very belonging to God through faith that gives man the courage to face and endure suffering, considering suffering as a means of consolidation, not in the sense of Stoicism, but in the sense that these are given to man as divine righteousness and pedagogy²⁸. Saint Cyprian of Carthage, talking about the difference between Christians and pagans when enduring suffering, says that, for those who are not familiar with the power of faith, pain and illness are a means of enhancing faith²⁹. Thus, there is a sort of divine pedagogy, according to which being put to the test is necessary to all, for spiritual practice:

“Being tested – says Saint Isaac of Syria – is useful to any man (...) Those who are in need are being tested, so that they thrive in their richness; the lazy, so that they stay away from harm; the sleepy, so that they urge themselves to wake up; those who are far, so that they get closer to God; the house dwellers, so that they enter the house with courage. No unskilled son receives the wealth of his father's house before he is capable of using it. That is why God first tests people, making them experience hardship, and only then does He show them the gift³⁰.”

St Basil the Great, experiencing suffering himself, says that God allows suffering, misfortune and wanting as a test through which man can regain hope, faith, patience, the capability of being silent and dispassionate. Their purpose is to make men even brighter and worthier of an even greater reward, for those who bear them and overcome them spiritually:

²³ *Ibidem*, 157.

²⁴ Pr. prof. dr. Ioan C. TEȘU, *Necazurile și încercările, căi spre mântuire. Accente hrisostomice / Misfortune and Tests, Paths to Redemption. Chrisostomic Accents*, in the Annals of “Al. I. Cuza” University of Iași, vol. 12, Teologie Ortodoxă / Orthodox Theology, p. 93-110, here p. 98.

²⁵ H. VLACHOS, *Psihoterapie ortodoxă / Orthodox Psychotherapy*, p. 145.

²⁶ Ioan C. TEȘU, *Necazurile și încercările... / Misfortune and Tests...*, p. 102.

²⁷ H. VLACHOS, *Psihoterapie ortodoxă / Orthodox Psychotherapy*, p. 146.

²⁸ ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Epistolae ad Olympiadem I*, PG. vol. 52, col. 553: “Si igitur nunc cum molestiis laetos quoque successus subducere volueris, si non multa signa et miracula, at multas tamen res miraculis non dissimiles conspicies, quae quidem ingentis Dei providentiae atque auxilii perspicuis argumenta sint”. (“So, if you want to assess the good deeds and the bad ones, that occur nowadays, you will see, if not omens and miracles, many deeds resembling miracles, untold signs of God taking great care and of His help.”)

²⁹ ST. CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE, *De Mortalitate*, in J.P. Migne, PL. vol. 4, col. 383-602, here ch. 13, col. 591B: “Hoc denique inter nos et caeteros interest, qui Deum nasciunt, quod illi in adversis queruntur et murmurant, nos adversa non avocant a virtutis et fidei veritate, sed corroborant in dolore”; (“What distinguishes us from those who do not know God is that the latter complain and revolt in misfortune, whereas, for us, misfortune, far from making us turn away from true courage and true faith, strengthens us in pain.”)

³⁰ ST. ISAAC OF SYRIA, *Cuvinte despre nevoie / On Needing*, in *Filocalia Română / Romanian Philocalia*, Bucharest, The Biblical Institute Publishing House, 1981, vol. 10, pp. 251-252.

“The storm at sea – says St Basil – tests the captain of the ship, the stadium tests the athlete, the battle tests the general, misfortune tests the spiritual strength of man, temptation tests the Christian. Hardship tests souls just like fire tests gold³¹.”

Suffering has this therapeutic power to push the sinner away from what is ephemeral and lacking value in the world, unties him from earth and makes him mature enough to seek for the heavenly kingdom³²:

“You are poor. Don’t be sad! Because too great sadness becomes reason to sin; sorrow clouds the mind, confusion mixes everything up and puzzlement breeds ingratitude. But have faith in God! Should God not see your distress? He holds your nourishment in His hand, but He postpones giving it to you so that He might test your strength, know your thoughts, making sure they do not belong to the evil and the discontent. For those, as long as they are fed, they praise, they flatter, and they never cease being amazed; if they are but little pushed away from the table, they throw insults just like rocks towards those they previously worshipped, in pleasure, as if they were God³³.”

In such a situation, illness is beyond pedagogical research and the person enduring it with patience and in gratitude towards God is granted the right to ascesis and suffering, or, even more so, he reaps the fruit of salvation out of his patience³⁴.

2. THE PEDAGOGICAL ROLE OF SUFFERING

The pedagogical role of suffering also arises from the fact that it shows us that sin is at work within us, that we have strayed away from God’s protective love, thus risking our own redemption. For example, we can simply notice that, holding our hand above fire, we will definitely get burnt, we will feel a sting and our first reaction will be to pull our hand back, away from the fire. This means that our previous action, that of putting our hand over the fire was wrong and the pain that ensued showed that to us. And if we hadn’t felt the pain, the suffering caused by the fire, we would have risked getting our hand and body burnt, thus losing it all. Hence, this is how suffering reveals itself as the first messenger of the danger we find ourselves in, the danger of destruction when committing certain deeds.

The same meaning is to be found in the suffering that is brought upon people, namely to show them that their being struggles in an environment inconsistent with its natural state and place and that is why it fights through pain so as not to deviate from its ontological becoming. Only in Christ can man return to his real nature, as it was made by

³¹ ST. BASILIUS MAGNUS, *Homilia dicta Tempore Famis et siccitatis*, in J.P. Migne, PG. vol. 31, col. 303D-327C, here col. 318C: “Nam nauclerum tempestas, athleam stadium, imperatorem acies, magnanimum virum calamitatis, Christianum tentatio probat et examinat. Atque ut ignis aurum, ita res adversae animam probat”.

³² Nicolae BALCA, “Sensul suferinței în creștinism / The Meaning of Suffering in Christianity”, in: *Studii Teologice*, / *Theological Studies* no. 3-4(1957), p.155-176. p. 170-171.

³³ ST. BASILIUS MAGNUS, *Homilia dicta Tempore Famis et siccitatis*, col. 318CD: “Puper es? Cave animum abjicias. Nam nimia tristitia causa fit peccati, quod demergat mentem maeror, inducatque vertiginem desperatio, et vitium ingrati animi pariat consilii inopia. Sed spem habeto in Deum. Nunquid enim: non videm angustiam? Habet cibum in manibus: sed difert largitionem, ut probet tuam constantiam, ut animum agnoscat, sitne intemperantibus et ingratis consimilis. Ili enim, dum in ore sunt cibi, benedient, adulantur, supra modum admirantur: paululum vero dilata mensa, blasphemiis velunt lapidus inpetunt eos quos aliquanto ante aequae ac Deum propter voluptatem colebant”:

³⁴ Ioan C. TEȘU, *Bolile-”Divina filozofie... / Illnesses – Divine Philosophy...*, p. 20.

God before the beginning of time, when He thought of making man in His divine resemblance and face, and discovering man's nature is becoming into being³⁵.

Ultimately, suffering has the power to transform people. Those who used to indifferently pass by their grieving fellowmen, after having experienced hardship or severe illness, changed their behavior. They became good Samaritans and showed mercy in their relations to others; they are capable not only of sympathy, but also of sacrifice for the well-being of their fellow-men. Suffering bestows true value on life. It teaches us the lesson of love. More so than all didactic theories and ambitions, experiencing suffering gives man a real and healthy education. Lessons learnt through suffering are stronger and truer than all pedagogical principles. The latter are just as often and just as substantially corrected by life experience³⁶.

Out of His endless love for us, God does not want to allow our love to be squandered into sin and this is why He resorts to all solutions to turn it back to its real path. Christ came precisely for those who had strayed away from Him, He suffered for them, He died and came back to life, but, if they do not understand that, God keeps them wallowing in the suffering that they bring upon themselves, in the hope of the Gospel Father that they will at some point return home.

3. THE SACRIFICIAL ASPECT OF SUFFERING. ON MARTYRS

The sacrifice expresses life's profound richness, which offers or offers itself in order to surpass oneself and feel fulfilled in the communion with God, with one's fellowmen and with the entire existence. Man gives up "having" so as to become complete in "being," that is in his own being. He searches for himself in offering himself and, sometimes, he finds himself by creating himself, even at the cost of his own life³⁷. The martyr offers himself and everything he has as a sacrifice to God. By this offering, he turns even death into sacrifice³⁸.

Sacrifice, by the act of giving up, of abdicating the self, of offering, implies suffering. It is more acutely felt according to the motivation of sacrifice and our own capability of sacrificing. This sacrificing state should be the very reason of the existence of Christianity, which has the Holy Trinity as the ultimate model. Out of immense love for people, God did not shy away from sacrificing His only Son for our redemption (John III, 16). Thus, sacrifice is exclusively based on love, the only one to give higher purpose to our deeds, as it mimics Christ the Saviour. Martyrs prove that love for God is stronger than fear of death³⁹. In this respect, (Apostle) Saint Paul writes to Christians in Rome, the city to be martyred by beheading:

"Who will separate us from Christ's love? Misfortune, or hardship, or persecution, or hunger, or lack of clothes, or danger, or the sword (...). As it is ordained, it is for You that we are

³⁵ *Celălalt Noica / The Other Noica*, Mărturii ale Monahului Rafail Noica însoțită de câteva cuvinte de folos ale Părintelui Simeon / Testimonies of Monk Rafail Noica, accompanied by some useful words by Father Symeon, Anastasia Publishing House, 1994, p. 46.

³⁶ Ioan G. COMAN, *Frumusețile iubirii de oameni în spiritualitatea patristică / The Beauty of Loving One's Fellowmen in Patristic Spirituality*, Timișoara, The Banat Metropolis Publishing House, 1988, p. 282.

³⁷ Constantin GALERIU, *Jertfă și răscumpărare / Sacrifice and Redemption*, Bucharest, Harisma, 1991, p. 11.

³⁸ Henri CROUZEL, *Origen*, Sibiu, Deisis, 1999, p. 200.

³⁹ Michail GALENIANOS, "Valoarea martiriului în vremuri de persecuție conform Sf. Ioan Gură de Aur" / "The Value of Martyrdom During Persecution Times According to St. John Chrysostom", in *Eucharist and Martyrdom*, Alba-Iulia, Reîntregirea, 2014, p. 143-154, here p. 146.

killed every day, considered to be sheep for the slaughter. But, in all these, we are ever more victorious through the One Who loved us” (Romans 8, 35-37), that is through Jesus Christ.

Complete dedication is included – although it does not necessary imply martyrdom. Indeed, within martyrdom, there is total sacrifice, stating at the same time a profound consciousness of transcendence. The original meaning of the concept of martyrdom is that of an authentic witness⁴⁰ of truth, of testifying truth with one’s entire being under any circumstances and at any risk⁴¹.

“If being a martyr – Clement of Alexandria says – consists in acknowledging God, then any soul that lives in pure life and knowing God, obeying the commandments, is a martyr through life and word, because, when he parts with his body, he effuses, like blood, his faith upon his departure from here, the same way he effused it during his entire life⁴².”

Complete dedication in sacrifice and service does not mean self-dissolution and annulment of the individual, but, on the contrary, affirmation. Sacrifice gives the individual new content and glow; it transfigures him, enriching him⁴³; it makes the “face” evolve to “resembling” the Archetype, God. Renouncing the self does not mean forgetting the self, but the self, living in the other, in “you,” it is absolution from the useless concrete, the material, because of which we cannot follow Jesus.

Self-love, selfishness is a prison of the self, which makes man a guardian “guardian of nothingness” and a “being towards death.” There is no death in dedication out of love, as life extends from man to man, passed down from generation to generation⁴⁴. And, within the one to sacrifice himself for Christ, death works in life, as he completely offers himself to God, and He descends upon him, dwells within him, thus opening the gates to eternal life. It, therefore, confirms what (Apostle) Saint Paul said, that “I no longer live myself, but it is Christ who lives within me.” Suffering or experiencing pain because of faith as conviction, is part of the invitation to follow Christ: “Whoever wants to follow Me, renounce yourselves, pick up your cross and follow Me.” (Mc.8,34).

Martyrdom is the climax of ultimate fulfilment⁴⁵. The most authentic understanding of suffering within Christianity can be found in its relation to the Martyr⁴⁶. Martyrdom is the most eloquent expression of the state of suffering transfigured through faith and which is entailed not by means of human fight, but by the presence of the divine grace that takes hold of the soul and renders human life divine. Acknowledging Christ during those times meant taking on atrocious suffering: it meant not only losing your fortune, your social status, but also endangering your family’s future and being physically and morally subjected to

⁴⁰ Laurentius SOBCO, *Noul martiriu: un scurt moment de eroism sau un mod de viață / The New Martyrdom: A Short Instance of Heroism or a Lifestyle*, in “Eucharist and Martyrdom”, Alba-Iulia, Reîntregirea, 2014, p. 155-170, here p. 156.

⁴¹ C. GALERIU, *Jertfă și răscumpărare / Sacrifice and Redemption*, p. 33-34.

⁴² CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Stromata*, IV, 4, in J.P. Migne, PG., vol. 8, col. 685 – 1382, here col. 1227D: “Si autem Deo confiteri sit martyrrium, quaecunque anima pure cum agnitione Dei vitam instituit et praeceptis paruit, ea quidem vita et sermone est martyr, quomodocunque liberetur a corpore; fides scilicet, tanquam sanguinem, per totam vitam et etiam in exitu, profundes”.

⁴³ C. GALERIU, *Jertfă și răscumpărare / Sacrifice and Redemption*, p. 34.

⁴⁴ Elena SOLUNCA MOISE, *Cuviința Tainei / The Propriety of Sacrament*, 1996, p. 116.

⁴⁵ Nicolae MLADIN, *Asceza și Mistica paulină / Asceticism and St. Paul’s Mystique*, Sibiu, Deisis, 1996, p.163.

⁴⁶ Ilie MOLDOVAN, „Viața, suferința și moartea în condiția spirituală a existenței creștine” / “Life, Suffering and Death in the Spiritual State of Christian Existence”, in *Sensul vieții, al suferinței și al morții / The Meaning of Life, Suffering, and Death*, Alba-Iulia International Symposium, February 29 – March 2, 2008, Alba-Iulia, Reîntregirea Publishing House, 2008, p. 69-87, here p. 77.

unimaginable torture. A martyr's sacrifice sheds light, above all, on a profound faith in God, that is not only intellectual, rational acceptance of His existence and discovery, but a living faith, a personal adhesion which implies man's entire existence. Based on this faith, the martyr places all his hope in God and gladly and confidently leaves behind what he treasures the most⁴⁷.

'Martyrial Acts' describe, in this respect, tortures that man alone, without Christ's help, could not have endured. It is almost unbelievable how, old people, children, and women gladly preferred dying in those atrocious torments, rather than deny faith in Christ. This is the proof of the most genuine love for Christ. "It is very pleasurable (Saint Cyril of Alexandria says) to suffer in the name of Christ, and danger is sweet, when the reason behind it is love for God⁴⁸." We find the same information in the Martyrial Acts:

"We worship Christ because He is the Son of God, and we love martyrs for being worthy, as they are the disciples and imitators of God, for their unsurpassed love for their Lord and Teacher.' May we become part of this and disciples together⁴⁹."

Precisely because martyrial sacrifice is the proof of the highest form of love, it can become the noblest level of holiness. Following Christ up to the voluntary sacrifice of one's life, the martyr, more than any other person, becomes consecrated in the sense of holy and one with the Embodied Logos up to resembling Him⁵⁰ and worthy of Paradise happiness.

"So, casting out (persecuting) witnesses (martyrs) – Saint Gregory of Nyssa states – inflicted by tyrants is, for now, painful to the senses according to the face it showed, but the end of those experiencing it surpasses all happiness⁵¹." In the same respect, Saint Ambrose of Milan also stated: "He who, even upon his very death, acknowledges Our Lord Jesus, must be worthy of dwelling in heaven⁵²."

For three centuries, millions of saints, of martyrs may have been tortured, killed in indescribable torment, some of them remaining anonymous for us. Most of the times, the thought that Christ Himself was the one to suffer for them made them overcome the suffering of sudden or lingering death. Their faith was strong amidst the most terrible torment and suffering, considering that Christ was with them and He will suffer alongside them⁵³. *Christus in martyre est!* The belief that Christ Himself is the one to suffer is proof

⁴⁷ Sandro SPINSANTI, "Martire" / "Martyr," in STEFANO DE FIORES E TULLO GOFFI, *Nuovo Dizionario di Spiritualità / New Dictionary of Spirituality*, Turin, San Paulo Publishing House, 1985, p. 903-917, here p. 909.

⁴⁸ ST. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, *In Ioannis Evangelium, Liber X*, in JP. Migne, PG., vol. 74, col. 283-444, here col. 407C: "Suavissimum igitur est pati propter Christum, et dulce periculum, cum eius inferendi causa est erga Deum dilectio".

⁴⁹ ACTELE MARTIRICE / MARTYRICAL ACTS, *De martyrio Sancti Polycarpi*, in JP. Migne, PG., vol. 05, col. 1029-1046, here col. 1042D: "Illum enim, utpote Filium Dei adoramus; martyres vero tanquam Domini discipulos et imitatores merito diligimus, propter illorum eximiam erga regem ac magistrum suum benevolentiam; quorum utinam et nos siamus consortes ac condiscipuli".

⁵⁰ S. SPINSANTI, "Martire" / "Martyr," p. 909.

⁵¹ ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Beatitudinibus*, in JP. Migne, PG., vol. 44, col. 1194-1302, here Oratio VIII, col. 1294D-1295A: "Itaque persecutionis, qua martyres a tyranis agitandur, species quidem prout prima fronte apparet, sensui acerba esse videtur, sed id quo spectant ea quae sunt, omnem beatitudinem superat".

⁵² ST. AMBROSE OF MILAN, *Epistolae in duas classes distribuitae, Epistola LXXI / Epistle LXXI*, in JP. Migne, PL., vol. 16, col. 1241B-1243B, here col. 1243A: "Itaque is qui sub ictu mortis convertitur, et contitetur Dominum Iesum, mereatur incolatum paradisi".

⁵³ Ioan RĂMUREANU, *Introducere Generala / General Introduction*, in "Actele martirice"/ "Martyrial Acts", in Col. 'Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești' / 'Church Fathers and Writers', vol. 11, Bucharest, IBMBOR / BROCMCI, 1982, pp. 5-16, here p. 6.

that martyrial sacrifice is possible due to the man-God synergy⁵⁴. This is how we can explain superhuman courage and perseverance in enduring pain⁵⁵:

“While preaching God’s word to the people, preaching virtue, Peter inflamed the souls of the pagans, who began looking for him. But Christian souls asked him to withdraw from the public for a while. And, although he was willing to suffer, he yielded to the people’s pleas. For he was asked to wait for now, to be able to teach and empower the people. But why dwell on it any longer? At night, as he was trying to leave the city, he saw Christ coming into the city through the gates and he asked Him: My Lord, where are You going? Christ answered: To be crucified again. Peter understood that the divine answer entailed his own cross. For Christ could not be crucified again, as, in receiving death, He had parted with the suffering of the body. What died, died away from sin once and for all, and what lived, lives for God (Rom. 6, 10). Thus, Peter understood that Christ will have to be crucified again through His servant. Hence, he willingly turned back, answered Christians’ question on his way, and, being immediately arrested, honored Christ through crucifixion. So, you see, Christ wants to suffer through His servants⁵⁶.”

Saint Ignatius of Antioch, martyred in Rome in 107, wrote to the Romans:

“I write to the Churches, and impress on them all, that I shall willingly die for God, unless you hinder me. I beseech of you not to show an unseasonable good-will towards me. Allow me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God. I am the wheat of God, and let me be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ. [...] Oh, if I could experience the wild beasts that are in store for me, I pray I find them ready! I will even bait them, so that they might eat me presently, unlike others who, being fearful, were left untouched. And even if they do not want to, I will make them. Forgive me, I know what is useful for me. I now begin to be a disciple. I do not covet anything seen or unseen to reach Christ. The fire, the cross, the many wild beasts, being cut, torn apart, having my bones scattered [...] may the devil’s evil punishment come over me. The time of my birth is drawing near, I only need to reach Christ [...] I would rather die for Jesus Christ than rule up to the ends of the earth. [...] I am seeking for the One who died for us and came back to life. Forgive me, my brothers, do not prevent me from living within Christ by not wanting me to die. Do not give the one who wants to be God’s to the world and do not fool him with the material. Let me receive the pure light, once I get there, I will be a man. Allow me to be an imitator of Christ’s suffering⁵⁷.”

⁵⁴ I. MOLDOVAN, “Viața, suferința și moartea...” / “Life, Suffering and Death...”, p. 78.

⁵⁵ S. SPINSANTI, *Martire / Martyr*, p. 908.

⁵⁶ ST. AMBROSE OF MILAN, *Epistolae in duas classes distribuitae, Epistola XXI / Epistle XXI*, in JP. Migne, PL., vol. 16, col.1002CD-1018D, here col. 1010D-1011AB: “Idem Petrus postea cum praecepta Dei populo seminaret, doceret catimoniam, excitavit animos gentilium: quibus eum quaerentibus, christianae animae deprecatae sunt, ut paulisper cederet. Et quamvis esset cupidus passionis, tamen contemplatione populi precantis inflexus est; rogabatur enim ut ad instituendum et confirmandum populum se reservaret. Quid multa? Nocte muros egredi coepit, et videns sibi in porta Christum occurrere, urbemque ingredi, ait: Domine: quo vadis? Respondit Christus: Venio interum crucifigi. Intellexit Petrus ad suam crucem divinum pertinere responsum; Christus enim non poterat interum crucifigi, qui carnem passione susceptae mortis exuerat: «Quod enim mortuus est, peccato mortuus est semel: quod autem vivit, vivit Deo (Rm. VI, 10). » Intellexit ergo Petrus quod iterum Christus crucifigendus esset in servulo. Itaque sponte remeavit, interrogantibus Christianis responsum reddidit, statimque correptus, per crucem suam honorificavit Dominum Iesum. Videtis igitur quod in servulis suis pati velit Christus”.

⁵⁷ ST. IGANTIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Ad Romanos*, in JP. Migne, PG., vol. 5, col.802-818, here 807B; 810B; 811A; 814A: “Ego omnibus Ecclesiis scribo, et mando omnibus, quod voluntarius pro Deo moror, si modo non prohibueritis. Obsecro vos ne intempestiva benevolentia erga me sitis. Sinite me ferarum escam fieri, per quas licet deum adipisci. Frumentum sum Dei, dentibus bestiarum molor, ut mundus panis Dei inveniar. [...] Utinam fruar bestiis mihi pratis: quas et opto veloces mihi inveniri; quas et blanditiis demulcebo, ut citius me devorent; non ut quosdam veritae non attigerunt. Sed et ipsae volentem nolint, ego vi adigam. Ignoscite mihi: quid mihi utile sit ego novi; nunc incipio discipulus esse; nihil expetam visibilium et invisibilium, ut Iesum Christum

This joy and strength in dying for Christ, who suffered and was victorious for us, is common and characteristic to all Christian martyrs. It is not defiance to state authority, but rather a powerful statement of Christian identity. Before being citizens of a socio-political and administrative organization, such as the empire during the primary Church, Christians are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. Christ is the true King and Lord of Christians⁵⁸.

“For us – Tertullian says – it is a real war when we are brought before judges, because there we must fight for truth, at the risk of dying. But victory lies in achieving the goal you have been fighting for. This victory entails the glory of being to God’s liking and gaining eternal life. But we are crushed! This is true, but after having won. Thus, when we die, we are victorious, when we are crushed, we consider ourselves absolved. Now, you can call us many names, for we are tied at the half of an axis and burnt with brushwood laid around us. This is the coat of our victory, this is the medal on our chest, this is the chariot where we celebrate our triumph⁵⁹.”

The Church does not urge its followers to seek for suffering and death⁶⁰, but, when faced with them, the martyrs endured them heroically, as a sacrifice in Christ’s name. The martyrs are the expression of the fact that the Church is always in a state of sacrifice. The martyrs imitate not only Christ’s suffering, but also His virtues. Christ’s love and their love were one. They forgive their persecutors and pray for their absolution. Archdeacon Stephen, the first martyr to die under blows, says: “Lord, forgive them for this sin,” thus sublimely following Christ crucified on the Cross. Furthermore, from the very first centuries of the Church, the martyr has been compared with the virtue of virgins’ chastity, considering that the virtue of virgins’ chastity implies bloodless martyrdom⁶¹.

Martyrdom also has the power of a Sacrament: it is the Baptism of the one who has not been baptized with water, but which brings him salvation⁶². From the very first days of Christianity, it was commonly acknowledged and believed that those who were about to be baptized, the catechumen, but who suffered martyrdom before being baptized with water, were acknowledged as being effectively baptized, due to the spilling of their own blood while acknowledging Christ⁶³. Saint Gregory of Nazianzus confirms the validity and

assequar. Ignis, crux, ferarum concursus, sectiones, lanienae, assium disceptationes [...] et diaboli tormenta in me veniant, tantummodo ut Iesum nanciscar. [...]. Melius est mihi emori propter Iesum Christum, quam imperare finibus terrae. [...]. Dominum desidero, illum quaero, qui pro nobis mortuus est et resurrexit. Ignoscite mihi, fratres; ne mihi impedimento sitis, quominus ad vitam perveniam. Iesus enim est vita fidelium. Ne me velitis mori: mors namque est, vita sine Christo. Cumque cupiam Dei esse, ne me mundo condonetis. Sinite me purum lumen haurire. Cum illic fuero, homo Dei ero. Permittite mihi, ut aemulator sim passionis Christi Dei mei”.

⁵⁸ Adrian LEMENI (coord), *Apologetica Ortodoxă / Orthodox Apologetics*, vol. I, Bucharest, Basilica, 2013, p. 131.

⁵⁹ TERTULLIAN, *Apologeticus adversos Gentes Pro Christianis*, in JP. Migne, PL., vol. 01, col. 305-604, here col. 598B- 599A: “Praelium est nobis quod provocamur ad tribunalia, ut illic sub discrimine capitis pro veritate certemus. Victoria est autem pro quo certaveris, obtinere. Ea victoria habet, et gloriam placendi Deo, et praedam vivendi in aeternum. Sed obducimur, certe cum obtinuimus: ergo vicimus, cum occidimur: denique evadimus, cum obducimur; licet nunc sarmeticos et semaxios appelletis, quia ad stipitem dimidii axis revincti sarmetorum ambitu exurimur. Hic est habitus victoriae nostrae; haec palmata vestis, tali curru triumphamus”.

⁶⁰ Valer BEL, “Sensul creștin al martiriului” / “The Christian Meaning of Martyrdom”, in *S t u d i a Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai. Theologia Orthodoxa*, no. 1(2012) p. 109-112, Cluj, 2012, here p. 112.

⁶¹ S. SPINSANTI, “Martire” / “Martyr,” p. 910.

⁶² Teodor M. POPESCU, “Moartea și învierea Mântuitorului în credința vechilor creștini” / “Christ’s Death and Resurrection in the Faith of Old Christians”, in *Orthodoxia*, VII, no. 2, (1955), p. 163-181, here p.173.

⁶³ S. SPINSANTI, “Martire” / “Martyr,” p. 909.

the existence of this baptism of martyrs who, until the moment of their martyrdom, have not been baptized with water:

“I also know of the fourth Baptism, the one through martyrdom and blood, in which Christ was baptized, and which is more valuable than others, as it is not tainted by later sins⁶⁴.”
“According to Gospel laws – Origen also confirms it – we cannot be baptized twice: with water and spirit for our sins to be forgiven, but, instead, we are allowed the baptism of martyrdom. For this is how it is called, as it can clearly be seen in the fact that to the word ‘you may drink the glass that I shall drink’ the following is added ‘or be baptized in the same baptism that I am baptized.’ And there is another mention that says: ‘I shall be baptized in one baptism and I cannot wait for it to be fulfilled!’⁶⁵. “Being baptized in our blood and absolved of any wrong-doing, let’s spend our time next to the altar in heaven, together with the ones that fought beside us⁶⁶.”

CONCLUSION

All these considered, we can easily understand why, from the very beginning, the Church naturally acknowledged the worthy values of martyrdom and its effects in rendering life holy. From the same perspective, the Holy Fathers⁶⁷ urge us to consider the suffering undergone by the martyr as no more and no less than stages of Christ’s fight against the powers of evil and to look up to these battles that Christ is fighting within His believers. Through this, we can acknowledge God’s presence at work within man, not just as a presence invoked for eternity, but as one at work during history with eschatological opening⁶⁸.

“As, with Christ’s help, the saints’ patience rendered all these tyrannical punishment methods pointless, the devil plotted other imaginings: imprisonments in dark and horrible places, putting feet inside logs, and tightening them up to the fifth hole, as well as other types of torture, that angry and devil-like servants used to inflict on the arrested. Thus, many died asphyxiated in the dungeon, namely all those whom God chose to end their days so that His glory be praised⁶⁹.”

This is why Christian martyrdom is, at the same time, an eschatological sign as well, which distinguishes it from other forms of martyrdom, by the fact that it states life’s fullness by anticipating, in history, the reality of the eternal kingdom of Heaven. In the Holy

⁶⁴ ST. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio XXXIX*, In *Sancta Lumina*, in JP. Migne, PG., vol. 36, col. 335-360, here col. 355A: “Quartum etiam baptismi genus novi, nempe quod martyrio et sanguine comparatur, quo ipse quoque Christus baptizatus est, et quidem eo caeteris augustius, quod nullis postea sordibus contaminatur”.

⁶⁵ ORIGEN, *Exortatio ad Martyrium*, in JP. Migne, PG., vol. 11, col. 563 –650, here col. 599C-602A: “Nos autem juxta evangelicas leges iterum non posse baptizari aqua et Spiritu in remissionem peccatorum, sed datum nobis esse martyrii baptismum; sic enim vocatur, ut ex eo patet quod his verbis: «Potestis bibere calicem quem ego bibo?» subiungitur: «Aut baptismo quo ego baptizor, baptizari?» Alibi etiam dictum est: «Baptismo habeo baptizari et quomodo coarctor usque dum perficiatur»

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, col. 615B: “Ideo servati ut proprio sanguine abluti et omni peccato mundati apud coeleste altare cum iis qui similiter certaverint, conversemur”.

⁶⁷ ST. AUGUSTINE, *Sermones de Sanctis, Sermo 313*, in JP. Migne, PL. vol. 38, col. 1247 – 1484, here col. 1423.

⁶⁸ A. LEMENI, *Apologetica Ortodoxă / Orthodox Apologetics*, I, p. 126.

⁶⁹ EUSEBIU de Cezarea, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in JP. Migne, PG., vol. 20, col. 09- 904, here Liber V, col. 419B: “Porro cum universa tyrannorum tormenta per martyrum constantiam a Christo essent retusa, alias machinas diabolus excogitavit, ut scilicet in obscurissimum ac molestissimum carceris locum coiicerentur, utque pedes in nervo ad quintum usque foramen distensos haberent, ac reliqua huiusmodi cruciatuum generas perferrent, quibus ministri, utpote infensi et a daemone incitati, vexare inclusos consueverunt. Adeo ut ex eorum numero quamplurimi in carcere suffocati interierunt, quos scilicet Deus, qui suam in omnibus gloriam ostendit, hoc mortis genere defungi loluerant”.

Fathers' view, the persona of Christ the Savior is a living reality in the life of the believer, manifested in the continuous and fulfilling action of the Holy Spirit. Only at the extent to which this reality is lived as such by the believer as early as his life here, only at this extent is it possible to gain the Kingdom of Heaven and union with God⁷⁰.

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Messages of the Three Holy Hierarchs – Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom for the contemporary world

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ABSTRACT

The Three Holy Hierarchs Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom, whom the Church honors particularly and under whose protection the large family of Christian theological education, and not just it, has placed itself, year after year, entered the conscience of the Orthodoxy as “equal in habits to the Apostles” and “teachers” or educators “of the world”. Their contribution to the growth of the Church teaching consists in the fact that they formulated a theological word representing, truly, a radical change in the core habits of the man of their time. They did not ignore the human wisdom of various times and, especially, the Greek thinking of the Antiquity, but went beyond this wisdom, reviewing human life based on the evangelical principles. Thus, they highlight that one cannot talk about a Hellenization of the Christian faith or about a Christianization of Hellenism, but about the fact that the Christian faith is founded on the holy-spiritual experience of the grace-based work of the Holy Trinity and is expressed by dogmas and concrete ascetic and liturgical forms, creating a manner of living totally new for the world of those times, a unique experience of the relation of man with the God revealed in the Old and The New Testament, a unique expression of the relation of man with God, with the visible and invisible world, with the society he lives in and with himself. From the Three Holy Hierarchs’ teachings and living one can understand many messages for the contemporary world, such as: “the importance of the ecumenicity of the «Gospel»”; “the unity between contemplation and practice” or, in patristic language, “between the vision of God and action”; “the need for education and the benefit of the permanent spiritual cultivation of man”; “the dynamic, not static, character of the Holy Tradition”; “the service and social mission of the Church”; “the holy-spiritual life stages and the fact of theologizing in the Church”; “the role of repentance in the holy-spiritual life”; “the Holy Mysteries of the Church and their grace-filled work”; “the relation between the Greek philosophy of the Antiquity and the Christian teaching: combination (σύνκραση), synthesis (σύνθεση) or opposition (ἀντίθεση)?”; “the Church and the world” etc. In the celebratory word, which finally took the shape of a study, I have limited myself, on the one hand, only to the brief presentation, with the help of the Lord and of the Three Holy Hierarchs’ intercession to Him, of the first three messages, leaving the rest for other opportunities, and, on the other hand, I have added other little known aspects of the lives of these Holy Hierarchs or in connection with them, all being relevant for the contemporary world.

Keywords: Saint Basil the Great; Saint Gregory of Nazianzus or the Theologian; Saint John Chrysostom; ecumenicity of the *Gospel*; contemplation, practice, education, spiritual cultivation, holy-spiritual life; academic theology; empirical theology.

I. INTRODUCTION

The day of today, 30 January 2018, when we honor the Three Holy Hierarchs Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian or the Theologizer and John Chrysostom, represents, for the Faculty of Theology and the theological higher education of Romania, an opportunity of great celebration, because these three Holy Hierarchs are considered the spiritual protectors of this education, not just in Romania, but in the entire Orthodox Christian world, beginning, for the modern times, with the year 1936, by the decision made in Athens, on the occasion of *The First Congress of the Orthodox Theology Professors* (29 November - 6 December), the main motivation being that the Three Holy Hierarchs represent, for the Orthodox Christian conscience, the model of the missionary hierarchs, knowers of the profane culture and sciences, but, especially, authentic lovers of the unaltered Orthodox Christian faith. This decision was only confirming a practice already met, in one form or another, in the Orthodox Christian world, if we consider, for instance, in the case of the Romanians of the first half of the 17th century, the fact that in the cells of the Monastery of *The Three Holy Hierarchs* of Iași (Jassy) was hosted one of the first institutions with higher education elements of the Moldova of that time, a College (1640), which then became, in another location, *Princely Academy* (1707-1821)⁷¹. It is not impossible for the *Princely Academy* of Bucharest [1675(?)⁷²-1821]⁷³ to have had connections with the celebration of the Three Holy Hierarchs, as the tradition formed in Bucharest and Iași is found, after a certain interruption, at the historic Faculties of Theology of Sibiu, Arad, Bucharest, Oradea, Cluj Napoca or Chișinău, operating in that year 1936, and in the next period⁷⁴.

Actually, in the Greek Orthodox world, under Ottoman dominion or under the dominion of the different Great European Powers⁷⁵, we meet the relation between the celebration of the Three Hierarch Saints and the schools of the Orthodox Christians even since the beginning of the 19th century, not just on the level of the elementary schools but also on the higher education level, as in the case of the Ionic Academy of Corfu or Kerkira Island (1826)⁷⁶, this connection being legalized, after the creation of the Modern Greek State (1821-1830), at the Faculty of Theology of Athens (1843-1844)⁷⁷, from where it also passed on to the Great School of the Nation of Constantinople

* For a first version of this study in Romanian, with the same title, see *Almanah bisericesc. Teologie, cultură, istorie, misiune creștină, 2019*, Editura Arhiepiscopiei Târgoviștei, Târgoviște, 2018, pp. 201-225. Concerning the last Romanian version of this study of mine, see “Mesaje ale Sfinților Trei Ierarhi Vasile cel Mare, Grigorie Teologul și Ioan Gură de Aur pentru lumea contemporană”, in *Revista Românească de Studii Axiologice* 1/2 (2020), pp. 25-46.

⁷¹ Ariadna Camariano-Cioran, *Les Académies princières de Bucarest et de Jassy et leurs professeurs*, Institute for Balkan Studies 142, Thessaloniki, 1974, pp. 84-121 (= Camariano-Cioran, *Les Académies princières*); Ion I. Croitoru, *Ortodoxia și Apusul în tradiția spirituală a românilor. Unitatea Ortodoxiei și apărarea credinței ortodoxe în fața propagandei protestante din secolul al XVII-lea*, vol. I, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, Târgoviște, 2012, pp. 291-293 (= Croitoru, *Ortodoxia și Apusul*, I). It is worth mentioning that *the first form of higher education* in Moldova is considered *the Princely Academy* created by the ruler Alexander the Good in Suceava, after the year 1400 (Croitoru, *Ortodoxia și Apusul*, I, p. 291, note 439).

⁷² On the date when this *Academy* was set up, see Croitoru, *Ortodoxia și Apusul*, I, p. 298, note 501; Camariano-Cioran, *Les Académies princières*, pp. 22-37.

⁷³ Camariano-Cioran, *Les Académies princières*, pp. 20-84; Croitoru, *Ortodoxia și Apusul*, I, pp. 298-300.

⁷⁴ Most of these Faculties were closed in the year 1948, only two of them remaining in operation, but with the title of Institute (Bucharest and Sibiu), during the communist regime. After the fall of the respective regime (December 1989), these historical Faculties were created again, along with other new ones, so that at present, they include 11 Faculties, 3 Departments and a Chair in Romania, see <http://patriarhia.ro/lista-unitatilor-de-invatomant-teologic-universitar-541.html> (10.09.2018).

⁷⁵ For instance, Corfu or Kerkira Island, to which I am going to refer to the continuation of this study, was under English dominion during the period between 1815 and 1864, and then incorporated in Greece, together with other islands [<https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Κέρκυρα> (10.09.2018)].

⁷⁶ Έφη Γαζή, *Ο δεύτερος βίος των Τριών Ιεραρχών. Μια γενεαλογία του «ελληνοχριστιανικού πολιτισμού»*, Εκδόσεις ΝΕΦΕΛΗ, Αθήνα, 2004², pp. 106-116 (= Γαζή, *Ο δεύτερος βίος*).

⁷⁷ Γαζή, *Ο δεύτερος βίος*, pp. 34, 86.

(1865)⁷⁸, after having been adopted first by the University of Athens (1841)⁷⁹. Therefore, the Three Holy Hierarchs have been acknowledged in Greece not just as patrons of the theological education, but also as patrons of education in general (1841, 1911)⁸⁰, being stated that *since always, according to an unwritten law, which has existed for centuries, the day of their celebration is considered a celebration of education and of the letters*⁸¹. Thus, the day of 30 January has come to be marked by many manifestations, like the participation of the pupils and students in the *Divine Liturgy* and their partaking of the Holy Communion, after due preparation, the uttering of discourses and sermons for spiritual meditation or scientific communications, the listening to the messages transmitted, on the one hand, by the local Orthodox Church primate and the Holy Synod of the respective Church, and, on the other hand, by the Ministry of this domain etc.

Now it is time for this feast to be celebrated also in the academic center of Târgoviște, with Your Eminence's blessing, and I wish to thank you for this blessing and, at the same time, for entrusting me with pronouncing a celebratory discourse, conceived, however, under the form of a study, by which I will try to bring to the attention of those present here⁸² several aspects from the teachings of these great hierarchs and teachers of the Orthodoxy from everywhere and of Christianity in general.

From sources founded on the iconographic art, it results that the Three Holy Hierarchs were consecrated as a triad, in other words, co-honored, some time before the 11th century⁸³. Yet, during this century, new disputes emerge among *educated and virtuous men*⁸⁴ concerning the primacy merited by one of the three Saints, given their teachings and their feats. The dispute had even reached the point that the followers of one of these saints were called Basilian or Gregorian or Johannian, but the Christian world that had remained faithful to the revealed and embodied Truth, namely the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son and the world's Savior, benefits of His intervention, because, during the time of the emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118), according to the tradition written down in the

⁷⁸ Γαζή, *Ο δεύτερος βίος*, p. 116.

⁷⁹ Γαζή, *Ο δεύτερος βίος*, p. 86.

⁸⁰ The decision was made by the University Senate in 1841, and the first celebration took place on 30 January 1842. In 1911, the University, already called National, establishes, in its new Regulations of Organization, its official feasts, on: 25 March, the Annunciation (national feast date of Greece since 1835), and 30 January, the Three Hierarch Saints (Γαζή, *Ο δεύτερος βίος*, pp. 86-88, 104-note 111). It ought to be mentioned that the National University, which in the meantime became Kapodistrian and National University (1932), has two flags: the image of the goddess Athena (1887) and the icon of the Three Holy Hierarchs (1955), see Γαζή, *Ο δεύτερος βίος*, pp. 48-49. However, on the header of the official documents is printed only the profile of the goddess Athena.

⁸¹ See Γαζή, *Ο δεύτερος βίος*, pp. 56-62.

⁸² The event took place on Tuesday, 30 January 2018, in the Red Hall, Building K of Valahia University of Târgoviște, after the celebration of the *Divine Liturgy* in the Metropolitan Cathedral of the same locality. Celebrant priests were the Fathers Professors of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology and Education Sciences, in the presence of His Eminence Father Nifon, Archbishop and Metropolitan of Târgoviște, of Father Vicar Ionuț Adrian Ghibanu and of some Counsellor Fathers from the Eparchial Centre. The students of the respective Faculty gave the answers from the aisle, and the sermon was pronounced by Father Assoc. Prof. PhD Petre Comșa.

⁸³ Π. Γεωργίου Δ. Μεταλληνού, “Η έορτή τών Τριών Ίεραρχών και ή «σύνθεση» Όρθοδοξίας και Έλληνικότητας”, in idem, *Στά μονοπάτια της Ρωμηοσύνης. Σταθμοί στην ιστορική διαδρομή του όρθοδόξου Έλληνισμού*, Εκδόσεις Άρμός, Άθήνα, 2008, pp. 289-290 (= Μεταλληνού, *Η έορτή τών Τριών Ίεραρχών*); Άποστόλου Δ. Καρποζήλου, *Συμβολή στη μελέτη του βίου και του έργου του Ίωάννη Μαυρόποδος*, Ίωάννινα, 1982², p. 165. According to other researchers, the iconographic representation of the Three Holy Hierarchs honoured on 30 January will be consecrated permanently in the Byzantine art towards the end of the 11th century, see Γαζή, *Ο δεύτερος βίος*, pp. 184-185.

⁸⁴ *Historia Institutionis ex Menaeis impressis, interprete Nicolao Rayaeo societatis Jesu*, in *Patrologia Graeca* (= PG) 29, CCCXC D (390 D) (= *Historia Institutionis*); Μεταλληνού, *Η έορτή τών Τριών Ίεραρχών*, p. 290, note 13.

*Synaxaria*⁸⁵, Metropolitan John of Euchaita or John Mavropous, considered the last great Byzantine hymnographer⁸⁶ and honored as Saint of the Orthodox Church on 5 October, is revealed, in a *vision*, that the three Holy Hierarchs should be honored together. Therefore, Saint John of Euchaita consecrated the celebration of the Three Holy Hierarchs on the date of 30 January⁸⁷, he being also the main author of the *Services* and of the *Synaxarion* kept to this day in the *Menaion*⁸⁸, in which, among others, is shown: *There is no second among these three; as each carries his eternity, neither seeming the first and defeating the other in honour, but sharing with great joy each other's victory. Because there is no room among them for the impudence of envy, which ruins good understanding*⁸⁹.

⁸⁵ According to some scholars, the event would have taken place during the reign of the Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-1055), see Γεωργ. Δ. Μεταλληνός, “Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχαι”, in *Θρησκευτική καὶ Ἡθική Ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια* 11^{ος} τόμος, Ἀθήναι, 1967, col. 841 (= Μεταλληνός, *Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχαι*); Γ. Τσαμπής, *Ἡ παιδεία στο χριστιανικό Βυζάντιο*, Εκδόσεις Γρηγόρη, Ἀθήνα, 1999, p. 82. It should be mentioned that Father Georgios Metallinos, mentioned in the first bibliographic reference from this note, finally admits the tradition written down in the *Synaxarion*, see Μεταλλινοῦ, *Ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν*, p. 293. On the topic of the date of the respective event, see also Γαζή, *Ὁ δεῦτερος βίος*, pp. 139-note 1, 183-184.

⁸⁶ Καρυοφύλλης Μητσάκης, “Οἱ Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες στὴ Βυζαντινὴ Ὑμνογραφία”, in idem, *Το ἔμψυχον Ὑδωρ (Μελέτες μεσαιωνικῆς καὶ νεοελληνικῆς φιλολογίας)*, Ἀθήνα, 1983², p. 178.

⁸⁷ The choice of this date is explained by the fact that in January were honoured the three Holy Fathers, Saint Basil the Great on 1 January, Saint Gregory the Theologian on 25 January and Saint John Chrysostom on 27 January, so that Saint John of Euchaita brought them all together on the day of 30 of the same month, see *Historia Institutionis*, in PG 29, CCCXCI CD (391 CD); Ἁγίου Νικοδήμου τοῦ Ἀγιορείτου, *Συναξαριστὴς τῶν δώδεκα μηνῶν*, τόμος Γ΄, Ἰανουάριος – Φεβρουάριος, Θεσσαλονίκη, 1998⁴, p. 188 (= Ἁγίου Νικοδήμου τοῦ Ἀγιορείτου, *Συναξαριστὴς. Ἰανουάριος – Φεβρουάριος*); *Ὁ Μέγας Συναξαριστὴς τῆς Ὁρθόδοξου Ἐκκλησίας, Τόμος Α΄, Μὴν Ἰανουάριος*, Ἀθήνα, 2003⁸, p. 731 (= *Ὁ Μέγας Συναξαριστὴς. Ἰανουάριος*); *Sinaxar at Slujba Sfinților Trei Ierarhi, Utrenia (= Sinaxarul Slujbei Sfinților Trei Ierarhi)*, in *Mineiul pe Ianuarie*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă, București, 2010, p. 513 [= *Mineiul pe Ianuarie* (2010)] (*Synaxarion at the Service of the Three Holy Hierarchs, Matins, in Menaion for January*).

⁸⁸ Yet enriched, in the course of time, also with the hymnological creations of other authors, see Nicolai Rayaei, *Tractatus praeliminaris de acoluthia officii canonici pro Ecclesiis orientalibus Graecorum in solemni commemoratione trium doctorum Basilii, Nazianzeni et Chrysostomi*, in PG 29, CCCXVI CD - CCCXXV D (316 CD-325 D); *Acoluthia triplicis festi ex Typico, Menaeis, aliisque Ritualibus Graecis impressis, interprete Nicolao Rayaeo societatis Jesu*, in PG 29; CCCXXVI A - CCCXCIII C (326 A - 393 C); P. E. Lamerand, “La fête des trois Hiérarques dans l’Église Grecque”, in *Bessarione* 4 (1898-1899), pp. 164-176; E. Braniște, “Sfinții Trei Ierarhi în cultul creștin”, in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română 1-2* (1958), pp. 171-193; C. G. Bonis, “Worship and dogma: John Mavropous, Metropolitan of Euchaita (11th century); his Canon on the three hierarchs, and its dogmatic significance”, in *Polychordia. Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75 Geburtstag*, Amsterdam: A.M. Hakkert, 1967-1971, vol. 1, 1967, pp. 1-23; Κωνσταντῖνος Μπόνης, *Ὁρθόδοξος λατρεία καὶ δόγμα. Ἰωάννου, Μητροπολίτου Εὐχαΐτων τοῦ Μαυρόποδος (11^{ος} αἰ.)*, ὁ Κανὼν εἰς τοὺς Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες καὶ ἡ δογματικὴ αὐτοῦ σημασία, Ἀθήναι, 1967; Μεταλληνός, *Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχαι*, col. 841-842; A. Kazhdan, “Mavropous, John” in A. Kazhdan (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 1991, p. 1319; Daniel Stiernon, “Jean Mavropous”, in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique*, tome VIII, Beauchesne, Paris, 1974, col. 624-626; Παν. Ἰ. Μπρατσιώτου, *Ἡ διὰ μέσου τῶν αἰῶνων ἐπιβίωσις τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν*, Ἀθήναι, 1972²; Ἀποστόλου Δ. Καρποζήλου, *Συμβολὴ στὴ μελέτη τοῦ βίου καὶ τοῦ ἔργου τοῦ Ἰωάννη Μαυρόποδος*, Ἰωάννινα, 1982²; Καρυοφύλλης Μητσάκης, “Οἱ Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες στὴ Βυζαντινὴ Ὑμνογραφία”, in idem, *Το ἔμψυχον Ὑδωρ (Μελέτες μεσαιωνικῆς καὶ νεοελληνικῆς φιλολογίας)*, Ἀθήνα, 1983², pp. 167-191 (Ἀθήνα, 2000³, pp. 165-189; Θεσσαλονίκη, 1973¹, pp. 7-30); Ν. Λινάρδου, *Οἱ Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχαι ὑπὸ Βυζαντινῶν ἐγκωμαζόμενοι*, Ἀθήνα, 2005; Μεταλλινοῦ, *Ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν*, pp. 292-293.

⁸⁹ *Troparul al II-lea, glasul al 8-lea, of Cântarea a IX-a in Canonul al II-lea al Sfinților Trei Ierarhi, Utrenia*, in *Mineiul pe Ianuarie* (2010), p. 520. For another English translation, see: *There is no repetition in these three, for each of them beareth the seniority: none is first, but there is a surpassing equality of honor; and they all-joyously credit the victory to each other, for the audacity of jealousy, which corrupteth oneness of mind, hath no place in them (Troparion II, tone VIII, of Ode IX, in Canon II of the Hierarchs, at the Service of the Three Holy Hierarchs, Matins, in Menaion for January)*.

The lives of the Three Holy Hierarchs are recalled on their celebration days from the church calendar: Saint Basil the Great (330-379⁹⁰) on 1 January; Saint Gregory the Theologian (329-390⁹¹) on 25 January; and Saint John Chrysostom (344/354-407⁹²) on 13 November (departed to the Lord on 14 September, but because the Feast of the Cross is celebrated on this date, his celebration was moved on the respective date) and 27 January (bringing of his holy relics in the *Holy Apostles'* Church of Constantinople, under the Emperor Theodosius II, son of the Emperors Arcadius and Eudoxia). They lived approximately during the same period, namely in the 4th century and at the beginning of the 5th and *brought to the Orthodoxy the guarantee and brilliance of the holiness of highly educated men, as they knew both the depths of God's teaching from the "Holy Scriptures", inherited from the Holy Apostles, and all the science and philosophy of their time*⁹³, standing out, at the same time, as *defenders par excellence of the Holy Trinity dogma*⁹⁴. Actually, the choosing of these three Holy Hierarchs and not of others is attributed to the accuracy of their teaching on the Holy Trinity, to which one can add the role they had in the crystallization of the dogmas of the Church, faced with great heresies in the course of time, but also the frontiers established by them in the Greek thinking of the Antiquity and the Christian faith⁹⁵, and their number of three, neither more, nor less, is due to the Divinity in three Hypostases or Persons⁹⁶, so that they are perceived as being *defenders of the Trinity, guardians of the right faith, the three apostles after the twelve*⁹⁷, *the earthly trinity*⁹⁸ or *the three most brilliant lights of the Divinity thrice more brilliant than the sun*⁹⁹. Ecclesiastically, this perception and consecration of their co-celebration were coming in the context of the Schism of 1054, concluding a long period of mutual mistrust between Rome and Constantinople on matters of dogmatic accuracy¹⁰⁰, but also of the measures that the Emperor Alexios I Komnenos took for the unity of faith of the Empire, including among them the

⁹⁰ Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia between 370-379. His parents were called Basil and Emilia, daughter of Holy Martyrs. They formed a Christian family, having 10 children, of which three became bishops: Saint Basil in Caesarea of Cappadocia, Saint Gregory in Nyssa and Saint Peter in Sebaste. Due to their holy and spiritual life, Saint Basil the Great's grand-mother, Macrina, his parents, his two bishop brothers and a sister (Macrina) came to be honoured as Saints of the Church.

⁹¹ Bishop of Sasima, between 379-380, then patriarch of Constantinople, elected in 380. He remains here until June 381, when he departs to Nazianzus, where he will stay until 383, then he withdraws to his estate of Arianus and departs to the Lord in 390. His parents were Gregory and Nona. Being a convinced Christian woman, Nona also draws to the Christian faith her husband Gregory, who also becomes Bishop of Nazianzus.

⁹² His parents were Secundus and Antusa, widowed at 20. Between 381 and 386, he was a deacon in Antioch, where he will get to be a priest, during the period 386-398, then becomes patriarch of Constantinople, between 398 and 407.

⁹³ "Pomenirea Sfinților Trei Ierarhi și mari dascăli a toată lumea", in *Proloagele*, vol. I (septembrie-februarie), Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe, București, 2011 (= *Proloagele*, I), p. 834.

⁹⁴ Μεταλληνός, *Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχαι*, col. 841; Γαζή, *Ο δεύτερος βίος*, p. 142. *Because these three Most Holy beacons and teachers have taught us to confess the Holy Trinity and have supported the accurate dogmas by most wise teachings, by persecutions, by dangers and by fights till death and after death (Ὁ Μέγας Συναξαριστής. Ἰανουάριος, p. 734).*

⁹⁵ Γαζή, *Ο δεύτερος βίος*, pp. 51, 140-143, 146, 148, 186-187, 189-191.

⁹⁶ Γαζή, *Ο δεύτερος βίος*, pp. 140-141.

⁹⁷ *Stihira a II-a, glasul al 4-lea*, from *Doamne strigat-am*, in *Slujba Sfinților Trei Ierarhi, Vecernia Mare*, in *Mineiul pe Ianuarie* (2010), p. 497 (*Sticheron II, tone IV, from Lord, I have cried, at the Service of the Three Holy Hierarchs, Great Vespers, in Menaion for January*).

⁹⁸ *Stihira idiomelă I, glasul al 2-lea*, at *Slujba Sfinților Trei Ierarhi, Litia*, in *Mineiul pe Ianuarie* (2010), p. 499 (*Sticheron I, tone II, at the Service of the Three Holy Hierarchs, Litia, in Menaion for January*).

⁹⁹ *Tropar, glasul I*, at *Slujba Sfinților Trei Ierarhi, Binecuvântarea pâinilor de la Litie*, in *Mineiul pe Ianuarie* (Menaion of January) (2010), p. 502 (*Troparion, tone I, at the Service of the Three Holy Hierarchs, The Blessing of the loaves from Litia, in Menaion for January*).

¹⁰⁰ Γαζή, *Ο δεύτερος βίος*, pp. 146, 182-183, 186.

reinforcement of the Church control over education during a period of intense confrontations referring as well to matters of meaning of the Greek philosophy of the Antiquity¹⁰¹.

However, I do not wish to draw your attention on the Three Holy Hierarchs' teachings about the Holy Trinity or on the situation of the Byzantine Empire in the 11th century and on the social-political and ecclesial policy of the Emperor Alexios I Komnenos, whom his daughter, Ana, considered, for his attachment to the one Church, as the thirteenth apostle¹⁰², nor on the biographic data of these Holy Fathers, although two of them had relations with the Christian world north of the Danube, in other words, with our ancestors, if we consider the episode when the Saint Basil the Great asked for the Holy Relics of Saint Sabbas the Goth of Buzău or the one when Saint John Chrysostom sent missionaries to the Scythes and Goths of the Black Sea and Danube, and the latter's relation with the Saints John Cassian and German. Maybe I will do these studies on another occasion, while for the event of this year I have set myself the aim to put to your heart a few messages of the Three Holy Hierarchs for the contemporary world. It should be mentioned that their messages are many, such as *the importance of the ecumenicity of the Gospel; the unity between contemplation and practice* or, in patristic language, *between vision of God and action; the need for education and the benefit of the permanent spiritual cultivation of man; the dynamic, not static character, of the Holy Tradition; the service and social mission of the Church; the holy-spiritual life stages and the fact of theologising in the Church; the role of repentance in the holy-spiritual life; the Holy Mysteries of the Church and their grace-filled work; the relation between the Greek philosophy of the Antiquity and the Christian teaching: combination (σύνγκραση), synthesis (σύνθεση) or opposition (ἀντίθεση)? the Church and the world* etc. Seeing, however, the time reserved for this celebratory presentation, I will content myself only with the brief presentation, with the help of the Lord and of the Three Holy Hierarchs' intercessory prayers, of the first three messages, leaving the rest for other occasions.

II. MESSAGES OF THE THREE HOLY HIERARCHS FOR THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

The Three Holy Hierarchs, whom the Church celebrates particularly and under whose protection the large family of the Christian theological education has placed itself, every year, entered the conscience of the Orthodoxy as *equal in habit to the Apostles and teachers* or educators of the world¹⁰³. Their contribution to the growth of the Church teaching consists in the fact that they formulate a theological word bringing, in fact, a radical change in the fundamental habits of the man of their time. They do not ignore the human wisdom of various times and, mainly, the Greek thinking of the Antiquity¹⁰⁴, but rise above it, reviewing human life based on the evangelical principles. Thus, they show that one cannot speak about a hellenisation of the Christian faith or about a christianisation of Hellenism, but about the fact that the Christian faith is founded on the holy-spiritual experience of the Holy Trinity's grace-filled work and is expressed by dogmas and concrete ascetic and liturgical forms, which form a way of living totally new for the world of those times, a unique experience of

¹⁰¹ Γαζή, *Ο δεύτερος βίος*, p. 189. Due to these aspects, it has been affirmed that the ecclesial celebration of the Three Holy Hierarchs, consecrated in the 11th century, functioned as indicator of the relation between *the holy letters*, namely the teaching of the Church, and *the education from the outside*, in other words, *profane or lay education*, but also highlighted the fact that the Church is *the legitimate censor* of this relation (Γαζή, *Ο δεύτερος βίος*, p. 238).

¹⁰² Γαζή, *Ο δεύτερος βίος*, p. 145.

¹⁰³ *Troparul Sfinților Trei Ierarhi, glasul al 4-lea, in Slujba Sfinților Trei Ierarhi, Vecernia mică, in Mineiul pe Ianuarie* (2010), p. 496 (*Troparion of the Holy Three Hierarchs, tone IV, at the Service of the Three Holy Hierarchs, Little Vespers, in Menaion for January*).

¹⁰⁴ They used this thinking for the dialogue with the people and the society of their time, and for exerting their pastoral service, see Μεταλληνού, *Η έορτή των Τριών Ιεραρχών*, p. 303; Βλάσιο Ίω. Φειδά, “Η Έκκλησία και ο κόσμος κατά τους Τρεις Ιεράρχες”, in *Επίσημοι Λόγοι*, πρωτανεία Γ. Μπαμπινιώτη 2000-2003, vol. ΚΓ' (XXXIII), Αθήνα, 2005, pp. 1007-1023; Πρωτοπρεσβύτερος Γεώργιος Δ. Μεταλληνός, “Η κριτική της ελληνικής φιλοσοφίας από τους Τρεις Ιεράρχες και το αληθινό νόημά της”, in *Περγαμινή Β'* (2007), pp. 257-279.

the relation of man with the God revealed in the *Old* and the *New Testament*, a unique expression of man's relation with God, with the visible and invisible world, with the society in which he is living and with himself. All these do not represent fruits of man's reason, consequently, nor of any philosophical system, nor, all the more, of any worldly, secular power, but are the fruits of the holy-spiritual experience of these three great world teachers, being just as many messages, not just spiritual but even revolutionary and challenging for all the epochs and societies. From these messages, as mentioned, for the economy of the time allowed for this academic meeting and, at the same time, of great spiritual celebration, I will highlight just three.

1) First message: *The importance of the ecumenicity of the Gospel*¹⁰⁵. A fundamental message of the Three Holy Hierarchs' teachings is the accentuation of *the ecumenicity of the word of the Gospel*. Actually, the Three Holy Hierarchs are teachers of the world not just because their teachings are significant for the whole world, but because by these teachings they want to notify of the ecumenical dimension and amplitude of the Christian faith, when transmitted in its authenticity and accuracy. The Three Holy Hierarchs saw the Christian teaching not as a code of religious and ethical behavior, referring to a certain category of people, but perceived and lived it as a totally new, fundamental word for any man's existence and life, independently of all racial and cultural difference.

In this sense, Saint Basil the Great affirms that *theology*, namely speaking about God, *should not be limited to one or two people, on the contrary, the "Gospel" of salvation should be preached throughout the whole earth*¹⁰⁶. Saint John Chrysostom pinpoints the ecumenicity of the Christian faith in *The Lord's Prayer*, summing up the Church prayer. On the one hand, the request *Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*¹⁰⁷ expresses the way of living of the communion in the Church¹⁰⁸, so that *nothing may prevent us from reaching the perfect life of the heavenly powers, although we live on earth; because the one who lives here can do everything as if he were there as well*. On the other hand, this request also tells that *just as there, up in heaven, all happens without any obstacle, and the Angels do not accomplish only some commandments, while violating others, but do all of the commandments and they all submit, as they are strong in virtue, doing His word*, in other words, entirely fulfilling His will, as the psalmist says¹⁰⁹, *similarly make us, the people, worthy to do Your will not just halfway through but entirely, as You wish*. Because God's Son and the world's Savior Jesus Christ did not say *Your will be done in me or in us, but everywhere on earth, for all deceit to disappear, for the whole truth to be established, for all sin to be abolished, for the whole virtue to return, so that there may be no difference between heaven and earth*¹¹⁰.

2) A second message: *The unity between contemplation and practice* or, in patristic language, *between vision of God and action*. From the beginning, we need to emphasize the fact that the term *contemplation* does not mean in patristic language a state of imagination or simple dreaming of a certain thing, but refers to the real vision, with the spiritual eyes, of the uncreated Light, in other words, of God's glory, meaning the experience of God's presence in man's heart, by the work of the mind and of the uncreated divine grace. It is interesting to note that, as man's life gets laicized and secularized, the patristic sense of the Greek term *θεωρία*¹¹¹ passed from *the vision of God* to

¹⁰⁵ Κωνσταντίνου Σκουτέρη, "Μηνήματα τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν", in *Εικοσιπενταετηρικὸν Ἀφιέρωμα στὸν Μητροπολίτη Νεαπόλεως καὶ Σταυρουπόλεως κ. Διονύσιου, Ἀνάτοπο*, Ἔκδοσις Ι. Μητροπόλεως Νεαπόλεως καὶ Σταυρουπόλεως Νεάπολη, Θεσσαλονίκη, 1999, p. 605 (= Σκουτέρη, *Μηνήματα τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν*).

¹⁰⁶ Saint Basil the Great, *Homilia de hominis structura*, in PG 30, 44 A.

¹⁰⁷ *Matthew* 6: 10.

¹⁰⁸ Σκουτέρη, *Μηνήματα τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν*, p. 606.

¹⁰⁹ *Psalms* 102: 21.

¹¹⁰ Saint John Chrysostom, *Commentarius in Santcum Matthaem Evangelistam. Homilia XIX*, in PG 57, 280; see also idem, *Scrieri. Partea a treia. Omilii la Matei*, translation, introduction, indices, and notes by Fr. D. Fecioru, Col. Părinți și Scriitori bisericești (= PSB) 23, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1994, p. 252.

¹¹¹ Etymologically, this term comes from the Greek verb *θεωρῶ*, -έω, for which two etymologies can be found: 1) the combination of the Greek words *θέα* = *landscape* and *ὄρῶ*, -άω = *to see*, meaning *the fact of seeing a*

contemplation, and from *contemplation* to *theory*, in other words, man becomes *strong* in theory, is a theorist, but ceases to be a liver, more and more. This phenomenon is not just of our epoch, on the contrary, we find it as well in the Three Holy Hierarchs' time, and therefore one can notice their permanent endeavor to prove, by their own life, namely by their own living, the unity between faith and life, between dogma and morals, and between contemplation, in the patristic sense, and practice, in other words, between the vision of God and action¹¹².

This unity is summed up in the already classical formula of Saint Gregory the Theologian: *by living you should stand up; by cleansing you should acquire what is clean..., because practice means stepping towards the vision of God*¹¹³. This evidences that the Christian teaching does not represent a theoretical-abstract system of values, but accomplishing word¹¹⁴, exhorting to care for the soul, but also for the body, by deliverance from all that goes against the acquisition of the quality of citizen of the Kingdom of God¹¹⁵. Therefore, man is called to have spiritual premises, according to Saint Gregory the Theologian, to theologize: *it is not for each one... the fact of philosophizing about God, namely of theologizing about God, it is not for everyone; so, this is not easy and of the earthly ones. And I will add that it does not happen all the time, nor to all, nor for everything, but sometimes, to some and for a special thing. Consequently, it is not for all, but only for those tested and advanced in contemplation*, namely in the vision of God, in other words, in the vision of His glory or of the uncreated Light, *and, first of all, of those who have cleansed their body and soul or are cleansing them, in the most appropriate manner. Because to the impure it is not somehow without danger to be touched by the clean One, just as it is not without danger for the weakened vision to be touched by the sunray*¹¹⁶. For this reason, Saint Basil the Great's advice is that *we ought not to serve the body except in those absolutely necessary; yet, to the soul, we ought to give what is best, to free it, with the help of philosophy*, in other words, with the support of the holy-spiritual living, *from the relation with the passions of the body, as from a prison, and make, at the same time, also the body a master over the sinful passions*¹¹⁷. Because it is a great difference, on the one hand, between those working their salvation, taking into account, therefore, all the details of their life concerning their body and their soul, and, on the other hand, *those taking care of the body, to be as well as possible, but disdaining, as something deprived of value, the soul that is using the body*, the latter being, by analogy, like people taking care of the tools of their trade, but neglecting the trade that uses these tools¹¹⁸.

The mystery of theology, according to the same Saint Basil, *looks for certainty because of the not-yet-investigated faith*¹¹⁹, in other words, this mystery does not rely on un-lived, unexperienced

landscape; 2) the combination of the Greek words *θεός* = God, god or *θεά* = divinity, goddess and *ὁρῶ*, - *άω* = to see, from them deriving, by reference to the Christian faith, *the fact of seeing God*. Therefore, the term *θεωρία* means, among others, *research, observation with the eyes of a reality*, but also *vision of God*; in the first case, man uses his physical eyes and, in the second, his spiritual eyes (James Donnegan, *A New Greek and English Lexicon*, Philadelphia, 1844, pp. 652, 661; Δ. Δημητράκου, *Μέγα Λεξικόν ὄλης τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Γλώσσης*, τόμος Ζ', Ἀθήναι, 1964, pp. 3348-3349; J. B. Hofmann, *Ἑτυμολογικὸν Λεξικὸν τῆς Ἀρχαίας Ἑλληνικῆς*, ἐξελληνισθὲν ὑπὸ Ἀντωνίου Δ. Παπανικολάου, Ἀθήνα, 2009³, pp. 127, 129).

¹¹² Σκουτέρη, *Μηνήματα τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν*, p. 606.

¹¹³ Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oratio XX*, 12, in PG 35, 1080 B.

¹¹⁴ Σκουτέρη, *Μηνήματα τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν*, p. 607.

¹¹⁵ In this sense, eloquent are Saint Basil the Great's words: *We uphold that we need to love and follow, with all our strength, what can be useful for the preparation of that life*, namely of the eternal life, *and let us overlook the things not aimed [at the eternal life], considering them valueless* [idem, *Omilia a XXII-a către tineri*, 2, translated by Fr. Dumitru Fecioru, in Clement Alexandrinul, Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, Sfântul Grigorie Teologul, Fericitul Ieronim, Fericitul Augustin, *Scrieri cu tematică pedagogică*, PSB, Seria nouă 16, Editura Basilica, București, 2016 (= Clement Alexandrinul et al., *Scrieri*), p. 318 (= Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Omilia către tineri*)].

¹¹⁶ Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oratio XXVII*, 3, in PG 36, 13 CD - 16 A.

¹¹⁷ Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Omilia către tineri*, 9, p. 330.

¹¹⁸ Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Omilia către tineri*, 9, p. 331.

¹¹⁹ Saint Basil the Great, *Homilia in Psalmum CXV*, în PG 30, 105AB.

faith. For this reason, *the dogma*, namely the Church teaching, and *morals*, in other words, the manner of thinking and living in the Church teaching, represents for the Three Holy Hierarchs, according to Professor Constantin Skutéris, *a unity, an ontological agreement between life and faith. The Christian theology and, in general, the Christian teaching, continues the same professor, suppose a certain behavior, and the Church life is founded on a certain faith. There can be no correctness of life where there is no correctness of faith and always the Orthodoxy calls unwaveringly and uninterruptedly to cleanliness of life and sanctification of the concrete man*¹²⁰. In this sense, Saint Gregory the Theologian affirms, on the one hand, that man should ascend above his sinful passions and cleanse his mind, before taking on the priestly service¹²¹, and, on the other hand, he who wants to teach others the way to salvation *needs to be he himself clean first, to then cleanse others; needs to become he himself wise first, to then make others wise; needs to become he himself light first, to then illumine others; needs to draw close to God he himself first, to then bring others to Him; needs to be sanctified he himself first, to then sanctify*¹²².

Saint John Chrysostom says that for man to be authentic and for man's light to shine *before men*, according to the commandment of the *Gospel*, it is necessary for his *life to be in harmony with the dogmas, and for the dogmas to preach life. Because faith without actions is dead, and actions without faith are dead*. By this affirmation, referring to man's salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ, Saint John Chrysostom makes a difference between the good deeds done by pagans, who *by nature do the things in the law*, according to Saint Paul the Apostle¹²³, and those done by Christians. In this context, if, as Saint John Chrysostom says, *we have healthy dogmas, but we neglect the life, namely the living of the dogmas in our life, then we will draw no profit from the dogmas*. On the contrary, if *we are careful about the life, but we take out from the dogmas even a dot, then this will not be of use for us either*¹²⁴. Consequently, the believer, be he a clergyman or a layman, young or old, man or woman, must have in view the close relation between dogma and manner of thinking and living, between faith and action. This truth is illustrated by Saint Basil the Great in a clear and characteristic manner, likening the unity between vision of God and practice, between faith and behavior, with a house, for whose building the materials needed are actions and vision of God. Saint Basil affirms: *for dogmas and actions can be perceived as a house of each, concerning the dense and unified part of creation [made up] by meanings*¹²⁵. In other words, according to Saint Basil the Great, in this house, where the vision of God and the actions coexist and function together for its stability, foundation is the world's Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. The vision of God and the actions are recognized in the Person of our Savior Jesus Christ, because the Christian life relies on His work, since, in harmony with the same Holy Father, *the dogmas of faith have their foundation and beginning in our Lord Jesus Christ*¹²⁶. Therefore, *actions and vision of God meet and support each other, according to the Three Holy Hierarchs, in the Person of Christ*¹²⁷, Who is the Head of the Church. The Christocentric consideration of the vision of God and of actions, namely the fact that dogma and morals are founded on the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, means that this balance is achievable only in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The new man according to Christ is built inside the Church, by the work of the grace of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the meeting between the vision of God and actions is visible in the Church in the persons of the Saints, because the Saints are the ones who attain, by the Holy Spirit, the communion in our Savior Jesus Christ with God the Father, in other words, the deification or the

¹²⁰ Σκουτέρη, *Μηνήματα τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν*, p. 607.

¹²¹ Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oratio II*, 91, in *PG* 35, 493 BC.

¹²² *Ibidem*, 71, in *PG* 35, 480 BC. Concerning the vision of Saint Gregory, the Theologian on the meaning of *theology* and *theologians*, see also Deacon Prof. Assist. Ioan I. Ică, "Teologie și teologi după Sfântul Grigorie de Nazianz", in *Mitropolia Ardealului* 34/1 (1989), pp. 40-56; for similar studies see *ibidem*, p. 41, note 4.

¹²³ *Romans* 2: 14.

¹²⁴ Saint John Chrysostom, *Homilia II. In creationis principium*, in *PG* 53, 31.

¹²⁵ Saint Basil the Great, *Commentarius in Isaiam Prophetam*, 5, in *PG* 30, 368 A.

¹²⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹²⁷ Σκουτέρη, *Μηνήματα τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν*, p. 608.

state of gods by grace, which state is simply the undisturbed coexistence between the vision of God and practice¹²⁸.

3) A third message: *The need for education and the benefit of the permanent spiritual cultivation of man*. Although the Three Holy Hierarchs remained faithful to the Christian faith in harmony with the spirit of the *Gospel* and of the Holy Apostles, they turned to good value in the best manner the schools of the time from Caesarea of Cappadocia, Caesarea of Palestine, Alexandria and Athens, and implicitly the Greek classical thinking. Studies preoccupied them so much, as well as inner spiritual training, that a reference point became the case of the Saints Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian, who, being colleagues in Athens, knew but two ways, one leading to the church and another to school, getting to know deeply the intellectual and scientific richness of their time, and the possibility of the Greek language to express meanings and distinctions, theological and philosophical, of a rare fineness. Saint John Chrysostom also benefited of the Greek education, because in his country, Antioch, where he spent most of his life, he studied at the Greek sophists' schools, knowing very well the Greek dialectics and mentality.

Therefore, remarkable is the fact that the Three Holy Hierarchs did not hesitate to exploit the thinking of the Greek philosophers and turn to good value the richness of the Greek language, without falling in the rationalization of the faith. On the contrary, they acknowledged in the *profane letters*, namely in *the lay or outwardly education, the pre-training for the Christian training and the adequate tool to promote to the intellectual man of their epoch "the new teaching"*, spoken of by [Saint] Paul [the Apostle] in Athens, when "his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols (Acts 17: 16)"¹²⁹. In fact, still in Athens, Saint Philip the Apostle told his listeners: *I have come to reveal to you the education of Christ*¹³⁰, as a natural crowning of classical education¹³¹. Consequently, this knowledge of the culture of their time helped the Three Holy Hierarchs, on the one hand, to appreciate and make known the superiority of the Christian faith, and, on the other hand, to formulate, based on their personal experiences, the content of the Christian faith in a perceptible, logical and user-friendly manner to the people of their epoch. If one goes through the Holy Fathers' lives and writings carefully, he will note, among others, that the depth of the expression of their own holy-spiritual experiences and of the approach of the faith problems, caused by the phenomenon of heresies and sects, is in close analogy with the intellectual training of the respective Holy Fathers, yet permanently referred to the living of the holy-spiritual life of cleansing, illumination and deification. This aspect indicates the truth that man is called to participate in the mystery of faith not just with the senses, but also with his power of thinking and reflection, as he has the possibility to cultivate all that is his, namely both senses and feelings, and reason and thinking, by the education received and even choose from this education what is helping him and leading him to the authentic living of the Truth, Who is the world's Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, God's Son¹³².

¹²⁸ Σκουτέρη, *Μηνήματα τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν*, p. 608.

¹²⁹ Σκουτέρη, *Μηνήματα τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν*, p. 611.

¹³⁰ Cf. *Acta Philippi* 3, 3, apud Werner Jaeger, *Cristianesimo primitivo e paideia greca*, La Nuova Italia Editrice, Firenze, 1966, p. 15; Ierom. Policarp Pîrvuloiu, "Studiu introductiv" (= Ierom. Policarp, *Studiu introductiv*), in Clement Alexandrinul et al., *Scrieri*, p. 9, note 1.

¹³¹ Ierom. Policarp, *Studiu introductiv*, p. 9.

¹³² This fact is confirmed as well by Father Dumitru Stăniloae who, commenting on the life and thinking of Saint Maximus the Confessor, affirms: *God communicates Himself to man according to his measure or proportionally to the level man has reached*, which means, of course, not just the intellectual level, but also the spiritual one conjugated to the intellectual one. *This means that God is continually in Himself above any spiritual level of man, yet, by descent, He can make Himself proportional to man, namely He can give to man a gift according to the measure of man. Man makes on each of his levels this double experience: the experience of God accessible to him and the experience of God infinitely greater than everything He is giving to man* (idem, "Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul – viața, scrierile și gândirea teologică și spirituală –", in Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Mistagogia*, translation, introduction and notes by Fr. Professor Dr Dumitru Stăniloae, edition by Fr. Alexandru Atanase Barna, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă, București, 2017, pp. 54-55).

The classical example is the 22nd Homily or Discourse to the young on how they can use beneficially the literature of the Hellenic writers. The text belongs to Saint Basil the Great and was used especially during the Renaissance, being interpreted as a legitimation and a recognition of the classical culture by the Christian Church, but also represented the first work of Saint Basil the Great published in printed form¹³³. Considered a *small moral treaty in the well-known genius of Plutarch*¹³⁴, Saint Basil the Great expresses in it, among others, the exhortation addressed to the young to read the classical texts and assimilate the culture of the time, but not *without discernment*¹³⁵, to guard, *with all due care, the soul*¹³⁶, considering only those authors and writings in which *they praised virtue or condemned vice*¹³⁷. To consolidate this attitude, Saint Basil the Great uses two examples taken from the surrounding nature: bees collecting pollen and people picking up roses: 1) *Just as other beings delight only in the smell or the color of the flowers, but the bees can take from the flowers also the honey, similarly, here, also, the people who are not looking in such writings only for pleasure and delight, can get from them also benefit for the soul. Therefore, just as in the bees' example, we need to partake of the profane authors' writings. For they neither go without choice to all the flowers, nor try to bring everything they find in the flowers they sit on, but take only as much as it is appropriate for their work, while the rest [is left behind]. We, if we are wise, let us take from those [books] as much as it is appropriate for us and corresponds to the truth, while forsaking the rest*¹³⁸; 2) *And, just as when we pick up roses, we take the thorns aside, similarly, from such writings, let us pick up everything that is useful and let us also keep ourselves safe from what is damaging*¹³⁹. A first conclusion is that *even from the beginning it is appropriate to check each teaching and adapt it to the aim pursued*¹⁴⁰, namely *the preparation of the other life*¹⁴¹. The happiness of the respective life is so great that *if someone were to gather with the mind and put together all the happiness since people have been created, he would find that it cannot equal even the smallest part of the goods of that life*¹⁴².

*It is the Holy Scriptures that lead us to this life, but because it is not possible to understand the depth of the meaning of the Holy Scripture, given the age of the young, ranging from 12 to 15, some of them even Saint Basil's nephews, others members of the community he was shepherding*¹⁴³, *until then let us put the eye of the soul to work, as in shadow and mirror*¹⁴⁴, *with other teachings not totally different from ours, imitating the soldiers who do fighting drills on the training field: they, training their hands and feet, acquire a special skill, receiving, in this way, in fights, the reward for their games. Well, we, too, need to think that we are in front of a battle, the most important of all the battles, for whose preparation we have the duty to do and to endure all we can and speak with poets,*

¹³³ Ierom. Policarp Pîrvuloiu, "Introducere" la Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Omilia către tineri*, p. 316 (= Ierom. Policarp, *Introducere la Omilia a XXII-a*).

¹³⁴ Ierom. Policarp, *Introducere la Omilia a XXII-a*, p. 313.

¹³⁵ Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Omilia către tineri*, 8, p. 327. *It is precisely for this reason that I come and advise you, affirms Saint Basil the Great, that you must not give your mind's steering wheel in its entirety to these people, as you would give the steering wheel of a ship, nor should you follow them wherever they take you, on the contrary, receive from them as much as it is of benefit to you and discern what you need to leave aside* (Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Omilia către tineri*, 1, p. 318).

¹³⁶ Cf. *Proverbs* 4: 23.

¹³⁷ Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Omilia către tineri*, 4, p. 321.

¹³⁸ Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Omilia către tineri*, 4, p. 321.

¹³⁹ Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Omilia către tineri*, 4, p. 321.

¹⁴⁰ Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Omilia către tineri*, 4, p. 321.

¹⁴¹ Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Omilia către tineri*, 2, p. 318.

¹⁴² Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Omilia către tineri*, 2, p. 318.

¹⁴³ Ierom. Policarp, *Introducere la Omilia a XXII-a*, p. 313. In relation to his nephews, Saint Basil expresses himself as follows: *By natural kinship, I am, for you, right behind those who gave birth to you and love you just as much as your parents; and, unless I am wrong about you, I think that, looking at me, you will not miss your parents* (Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Omilia către tineri*, 1, p. 317).

¹⁴⁴ Cf. *I Corinthians* 13: 12.

and writers, and orators, and all the people we can find some benefit from, for the cultivation of the soul. Consequently, just as the painters prepare, first, by some [transformations], the object about to receive the paint and then color it, either in purple, or differently, similarly we, if we want the glory of good to remain in us undeletable, let us initiate ourselves first in profane writings, and then we will understand also the holy and mysterious teachings. And, after having got used to seeing the sun in water, we can turn our eyes also to its light¹⁴⁵. Therefore, we are dealing with two kinds of teachings, one divine and one profane, and with two kinds of wisdom, one divine and one profane. The difference between them is just as the specific trait of a tree is to be full of ripe fruit, but also the leaves trembling on the branches give the tree a certain adornment, similarly with the soul: its fruit is first of all the truth; yet it is not unpleasant for it to be clothed in the outwardly or profane wisdom (ἔξωθεν or θύραθεν), just as the leaves offer the fruit a shelter and this accomplished aspect¹⁴⁶. As example, Saint Basil the Great evokes the great Moses, who drew near to the contemplation of "He Who Is"¹⁴⁷ only after he first trained his mind with the Egyptians' teachings¹⁴⁸, but also the wise Daniel, about whom it is said that while he was in Babylon, only after having learnt the Chaldeans' wisdom well, did he draw close to the divine teachings¹⁴⁹.

Saint Gregory the Theologian reveals himself, by a part of his *Epistles*, as a careful educator of his blood relatives, manifesting a special care to the children of Nicobulos¹⁵⁰, the husband of his niece Alypiana, among them standing out the great-nephew also called Nicobulos, to whom he dedicates several *Epistles*¹⁵¹. From their content, one can distinguish the preoccupation of Saint Gregory the Theologian for the profane and especially moral-spiritual education of Nicobulos and his brothers, recommending them to the most famous professors of the time, rhetors and sophists, and the governors and bishops from the cities where they were studying¹⁵². Thus, the *Epistles* of Saint Gregory the Theologian addressed to the latter or referring to the education of his great-nephews are structured under the form of a true paideic trajectory, in which we can observe and evaluate the cultural-spiritual evolution of the great-nephews, and, by extension, also of the young, whom the Holy Father reminds that the Christian literature, in general, and especially his writings, have mainly an educative role: *The principal trait of my writings is to be educative by maxims and reflections, where possible. Just as the father of the children of noble lineage is easy to recognize, similarly when it comes to writings; and this happens no less than with the ones who have given birth [and who are recognized] thanks to their corporeal features. Similarly, with mine [with my writings]*¹⁵³. The profane education specific of the time ought to be combined, according to Saint Gregory the Theologian, with the moral and spiritual one, received in the family and in the Church, for divine grace to be at work in the young person's life. In this sense, Saint Gregory the Theologian was writing, among others, to bishop Theodore of Tyana, whom he had entrusted his great-nephews, the following: *My beloved Nicobulos' children are coming in town to learn tachygraphy; watch them kindly and paternally (as no canons are against this) and see that they go to church as often as possible. I intend that, concerning their character, they be modelled according to the shape of virtue, being as often as possible next to Your Perfection*¹⁵⁴.

¹⁴⁵ Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Omilia către tineri*, 2, p. 319.

¹⁴⁶ Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Omilia către tineri*, 3, p. 319.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. *Exodus* 3: 14.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. *Acts* 7: 22.

¹⁴⁹ Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Omilia către tineri*, 3, pp. 319-320.

¹⁵⁰ Sfântul Grigorie Teologul, *Epistola 157. Către Teodor*, 2, translated by Hieromonk Policarp Pîrvulescu, in Clement Alexandrinul et al., *Scieri*, p. 385 (= Sfântul Grigorie Teologul, *Epistola 157*).

¹⁵¹ Ierom. Policarp Pîrvulescu, "Introducere" at Sfântul Grigorie Teologul, *Epistole cu privire la educația lui Nicobulos*, in Clement Alexandrinul et al., *Scieri*, p. 379 (= Ierom. Policarp, *Introducere la Sfântul Grigorie Teologul*).

¹⁵² Ierom. Policarp, *Introducere la Sfântul Grigorie Teologul*, p. 379.

¹⁵³ Sfântul Grigorie Teologul, *Epistola 52. Către același Nicobulos*, 3, translated by Hieromonk Policarp Pîrvulescu, in Clement Alexandrinul et al., *Scieri*, p. 383.

¹⁵⁴ Sfântul Grigorie Teologul, *Epistola 157*, 2-3, p. 385.

While Saint Basil the Great referred mostly to the education of the young, as mentioned above, aged between 12 and 15, some of them being also his nephews, who studied at a man of letters (*Grammaticus*)¹⁵⁵, and Saint Gregory the Theologian to the education of his great-nephews¹⁵⁶, in exchange, Saint John Chrysostom refers to the moment of the beginning of the Christian education, drafting even *a program of family Christian education* for children, according to which the parents, father and mother, are the first educators or teachers of Christian living and conduct, for which reason the entire education needs to gravitate around the holy-spiritual life, as lived in the Church, according to the divine Revelation organs, the *Holy Tradition* and the *Holy Scripture*. In other words, one has in view the pedagogy of the God's grace-filled work on the child's soul, which soul is *malleable and easily modellable towards good or towards bad*¹⁵⁷. For this reason, in the second part (16-90) of his small treaty *On vainglory and on how parents ought to raise their children*, which became popular only starting with the 17th century and *represents the first work of Greek literature of the Antiquity dedicated exclusively to the education of children, and the first systematic treaty of Christian pedagogy*¹⁵⁸, Saint John Chrysostom likens the children's souls at first with *pearls, easy to shape only at first, right after they have been caught*¹⁵⁹, then with *paintings and statues*, which are realized gradually, yet with no deviation from what we want them to represent¹⁶⁰.

According to Saint John Chrysostom, the soul of a child is also like a fortified city, recently built and founded, *which has foreign citizens who do not have yet the experience of anything*, and to organize it, laws are needed, even *frightening and tough laws*, which need to be *applied*. This means that the defenders of the laws are the citizens of that city, who teach all the newcomers, regardless of their age, the good living. *Those educated since childhood to live a bad kind of living, when old, are hard to change, yet not unchangeable, because, if they want, they, too, can change. Those [young], however, who do not have the experience of life, yet, will easily receive the laws of the city, and the Christians' legislation is for the good progress of the entire world*¹⁶¹. To build the city, by which we understand the spiritual building of the soul, one has in view that man's five senses *ought to be the fortified walls and gates of the respective city, and the entire body ought to be as a wall*. Therefore, the gates of this wall are: *the eyes, the tongue, the hearing, the smell and... the touch. By these gates come in and go out the citizens of this city, in other words, by these gates the thoughts are corrupted or straightened*¹⁶². For this reason, it is appropriate to make for the respective gates *openings and golden locks from God's words*, which means *that we should teach the children to have these [words] ceaselessly on their lips, even when they are on the run, not anyway, nor superficially, nor rarely, but continually*. The gates *should not be covered only in golden leaves, but, on the contrary, should be made thick and solid, worked entirely in gold; instead of ordinary stones, they should have encased precious stones. Lock of these doors should be the Cross of the Lord, made up entirely from precious stones, placed across the doors*. Through these gates should not seep into the city *mixed and corrupt people*, namely any bad thought or *depreciative words*¹⁶³, but only the Emperor Jesus Christ, because

¹⁵⁵ Ierom. Policarp, *Introducere la Omilia a XXII-a*, p. 313.

¹⁵⁶ Sfântul Grigorie Teologul, *Epistola 157*, 2, p. 385.

¹⁵⁷ Ierom. Policarp Pîrvuloiu, "Introducere" at Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre slava deșartă și despre cum trebuie să își crească părinții copiii*, in Clement Alexandrinul et al., *Scrieri*, p. 340 (= Ierom. Policarp, *Introducere la Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur*).

¹⁵⁸ Ierom. Policarp, *Introducere la Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur*, p. 342.

¹⁵⁹ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre slava deșartă și despre cum trebuie să își crească părinții copiii*, 20-21, translated by Fr. Dumitru Fecioru, in Clement Alexandrinul et al., *Scrieri*, pp. 352-353 (= Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre cum trebuie să își crească părinții copiii*).

¹⁶⁰ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre cum trebuie să își crească părinții copiii*, 22, p. 353.

¹⁶¹ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre cum trebuie să își crească părinții copiii*, 23-27, pp. 353-354.

¹⁶² Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre cum trebuie să își crească părinții copiii*, 27, p. 354.

¹⁶³ All these and any inclination to bad need to be killed *inside, as the bees kill the drones and do not let them get out or buzz* (Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre cum trebuie să își crească părinții copiii*, 35, p. 357).

after this city is built, in other words, after the child's soul has acquired education and, consequently, the Christian living, *it is not a man who will live in it, but the Emperor of all Himself*¹⁶⁴.

The constant exhortation of Saint Joan Chrysostom to parents, by extension, to the parents of all times, is: *raise an athlete for Christ*¹⁶⁵, moreover, *a philosopher and a citizen of heavens*¹⁶⁶, which means for parents themselves, father and mother, both a way to receive forgiveness for their sins, but also an overflow of goods from God for the entire family, because who works for the education of his own child, endeavors, in fact, for himself, as, *if you imprint on his soul, still unripe, the good teachings*, in other words, the teachings of the Church, *no one will be able to take them away from him; they solidify like the seal applied on wax*¹⁶⁷. Yet, then, just as now, namely *in our time, each parent does his best to teach his children the arts, literature, oratory, yet no one is interested at all in educating his soul*¹⁶⁸. Consequently, it is vital that a child's training in the spiritual domain ought to begin even from his home, in other words, from his family¹⁶⁹, for the child to have imprinted in himself *the character of a holy man*¹⁷⁰. This is how he will learn and get used to the fact that, for instance, the innocence, namely the state of virginity, *is very useful at marriage, not just for the temperance of the young man but also for that of the wife*, because *their love will be cleaner; God will be all the more merciful and will fill that marriage of innumerable blessings; moreover, God will make such a man ceaselessly have in his heart love for his wife and be so in love as to never look to another woman*¹⁷¹.

III. THE WORK OF MIRACLES

The lives of the Three Holy Hierarchs and their teachings are, therefore, *straighteners of the Orthodoxy*, in other words, the way to follow in the Orthodox Church. For this reason, I wish to bring to your attention three miracles or wonderful deeds of the Three Holy Hierarchs' lives, which miracles can be, in their turn, other messages from them:

1) First, I want to evoke the way Saint Ephrem the Syrian (306-373), celebrated on January 28, learnt Greek, right towards the end of his earthly life, if we consider the fact that Saint Ephrem the Syrian departs to the Lord in 373, and Saint Basil the Great becomes bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia in 370. Saint Ephrem the Syrian, while in the desert, finding out about Saint Basil the Great's actions and teachings, was praying to God to reveal to him how Saint Basil was like. By the Holy Trinity's grace, he saw in his dream a pillar of fire, whose end reached heaven, and heard a voice, saying: *Ephrem, Ephrem, like this pillar of fire that you can see, this is how Basil is*. Ephrem, taking with him an interpreter, because he did not know Greek, went to Caesarea in Cappadocia, where they arrived during the celebration of our Lord Jesus Christ' Baptism. And, watching secretly from a distance, he saw Saint Basil, going in great glory to church. Then, Saint Ephrem told the interpreter: *It seems to me that we have struggled in vain, brother, because this man, being in such a state, is not the way I saw him*.

However, they went in the church, where they sat in a corner, out of sight, and Saint Ephrem was saying to himself: *I am amazed how we, being in the desert and suffering the hardship and heat of the day, have not increased at all, and the latter, being in so much human honor, is pillar of fire*. Yet, Saint Basil the Great was informed by the Holy Spirit about the presence of Saint Ephrem in the church and sent his archdeacon to him, indicating the place where he was, to call him into the Holy Altar. Understanding by the interpreter the hierarch's message, Saint Ephrem answered the one who

¹⁶⁴ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre cum trebuie să își crească părinții copiii*, 28, pp. 354-355.

¹⁶⁵ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre cum trebuie să își crească părinții copiii*, 19, 39, 63, 90, pp. 352, 358, 366, 374.

¹⁶⁶ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre cum trebuie să își crească părinții copiii*, 39, p. 358.

¹⁶⁷ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre cum trebuie să își crească părinții copiii*, 20, p. 352.

¹⁶⁸ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre cum trebuie să își crească părinții copiii*, 18, p. 352.

¹⁶⁹ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre cum trebuie să își crească părinții copiii*, 68, p. 367.

¹⁷⁰ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre cum trebuie să își crească părinții copiii*, 80, p. 372.

¹⁷¹ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre cum trebuie să își crească părinții copiii*, 81, p. 372.

was calling him: *You are wrong, brother, because we are strangers and the archbishop does not know us.* The archdeacon went back to report Saint Ephrem's words to Saint Basil. During this time, Saint Basil was just reading the *Holy Gospel*, and Saint Ephrem is given to see a tongue as of fire speaking by Saint Basil's mouth. Finishing reading, Saint Basil told the archdeacon again: *Go and tell that foreign monk: "Honourable Ephrem, come into the Holy Altar, because the archbishop is calling you!"* Faced with this reality, Saint Ephrem said: *Really, great is Basil, really, pillar of fire is Basil, really, the Holy Spirit speaks by his mouth!* And he asked the archdeacon to transmit to Saint Basil that they should meet after the end of the divine service.

Finally, they met in the *schevophilachion*, namely in the room where the priestly apparels, the Holy Vessels and other precious objects of the church were kept. They spoke with the help of the interpreter, and Saint Ephrem partook of the Most Holy Mysteries from Saint Basil's hands. After the meal occasioned by this special meeting, Saint Ephrem asked Saint Basil to bestow on him, by the work of the Holy Spirit, a gift, namely the gift to speak Greek. Saint Basil agreed to ask for this gift for Saint Ephrem, considering the latter's holiness and the effort he had made coming to Caesarea. They went in the church, where they *prayed for a long time*. Then, Saint Basil said to him: *Honourable Father, why do not you receive the sanctification of priest, being worthy?* He answered to him, by the interpreter: *Because I am a sinner, master.* Saint Basil replied: *O, if only I had only your sins!* Next, he said to Saint Ephrem: *Let us bow down [to God]*. And, kneeling, he put his hand on Saint Ephrem's head and said out loud *The Prayer for the ordination of a priest*. After it, Saint Basil said to Pious Ephrem: *Now command us to stand up. And Greek became clear to Blessed Ephrem and he said in Greek: 'Save us, have mercy on us, raise us, and keep us O God, by Your grace.'* In this way, came to be accomplished the word of the *Holy Scripture, then the lame will leap like a deer and the mute will sing for joy*¹⁷², Saint Ephrem became priest and speaker of Greek. His interpreter was also ordained deacon, and three days later they left Saint Basil the Great heading for their desert¹⁷³. I conclude this miracle by adding that Saint Basil the Great undertook not just a great philanthropic work, but also a rich activity in defense of the Christian faith by writings, which are included in 4 volumes of *Patrologia Graeca* (29-32).

2) Saint Gregory of Nazianzus used, by the work of the Holy Spirit, the power of the word in a convincing manner, so that he gained for himself the appellation *Theologizer*, namely *Theologian*. It is said that he was called to Constantinople, because so many had fallen in Arius' heresy, that only one church had remained Orthodox, the one called *The Church of the Resurrection*. After a long period of discourses and sermons in this church, the state of things changed and in the entire capital there remained only one church of Arius, all the others rebecoming Orthodox. From those sermons, *The Five Theological Discourses* are the most famous¹⁷⁴. In fact, the writings of Saint Gregory the Theologian are divided into *Discourses, Poems* and *Letters*, being included also in 4 volumes of *Patrologia Graeca* (35-38).

3) A professor of theology of Thessaloniki, who is a lay man¹⁷⁵, had to give an urgent answer to a very important matter that the Orthodox Church of Greece was being faced with at that time. He could remember that somewhere in a Holy Father he had read something regarding the respective matter, and his memory had retained the name of Saint John Chrysostom. However, he had not been able to identify that passage from Saint John Chrysostom's writings, and, in this situation, he prayed for God to help him, one way or another, to be sure that he will not be wrong with the solution he was going to give to the respective matter. From here, exemplary for me are, on the one hand, the professor's humility, who did not rely only on his memory and intellectual capacity, and on the other hand, his propensity to prayer.

¹⁷² See *Isaiah* 35: 6.

¹⁷³ *Proloagele*, I, pp. 825-828.

¹⁷⁴ Arhid. Prof. Dr. Constantin Voicu, *Patrologie*, vol. II, Editura *Basilica* a Patriarhiei Române, București, 2009, p. 205.

¹⁷⁵ His name is Demetrios Tselengidis.

After he finished his prayer, the telephone rang, and at the other end of the line was, by divine oikonomia, I would add, none other but a famous disciple of Saint Paisios the Hagiorite¹⁷⁶. The two knew each other, and the respective disciple set forth to him the reason that he was coming out of the Holy Mount to Thessaloniki, to solve certain things, and on this occasion he would like to visit him to his home, because they have something to discuss. Great was the joy of the professor of theology, and the moment of their meeting took place in a special spiritual atmosphere, full of emotions and noble discussions. Among them, the professor also put on the table the matter preoccupying him. Saint Paissy' disciple, having the same spiritual propensity and charismata as Saint Paissy, confirmed his solution, and the professor tells him: *I think I have read what you are saying in Saint John Chrysostom, but I can no longer find the respective passage*. The discussion was taking place next to the distinguished professor's library, exactly near Saint John Chrysostom's volumes of the *Patrologia graeca*, these volumes being no less than 18 (volumes 47-64). And as the professor was moving his hand along the respective volumes, not knowing which one to draw out, the respective Father, namely Saint Paissy' disciple, suggested that he should draw the volume next to the professor's hand at that moment. Drawing it out and holding it in his hands, the volume opened exactly at the passage he was looking for, yet whose content had been related just then by the respective Father. The Professor looks at it in awe, while the Father says: *Why are you amazed? The same Holy Spirit, Who was then, is also now*. In other words, the lot of those looking for spiritual perfection and reaching it is the same content of the *Divine Revelation* and, implicitly, of the *Pentecost*, by the personal living or experience of the work of the uncreated divine grace, and the Saints become their contemporaries, just as they, themselves, become contemporaries of the Saints.

IV. SYNAXARION AND ICON

By the above, my intention is also to draw your attention, among others, to two details. When we look in the church calendar or *Synaxarion*, for the day of 30 January, we observe that the three Hierarch Saints are enumerated in this order: Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian and Saint John Chrysostom. But, if we look at the icon honoring them on 30 January, we observe that, in its classical form, Saint John Chrysostom is in the middle, while the other Holy Fathers are painted on his right and on his left. In other iconographic representations, on the right of Saint Basil we find Saint Cyril of Alexandria, and on the left of Saint Gregory the Theologian is painted Saint Athanasios the Great, too, forming, all together, the *Holy Spirit's harp*, because the five Holy Fathers of the Orthodoxy stood out as defenders of the Holy Trinity dogma¹⁷⁷. The double question emerging, therefore, is: why these differences in the sequence of the three Hierarch Saints or why have the Holy Fathers ordained that Saint John Chrysostom be placed in the middle in the iconographic representation, in between the other Saints mentioned? These answers arose:

1) in the church calendar or the *Synaxarion* of the day, the order is given, as I have personally noticed, by the year when each of these Saints reposed in the Lord, in other words, history is respected and we have the sequence: Saint Basil the Great († 379), Saint Gregory the Theologian († 390) and Saint John Chrysostom († 407);

2) in the icon dedicated to their concelebration, we see Saint John Chrysostom in the middle not because he was given some personal primacy by comparison with the other two Holy Fathers, nor

¹⁷⁶ In a first presentation of this discourse, I made a confusion between this disciple and Saint Paissy the Hagiorite himself, a fact clarified following the meeting with Professor Demetrios Tselengidis in Thessaloniki, on 5 June 2018.

¹⁷⁷ The information is taken from Mr. Spyridon Tsitsigos, Professor of the Faculty of Theology of the Kapodistrian and National University of Athens, on the occasion of the conference *Introduction to Patrology*, held at the Faculty of Theology and Education Sciences of Valahia University of Târgoviște, on Friday, 18.05.2012, the translation being done by us. It is worth mentioning that, up to a certain point in time, Saint Gregory of Nyssa was included in the Holy Fathers' triad next to Saint Basil the Great and Saint Gregory the Theologian, forming the well-known scheme of the three Cappadocian Holy Fathers, but because teaching mistakes have been found in his writings, he was replaced by Saint John Chrysostom, see Γαζή, *Ο δέύτερος βίος*, pp. 189-191, 226-232.

because the yearly ecclesial celebrations cycle dedicated to the Three Hierarch Saints began and ended with Saint John Chrysostom (13 November and 27 January), in between these two celebrations being those of the Saints Basil the Great (1 January) and Gregory the Theologian (25 January), until their concelebration (30 January)¹⁷⁸, nor because the *Divine Liturgy* of Saint John Chrysostom is celebrated the most often along the ecclesial year, but for other two reasons, reinforcing all the others, as well: on the one hand, Saint John Chrysostom was considered the greatest hermeneut or interpreter of the *Holy Scripture*, like no other, and preacher of it, so that *had it not been for this Saint*, as the *Synaxarion* of the day of 30 January highlights, (*although it is boldness for us to say so*) *Christ would have had to come again on earth*¹⁷⁹; on the other hand, Saint John Chrysostom was taken as reconciliatory argument in the disputes and discussions of the time. When, in one circumstance or another, the clergy and the believers of the Church were in some hotter debate, all dispute ceased the moment someone brought an argument from Saint John Chrysostom's teachings¹⁸⁰. In fact, I think that it is due to these two reasons that Saint John Chrysostom is the first described in the *Synaxarion* of the day of 30 January¹⁸¹.

V. CONCLUSION

The Orthodox theology, as holy-spiritual experience of the relation with God, goes beyond all science, by the fact that its subject is multiple: on the one hand, God Who reveals Himself and, on the other hand, man, who ascends, by the work of the uncreated divine grace, to His knowledge, by the method of the hesychast living or of the acquisition of the holy-spiritual life, with its three steps, reminded above, cleansing, illumination and deification. In exchange, regarding the other sciences, the subject is the man investigating and searching, by methods specific to each science, and the object is God's creation. For this reason, when theology was "perceived" or "received" as science, catalogued among the *positive sciences* for its "experimental" and practical character¹⁸², and cultivated in the academic environment, it has been called *the highest science*, according, for instance, to the oath of doctor in Theology practiced in the Faculties of Theology from Greece¹⁸³, being, at the same time, considered *science in fact and in truth*¹⁸⁴, *science of sciences* and *an immense social conquest of Christianity*¹⁸⁵, which means, according to the words of Father Georgios

¹⁷⁸ According to some researchers, this cycle of celebrations dedicated to Saint John Chrysostom would have constituted the pretext of the dispute arisen among the three Holy Fathers' followers, see Άθαν. Δ. Παλιούρας, *Η ύπερβαση του έφημέρου μέσα από την εικονογραφία των Τριών Ιεραρχών*, Ιωάννινα, 1992, p. 35, note 3.

¹⁷⁹ *Historia Institutionis*, in PG 29, CCCXCII B (392 B); Άγίου Νικοδήμου του Άγιορείτου, *Συναξαριστής. Ιανουάριος – Φεβρουάριος*, p. 189; *Ο Μέγας Συναξαριστής. Ιανουάριος*, p. 732 (from this *Synaxarion* was taken out the note on Saint John Chrysostom's role in the preaching of the *Gospel* and his hypothetical absence triggering the return of the world Saviour Jesus Christ); for the translation in Romanian see also *Sinaxarul Slujbei Sfinților Trei Ierarhi*, p. 514: *so that if it had not been for him*, namely for Saint John Chrysostom, (*although it is boldness for us to say so*), *Christ would have had to come again on Earth* (*Synaxarion* of the *Service of the Three Holy Hierarchs*).

¹⁸⁰ Information taken from Mr. Spyridon Tsitsigos, see above note 107. In the same sense, see also Saint John of Euchaita, *In magnas festorum tabulas per modum expositionis*, in PG 120, 1135 A; Άνδρέου Ξυγγοπούλου, "Άγιος Ιωάννης ο Χρυσόστομος, «Πηγή της Σοφίας»", in *Αρχαιολογική Εταιρία* 1942-1944, pp. 1-36.

¹⁸¹ Άγίου Νικοδήμου του Άγιορείτου, *Συναξαριστής. Ιανουάριος – Φεβρουάριος*, pp. 189; *Ο Μέγας Συναξαριστής. Ιανουάριος*, pp. 731-732; *Sinaxarul Slujbei Sfinților Trei Ierarhi*, pp. 513-514. To these reasons one can add, according to some researchers, also a certain sympathy of Saint John of Euchaita for the Holy Father whose name he was bearing, namely for St. John Chrysostom, see Άνδρέου Ξυγγοπούλου, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

¹⁸² Π. Ν. Τρεμπέλα, *Εγκυκλοπαιδεία της Θεολογίας*, Αθήνα, 1980², p. 137 (= Τρεμπέλα, *Εγκυκλοπαιδεία*).

¹⁸³ Pr. prof. dr. emerit Gheorghe Metallinós, "Teologul în slujirea Bisericii", translated from Greek and completions of certain notes by Lect. Dr Ion Marian Croitoru, in Pr. Ion Vicovan, Pr. Paul-Cezar Hărlăoanu, Emilian-Iustinian Roman (editori), *Teologia academică și responsabilitatea ei în misiunea Bisericii*, Collection *Episteme* 22, Editura Doxologia, Iași, 2016, p. 94 (= Metallinós, *Teologul*).

¹⁸⁴ Τρεμπέλα, *Εγκυκλοπαιδεία*, p. 136.

¹⁸⁵ Ηλ. Β. Οικονόμου, *Αί Θεολογικά Σχολαί εις την διακονίαν της Έκκλησίας*, Αθήνα, 1981, pp. 8, 94.

Metallinós, *a social recognition of the Church*¹⁸⁶ and of its presence in the academic environment. In this way, theology received, *historically, also the sense of method of getting close to God*, mentioned above, *but also of research and scientific contribution concerning the ecclesial reality and systematic presentation of the Christian faith*¹⁸⁷.

The spiritual experiences of the Saints of the Church and its teachings are stored in various *testimonies* (texts, monuments, artistic expressions etc.) of her presence and progress in the world, as *body of the world Savior Jesus Christ*. Theology, as science, under the form of the disciplines included in the curriculum, either at pre-university level, or at university level (bachelor degree, master's degree and doctorate), *investigates, draws conclusions, rehabilitates critically, studies and interprets all these testimonies or draws inspiration from them in the uninterrupted dialogue of the Church with the world*. Therefore, *the part of the historical presence of the Church, which can be researched using the means of science and be perceived rationally, represents the subject of theological scientific research*, this research being important not just for the past of the Church, but also for its present in history¹⁸⁸.

This approach of the study of the Church testimonies also includes the education offered in the Faculties of Theology, transmitting to students, on the one hand, knowledge obtained from the theological scientific research fruits, and, on the other hand, giving them guidance in the Church life, namely in the life according to the teaching of God's Son Jesus Christ, as it has been lived and experienced by the Saints, in a society where, more than in other epochs, virtue and cleanliness have been abandoned for the sake of technology and consumerism, and man's quest for spiritual perfection is being replaced by the perfecting of apparatuses and machineries, not for man's benefit, but for economic gain, the latter, namely the apparatuses and the machineries, even getting to be considered more valuable than a man's life.

Therefore, the Church of the world Savior Jesus Christ, namely the Orthodox Church, being *one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church*, walks in the world by the steps of the Saints of yesterday, today and tomorrow. Consequently, the reference to their experiences, which forms the empirical theology, this theology representing the only dynamic and vitalizing reality of the synergy between the academic theology and the Church mission in the contemporary society¹⁸⁹, needs to remain a constant of theological education, because *God is not the great absent of man's historical endeavors*, on the contrary, He is present in history and is The One inspiring man¹⁹⁰. For this reason, the Orthodoxy is *not an epoch of history, but its truth*, because it has a past, but, all the more, a present and a future, and its guarantee is the Church conscience, whose head is God's Son and the World Savior Jesus Christ¹⁹¹. In this sense, edifying is an apophthegm of the *Egyptian Paterikon*. Abba Isidore of Pelusium stated that *life without a word is naturally more useful than the word without a life. For the life is beneficial even when silent, but the word is a nuisance even when calling out. But if word and life coincide, then they produce one image of the whole of philosophy*¹⁹², in other words, of the entire manner of living and thinking according to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. This teaching has been inherited, preserved, and transmitted in the world by the Orthodox Church. By its

¹⁸⁶ Metallinós, *Teologul*, p. 94.

¹⁸⁷ Metallinós, *Teologul*, p. 93, note 1.

¹⁸⁸ Metallinós, *Teologul*, p. 95.

¹⁸⁹ See my study, from which this last part of this presentation is inspired, with some changes, *Teologia empirică, singura realitate dinamică și vitalizatoare a sinergiei dintre teologia academică și misiunea Bisericii în societatea contemporană* (*The empirical theology, the only dynamic and vitalizing reality of the synergy between the academic theology and the Church mission in the contemporary society*), presented at the International Symposium *The Faculty of Theology: academic status and ecclesial mission*, Craiova, 4-7 October 2017, under print. For another version of this study, with the same title, see *Ortodoxia* 11/1 (2019), seria a II-a, pp. 26-47.

¹⁹⁰ Κωνσταντίνου Παπαπέτρου, *Πίστη και γνώση*, Αθήνα, 1987, p. 7.

¹⁹¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 17, 19.

¹⁹² *Pentru Avva Isidore Pelusiotul*, 1, in *Patericul ce cuprinde în sine cuvinte folosite ale Sfinților bătrâni*, Col. *Izvoare duhovnicești* 1, Alba Iulia, 1993/1994, p. 107.

Saints, of whom the Three Hierarch Saints Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom, concelebrated today, are an example, the Church has preserved its teaching, in a dynamic form, the accuracy and the authenticity, along the centuries. This fact guarantees the reality of the holy-spiritual life, which bestows on the contemporary man, faithful to the Orthodoxy, the inner transformation and external reference needed and lived in relation with the God revealed and glorified in the Holy Trinity, in relation with our neighbors and with our self, with the entire universe, visible and invisible, for the universal benefit of the society and for acquiring the quality of citizen of God's Kingdom.

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A short rejection of the innate ideas of R. Descartes through the epistemological scope of D. Hume

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ABSTRACT

*Descartes's belief in innate ideas still looms, in one form or another, over the history of philosophy today. In typical Early-Modern, Rationalist fashion, Descartes presents readers with main arguments for his belief in these pre-packaged ideas, via appeals to God and the application of logical thinking techniques. That is, Descartes asserts that the so-called inherent idea of God derives from God and that the mind can establish this notion as well as the surety of its supposed innate ideas of immortality and identity. However, such ideas may appear alien to some, and even unfounded upon critique. First, this essay will present Descartes's philosophy of innate ideas by using his *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Next, this piece will then describe the philosopher Hume's Empiricist understanding of ideas and the problems of abstraction, and then challenge the Cartesian view that innate notions like God, immortality of the soul, and identity may not be so innate, or as precise as Descartes leads us to believe.*

Keywords: Hume; Descartes; Empiricism; Rationalism; Epistemology; Innate Ideas.

1. AN EXPLICATION OF MAIN ARGUMENTS BY DESCARTES SUPPORTING INNATE IDEAS

As presented in Descartes's *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations on First Philosophy*, we readers encounter the argument that God is an innate idea of the mind, one which God itself establishes, in such a way that once we achieve a clear and distinct idea of God, we can be certain that such a Divinity embedded us with an inherent idea of itself.¹ One reason that leads Descartes to this conclusion is that because he is something rather than nothing, which derives from his inability to doubt his existence as a thinking thing, he may assert that he possesses the capacity for perfections.²

Now, by perfections, Descartes understands the mind's refinedness of which he can partake in, such as thinking, or intuiting, imagining, remembering, and even, to a degree, sensing.³ Moreover, Descartes notices that his awareness of his shortcomings leads him to recognize that others possess perfections, perhaps in a more significant proportion than himself.⁴ As such, Descartes envisions a perfect being, one by which we compare our perfections to, this being God.⁵ Finally, because this entity, or substance, God, affirms

¹ Descartes, René. Donald A. Cress trans., *Discourse on Method & Meditations on First Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998), 18.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 74, 76, & 79.

existence to the highest degree, due to the Divine containing the utmost level of all perfections, we may continue to assert that God is without blemish or lack, and rather all-good, as well as all-powerful.⁶

Next, from the claim that God is entirely pristine, benevolent, and magnificent, we find that Descartes does not contend that God would ever prevent us from knowing the Divine. Instead, God would be defying God's all-goodness, if God used God's supreme power, to deceive us from knowing God.⁷ Accordingly, Descartes does not believe it so farfetched if God implanted in rational minds, like we humans', the very idea of God, and the ability to build up to this idea, naturally, or inherently.⁸ Thus, one way in which innate ideas come to the fore of Cartesian philosophy is through Descartes's establishment of himself as, ultimately, a derivative of God.⁹

However, let us note that in anticipation of criticisms to come, Descartes rejects the idea that he is arguing in a circle by establishing the innate idea of God as being from God.¹⁰ Now, by circular reasoning, we may understand the absurdity of establishing a conclusion that clarifies, while does not add to, or, at worst, is merely identical to, an essential premise used to ground that conclusion.¹¹ In his defense, we may assert that if Descartes was seeking to establish first principles, like God, and thus the reality of innate ideas, perhaps he believed he was adding to knowledge by grounding age-old traditions on something other than the dominant Aristotelian and Scholastic worldviews of his time.¹² However, we shall see how this so-called progress may be merely a clarification of ideas as proclaimed from a Humean perspective.

For now, let us account for another reason why Descartes professes the notion of innate ideas is due to his belief that he possesses an inherent idea of self since he explicitly states that even if his mind were separate from his body, he would still know who he is.¹³ In other words, Descartes, by being a thinking thing, possesses self-awareness, so that he knows his mind, by default, or as given by reality.¹⁴ Accordingly, we may claim that Descartes's innate idea of self, is a byproduct of his humanity, ultimately reducing back to the life granted to him by God.¹⁵ Lastly, Descartes employs this innate idea of the self as a way to argue for the immortality of the soul, another inherent concept Descartes believed, engrained in the very fabric of our minds.¹⁶

Regarding the immortality of the soul as an innate idea, we may begin Descartes's argument by taking note of his assertion that no matter how much he doubts, he cannot doubt that it is he who engages in doubt.¹⁷ Accordingly, since there must be a doubter from which

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹¹ Richard Popkin ed., *A Columbia History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press., 1999), 336-346.

¹² Copleston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy Vol. IV: Modern Philosophy from Descartes to Leibniz* (New York: Doubleday., 1994), 9-10.

¹³ Descartes, René. Donald A. Cress trans., *Discourse on Method & Meditations on First Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998), 49-54.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Copleston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy Vol. IV: Modern Philosophy from Descartes to Leibniz* (New York: Doubleday., 1994), 79-83.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

the power of doubting issues, Descartes informs we readers, as mentioned above, that he is a thinking thing.¹⁸

Now, from his status as a thinking thing, Descartes expresses that because he can establish himself as participating in reality at the level by which he can clearly and distinctly conceive and perceive it, he is, to a degree, self-sufficient, and thus, a substance.¹⁹ Again, we find Descartes circularly arguing that because he discovered his innate ability to establish his inner identity, there results in the shining forth of the innate idea of himself *qua* substance.²⁰

Consequently, Descartes's essential substantiality, which he claims he can never doubt, or lose, indicates that something about him affirms existence, beyond material finitude, and instead, as an immortal, immaterial mosaic piece of infinite reality. In other words, Descartes's belief in the immortality of the soul links to his uncovering and understanding of himself as a substantiality, containing two paralleling substances, the mind, and body, of which he, again, knows the former more certainly, however now it is this same mind which continues in reality, potentially forever.²¹

2. AN EXPOSITION OF SOME MAIN POINTS OF HUME'S EPISTEMOLOGY AGAINST THE SO-CALLED TRUTHS OF REASON

As found in Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, we read a philosophy that is in stark contrast to the Rationalist leanings of Descartes. That is, Hume, working in the tradition of Locke's Empiricism, approaches philosophy from a different perspective than Descartes.²²

First, we find that Hume takes issue with the outlook that reason, and the ideas that it generates is the starting point for us to acquire real knowledge. That is because ideas truly rely on empirical perceptions.²³ Per Hume, we cannot deny what immediately impresses upon us from objects residing outside of ourselves, as we can ideas, or those less vivid and less meaningful derivatives of our capacity to perceive.²⁴ As such, our perceptions are more direct and of a greater surety than our rational ideas; they are the foundation on which those ideas depend.²⁵ Thus, to Hume, and in good Lockean Empiricist fashion, knowledge ought to be that which we regard as originating from our perceptions of the world.²⁶

Moreover, Hume believes that ideas are merely the collection of our perceptions, and accordingly, ideas are a problematic source of knowledge since they exist removed from direct perceptions. As such, we lose accuracy of what we are referencing our ideas to when we partake in the very language of ideas.²⁷ As another Empiricist before him, Berkeley,

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

²⁰ Richard Popkin ed., *A Columbia History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press., 1999), 336-346 & Descartes, René. Donald A. Cress trans., *Discourse on Method & Meditations on First Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998), 61-63.

²¹ Descartes, René. Donald A. Cress trans., *Discourse on Method & Meditations on First Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998), 31-32.

²² Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster., 1972), 659-660.

²³ Hume, David. Eric Steinberg ed., *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993), 9-11, 13.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster., 1972), 659-661.

²⁷ Hume, David. Eric Steinberg ed., *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993), 4-6.

Hume also believes that ideas are indeed a product of abstraction, but that such abstraction is not as precise, all-inclusive, or comprehensive, as we may think it to be, upon first assessment.²⁸

In other words, if, for example, we encounter a car, what stops us from labeling, or naming that object of four-wheels, a motor, an engine, and a muffler before us, as being a “dog”? As envisioned by Hume and Berkeley before him alike, nothing; and, this provides we readers with evidence to believe that abstract ideas are not as definite as we think them to be.²⁹ Finally, let us now consider the lack of all-inclusiveness of abstract ideas, which will further help to debase the precision, or truth of such ideas. If we continue to consider abstract ideas like “car” we come to another crux, namely, who is to say what is more of a car, for example, a bright red Ferrari or a bright yellow Mustang? From Hume’s perspective, what would it require for us to say if a bright red Ferrari is more of a car than a bright yellow Mustang? Do not both cars share in the fact that they possess common features like a steering wheel, seats, headlights, and a radio? However, why do our direct perceptions enable us to distinguish that these two cars are not the same? Hence, to Hume, our abstract idea of “car” does not function as an indubitable standard applicable to all cars.³⁰ Thus, should we not let go of absolute trust in such abstract ideas? As Hume understood, we should abandon these ideas, for they are not as all-encompassing as we take them to be.

Next, we may also follow suit with Hume in declaring that abstract ideas are not as comprehensive as philosophers like Descartes would want us to believe. That is, if we take notice of the world around us and we see examples of something such as cats, we may declare that lions, tigers, and pumas fall under the umbrella category of cats, which are examples of mammals, which are examples of animals. However, if we reverse this process, we cannot surely say that all animals are lions, tigers, and pumas, or cats, and thus, our process of abstracting from examples of cats, the abstract idea of animals fails to be fully unproblematic. Lastly, let us now consider Hume’s distinction between the relation of ideas and matters of fact.³¹

As understood by Hume, there are those empirical facts which derive from perceptions and then those relations of ideas which deal in concepts, of which sometimes no experience ever correlates.³² That is, Hume finds that reason can go over the limits of sense, however never in a sure way.³³ For instance, if we take our ideas of something like God and immortality of the soul that Descartes draws light to repeatedly, Hume believes can never be declarable as objects of experience.³⁴ Thus, such abstract ideas, like God and immortality of the soul, as too far removed from perception, can never be accurate, let alone, reasoned about in a way that justifies their truth to the level of proof. Finally, this is one instance where readers may see how it is that Hume would not place absolute trust in reasoning by way of relating ideas to secure truth. That is because it is only those empirical impressions that we can assess best when trying to establish facts of existence.

Furthermore, we also find Hume taking on the Rationalists’ project in the form of critiquing how it is that one person, a particular being, can ever discover a universal truth

²⁸ Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster., 1972), 661-662.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Hume, David. Eric Steinberg ed., *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993), 15-22.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

that is timeless, and unchangeable.³⁵ In other words, Hume finds that if universality existed, it would logically display no likeness to particularity, much like how it is that what is finite cannot be compatible with what is infinite, as Descartes would maintain.³⁶ That is, how can we, finite beings, which fade from existence, produce a truth that is of the duration of infinitude? From Hume's outlook, we simply cannot, and the starting point of Rationalists like Descartes, who believe that human reason alone can establish and discover all-applicable truths, is erroneous.³⁷ Lastly, let us now see how we can challenge Descartes's innate ideas via the further application of Hume's thought.

3. III. HUME'S EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASSERTIONS AS A MEANS TO DEBUNK DESCARTES'S THEORY OF INNATE IDEAS

By entering a further consideration of Hume's epistemology, readers find ways in which Descartes's theory of innate ideas may be at further fault. First, let us remind ourselves once more of Hume's Lockean Empiricist inheritance, namely the theory of primary and secondary qualities.³⁸ Now, Hume, like Locke, would agree that those qualities which we can divorce from a thing, while that thing is still identifiable to us as being what it is, are those attributes we can refer to as secondary qualities.³⁹ At the same time, there are primary qualities or those characteristics of things that are integral to that thing being what it is.⁴⁰ In other words, primary qualities to Locke and Hume alike would be those qualities we recognize as being inseparable from an object, if we are to maintain that that object is what it is, as we witness it to be.

Thus, the initial challenge, to Descartes, via Hume, would be if Descartes wants to maintain the unchanging permanency of the human mind to access its inherent ideas like God and immortality of the soul, and even of selfhood, he cannot assert that any of these ideas are as unquestionable as he wants his readers to assert in accord. First, to Hume, the idea of God is never verifiable by anything in experience, since no one can view all of reality in all places, always, to perceive the universe as would God, to verify God as being a real thing.⁴¹

Likewise, the immortality of the soul to Hume is also problematic, for we can never perceive any precise impression of imperceptible or immaterial souls so that we can identify them as necessarily connected to the bodies they supposedly inhabit, beyond all doubt.⁴² Thus, to Hume, such "innate" or so-called pre-packaged ideas like Descartes's alleged inherent ideas of God and immortality of the soul are themselves deniable, and hence the very source, God, that Descartes professes granted him the innate idea of itself and his soul's capacity for eternity may be subject to at least a reasonable doubt.

However, we should also explore Descartes's innate idea of self, and his identity, as a thinking thing, as something that Hume doubts through the application of the Lockean

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Descartes, René. Donald A. Cress trans., *Discourse on Method & Meditations on First Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998), 50, 74-75, & Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster., 1972), 654, 661.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster., 1972), 662-663.

³⁹ Ibid., 605-606.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Hume, David. Eric Steinberg ed., *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993), 11-12.

⁴² Ibid., 13.

Empiricist Tradition's theory of primary and secondary qualities.⁴³ Now, as understood by Hume, if we are to assert something such as a stable identity, ego, or ideational self, that encompasses, or summarizes who we are, as an essential, unchanging totality, we fall into an issue. This problem is, namely, how can it be that we can maintain a logical consistency to the point of necessity between the sensible world of phenomenal flux and an unmalleable abstraction of the self that is ever-present and constant throughout life?⁴⁴

As understood by Hume, it would be better for Descartes to abandon his reliance on the supposed concreteness of the "I." For, that very innate notion of a permanent self falls into ungrounded subjectivity too, when we consider that because all that exists possesses changeable secondary qualities, the source of those qualities, an entity, and its primary qualities, must then be alterable too.⁴⁵ Accordingly, if we, like Descartes, wish to maintain the agreeableness or compatibility between a cause and its effect, then an effect cannot be less than its cause, and a cause cannot be other than its effect since there must be a likeness between a cause and its effect, for us to recognize them as conjoined.⁴⁶

In other words, Descartes's assertion that a cause equals or exceeds the power of its effect is wrong from a Humean point of view.⁴⁷ Instead, to Hume, a cause can only equal its effect, if Hume were to believe in causality at all. Consequently, we may claim that because the secondary and now primary qualities of beings and things are indeed malleable, we may assume that Hume would at least be skeptical toward something such as Descartes's indubitable belief in his innate idea of self *qua* substance, or as a self-sufficient being, registerable as an eternal and necessary truth, ultimately unerasable from reality.⁴⁸

Next, another issue Hume would take with Descartes's innate idea of identity is that Descartes is not so much adding something new to the knowledge he already possessed of himself; instead, Descartes is merely clarifying his idea of himself and claiming that it is a discovery of an afresh innate idea of a stable and permanent identity he possesses all his own.⁴⁹ One reason why Hume would find this Cartesian conclusion to be aporic is that Descartes's aim, to establish new knowledge that can forward the sciences, through his philosophy, defies how good scientific method works.

In other words, if we are to follow the scientific process of testing inputs to achieve knowledge of a new output deriving from some input, how can we claim that Descartes is asserting a new output when his input is almost the same as that output? From Hume's outlook, Descartes claims that he is establishing the truth of his innate idea of self when that innate self already existed before Descartes's supposed founding of it.⁵⁰ As such, we may

⁴³ Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster., 1972)., 605-606.

⁴⁴ Hume, David. Eric Steinberg ed., *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993)., 23, 135.

⁴⁵ Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster., 1972)., 651-655.

⁴⁶ Descartes, René. Donald A. Cress trans., *Discourse on Method & Meditations on First Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998), 71.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Descartes, René. Donald A. Cress trans., *Discourse on Method & Meditations on First Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998)., 62-63 & Hume, David. Eric Steinberg ed., *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993)., 23, 135.

⁴⁹ Richard Popkin ed., *A Columbia History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press., 1999)., 336-346 & Descartes, René. Donald A. Cress trans., *Discourse on Method & Meditations on First Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998)., 62-63.

⁵⁰ Hume, David. Eric Steinberg ed., *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993)., 23, 135.

claim that from Hume's gaze, Descartes was making an identity claim of "I=I," at best, and even that claim is further doubtful via Hume's philosophy.

One reason as to why an identity claim of "I=I" would be questionable to Hume, is that if we are to make advances in the sciences, as Descartes seeks for us to accomplish, then an abstract, or purely rational innate idea of the self cannot connect with physical, empirical existence, making such an idea outside of the domain of the sciences.⁵¹ In other words, to Hume, Descartes, by grounding the sciences in metaphysics, not only mistakenly ties the strictly conceptual to the purely sensory, but Descartes also faultily believes that science, as a human enterprise, must rely upon and begin in an allegedly unquestionable first principle, of God and then the self.⁵²

Accordingly, if Descartes wishes to establish the sciences indubitably, he must abandon reliance on an innate idea of a first principle, because as shown, such first principles are not all that indubitable. Finally, since first principles are deniable, there must be another grounding or way to understand and view the sciences rather than merely relying on metaphysical theories like that of innate ideas.

CONCLUSION

This essay aimed to unpack Descartes's doctrine of innate ideas and set the stage for the denial of such a theory via the Empiricist philosophy of Hume. First, we readers encountered Descartes's belief that his innate idea of God shines forth from his uncovering of God's reality.⁵³ Similarly, we found that Descartes adheres to the view that by establishing himself as a substantiality, he can at least adequately know that he possesses an innate idea of the self, one that is potentially immortal, after worldly demise.⁵⁴

Moreover, with an explication of Hume's beliefs, this piece helped readers to view a different brand of philosophy, one distinct from Cartesian Thought. As such, this piece continued to provide readers with a glimpse into how Descartes's philosophy's central tenets are not as epistemically secure as Descartes wished us to believe. That is because, upon entering the philosophical outlook of Hume, we find a trove of ways in which we can jeopardize the innate ideas of Descartes. Accordingly, this article closed with arguments against Descartes's support of the reality of innate ideas, by employing some main epistemological challenges that Humean Thought can provide us.

Finally, the ultimate purpose of this brief essay was to invite readers to question philosophical dogmas, like those of Descartes, and his theory of innate ideas, so that we may ironically follow Descartes's advice to never place rational belief into that of which we cannot be sure.⁵⁵ Unfortunately for Descartes, his own advice prevents the reality of his

⁵¹ Descartes, René. Donald A. Cress trans., *Discourse on Method & Meditations on First Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998), 1 & Hume, David. Eric Steinberg ed., *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993), 11.

⁵² Descartes, René. Donald A. Cress trans., *Discourse on Method & Meditations on First Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998), 1 & Hume, David. Eric Steinberg ed., *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993), 23, 135.

⁵³ Richard Popkin ed., *A Columbia History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press., 1999), 336-346 & Descartes, René. Donald A. Cress trans., *Discourse on Method & Meditations on First Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998), 21-22.

⁵⁴ Richard Popkin ed., *A Columbia History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press., 1999), 336-346 & Descartes, René. Donald A. Cress trans., *Discourse on Method & Meditations on First Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998), 21.

⁵⁵ Descartes, René. Donald A. Cress trans., *Discourse on Method & Meditations on First Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998), 36-37.

assertion of innate ideas to ever be that which we can certainly know with the utmost surety. We may thank our application of Hume for that.

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From the memory of history: Evagrius Ponticus and his writings in the preoccupations of Patriarch Iustin Moiescu

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ABSTRACT

The year 2019 was dedicated to paying homage to one of the foremost servants of the Romanian Orthodox Church – patriarch Iustin Moiescu. This was a good opportunity for us to bring back to light writings which relate to his preoccupations with the teachings of the Church Fathers. These preoccupations originate as early as the time of the courses attended in the “Miron Patriarhul” Seminary in Câmpulung Muscel, which he graduates as valedictorian, followed by the Faculty of Theology in Athens, where he goes for four years, between October 1930 and July 1934. Following this fruitful period, he prepares his doctoral thesis entitled “Evagrius Ponticus. Life, Writings and Teachings” which he presents in 1937 in Athens, under the guidance of the distinguished Greek patrologist Dimitrios Balanos. This paper was graded as exceptional.

Keywords: *Evagrius Ponticus; patristic research; ascetic writings.*

INTRODUCTION

In a study dedicated to patriarch Iustin Moiescu, Professor Priest Nicolae C. Buzescu characterizes the doctoral thesis as “a locked treasure, accessible only to specialists in classical languages or theologians who are better acquainted to them”⁵⁶. Despite the fact that it conveys the idea that the paper is “locked”, in other words it does not target the general public, this assertion encompasses yet a “treasure” of information and ideas regarding Christian life, as he discovered it in the writings of Evagrius Ponticus.

According to the same illustrious professor, “the paper falls under the category of strict literature, expression of an impressive erudition and a great power of theological and philosophical summarization. It is the result of a vast patristic research in which are used all works consecrated to Evagrius Ponticus until 1937”⁵⁷.

The reason of having chosen this theme is disclosed by the author himself, who published in Romanian, no later than one year after its presentation, an ample summary of this thesis in which we find the assertion that Evagrius Ponticus is the most important and original personality of the Orthodoxy, “the father of the Byzantine asceticism and mysticism”, as “the whole spiritual teachings of the Eastern Church”⁵⁸ nowadays originate in his writings.

⁵⁶ Pr. prof. dr. N.C. Buzescu, *Preocupări patristice ale Prea Fericitului Patriarh Iustin*, în rev. *Mitropolia Olteniei*, No. 3-4/1980, p. 315.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

⁵⁸ Dr. Iustin Moiescu, *Evagrie din Pont*, în rev. *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, No. 5-6/1938, p. 230.

1. BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATA ON EVAGRIUS PONTICUS

When presenting Evagrius Ponticus' life, writings and teachings, patriarch Iustin uses as Bibliography 74 titles of papers. For Evagrius' life, use was made of: *"The Lausiaca History*, written by Palladius, bishop of Helenopolis in Bithynia, his friend and disciple; *History of the Monarchs in Egypt*, paper written at the beginning of the 5th century and kept in Rufin's Latin translation; and the works of church history by Socrates and Sozomen, Ieronymos and Gennadius"⁵⁹.

For that reason, we find written records of Evagrius being born in 345⁶⁰ in Iborra of Pontus (therefore the pseudonym of "Ponticus"⁶¹). His father, who was a country bishop, was a very close friend of the Saints Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus. It is even assumed that young Evagrius was taught by Saint Gregory⁶², from whom he had the chance to acquire excellent theological knowledge, and much more, which led him to choose an ascetic life. So it is that Evagrius grows as a Christian and becomes "disciple of the great teachers of Church, who instilled in him both the living faith in God and the passion for the hermit lifestyle. He distinguished himself by a life led in virtue and his great knowledge acquired as a young boy"⁶³.

In an epistle written in 369 by Saint Gregory of Nazianzus for the father of his disciple, whose name was also Evagrius, the author shows his satisfaction with the educational motivation of his disciple and praises him for having acquired as a young man "the fear of God and the conviction to despise the things of the present world"⁶⁴.

While spending his life with the Saints of Cappadocia, away from the world, Evagrius learns the dogma of the Church, explains the Holy Scripture with his teachers and contributes to preparing the Philokalia starting from Origen's works. In the meantime, he reads the writings and feels passionate about the theological system of the great didascal of Alexandria, to whom he continues to feel great affection, being condemned for Origenism at the 5th Ecumenical Council. This will lead to the disappearance of his works written in Greek, (only Syrian and Armenian translations being kept), namely to monophysite Christians or under other names such as the one of Nil the Hermit.⁶⁵

Evagrius continues to stand by Saint Basil the Great who ordains him as lector. When the latter passes away, he decides to leave Cappadocia and follows Saint Gregory the Theologian who promotes him as deacon. Following this promotion, he accompanies Saint Gregory to Constantinople where he participates to the second Ecumenical Council. After

⁵⁹ Pr. Prof. Ștefan Alexe, *Sfinții Părinți în preocupările Prea Fericitului Patriarh Iustin*, în rev. *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, No. 3-4/1985, p. 267.

⁶⁰ We chose year 345, as a certain date of his birth, as recorded by hieromonk Gabriel Bunge, the most tenacious researcher of Evagrius' work (see vezi Ieromonah Gabriel Bunge, *Akedia. Plictiseala și terapia ei după avva Evagrie Ponticul*, trad. Ioan I. Ică jr., Ed. DEISIS, Sibiu, 1999, p. 27; and also *Evagrie Ponticul. Scolii la Pilde și Ecclesiast*, trad. de ieromonah Agapie Corbu, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă, București, 2017, p. 9, data taken over by Paladie, *Istoria lausiacă*, trad. de pr. prof. dr. D. Stăniloae, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2007, p. 87, where we are told that "he passed away at the age of fifty-four, away from the world", i.e. in 399 and not 346, as we may find in the work of patriarch Iustin Moiescu.

⁶¹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ioan G. Coman, *Patrologie*, Ed. Mănăstirii Dervent, 2000, p. 141.

⁶² Ieromonah Gabriel Bunge, *Akedia...*, p. 27.

⁸ Pr. Prof. Ștefan Alexe, *Sfinții Părinți...*, p. 267.

⁶⁴ Evagrie Ponticul, *Scolii la Pilde și Ecclesiast ...*, p. 10.

⁶⁵ Pr. prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Viața și scrierile lui Evagrie Ponticul*, în *Filocalia*, vol. I, Humanitas Publisher, București, 1999, p. 49.

the resignation of this protector, he continues to be around patriarch Nectary. This new position and his sound theological knowledge push him towards the gulf of the dogmatic controversies of those times, which he combats through the sermons that were so highly valued by the listeners.

This new context or other reasons⁶⁶ may have determined Evagrius to leave the great Byzantine citadel and head for Jerusalem. This is where he encounters Saint Melanie the Elder who advises him to become a monk on Easter Day of 383 in Rufin's Mount of Olives Monastery. After a short while spent in the Holy City and following a physical distress of which cause remains unknown, he decides to settle down in Egypt and starts his ascetic life under the guidance of the two great Macarius: Macarius of Egypt and Macarius of Alexandria. He spends two years in the Nitrian desert and the remaining of his life in Kellia, the area of hermitage. In a very short time, numerous disciples⁶⁷ are inspired by his improved life and led themselves guided by wise advice originating in an authentic living and feeling of the Gospel of the Savior. This very zeal recommends him for ordination as bishop, as patriarch Theophilus of Alexandria would have wanted. Nevertheless, the offer is constantly rejected by Evagrius who will pursue serving Jesus Christ, as a humble hermit, until he passed into eternity in 399.

2. THEOLOGICAL AND DOGMATIC THEMES IN EVAGRIUS PONTICUS' WRITINGS

Following an inventory of Evagrius' writings, patriarch Iustin Moisescu comes to the conclusion that of all the works attributed to the monarch of Pontus, only seven may be deemed as authentic: 1. *Practicus* or *the Monarch*; 2. *Antirrhetikos*; 3. *The Gnostikos* or *To the One who Deserved the Gnosis*; 4. *Six Hundred Gnostic Issues*; 5. *To the Monarchs in Monasteries or Assemblies*; 6. *To the Virgin or the Virgins* and 7. *Epistles*.

Although the writings have an ascetic nature and they mainly focus on the monastic environment, as they target the reader who pursues *hesychia*⁶⁸, we cannot overlook the use of his teachings to the spiritual life. They are useful to all people who seek redemption, that is the same as getting to know God, namely the *gnosis* that leads to spiritual contemplation.

In terms of theological and dogmatic norms in Evagrius' works, patriarch Iustin divides them into three main chapters: I. *Theology*, II. *Cosmology* and III. *Eschatology*.

Evagrius' theology is organized by patriarch Iustin in 5 subchapters: *God, The Holy Trinity, The Father, The Son* and *The Holy Spirit*. In relation to *God*, Evagrius affirms that "in essence, there is but one God. He may not be defined as the definitions belong to a world that is produced and composed, while God has no beginning and is uncomposed"⁶⁹. God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit forms *the Holy Trinity*, impossible for the human mind to encompass. The Holy Trinity is not subjected to transformation and does not change. It is made up of three hypostases: the Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit, which means that it is not composed, as it is not a numerical trinity, "but a uniform essence, in full and forever equal to itself"⁷⁰.

⁶⁶ Palladius mentions an amorous trap laid by a woman from high society, woman whom he escapes by going to Palestine (see *Istoria Lausiaca*, p. 88).

⁶⁷ Among his disciples, patriarch Iustin mentions: Palladius, Saint John Cassian, Heraclides, bishop of Ephesus and writer Rufin.

⁶⁸ *Isihia* – from the Greek ησυχία which means "inner peace", the peace of the soul illuminated by the divine grace, which brings inner peace by communion with God.

⁶⁹ Patriarhul Iustin, *Evagrie din Pont*, Anastasia, 2003, p. 123.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 126.

On the Person of *the Father*, Evagrius Ponticus tells us that He has created everything, and He is the cause of everything and every end. *The Son* of God is the first and the one born from the Father, through Whom all things were made. For His great love of men, He descended from Heaven and was incarnated as man and took the soul of man. “Being made of material elements, the body of the Savior was created in time, and right after His creation, the body united with God the Word and has been united with Him since then. His body was never subjected to decay after the resurrection from the dead”⁷¹. In relation to the last person of the Holy Trinity, *the Holy Spirit*, Evagrius Ponticus tells us that it is the same as the Father and the Son and is Holy in essence, not by attainment.

Patriarch Iustin Moiesescu divides the second chapter into five subthemes: *The Creation of the World, the Fall of the Rational Human Beings, The Angels, the People and the Demons*. “Creation of the Holy Trinity, the world – all rational beings created, who are all the same by their nature and united with God by grace – was created in time, even though it has been with God’s wisdom and His creating power with no beginning”, according to his Holiness⁷².

With reference to the creation of the world, Evagrius Ponticus affirms that rational beings (angels, people, demons) have been good and perfect since the beginning, yet not in the meaning of absolute and positive perfection, which is the prerogative of God only. Therefore, Evagrius dares to affirm that rational creatures are sometimes “divine” or even “gods”.

Later on in the same chapter, Evagrius of Pontus focuses on the fall of the rational beings, who were happy to coexist in the Holy Trinity. With regards to their fall, Evagrius states that it originates in the evil being introduced into the world, which is “identified with not knowing, which is the exact opposite of knowing God”⁷³.

In Evagrius’ view, *the Angels* are “beings composed of essence and godliness, who, while moving, drifted apart to a lower extent from unification with God”⁷⁴.

The demons are the creatures that drifted away from God to the highest extent. They are opposed to angels in all aspects and they seek the perdition of men.

The third category of rational creatures, *people* are, by their nature, equal to the other ones. In terms of their drifting away from God, they stand right between the angles and the demons. “A first consequence of their fall is the destruction of the unity of their spiritual nature, as well as the disturbance of the natural order of the powers of the soul”⁷⁵.

From the eschatological teachings of Evagrius of Pontus, the patriarch Iustin Moiesescu develops themes such as the *Last Judgment, the Division of Heaven*, or the existence of hell.

As for the *Last Judgment*, Evagrius Ponticus says that all rational beings lead their right life in line with how deep down they have fallen. “After all beings have settled by the side of good or evil, the right judgment will come. As commanded by the righteous judge, all creatures will regain the bodies within which they lived, bodies which will be instantly turned into spiritual bodies. The creatures therefore renewed shall live in their new bodies until the end of time. Their bodies will not decay just like the body of Christ the Savior”⁷⁶.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 126.

⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 127.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 133.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 136.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 137.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 140.

The kingdom of heaven or the paradise, as it is also called, will be the reward of those who were good. This should not be interpreted as a certain place or a certain state that remains unknown to us, but as a state within ourselves. The angels are already in the kingdom of heaven, and this state of happiness is offered to people by God, in harmony with every person's actions. *The Hell*, just like the kingdom of heaven, is the continuation of life by bad people in this world. Evagrius tells us that the purpose of torturing sinners in hell is purification, and no sinner shall escape hell.

3. SPIRITUAL LIFE IN EVAGRIUS PONTICUS' VIEW

Enlarging upon the theme of *Christian Life*, as one finds it in Evagrius Ponticus' writings, Justin Moisescu also mentions that his works had a strong influence on the life of Christians in Syria in relation to whom Evagrius may be called "teacher by excellence". This appellation is sufficient for us to understand the impinge of his works on the orthodox mystics until late, in the 14th century. Many of his ideas can be found in works of Saint John Climacus, Saint John of Damascus, Saint Maximus the Confessor or Saint Symeon the New Theologian.

From Evagrius Ponticus' perspective, spiritual life means regaining the state of peaceful soul with which man was endowed by God as early as the creation and which man lost through committing sins. This spiritual undertaking, which is in fact an ascent of the soul up to the supreme happiness – unification with God in three persons, is achieved by exercising one's own will with the help of the divine grace. The will is tested through asceticism, which strengthens the soul and releases it from all influence which may come from the body and which may deviate it from the path of knowledge. In the birth of passions tying the soul to material pleasures, an important role is played by demons as powers through which evil manifests itself in the world.

As every Christian, be they monks or laymen, fights a personal fight against the evil, one understands that there is only one and the same spiritual life, even though, at first sight, laymen and monks do not always use the same means. The demonic works are everywhere, both in the desert and "in the world", and they come to surface in many and various ways. Following the example of Christ, the One who was tempted and stood against the devil using the word of the Scripture, Evagrius provides the ones in need with biblical answers to the thoughts coming from the enemy⁷⁷, thoughts which unrest the soul of the Christian and which the author reduces to eight: greed, lust, love for money, grief, anger, sloth, vainglory and pride. All the other passions originate in these sins.

The ascent up to gaining the kingdom of God is made up of three stages: "making" (πρακτική), "natural contemplation" (φυσική) and "contemplation of the Holy Trinity" or "theology" (θεολογία). The first stage is represented by the war against the passions towards gaining the virtues, the last of which being love which is understood as a passing door to the second stage: natural contemplation. Once the mind deprived of all passions reaches this stage, it perceives the reasons imprinted in the creation in a spiritual way. The next stage is the highest form of contemplation, the one of the Holy Trinity which is also called the absolute happiness.

⁷⁷ See *Antireticul mare sau replicile împotriva celor opt gânduri*, in Ieromonah Gabriel Bunge, *Akedia...*, pp. 195 – 208.

CONCLUSION

Analyzing Evagrius Ponticus' writings and given the depth of his theological ideas, one must admit that he is "the most fecund and most characteristic spiritual writer in the desert of Egypt" and, rightfully, "the father of our spiritual literature"⁷⁸, recognized both in the Eastern and the Western world, through the works of John Cassian. Furthermore, his works facilitated knowing and promoting, on a larger scale and in a much more accessible way, some ideas of two great Church theologians – Origen and Saint Gregory of Nyssa. A characteristic of his work is that his teachings are presented under the form of "predictions", sentences grouped by 100, as he is the first religious writer who uses this writing style.

In this study, the notable patriarch Iustin Moisesescu highlights Evagrius' exceptional ascetic, theological and philosophical background and focuses on the fact that "his works are even nowadays a testimony of his sound theological and philosophical knowledge, on the one hand, and of the great power of discernment of his mind, on the other hand. As early as the years spent in the desert of Pontus, he had started to learn the Christian dogmas and the ancient philosophical principles. In Egypt, he continues to widen his horizon by reading both the works of Origen, which had a decisive impact on his dogmatic or spiritual system, and the works of Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, the Great Atanasius, Serapion de Thmuis and Clement of Alexandria"⁷⁹.

By presenting in detail and with a scientific accuracy the life, writings and teachings of Evagrius Ponticus, patriarch Iustin Moisesescu enriches the Romanian and universal patristic literature with a work that stirs the interest of both the specialists and the people who are only eager to enhance their understanding of the Byzantine mystics. Analyzing his study, patrologist Iustin Moisesescu clarifies Evagrius' important position in the orthodox spirituality and removes all accusations of heresy launched in relation to this great theologian.

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⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁷⁹ Pr. prof. Ștefan Alexe, *Sfinții Părinți...*, p. 268.

The presence of Saint Apostle Andrew in Scitya- a historical reality of the Romanian Orthodox Church

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ABSTRACT

This article contradicts some historians, researchers or professors claim that there is no evidence to prove the presence of the Saint Apostle Andrew in Dobrudja. Researchers of history know that some sources are written, direct, and others unwritten. Undoubtedly, the origin of Romanian Orthodox Church is apostolic, due to the missionary activity of Saint Andrew the Apostle on the territory of Dobrudja district. The presence and sermon of the Saint Apostle Andrew in the Scythia Minor - today's Dobrudja - Romania, in the cities on the edge of Pontus Euxinus is clear, recorded by Eusebius of Caesarea in "Church History" and Romanian carols, folklore and place names.

Keywords: Saint Andrew the Apostle, Dobrudja; Scythia Minor; Romania.

INTRODUCTION

The Romanian Orthodox Church is of apostolic origin, being made after the sermon of St. Andrew the Apostle in Scythia, in the cities on the edge of Pontus Euxinus, as Eusebius of Caesarea shows us in his "Church History" and the carols, folklore and place names that attest to the presence Saint Andrew the Apostle on the territory of our country.

From a historical point of view, the ethnogenesis of the Romanian people is simultaneous with its Christianization. The Christian faith acted as a factor in the coagulation and perpetuation of the Romanian nation. Many centuries of Romanian culture were formed in monasteries and churches. Following the sermon of the Saint Apostle Andrew, the descendants of the Dacians, the worshipers of Zamolxis became disciples of Christ. "*The Geto-Dacians found salvation in the Gospel and at the same time felt the fulfilment of deep aspirations*"⁸⁰.

Christianity spread in the first centuries on the Romanian territory easily for the following reasons:

- The teaching of the Orthodox faith expresses the revealed truth, truly necessary for human existence.
- The representatives of both the Dacians and the Romans knew the Greek and Latin languages, which facilitated the preaching of the Gospel.
- The colonists and the Christianized Roman military units brought to Dacia passed on the Christian teaching. Roman officials were evacuated along with the

⁸⁰ Gheorghe Neagoe, *Aspecte ale continuității religiei geto-dacilor în Dacia romană*, în rev. Studii Teologice, Seria II, Anul XXX, Nr. 1-2, (1978), p. 141

armies, as it results from the biography of Aurelian, from the Augustan History (sublato exercitu et provincialibus)⁸¹, as well as the great landowners, merchants and the rich, to whom the Roman Empire could provide protection in the newly conquered provinces, which facilitated Christian preaching.

Christianity spread throughout the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic territory and not only in the southern part of the Danube. Thus we agree with the idea supported especially by the historian Vasile Pârvan, that the Romanian nation was formed not only in Dacia, but on a much larger space, which allowed it to inherit all the Eastern Romanity that developed in the Roman provinces of North and South of the Danube, in the extension of the Illyrian from the eastern Adriatic. The history of the Romanian people provides a clear example that highlights the Orthodox Church's concern for the nation.

1. SAINT ANDREW, THE APOSTLE OF THE GETO-DACIANS (SCYTHIANS)

The Saint Apostle Paul, since the apostolic age, stated in his Epistle to the Colossians that "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3, 11).

Saint Apostle Andrew, the brother of St. Apostle Peter, sons of the fisherman Jonah, was originally from Bethsaida, a town located on the shores of Lake Gennesaret (Sea of Galilee), in the province of Galilee, in the north of the Saint Land. Briefly, the missionary activity of St. Andrew the Apostle targeted Bithynia and Pontus, then passed to Macedonia, Thrace, Moesia and from here to Scythia Minor (today's Dobrudja – Romania), where it is very probable to have stayed over the winter in the cave that until today bears his name. Passing through Thrace, he reached Byzantium, descending through Macedonia and Thessaly, then to the city of Patras in Achaia (Greece), near the Gulf of Lepanto, where he was martyred, crucified on an X-shaped cross.

The historian Eusebius of Caesarea († 339), taking over the information from Origen, and from Tradition, states that the Apostles and their disciples spread Christianity throughout the world, as it follows: Thomas at the parthians (Persia and India); Andrew in Scythia; John in Asia; Peter in Galicia, Bithynia, Cappadocia, and Proconsular Asia; Bartholomew in India (southern Arabia), according to an oriental tradition and in Armenia; Matthew among the Jews, then to other Heathens.⁸²

Saint Andrew, Apostle of the Getae (Scythians). For us, Romanians, the activity of Saint Andrew is very important, because he is credited to have preached in the territory between the Danube and the Black Sea, later Dobrudja, known in ancient sources as "Scythia Minor".

Hippolytus the Roman († 235) recorded a tradition according to which the Saint Apostle "Andrew preached [the Gospel] to the Scythians and Thracians. He was crucified at Patras in Achaia, tied to an olive tree, and buried there."⁸³

The great patristic writer Origen († 254) recorded, in *Book III* of the *Commentaries on Genesis*, the preaching of the Saint Apostle Andrew to the Scythians. Historical sources call the inhabitants of the land between the Danube and the Black Sea Scythians, because this province of the Empire was called Scythia Minor, a memory of the ancient Scythians,

⁸¹ Mihai Bărbulescu, *Istoria României*, Enciclopedică, București, 1998, p.107

⁸² Eusebiu de Cezareea, *Istoria bisericească*, III, 1, în „*Fontes historiae daco-romaniae pertinentes*”, II, București, 1967, p. 15 (III, 1,24; V, 10).

⁸³ Hipolit Romanul, *Despre cei doisprezece Apostoli*, în „*Fontes historiae daco-romaniae pertinentes*”, I, București, 1964, p. 713.

being in fact the Daco-Romans in the Danubian-Pontic area. Therefore, most historians identify the Scythia mentioned by Eusebius of Caesarea with the territory between the Danube and the Sea, the future Roman province of Scythia Minor. This conclusion can also be deduced from the fact that the poet Ovidius (43 BC - 17 AD) complained in his work *Tristia* that he was exiled to Tomis (now Constanța, in Romania) among the Scythians. The Greek geographer Strabo (c. 58 BC – c. 21 AD) in his work *Geography*, understood by Scythia also today's Dobrudja or Scythia Minor. This name was also preferred in 297, by the Roman emperor Diocletian (284-305) who separated the province of Pontic Dacia from Lower Moesia, forming the province of Scythia Minor. Also, the life and martyrdom of St. Andrew the Apostle, recorded in the Synaxarion of the Constantinople Church, on November 30, states that St. Andrew the Apostle "*preached in Pontus, Thrace and Scythia.*"

In the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic lands, as evidenced by historical evidence, the Orthodox Church is organized in the first centuries after Christ, having its own hierarchy and administration, dependent on the Patriarchate of Constantinople, proven by the activity of the Diocese of Tomis, St. John Cassian or monks Scythians, by the Ulfila of the Goths, but also by the Tomitan hierarchs from the ranks of the local monks, participants in the ecumenical or local synods.

2. CERTIFICATION IN TIME OF THE PRESENCE OF THE SAINT APOSTLE ANDREA IN SCYTHIA MINOR

Christianity spread throughout the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic territory and not only in the southern part of the Danube. Thus, we disseminate the idea supported especially by the historians Vasile Pârvan and C. Giurăscu, according to which the Romanian nation was formed not only in Dacia, but on a much larger space, which allowed it to inherit all the oriental Romanity that developed in the Roman provinces. from the North and South of the Danube, in the extension of the Illyrian east of the Adriatic. The tradition of the preaching of the Saint Apostle Andrew in today's Dobrudja, recorded historically for centuries until now, is also affirmed in the old Romanian carols, folklore and toponyms, but also by some church books, for service. Thus, the carols and folklore works from Dobrudja or from the left bank of the Prut, as well as some toponyms (St. Andrew's cave, St. Andrew's brook) attest by the force of historical continuity its presence and preaching on these territories.

The tradition of the preaching of St. Andrew the Apostle in today's Dobrudja was resumed and recorded, in the eighth century, by the monk Epiphanius, and later, in the fourteenth century, by the Byzantine historian Nicephorus Callistus.⁸⁴

The latter informs us that: *after the Apostle Andrew preached in the cities of the Left Pontus inhabited by Greeks, Romans and Dacians, passing through Thrace, he reached Byzantium, and from here, descending through Macedonia and Thessaly, he reached the city Patras, from Achaia (Greece), near the Gulf of Lepanto, where he was to die a martyr's death, being crucified on an X-shaped cross, which to this day is called the Cross of St. Andrew.*⁸⁵

Mentions about the preaching of the Saint Apostle Andrew in Scythia Minor (today's Dobrudja), we also find in some service books and lives of saints, printed in Romania.

⁸⁴ Pr. Prof.Dr. Nicolae Șerbănescu, *1600 de ani de la prima mărturie documentară despre existența episcopiei Tomisului*, în rev. „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, (anul LXXXVII), București, 1969, nr. 9 - 10, p. 979

⁸⁵ Nichifor Calist, *Istoria bisericească*, II, 30, în „Patrologia greacă”, CXLV,col. 2031 - 2034; vezi și Pr. Prof. I. Rămureanu, *Sfinți și martiri la Tomis –Constanța*, în rev. „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, (anul XCII), București, 1974, nr. 7-8, p. 986

In his manuscript, *"The Lives of the Saints" from 1760, Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul (1750 - 1760) made the following mention: Thrace and Macedonia and those up to the Danube ...*"⁸⁶ Also, the *Synaxarium* for the month of November, printed in Râmnic, in 1778, reads as follows on the thirtieth day: and Thrace and Macedonia and those as far as the Danube, Thessaly, Hellas and parts of Achaia ..."⁸⁷ The news about the sermon of Saint Andrew the Apostle in Romanian was also confirmed by a series of older researchers in the field of church history, among which we mention the bishop Filaret Scriban⁸⁸ (1811 - 1873) and Bishop Ghenadie Enăceanu (1835 - 1898) of Râmnicu and the New Severin, who, analyzing what was reported by the priest Epiphanius regarding the preaching of Saint Andrew in Scythia, came to the conclusion that this land cannot be other than our Dobrudja, thesis also supported by J. Zeiller.⁸⁹

Metropolitan Irenaeus of Moldavia and Suceava emphasized with conviction that: "What is entirely credible and above all doubt is that St. Andrew preached the Gospel through our Dobrudja"⁹⁰ Referring to the church writers of the IV-V centuries, Professor Ion Barnea pointed out that they speak of the missionary activity of St. Andrew the Apostle in Scythia Minor (today's Dobrudja), most agreeing that the dawn of Christianity in our country has arisen since the century apostolic⁹¹.

The historian C. C. Giurescu, referring to the antiquity of Christianity in our country, said: "*It is certain that there were Christians in Dacia even before it left. Christianity was two and a half centuries old when the legions left (271-275); he had penetrated all the most important centers of the Roman Empire, including the Balkan Peninsula*".⁹² Also, P.P. Panaitescu notices: "*Daco-Roman Christianity began earlier than the inscriptions and monuments allow us to understand, that is, before Constantine the Great (325)*".⁹³

So, indirectly, the thesis is accepted that the Christian teaching was spread to us in the first century, a fact due, first, to the sermons of Saint Andrew the Apostle in Scythia Minor. Academician Rev. Mircea Păcurariu makes the following statement regarding the preaching of St. Andrew the Apostle in Dobrudja: "According to a tradition, recorded by the church historian Eusebius of Caesarea (around 324), St. Andrew the Apostle preached the Gospel in Scythia. Later tradition states that he moved from Asia to Scythia Maior (southern Ukraine today), then to Scythia Minor (today's Dobrudja), where he preached in Greek cities on the Black Sea coast. Some carols and folk creations from Dobrudja or from the left bank of the Prut, as well as some toponyms (the cave of Saint Andrew, the brook of Saint Andrew), also attest to its presence and preaching on these territories.

It means that part of the territory of our homeland was evangelized by one of our Saviour's disciples, Saint Apostle Andrew.

⁸⁶ Iacob Putneanul, *Viețile Sfinților*, ms. nr. 79, Putna, 1760. f. 263,

⁸⁷ *Minei pe luna noiembrie*, Râmnic, 1778, f. 198,

⁸⁸ Filaret Scriban, *Istoria Bisericească a românilor pe scurt*, Iași, 1871, p. 1-2.

⁸⁹ J. Zeiller, *Les origines chretiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l'Empire Romain*, Paris, 1918, p. 28-30.

⁹⁰ Irineu, Mitropolitul, *Istoria Bisericii Române*, ediția a V-a, Iași, 1939, p. 8

⁹¹ I. Barnea, *Recenzie asupra lucrării D. M. Pippidi, Intornealle fonti litterarie de cristianesimo daco-româna*, în rev. „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, București, 1945, (anul LXIII), nr. 1-2, p. 157.

⁹² Constantin C. Giurescu, *Formarea poporului Român*, București, 1973, p.116; a se vedea și: C. C. Giurescu și Dinu C. Giurescu, *Istoria românilor*, I, București, 1974, p. 140.

⁹³ P. P. Panaitescu, *Introducere în istoria culturii românești*, București, 1969, p. 16

3. CONCLUSION

Orthodox Christianity planted by the Church was, is and will be the main constitutive ferment of the Romanian consciousness and of Romania's identity, together with the Daco-Romanian fibre acquired in the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic space over time in Romanism. Undoubtedly, the origin of Romanian Orthodox Church is apostolic, due to the missionary activity of Saint Andrew the Apostle on the territory of Dobrudja district. The presence and sermon of the Saint Apostle Andrew in the Scythia Minor - today's Dobrudja - Romania, in the cities on the edge of Pontus Euxinus is clear, recorded by Eusebius of Caesarea in "Church History" and Romanian carols, folklore and place names.

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Science and Religion on the environmental crisis

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ABSTRACT

The environmental crisis today becomes an issue with important impact on our world. Everyone understands that it is very important to protect the nature, to limit pollution, and to rise the respect for all forms of life. On the other side, the world is confronted with the growth of population. To feed all population becomes a challenge for the rulers of states, especially on the poor countries. Degraded land, eroded soil, and decimated fisheries and forests will take many years to recover. For that it is important to connect all the scientists and representatives of states, and also the religious leaders. Through this paper I will try to underline the common point of view of scientists and religious people on the environmental issue. This paper is not an exhaustive one, but emphasizes the possibility of collaboration and common action for the sake of this world.

Keywords: environment; crisis; religion; actions; Christian Church.

INTRODUCTION

From the starting point of this paper I must say that the members of scientific and religious communities work together for the future of this planet. From 1990 until now, a series of conferences was held under the title “*Joint Appeal of Science and Religion for the Environment*”⁹⁴. This collaboration had as result some pragmatic considerations: people who share and express their concern can be more effective in education and political action if they work together.

These meetings gave the opportunity to know and to learn from each other. Examining the common points of view and the distinctive ones, the scientists and the religious members of community opened an interdisciplinary dialogue for the benefit of society.

1. THE SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTION ON THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

Presenting the point of view, science give us a complex understanding of the environmental impacts of our current agricultural, industrial and personal practices. The new discovers on the technical and industrial ground offer a new view of interdependence between humanity and nature. Nature is not an instrument, which can satisfy our wills, is a partner for the future. Without it we cannot exist.

Even if the scientists presented the impact of pollution on air, water and land on the 1960s and 1970s, on the 1980s and 1990s they made us aware of long-term global impacts:

⁹⁴ Andrey Chapman and Rodney Petersen, *Consumption, Population and Sustainability: perspective from Science and Religion* (Covelo, Calif: Island Press, 2000).

the climate changes and the loss of endangered species⁹⁵. The intensive agriculture eroded the topsoil, and had contributed to the deforestation of planet. Some studies sustained that the world population is growing up 80 million each year⁹⁶.

The theory of Thomas Robert Malthus, Anglican priest and professor of economy, is starting from the hypothesis of growth of population and the limitation of resources⁹⁷. For that it is necessary some wars and epidemics to limit the growth of population. Against his theory has fought Christian theologians from different traditions: Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant. They believe that human being has the right to live; even if the natural resources are limited, the science has developed or will develop the necessary technology to supply that. More than that, on the world there are a lot of waste of natural resources. A better administration of that, a good understanding of our role in the world will help to prevent the waste.

Other scientists recommend some particular policies of action based on the scientific estimates of the consequences of that policies. But the scientific proposals not always become laws on the state's decisions. On the other hand, the scientific proposals give advantage through the technology and economic policy to a group of citizens, not to all. Usually, the main burden of risks or indirect costs are supported by all. "*Policy decisions thus require ethical analysis and input from the social sciences and the wider culture as well as input from the natural sciences, even when the latter are as crucial as they are in decisions affecting the environment and sustainability*"⁹⁸.

The scientific community showed that there is an interdependence of all forms of life. While some ecosystems are resilient, others are vulnerable and fragile on the human actions. Diversity in the biosphere allows for both stability and adaptation to new conditions.

Our life style has many consequences over the environment. The future generations must deal with the impact of our technology: radioactive wastes from nuclear power plants; intensive agriculture; deforestation; pollution of the soil, waters and air; disappears of many species of plants, fishes and animals; global overwarming etc. Faced with that challenges, science tries to give an adequate response. For that members of scientific community have committed to an international agreement on the reduction of greenhouse emissions. On the agenda of meetings of great powers from world there is an important capitol about the reduction of pollution and protection of environment. On Europe, some of the states took in consideration this concern. For example, on Germany some of the cities forbidden the circulation of diesel cars. Also, Denmark decided that from 2025 will not sale any car which is using the fossil combustion.

Taking in consideration all these concerns, the cars industry tries to adapt, introducing hybrid and electric cars. For a long time period, the change will reduce the pollution on the atmosphere. But this measure must be completed with other ecological commitments.

⁹⁵ ***, *Tropical Deforestation and Species Extinction*, ed. J. Sayer and Timothy Whitmore (London: Chapman and Hall, 1993); ***, *Biodiversity II: Understanding and Protecting our Biological Resources*, ed. M.L. Reaka-Kudla (D.E. Wilson and E.O. Wilson, Washington: Joseph Henry Press, 1997).

⁹⁶ Lester Brown et al., *State of the World 1998* (W.W. Norton, New York, 1998); World Resources Institute, *World Resources, 1998-1999* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁹⁷ Nicolae Mladin, Orest Bucevschi, Constantin Pavel, Ioan Zăgrean, *Teologia Morală Ortodoxă (Orthodox Christian Morality)*, volume II (Alba Iulia: Reîntregirea Publishing House, 2003), 146.

⁹⁸ Ian G. Barbour, "Scientific and Religious Perspectives on Sustainability", *Christianity and Ecology. Seeking the well-being of Earth and Humans*, edited by Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2000), 387.

After an industrialized period, when the nations practiced an intensive agriculture using chemical fertilizers and pesticides, combined with monoculture using artificially produced hybrids, thinkers as Wes Jackson and Wendell Berry proposed to return to traditional, small- and medium-scale farming methods, that used crop rotation and biological methods. These methods will help to develop organic farms with benefits for all: land, plants, animals and human being.

On industry, profit-driven technologies that pollute the global elemental energy circles and generate catastrophic amounts of toxic and non-recyclable wastes will be replaced by appropriate technologies, called “*soft energy paths*” by Amory Lovins⁹⁹. The wastes of this industrial process will be reusable or recyclable. Technology will not be directed to consumerism, will be redirected to the protection and restoration of damaged ecosystems.

2. RELIGIONS’ WORKS ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGE

Confronted with ecological crisis, religions as the entire human kind, developed own point of view, starting from their understanding of life, and relationship with Divinity. Christian Church gives on expression of its concern for the nature and for entire cosmos. The Biblical writings affirm the value of the natural world. Created as God’s image, human being has capacity and responsibility for nature.

The Biblical perspective of creation, shared by Judaism and Christianity, started from God’s creation from nothing (*ex nihilo*). Only God is and has the existence. He is Creator of everything through His Word or His Son (Colossians 1, 15-16). The Holy Spirit was moving on the face of the waters (Genesis 1, 2), on the biblical description. The Holy Trinity is participating to the world’s creation. On the sixth day, God created the man. Created in the image of God, man will “*rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every living thing which goes flat on the earth*” (Genesis 1, 26). This kind of leadership demands responsibility and involvement for entire creation. “*The human person must be associated with, and not dissociated from, the created world, for it is through the human person that the created world must be transformed and offered to God. And so the world is freed from its natural limitations and becomes a bearer of life*”¹⁰⁰.

On the other hand, Ian McHarg’s raises some critics about Christian thoughts: “*Judaism and Christianity have long been concerned with justice and compassion for the acts of the man to man, but have traditionally assumed nature to be a mere backdrop for the human play*”¹⁰¹. Unfortunately, this kind of critics starts from poor understanding of Bible and theological thinking. “*Eastern theological thought has been concerned with the meta-historical or the spiritual dimensions of this world seen in the light of the kingdom of heaven and the liturgical nature of time. Facts and figures are considered in terms of the Holy Spirit; power is understood from the perspective of the Sacrament of the Eucharist; the world around is appreciated in relation to the heavens above*”¹⁰².

⁹⁹ Amory Lovins, *Soft Energy Paths: Towards a Durable Peace* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977).

¹⁰⁰ John Chryssavgis, “The World of the Icon and Creation: An Orthodox Perspective on Ecology and Pneumatology”, *Christianity and Ecology. Seeking the well-being of Earth and Humans*, edited by Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2000), 85.

¹⁰¹ Ian L. McHarg, “The Place of Nature in the City of Man”, *Western Man and Environmental Ethics: Attitudes Toward Nature and Technology*, ed. Ian G. Barbour (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1973), 175.

¹⁰² John Chryssavgis, “The World of the Icon and Creation: An Orthodox Perspective on Ecology and Pneumatology”, 91.

Relating to the land, the Western industrial-technological worldview is fundamentally based on the notion of property and ownership. Land is used for farming, herding, building etc. It is not considered as a gift of God made to the human kind, and the human being a steward, not an owner of this world.

On the Eastern thought the man received everything from God, being a steward of entire creation. Creation participates to the Eucharist. Greek metropolitan John Zizioulas believes that *“the world is entirely a liturgy, a cosmic liturgy which brings to God’s throne entire creation. The orthodox theology is a doxology, a liturgical expression; is a Eucharistic theology”*¹⁰³.

Humanity is responsible for entire creation. The creation of God and human being are interconnected and can become holy, as the Orthodox theology emphasizes. Human being and nature are not in opposition. They have a real relationship. On this relation, man, if wants to overcome the ecological crisis, must become a liturgical being.

On the same time, Christians live on this world using the ascetic theology. Through asceticism, he is not against material world, he is against “own will”, which mean personal satisfaction. Christian Church not believes that the material world is bad, as the Gnosticism believes. The material goods can be used for the benefits of man, without exhausting that.

The Orthodox theology has a quite different understanding by an animistic religions or pantheist believe. *“In the animistic religious view of primordial peoples all of nature – animals, plants, mountains, forests, streams, landscapes – was animated by living intelligences (called “spirits”), with which both shamans and ordinary people could be in communication”*¹⁰⁴. In Ralph Metzner’s consideration *“by destroying pagan animism and the shamanic traditions preserved in witchcraft, Christianity drastically severed itself from the roots of a regenerative spirituality grounded in the natural world”*¹⁰⁵.

The pantheism (everything is divine) or panentheism (the divine is in everything) are in contraction with Christian understandings of world. The confusion between creation and Creator is presented on the writings of contemporaneous scholars. For example, Alfred North Whitehead believes that God obeys to some general metaphysical principles. *“It is not true to say that God is permanent and the world fluent, as that the World is permanent and God is fluent. It is as true to say that God is one and the World many, as that the World is one and God many. It is as true to say that, in comparison with the World, God is actual eminently, as that, in comparison with God, the World is actual eminently. It is as true to say that the World is immanent in God, as that God is immanent in the World. It is as true to say that God transcends the World, as that the World transcends God. It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God”*¹⁰⁶.

In comparison with him, Saint John Chrysostom believes that someone who loses himself on the admiration to the creation, transforms nature into an idol. The world was made with weaknesses, so that everybody can see in that a sign for the care of God to the

¹⁰³ Ioannis Zizioulas, *Creția ca euharistie (Creation as Eucharist)* (Byzantine Publishing House: Bucharest, 1999), 11.

¹⁰⁴ Ralph Metzner, “The Emerging Ecological Worldview”, *Worldviews and Ecology. Religion, Philosophy and Environment*, Edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John A. Grim (Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 167.

¹⁰⁵ Ralph Metzner, “The Emerging Ecological Worldview”, 167.

¹⁰⁶ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, edition by David Ray and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 348.

human being. On this way, human being can avoid the trap of idolatry¹⁰⁷. Through its magnificence, the universe reveals something from the divine magnificence. Also, being imperfect, the universe cannot allow a confusion between creature and Creator.

On the context of ecological crisis, on Western tradition appeared some writers who speak about “*animal gospel*”¹⁰⁸. In comparison with this understanding, we see today, how our dogs and cats are better fed than most of the children in Africa. The current international economic order tends to perpetuate the third world’s role as a supplier of raw materials and cheap labor.

On relation with nature, man changes his attitude. The legends of Prometheus, Faust and Frankenstein all point to the dangers in the search for unlimited power. Christian religion proposes a different one: humility and moderation. Humility requires recognition of limitations in human character and social institutions as well as ecological limits. The natural resources are not limited. If we will waste them, if we will consume more than we need, we will exhaust them. On the time when we waste supplies, other people suffer by hunger and thirsty.

CONCLUSION

On the dialogue between science and religion, the ecological crisis represents one of the most important points of reflection. If the scientists are thinking in the terms of long time, the biologists and ecologists over many generations, religious traditions are taken in consideration a long-term view. It is necessary a common action for the benefit of all.

The scientific and religious community should cooperate for the benefit of society and the environment. Interdisciplinary dialogue has a good result in education and political decisions. The religious members listen the scientific research and conclusions, and help in spreading the word. Scientists bring the specific information about environment impact, and the religious members share a long-term global view, taking care of nature, as God’s creation.

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¹⁰⁷ Saint John Chrysostom, *Semons sur la Genèse*, collection Source Chretienne, 433 (Paris: Les Éditions du CERF, 1998), 36-38.

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