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**PAISIAN MONASTICISM IN NICHIFOR CRAINIC'S WORK**

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*Abstract*

This paper represents an analysis of Nichifor Crainic's work in terms of influence of paisian monasticism. As it is reflected in his work, St. Paisie Velichkovsky sits a top the pyramid or, rather, among those people who contributed through their works and their personality to influence intellectual and religious formation of this author. About St. Paisie, Crainic speaks not only with admiration, but also with reverence, giving to understand that the abbot is more than a man - a saint, so a man deified.

Abbot holiness places it in Nichifor Crainic's conscience above other valuable personalities, because holiness is evidence of a destiny fulfilled, as he himself is entitled courses mystical holiness - human fulfillment. Based on the experience of the Church, he knew that prayer, that the connection with God or His grace uninterrupted stay, should come from it. Moreover, he also knew that the congregation numerous St. Paisie worked perfectly if within them have been listening, prayer and struggle against human passions, but fell apart when passions and not the spirit of holiness took over monks, divided only because quarrels due abbots. In Crainic's view, Orthodoxy respects the variety of nature because it is the work of God.

**Keywords:** Nichifor Crainic's work; paisian monasticism;

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Nichifor Crainic (baptised Ion Dobre, was born December 22, 1889 at Bulbucata County Vlaşca or Giurgiu today, died on August 20, 1972 in Mogosoaia, near Bucharest) was a writer, poet, journalist, politician, director of magazine, philosophy (the creator of the current of thinkers), educator and theologian. Primary school followed in his village, but his father insisted very much like the young boy to "get big man" and out of poverty from Bărăgan. Thus, between 1904-1912 was a student at Theological Seminary in Bucharest, where he had merit scholarship throughout their studies. As he says, there has remained a pleasant memory on religious education here due to dry and little educational lessons in terms of piety and faith generally (Nichifor Crainic, 2015, pp. 90-91).

He had, however, a good education with great teachers like Iuliu Scriban. His classmate was Dumitru Cornilescu (1891-1975), the translator of Britain Bible and converted to Protestantism (Ioan I. Ică jr., 2010, p. 8). If not satisfied in terms of religious education, Nichifor Crainic leans on literary creation. He is passionate about literature and publishing under Nicolae Iorga magazines coordination.

Nicolae Iorga was the mentor under whose auspices he made in 1907 as a student literary debut in a magazine from Iasi, publishing in the coming years as a seminarian in various pseudonyms. (I.D. Nichifor, D.I. Crainic) and in famous publications as Ramuri from Craiova, Luceafărul from Sibiu, Viața Românească from Iași, but Semănătorul and Neamul Românesc coordinated by Nicolae Iorga. Continues to publish in the years 1912-1916, during which follows the Faculty of Theology of București. For his own tangle, engages as a singer at Zlătari Church. He noted the young professor of dogmatic Ioan Mihălcescu that it directs to apologetic, but "lack of spirituality makes his theological studies appear abstract, overly rationalist and historicist. In turn, the universities of Bucharest dominated by scientific positivism" (Ioan I. Ică jr., 2010, p. 8).

He gets bachelor degree in theology and publishes his first volum of poetry, Zâmbete în lacrimi (Angels in tears). He is very eager to priests and would not grab another road. "I taught seminary and studied tehology, testifies Nichifor Crainic. It was for me a desertion and a betrayal to break the line, which I traced a destiny. I was used to this line so deeply that I could not conceive different life and I always had a restraint against seminarians and theologians who deserted ". His dream was to become a priest anywhere else than Zlătari but the Bishop Conon refused to name him, despite the insistence and pressure brought upo by various personalities of the time, friends of Nichifor Crainic, Gala Galaction, Nicolae Iorga, I.G. Duca.

The events that followed them wasted not only the dream of being Zlătari priest, but a priest forever, because divorces first wife. Then The Second World War started, Romania defeat and death of his father throws him away from Bucharest. He is a sergeant deployed to the hospital in Iasi, working assiduously with articles and poems in Neamul Românesc of N. Iorga. Back in Bucharest, becomes editor of Dacia, led by Al. Vlahuță and thereafter Luceafărul, moved by Goga from Sibiu to Bucharest. In 1919 the volume Icoanele vremii containing articles and poems of the years during the Second World War.

In 1926 Crainic his literary pseudonym legalizes this and take effective management of Thought, aborted, Cezar Petrescu went to Paris, providing material its appearance almost uninterrupted 10 issues a year from January 1926 until August 1944.

Also, in 1926 Nichifor Crainic becomes professor at New College of Theology from Chisinau for six years where he teaches in the department of modern religious literature. The famous course on "Dostoevsky and Russian Christianity" mean the introduction of literary course the elements mystical Orthodox under clothes literature Crainic, "requiring first course of mystical Orthodox faculties of Theology, a priority Romanian in higher schools of theology in space panorthodox" (Ioan I. Ică jr., 2010, p. 9). On May 22, 1941, Crainic supported the Romanian Academy, the place remained open following the death of Octavian Goga.

Politically it on the far right and was adept religious traditionalist tendencies, claiming that Romania must remain faithful Christian Orthodox spiritual heritage.

According to its practical spirit, and he sought to do something to personal taste divine realities or rather, for the expert living God. Mystique, according to Nichifor Crainic's believe helped in this regard, because "mysticism teaches you to pray, religion in its essence is nothing but ecstatic prayer" (Nichifor Crainic, 2010, p. 215) or one that leads you to union with God. Instead of speculative or philosophical mysticism, he prefers the experimental because it "is the culminating experience of religion, or personal experience of union with God in prayer, in contemplation or ecstasy" (Nichifor Crainic, 2017, p. 69).

Sentenced to life imprisonment in 1945, he was arrested in 1947, through several prisons, including Văcărești and Aiud. During detention remained the same man distinguished and highly regarded by others. Here is some valuable testimony about this man: "At night, when he thought that the other cellmates sleep, get out of bed, kneel and pray, crying with sobs," (Viorel Gheorghiuță, 1994, pp. 260-261), says a former cellmate; "Sunday, especially, remembers D. Andronescu, after a short service officiated by the high priest, lectures Nichifor Crainic. One such conference, he kept his narrow audience a lesson in Orthodox mystic. He spoke so beautifully and convincingly that impressed him deeply even Professor John Petrovich, who is considered rather "free thinker" (Demostene Adronescu, 2009, p. 78).

Father Grebenea knew Nichifor Crainic in the prison: "To pass the time nicely, I asked to take a few mystical lessons. He made a lot of great exposure. He spoke about Dostoyevsky, Meister Eckart, and others from the East, Simeon the New Theologian etc." (Nicolae Grebenea, 2005, p. 124).

Ioan Ianolide about Nichifor Crainic:

"He is the famous Christian Romanian poet and one of the greatest poets of the world of Christians. He is a former university professor, historian and journalist. His poetic work is complemented by essays and mystical. His university lectures ascended into heaven the auditors. Crainic is the traditionalism and he focus on Byzantium. His Byzantine parentage spiritual trait of the Romanian people is structural, and nobody can deny this."

For his ideas, Nichifor Crainic had a long detention, during which he composed many poems that arrived outside where circulated illegally. But we hope that one day they will see the light of day. Poet in prison prayed deeply on his knees for hours. Yet this man of remarkable sensitivity was matched by an irrepressible sense. Due respect for his work and suffering endured will not talk about his human weaknesses. He regrettable compromises of conscience but his work remains pure and authentic Orthodox. He died as a loner, because he was still ostracized. Forgetting human mistakes, we appreciate the Christian poet and thinker image that will impress, so he will be read anytime, anywhere. Today there was silence over his work but one day will be placed in the place of honor culture" (Ioan Ianolide, 2012, pp. 305-306).

## **2. PAISIANISM IN NICHIFOR CRAINIC'S WORK**

### **2.1. Paisianism– „golden age of Romanian Orthodoxy”**

For Nichifor Crainic, paisianism was a thread or a benchmark against which the sample elite real spirit of a work of a current or a person. But where's the attraction to this phenomenon? The answer is simple: attracted Orthodox mystique, because it was only to satisfy his deep spiritual aspirations, one that was complete, seamless and fully justified. So, the mystical come to appreciate and acquire principles.

In 1927, Nichifor Crainic became professor at the newly established Faculty of Theology in Chisinau, the department of "modern religious literature". The first course was devoted to Dostoevsky and Russian Christianity, and he was to be followed by others dedicated to religious German and Spanish literature. Reading Dostoevsky's work convinced the young theologian and poet of the need to deepen Orthodox mysticism. The fascination of Dostoevsky's work genius was because its substrate notified Orthodox monastic spirit and felt in assonance with the Russian novelist especially by paisianism that has bridged and smooth between the two Orthodox traditions. Nichifor Crainic, loving paisianismul recognized it in Dostoevsky's work about he started to love more. Therefore, he prefers him most, as he himself says: "The emergence of the most important novelist of the world, which is Dostoevsky genius orthodoxy modern proved that you do not need any mythology to raise art to heights untouched. Russian writer not modeled after the block works as Racine and Cornelle ancient tragedy, but after hagiography church discipline. The novel "Idiot" is in fact a modern hagiography and literary "Brothers Karamazov" is an apology of paisianism. Source of inspiration is Christian conscience tragic split between inner hell of sin and divine love paradise" (Nichifor Crainic, 2010, p. 42).

Nichifor Crainic speaks always about paisianism with joy just because this "phenomenon" happened in our country, seek values not far, but in the bosom of our people." Movement of Hesychasm are important for Romanian Orthodox Church, too, because of the paisianism. This current is a vivid reflection of Hesychasm from Athonite Hesychasm, because the paisianism is not a culture movement, but a movement of mystical content itself. Paisie [Velickovski, 1722-1794] is a practitioner of mystical Hesychasm and author from whom we have left precious treatise on the prayer to Jesus The Survivor, who is hesychasm mental prayer "(Nichifor Crainic, 2010, p. 48).

Nichifor Crainic believes that due to the Saint Paisie from Neamt, "on the threshold of the XIX-th century, Neamt Monastery playing field the ecumenical role of Sinai and Atos"(Nichifor Crainic, 2010, p. 125). Moreover, he thinks that paisian era from Neamt Monastery is the most flourishing period in the history of our Church: "At the end of the eighteenth century, The Neamt Monastery becomes the supreme spiritual irradiation center for the entire Orthodoxy. He is now what was in centuries XI and XIV Athos and Sinai in VI century. Perhaps our church forefathers never did acylated most prolific creative flame of the Holy Spirit currently. From bishops to monks the same impetus of divine transfiguration. I am certain that if Jesus does not punish us for moral unworthiness slumps that followed and if he still covered in

glory nation, erecting all historical humiliations, the rich mercy was conquered by the age of paisianism transfigured. It's golden century of Romanian Orthodoxy" (Nichifor Crainic, 1993, p. 150).

## **2.2. Paisianism, cultural movement or mystic" phenomena"**

In Nichifor Crainic's view, St. Paisie Velichkovsky hasn't created a cultural phenomenon, but a theological and mystical. Indeed, cultural work undertaken by Saint Paisie and his communal facilitate access to sources of wisdom of the Fathers, and thus they are perfect through prayer, ascetic and others. These ideas are shared by The Father Ioan I. Ică jr: "An authentic interpretation of "paisianism" must take exactly and inevitably the historical and spiritual horizon immanent reality that is meant to be understood. In the case of Paisie is clear that the abbot did not want to go so, the cultural pantheon of humanity "as the kingdom of God, that he was not interested so its national affiliation as the mystery of its adoption and its community God and for Filocalia he was not "a fundamental book of European culture" or national but simply practical breviary showing "every person how to purify, light and save his/her soul". (This does not mean at all that experience ascetic-spiritual sense not deep spiritual dynamics of the era. On the contrary) (Ioan I. Ică jr., 2010, p. 76).

Nichifor Crainic, theologian and cultural personality, has the merit of recourse paisian's substance work and not aligned with the general trend of study St. Paisie operates only in terms of its bookish. "It is deeply regrettable, he says, that our historians who have dealt with this age, whether secular or theological, I have closely observed the very essence of paisianism. This substance is eminently mystique. It consists of raising the spirit of the usual monastic psalmody height sublime contemplation. Paisian new spirit can be summed up in two words: study and contemplation. Meaning not simple satisfaction theological curiosity, be it as legitimate, but deep intellectual preparation for contemplation. If we ignore this stone light of paisianism movement there is only a theological and cultural value, it was counted so far in a way to understand all peripheral" (Nichifor Crainic, 2010, p. 308).

Moreover, even the Saint Paisie testifies in his autobiographia to that purpose in coming paisian's congregation from Moldova was not a revolution of monastic life, but salvation: "Seeing me the approaching end of my life and thinking that everything writing can be forgotten, I thought that at least a part can be known in writing about this holy synod of holy fathers, brothers and beloved sons of my spiritual activity, which, in the name of Christ, gathered to me for salvation of their souls" (underlined. b.) (Cuv. Paisie de la Neamț Velicikovski, 2015, 102).

If we take an insight into Optina's monastic specificity, as the place of the most perfect perpetuation of the paisian spirit, one can see without much effort that spiritual paternity is the essence of paisianism, which has been conveyed alongside the practice of the Prayer of Jesus in the stasis of at Optina. The Father Ioan I. Ică jr. even claims that the paisianism still throws a last wave of light in Romanian Orthodoxy through Father Ioan Kulighin, as a symbol of this paisian fatherhood:" Not as a system of monastic organization, but as a spiritual tradition of spiritual fatherhood and Jesus' prayer, "paisianism" returns to Romania in the years 1944-1946 through the enigmatic figure of Father Ioan Kulighin ("the stranger"). The refugee from Valaamo, one of the last bearers of the spirit of Optina, ignites at Antim the flame of the "Rugul Aprins" and the "Romanian Filocalia hatching" of the 1950s, whose protagonists will be martyred between 1958-1965 in the communist prisons (from Dej). One of the Providence privileged witnesses of this unique "time" of contemporary Romanian Orthodox spirituality, Archimandrite Andre Scrima, owes us the most lucid evaluations of "paisianism" ever emanating. Paisie "embodies the type of spiritual father for his time," because "at the center of the Paisian" is nothing more than "spiritual paternity", "grace in the Holy Spirit" (as the letter of Father Ioan Kulighin în Andre Scrima, Timpul Rugului Aprins, 1996, pp. 23-27).

## **2. 3. The double essence of Paisianism: Jesus' Prayer and Being Abbot as a model for monks**

Nichifor Crainic believes that "the essence of paisianism lies in the Jesus's prayer," and rightly says this, given that St. Paisie taught and strongly urged the monks to this hesychast work. Regarding this prayer and the entire teaching of the Filocalia Fathers related to it, Nichifor Crainic firmly states that this is specific to the Eastern tradition and expresses most faithfully the spirit of Orthodox piety. Therefore, he says, "in the spiritual life of the West, we can not find a similar form. It's the exclusive property of the East. Through both the doctrinal essence and the method, and not less by its overwhelming historical practice, ranging from ancient times to the prominent Russian abbesses of our time, it is the most

widespread Orthodox contemplation. Transmitted from a spiritual parent, such as from a master, to an apprentice, from generation to generation, and shrouded in jealous discretion of holy things, the Prayer has kept its originality untouched. When in 1782 the treatises of "practical and theoretical philosophy" worshiped in this way of contemplation and gathered under the title of Filocalia, were printed by Nicodim Haghioritul for the first time in Venice, all the copies up to one were brought to the East. This retail, which is nothing more than the echo of a traditional discipline, indicates precisely the confessional consciousness of exclusive belonging. The Jesus's prayer almost confuses with the spiritual life of Orthodoxy" (Nichifor Crainic, 1938, p. 217).

The work of Saint Paisie is monumental both for its value and for its broad influence in the space of Orthodoxy. However, before applying his new Rule in Moldavian monasteries, the abbot Paisie asked for the blessing of the church leadership at that time, as Crainic states: "The great monastic reform he has made of a universal value for modern orthodoxy consists of the regulation of public life from the monasteries of the prayer of Jesus. He suddenly raises the level of this public life from mechanical psalmody to the inner discourse of meditation and contemplation. This is definitely clear from the monastic rule made by him in Athos and approved by the Metropolitan and the Council of Moldavia when Paisie placed an abbot in Dragomirna in 1764" (Nichifor Crainic, 2010, p. 311).

This tells a lot, that the Abbot and the community do not come as rebels of the Athos, but even as persecuted and with a sincere desire for salvation and not to do the teachers in the Romanian lands. St. Paisie came with a non-personal, but philosophical vision, in that it was proved that it was not a pure or exclusively anahoretic work, but equally well could be appropriated in the cenobitic life. To this end, the Jesus's prayer is ordained as an essential rule for every monk, as Crainic says: "We do not want to say that before this prayer was not known in the Romanian Countries and Russia, which were in constant connection with the Great Church of the East. In its system of organization of monastic life, Paisie introduces it, however, as a superior rule of daily prayer for every monk" (Nichifor Crainic, 2010, p. 308).

In other words, the whole Saint Paisie Rule for the life of monks in the community was aimed at favoring the creation of an outer climate, especially interior for the spirit for the constant work of the Jesus's Prayer called the Heart's Prayer.

Here is a part of the requirements of St. Paisie: "He commanded that none of the brethren should call anything" mine "or" yours "in any way, but to have everything what God would give them, for that there will be between them a single thought and love. The necessities of necessity were given to all in common, so that obedience to the abbot and the whole might be guarded, and the breaking of his own will and judgment, and the submission of all in the fear of God. In the monastery, the obedience of the kitchen, the bakery, and the other, were to be made by the brethren themselves, without being used to commit ministers or minions. The kind of craftsmanship of life should have been done by brothers serving each other in the fear of God as the Lord Himself. The disobedience, the opposition in the word and the self-ordination (idiorrhymia) in the service of the people, through which the divine commandments are broken, should have been thrown out, and godliness, humility, unanimity, and love should have reigned: murmuring and keeping the mind of evil could not take place. At common obediences, silence should be guarded by the prayer on the lips (subl. n.)" (Cuv. Paisie de la Neamț Velicikovski, 2015, 247).

Because the work of the prayer of the mind also involved many temptations, the abbot Paisie decided that each day in the evening, each monk would make the discovery of the spiritualist's thoughts so that the labors might be increased and the monks would not fall into various deceit or inability. He also decided on a daily study of the Fathers for guidance and encouragement. He himself studied the Philocalian Fathers, bending himself especially on their words of prayer, such as that of St. Anthony the Great, the Holy Philotheus, St. Isidiah, the Holy Diadochus, the Holy Talas, Saint Simeon the New Theologian, of St. Nicholas the Monk, of St. Isaiah and others. For this reason, Nichifor Crainic once again argues that the work of the ascetic literature has nothing to do but the spiritual use or the rule of the monks:" The books they are looking for are the hesychast ones. And he does not direct them and will not translate them from purely cultural interest, but to the needs of his spiritual life and his brothers and sisters. The new rule of this community was now formed and will remain in Athos even after its departure" (Nichifor Crainic, 2010, p. 310).

Nichifor Crainic draws attention to an important aspect of the mystical of the heart's prayer as St. Paisie sees it, namely, that for those who advance in the practice of this work prayer becomes a constant heaven within them. Therefore, "The Abbot Paisie calls the Jesus's prayer as a paradise prayer. The mystic who practices Jesus's prayer aspires to the restoration of lost paradise. This restoration means the contemplation of the eschatological paradise, the vision of the new heaven and the new earth beyond time. The eschatological paradise becomes, for the mystic absorbed in permanent prayer, an inner reality, even during earthly existence. This sublime happiness of contemplation is shared by man with the whole being. The life that follows mystical perfection is a real paradise.

As we have said before, the paradise is a state of infinite solidarity with the creative world. " So, the more prayer descends from the mind to the heart, the more the spiritual state of the kingdom is to taste. Obviously, this belongs to the last stage in the prayer work, as Crainic states: "Paisie clearly distinguishes the two phases of Jesus' s prayer: meditation or the active phase, which he calls" work or action "and contemplation or passive phase, on who calls it a "vision" (...) The active phase is for beginners, the passive phase is for saints" (Nichifor Crainic, 2010, p. 315).

Besides the prayer of Jesus practiced intensely and with the order of the monastic community, Nichifor Crainic sees spiritual fatherhood or being abbot as the second and equally important characteristic of Paisianism. In the monastery, the image of the abbot appears not as an administrative but as a leader not only for the public, but also for the laity. The elder does not become an abbot except in the way of obedience and the practician for the Heart's paryer. This link is also remarked by Crainic: "The monastery has a religious personality besides the abbot, but not imposed by the exceptional power of the spirit. The abbot is a director of spiritual consciousness for the monks, for the common people and for the intellectual seekers of God alike. The model is Abbot Paisie. And these abbots have the greater influence on souls as they prove to be more intimidated by the mysterious Jesus's prayer" (Nichifor Crainic, 2010, p. 313). Indeed, in postpasian monasticism, the spiritual authority of the abbot became impressive because St. Paisie emphasized not only the practice of the prayer of the heart, but also the necessity of full obedience to the abbot and discovery of his thoughts. The venerable Varsanufie of Optina also confesses: "Do you see what kind of respect they all have to the abbot's will, that even the highest authority of the Eucharist and church did not dare to change the commandments and prohibitions of the abbot" (Nichifor Crainic, 2010, p. 313).

### **3. CONCLUSION**

Being a deep spirit, Nichifor Crainic chose in his career as models only chosen spirits. He was very selective and was not content with superficiality. Seek the authentic, the true value and judge them all through the prism of the eternal Truth -Jesus Christ. If a person, work, cultural, socio-political, or religious current was in perfect rhyme with the Person of Christ and His Gospel, then he also invested his trust and devotion with some of those. Dostoevsky has tremendously appreciated his introspection capacity not only in the phenomenological complex of psychology but deeper in the states of the human spirit that struggle between the Spirit of God and the spirits of darkness. Crainic approached the Dodoievskian opera even more so since he recognized in this the authentic scent of Orthodoxy, which he had also learned in the Filocalia writings and especially in the knowledge of paisianism.

Why do we say that Paisianism was the culminating light for Crainic's cultural, religious, political and economic optics? Even though the entire Filocalia literature served to outline his orthodox pure thought, Paisianism was his preference primarily for being an exceptional phenomenon that developed so harmoniously and thriving in our humble country, and he never hesitated to highlight the values of our nation. Although a nationalist convinced, Nichifor Crainic never stumbled upon the fact that St. Paisie's community was a multinational one, which could bring, as many, suspicions of a glorious monopolization of the Romanian monastic life. He, above all, recognized in the Paisian phenomenon the genius of Orthodoxy, which can be both national and ecumenical. Secondly, St. Paisie, along with his entire work, was close to Nichifor Crainic. For him, this was of great importance because he did not want to speak only of a distant past of the life of the spirituality of the Romanian people, who, even though famously, was considered by most as an inert, defeated by history, the adept of a living Orthodoxy, permanently

animated by the same faith. It is through this living faith that the Church has the power to enliven the whole life of the nation in all its spheres, and Crainic also supported it in its work and actions.

In Crainic's view, Orthodoxy respects the variety of nature because it is the work of God. The Orthodox Church is "ecumenical in spirit ... [and] private or national in the form of organization. It is self-taught in administration and universal in dogma and aspiration." (Nichifor Crainic, 1997, p. 121). The community of Saint Paisie, made up of monks of different nationalities, but spending in one faith and consciousness, is an enlightening example for this Orthodox genius.

As far as Crainic's optics about political and economic systems are concerned, it must be said that he affirmed and supported only that system that is based on the principles of our Christian life. Based on the experience of the Church, he knew that everything must come out of prayer, that is, from the constant bond with God or from the unbroken stay in His Grace.

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