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The review publishes studies, translations from Holy Fathers, notes, comments and book reviews.

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St. Constantine the Great and Christianity

Holy Emperor Constantine and his mother, Empress Helena were rightly given the nickname of the Apostles, due to the immense service they brought to the young Christian religion, contributing significantly to its spread. The meaning of the Edict of Milan, its consequences and other actions of the two emperors, can only be guessed, but we can not fully understand how the history of Christianity would have been without such measures. Nevertheless, history doesn't work with probabilities, so that the life and the works of St. Constantine the Great can be seen integrated into the broader plan of divine providence.

The conversion of Emperor Constantine the Great must be understood as a process, not as an event that happened suddenly. The same thing happened with his religious policy. Once converted to Christianity, the king will manifest constantly in this direction, even if he will keep the pagan title of Pontifex Maximus. Since 312, when he converted to Christianity and up to his baptism, which happened before his death in 337, Constantine will draw nearer and nearer to Christianity. The fact is that before the confrontation with Maxentius, his life has manifested a fundamental change. The real change could be influenced by the family of late emperor Galerius and other persecutors or different contemporary events. Although the political and military interests in adopting the new religion were not excluded, they are unlikely, because the number of Christians in the army was reduced, the senatorial class was composed largely of Gentiles, and the foreign policy had no significance within lots of Christian polytheistic states that could not make alliances on religious grounds.

The classical story about his conversion places this event in the year 312 when the emperor had a vision before the battle with Maxentius. Some Romanian and foreign specialists are skeptical about the authenticity of the „legends” about the Christianing of St. Constantine the Great, but agreed

that the work *Vita Constantini* attributed to the church historian Eusebius of Caesarea contains an „eusebian core”. In addition, we are dealing with some interpolations. Regarding this crucial moment in the life of the saint king two ancient authors, Eusebius and Lactantius, offer two different versions. Eusebius places that revelation in Gaul, while Constantin was heading to Italy (*Vita Constantini* I, 28-30). He says that at noon, he would have discovered the sign of the cross, on the sky, accompanied by the inscription: „*Hoc signo victor eris*” - „*En tuto nika*” (by this sign you will conquer). And at night, in his sleep, he would have been commanded to make a banner (*labarum*) after the prototype dreamed of, which will be made the next day. Unlike Eusebius, Lactantius only talks about a dream St. Constantine had on the eve of battle with Maxentius, after which he ordered the monogram of Jesus to be affixed on the shields of his soldiers. The battle against Maxentius was held near Rome, at Milvius’s bridge (*pons Milvius*). A sufficient argument for the credibility of this revelation would be the inscription on the Triumphal Arch of Constantine, near the Colosseum, where appears the statement: „*instinctual divinitatis*” ie „under divine urge”. In addition, Eusebius reports that Constantine said, under oath, that the signs seen convinced him of the power of Christ and led him to convert to Christianity.

In the following year (313), together with Licinius, Constantine gives the edict of religious tolerance in Mediolanum (Milan today). The drafting and the implementation of this edict, is well known in the history of the Christian Church. The authors of this edict are known, although little is spoken about Emperor Licinius because he will betray the decisions taken at Milan and Nicomedia in the year 313, turning into a persecutor king. This explains why the full merit for the issue of the Edict was transferred to one man: St. Constantine the Great. Due to the Edict of Mediolanum in 313 the king not only granted Christianity freedom of expression, but also protected it. After this time, several laws were given, that clerics were exempted from municipal functions, giving them significant subsidies and thus giving them the chance to devote themselves only to the church service. Christianity will become one of the religions of the Roman Empire, with free practice and the right to recover the property lost during the persecutions. The existence of these goods shows that, during the short

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periods of peace, Christianity was a religion well organized, with places of worship, and other property owned by the whole community. From now on, the Edict will create not only a restauration of the Church property, but will generate a religious, social, political mutation, very difficult to foresee at that time, for the Christian life will radically change the mentality of ancient man.

Christianity will spread everywhere, finally imposing itself to the Greco-Roman polytheism. Heresies will arise from the lack of spiritual discernment, from the heresy of life, but also from the lack of doctrinal settlement in such a short time of reflection on the divine truths of the Scripture. The Edict of Milan will break the bounds of a theological thinking that couldn't run freely because of the persecutions of the past centuries. Now, lots of theories appear, but the ecclesial body will react through those men who, over the centuries, will be called the Holy Fathers of the Church. They will place the theological thinking on the safe grounds of the dogmas based on the Holy Scripture. In this process, St. Constantine the Great has a well-defined place, because he will convene and preside the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325, in which the 318 Fathers will fight Arianism and will specify the Orthodox teaching about God the Father and the Son, in the first seven articles of the Creed.

Moving the capital to Constantinople may be mentioned in this context of drawing nearer to Christianity as, the new capital will be a Christian one, the king adorning it not with pagan temples, but with churches and Christian buildings. The city will be dedicated by its founder to the Blessed Virgin, and on the occasion of the inauguration on 11th May 330, a special office was celebrated in Hagia Irene, while the pagan people were praying for his prosperity in the temples. Moving the capital to Constantinople had a high political and religious importance, awaking later rivalry between their bishops placed at equal rank with canon 3 (Second Ecumenical Council) and 28 (Fourth Ecumenical Council).

The particular concern manifested by Saint Constantine the Great towards the Christian Church, striving to ensure its unity, started not only from a deep religious feeling, but also from practical and political needs. He was convinced that the unity of the Empire had to be compatible with the unity of faith. Empire defense, internal order and unity were the goals

pursued throughout his life by Constantine the Great. But beyond all these calculations, the king will remain a constant supporter of Christianity, even if he was baptized only on his deathbed (337), and he received the baptism from Eusebius of Nicomedia who was not a stranger to arianism.

Deac. Caius Cuțaru

STUDIES AND ARTICLES

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God of Life lead us to justice and peace. An Orthodox Interpretation of the 10th World Council of Churches (WCC) Assem- bly Theme from Biblical Perspective ¹

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to provide a reflection on the theme of the 10th Assembly of the WCC from an orthodox perspective, using mainly biblical quotations. The author argues that the expression “God of life” needs to be interpreted in a Trinitarian way. The Holy Trinity is the Creator, the Redeemer and the Sanctifier of the world. God of Life implies all three dimensions of the relationship between God of Life and creation. Justice and peace are resulting from the life that God grant us. It is not our justice and our peace to which we are led by God of Life, but His justice and peace. We as Christians are called to integrate ourselves in God of Life’s justice and peace. Church plays an important role in this integration, however God of Life’s justice and peace is addressed to a larger constituency than the limits of the Church. The effort of integration in the justice and peace of God of Life is an ongoing one and it will be accomplished in *eschaton*.

Keywords

Ecumenism, WCC Assembly Busan, God of Life – Biblical, Justice and Peace - Biblical

¹ This study is a developed form of a keynote paper presented in the Conference of Younger Theologians on the 10th WCC Assembly theme, Bangkok, Thailand, 3-7 July 2011.

Introduction

The theme of a WCC Assembly – and this affirmation applies also for every Assembly theme of every ecumenical organisation – plays a central role in developing its theological reflections, in choosing and conducting the Bible studies, prayers, discussions and in setting up the mandate that the Assembly as “the supreme legislative body governing the World Council of Churches” needs to hand over to WCC governing bodies and staff for the next seven years.² That is why a proper theological reflection on the Assembly theme from various perspectives is needed. In this short reflection on the Assembly theme, I will try to interpret it from an Orthodox perspective, using mainly, but not exclusively, Biblical quotations. In this way I want to emphasize that, as for other Christian traditions, the inspired word of God which is contained in the Holy Scriptures represents also for us the Orthodox, the foundation of our believe. While reflecting on the theme of the 10th Assembly of WCC, I will focus on two aspects: (1) the interpretation of the expression “God of Life” and (2) what is means to be lead by God of Life to justice and peace.

God of Life is the Triune God

According to the Book of Genesis, “God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1: 1),³ which means in an Orthodox understanding, the entire universe, as well as the unseen world of angels. The creation of the world is the result of the inter-Trinitarian collaboration between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. While in the common Trinitarian terminology only God the Father is called the “Creator” of the world, as God the Son is called the “Savior” or the “Redeemer” of the world and God the Holy Spirit is called the “Sanctifier” of the World, the Orthodox triadology, deeply rooted in the Bible, teaches that the creation, the salvation and the sanctification of the world are the result of the action

² http://www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/2006pdfs/GEN_09_Constitution_and_Rules.pdf.

³ The biblical quotations are from *The Holy Bible containing The Old and New Testaments, Revised Standard Version*, The Bible Societies, Swindon, 1971.

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of the entire Holy Trinity in relationship with the created world. The designations of God the Father as “Creator”, of God the Son as “Savior” and of God the Holy Spirit as “Sanctifier” expresses which Person of the Holy Trinity is particularly responsible for that act in relationship with the created world. These names which we ascribe to each Person of the Holy Trinity express their *iconomic* relationship with us as part of God’s creation. It is crucial to underline however, that these acts are fulfilled by each Person of the Holy Trinity in perfect collaboration with the other Persons of the Holy Trinity.

God the Father or the “Creator” created this world in intimate and perfect collaboration with God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Scriptures certify that the world was created through the “Word of God”: “all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.” (John 1: 3); “yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (I Corinthians 8: 6); “...for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities – all things were created through him and for him” (Colossians 1: 16); “but in the last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.” (Hebrews 1: 2).

The Holy Scriptures acknowledge the participation of the Holy Spirit in the creation of the world. The first chapter of Genesis mentions that “the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the water” (Genesis 1: 3). In a patristic understanding, that means that the Holy Spirit participates actively in the act of creation. St. Basil the Great († 379), using earlier exegesis on this text, explains it as follows:

“How then did the Spirit of God move upon the waters? The explanations that I am about to give you is not an original one but that of a Syrian⁴ ... let us understand, that is, prepared the nature of water to produce living beings: a sufficient proof for those

⁴ St. Basil refers here either to Eusebius of Samosata († 380; for more details see art. *Eusebius von Samosata*, Markus Vinzent in *Religion in Geschichte and Gegenwart*, vol. 2, p. 1679) or to Ephrem Syrus († 373; for more details see art. *Ephraem Syrus*, Peter Bruns in *Religion in Geschichte and Gegenwart*, vol. 2, p. 1351) (See footnote 1435, p. 196, as footnote 4 of this study).

who ask if the Holy spirit took an active part in the creation of the world.”⁵

A similar explanation is given by St. John Chrysostom († 407): “What is meant by that part of the text <The Spirit of God moved over the water?>. It seems to me to mean this, that some life-giving force was present in the waters.”⁶ That is why the Nicean-Constantinopolitan Creed calls the Holy Spirit “the Lord and Giver of Life.”

But the most well-known place in the Bible that acknowledges the participation of the entire Holy Trinity in the act of creating this world is the one that describes the creation of the human being: “Then God said: <Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;” (Genesis 1: 26). This apparently mysterious “Let us...” is explained in the Orthodox tradition as being an “inter-trinitarian consultation” regarding the creation of the human being as the “crown of God’s creation.” It emphasize that the human being has been created in a special way. While the rest of creation has been brought into existence only by the power of the word of God, the human being has been created through a special gesture of the Triune God.

The act of creation is only one dimension of God of life’s action in the world. Part of life-giving is also *the act of salvation*. God the Son is the Redeemer of the world. We know from the Holy Scriptures that he is the promised “Savior” of Israel (Acts 13:23); that in Him as “God” and “Savior” rejoiced Elisabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist (Luke 1:47); that he was presented by the “angel of the Lord” to the afraid shepherds as “Savior” (Luke 2:11). The Apostles preached Him to the world as “our God and Savior Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1: 1; 1:11; 2: 20; 3:2; 1 Timothy 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; 2 timothy 1:10; Titus 1:3-4). We as Christians recognize and witness Him as “head” and “Savior” of the Church (Ephesians 6: 23); we do so because the Samaritans did the same by saying: “we believe, for we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world” (John 4: 42); the first Christians testifies “that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14). Finally the Incarnated Son of God will be our Savior also in heaven (cf. Philippians 3: 20)

⁵ St. Basil the Great, *The Hexaemeron*, Omil I, 6 in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 2-08, Philip Schaff (ed.), Grand Rapids, 2003, p. 195-196.

⁶ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily III*, 4 on Genesis in *Homilies on Genesis 1-17*, trans by Robert C. Hill, *The Fathers of the Church*, America Press, 1999, p. 41.

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As Redeemer of the world, our incarnated Lord is also life of the world. He presented Himself to the world as “the resurrection and the life” (John 11: 25), “the bread of life” (John 6: 35) and “the living bread” (John 6: 51). He has life and gives it to those that believe in him: “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men (John 1: 4). He is the “Son of Man ... whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3: 15-16). He is the source of our eternal life that so many people seek, because He has life in himself: “for as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the son also to have life in himself” (John 5: 26). Our Savior is the only source of eternal life: “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him” (John 3: 36). As Christian, “we know that we have passed out of death into life” (1 John 3: 14) and are ready to witness our Life-giver to the world. We follow His commandments because we know that in following them it means for us “eternal life” (John 12: 50).

As entire Holy Trinity is involved in the act of creation, the same applies for the act of salvation. God the Son is called the Savior, but God the Father and God the Holy Spirit play a crucial role in the act of our salvation. The incarnated Son of God is sent into the world by God the Father: “for the words which the Father has granted me to accomplish, these very words which I am doing bear me witness that the Father sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness to me” (John 5: 36-37); “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 6: 44); “As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me” (John 6: 57); “I bear witness to myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness to me” (John 8: 18); “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded and came forth from God” (John 18: 42); “For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak.” (John 12: 49); “He who does not love me does not love keep my words; and the word which you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me” (John 14: 24).

The Holy Spirit prepares Son of God’s coming into the world by inspiring the prophets to keep alive the hope of a Redeemer especially among the people of Israel and to announce that a Savior shall come. The Holy Spirit comes upon the Virgin Mary so that the Son of God (Luke 1:

35; see also Mathew 1: 18; 1: 20) is born “for us and for our salvation.” The Holy Spirit was upon the righteous Simeon and inspired him to witness the Savior that was sent to the world and was just circumcised according to the rules of Old Testament (Luke 2: 25-28). After the baptism in Jordan, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus Christ as a dove, empowering Him for the earthy mission (Luke 3: 22; John 1: 32;), being “full of the Holy Spirit” (Luke 4: 1). Our Lord “rejoiced in the Holy Spirit” (Luke 10: 21).

During his earthly activity, Jesus Christ promises to those that believe in him that “out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.” The Gospel of John explains what this means: “Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit has not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7: 38-39). Talking about his passions, our Lord promised to his disciples to pray the Father to send them “another Counselor” to be with them. Who is this Counselor? Is “the Spirit of truth” who is unknown to the world but is well-known to the disciples of Jesus Christ, because “he dwells with you, and will be with you.” (John 14: 15-17). The Holy Spirit will be sent by God the Father to accomplish Jesus Christ’s mission in the world: “But the Counselor, The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” (John 14: 25). So, God the Father is the One that sends the Holy Spirit into the world in the name of God the Son and in order to accomplish his mission, sanctifying the world and making Jesus Christ always present in his Church. According to the Orthodox pneumatology, the Holy Spirit is the one that makes Jesus Christ being with his disciples “always, to the close of the age.” (Mathew 28: 20).

The Spirit of God will make the Disciples of Christ in all times understand the message of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God does not bring another message, or another kerygma, but deepens the Gospel of our Lord: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come” (John 16: 13). The Holy Spirit will accompany the disciples of Christ, teaching them what so say, also in difficult moment of persecution (cf. Luke 12: 12; Mark 13: 11).

The historical event of the Pentecost is presented in detail in the book of Acts cap. 2. The immediate effect of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles who were hiding is that now they go in public and “filled

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with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4: 8) preach the Gospel without fear. Christian mission to the world is possible only with the assistance of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Corinthians 12: 3). The Christians are baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mathews 28: 19) and receive the Holy Spirit through the hand of the Apostles (cf. Acts 8: 17). The body of Christians became "God's temple" in which "God's Spirit dwells" (1 Corinthians 3: 16). With other words Christians bodies are "temple of the Holy Spirit." (1 Corinthians 6: 19). The book of Revelation clearly shows that the Spirit of God speaks to churches (cf. Revelation 2: 7; 2: 11; 2: 17; 3: 6; 3: 13; 3: 22 etc.). In the Orthodox theology, the very place of Holy Spirit's manifestation is the Church because it was "obtained with the blood" of the Son of God (Acts 20: 28b) and it was historically created by Pentecost. However the orthodox ecclesiology does not only limit the work of the Holy Spirit to the historical limits of the Church. The Spirit "blows where it wills" (cf. John 3: 8).

Summarized, it could be said that in orthodox understanding God of Life is

„the Divine Life, which is above life, is life-giving and sustaining even of the self-existing Life; and every life and life-giving movement is from the Life which is above every life, and all source of all life. From It, even the souls have their indestructibility, and all living creatures, and plants in their most remote echo of life, have their power to live. And when It is „taken away,” according to the Divine saying, all life fails”⁷.

A pre-assembly meeting for the Orthodox Churches organized by the World Council of Churches in collaboration with the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Kos, Greece, between 11-17 of October 2012 summarized the idea that God of life is the Triune God as following:

“In Orthodox theology, the <God of Life> is understood in a Trinitarian way. The Triune God is the God of Life for all creation because He created the world, and maintains and protects it as an expression of His love. The supreme act of God's love is the economy of salvation, which is understood as the re-creation and restoration of humanity.”

Similar reflections could be found also in a recent publication of the General Secretary of the World Council of churches:

⁷ Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *On Divine names*, Caput VI, section I.

“The ecumenical movement is in a special way shaped by faith in God, the creator – God of life.” ... “God is the Spirit, the omnipresent Spirit, able to be present everywhere, present even in all kinds of chaos. The breath of God is giving life in our entire world, every day, every year. The Spirit of God is moving the whole world, the *oikoumene*, and therefore also the churches, which are us, the women and men in the churches.” ... “The first thing to be said about this world, about life, is to be said about God, The God of Life: God the will of life, God the world of life, God the Spirit of life. In this trinity of the God of life, everything is potentially present.”⁸

Justice and Peace as a result of God of Life's leadership

Because of the limited space given to my presentation, I will briefly emphasize a few ideas regarding justice and peace and how they might be understood by the Orthodox, using the Bible as starting point.

Justice. According to the Gospel of Matthew, when Jesus went to St. John the Baptist to be baptized in Jordan, St. John told him: “I need to be baptized by you and do you come to me?” the response of Jesus was: “Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.” (Matthews 3: 15). St. John speaks according to human justice or righteousness; Jesus speaks according to divine righteousness. For the Orthodox, even if human justice is inspired by the natural law, it is still far from God's justice. Jesus sharply criticize the Pharisees also because they mind their rules and “neglect justice and the love of God” (Luke 11:42). God's justice is always intimately linked with his love to his creation. Justice without love becomes legalism and love without any connection to justice becomes sentimentalism. We are called as Christians to struggle for justice in the world: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matthew 5: 6). Here is certainly minded God's righteousness which has to inspire our struggle for justice.

Peace. When Jesus has been born in Bethlehem, angels were descending from heaven, praising the Lord by singing: “Glory to God in the

⁸ Olav Fykse Tveit, *Christian Solidarity in the Cross of Christ*, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2012, p. 3.

God of Life lead us to justice and peace...

highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased” (Luke 2: 14). The “Prince of peace” was born and the heavenly peace was extended on the earth, and with other words the earth was invited to join the peace which has been brought from heaven. But many of those living on the earth refused this invitation. Among them is Herod who tries to kill “the child” (Mathews 2: 8). Joseph takes Mary and the little Jesus and escape as refugees in Egypt.

During his public witness in the Holy Land, Jesus Christ continues to share his peace with his disciples and with those He came in contact. “Peace be with you!” saluted Jesus to his disciples (Luke 24: 36; John 20: 19; 20: 21; 20: 26) and He sent “in peace” those who benefited from his miracles (cf. Luke 7: 50; 8: 48; Mark 5: 34). At the end of his earthly activity, He left his peace with His disciples: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.” (John 14: 27). St. Paul and other Apostles wished to different communities to whom they wrote to be part of God’s or Jesus peace (cf. Colossians 1: 2; 1: 15; 1 Corinthians 1: 3 etc). We as Christians are called to seek Jesus Christ’s peace. He certainly blesses as “sons of God” those “peacemakers” that promote his peace (cf. Matthew 5: 9). But is Jesus’ peace different than our peace? Certainly his peace is more than a simple absence of war or of conflicts of any kind. It is the extension of harmony that governs in heaven on the earth. And certainly his peace does not mean passivity regarding all means that disturb our peace or the peace of our brothers and sisters. Before his passions, Jesus Christ said to his disciples: “I have said this to you, that in me you have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16: 33).

Jesus Christ’s peace does not mean commodity, but rather permanent struggle to understand his message to the world. That is why He said: “Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.” (Luke 12: 51)

The Pre-Assembly meeting for the Orthodox Churches which was mentioned above underlined that justice and peace, as well as unity, remain our calls both as Orthodox Churches and as Orthodox Christians. This call is not our call, but our Lord’s call. That is why, we do not seek to accomplish our justice, peace and unity, but our Lord’s justice peace and unity. While acting and promoting His justice, peace and unity in this world, we Orthodox are fully aware that a perfect justice and peace, as

well as unity will be reached only in the eternal life: “The call for unity, justice and peace remains our calling today, as our incarnate Lord prayed for these before His passion (Jn. 17). As Orthodox, we are committed to cooperate with all Christians for the sake of justice, peace and unity on the basis of Christ’s message and God’s love for humanity and for all creation. While working together for justice and peace in this world, however, we are aware that complete justice and peace will be reached only in the eschaton where Christ will <fill all in all>” (Eph. 1:22).

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Ο Ησυχασμός και ο Νεοησυχασμός στη Ρουμανία

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Abstract

Hesychasm, which emerged in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century by St. Gregory Palamas, entered the territories inhabited by our ancestors through Romanian monks and pilgrims who went to Mount Athos. The presence of the Romanian monks in the monastery brethren of Paroria, built in the forests of southern Bulgaria by Prince Nicolae Alexandru Basarab, is mentioned by a well-known representative of the hesychast current, St. Gregory of Sinai, who passed away in 1346. The one who brought hesychasm from the monasteries of Mount Athos in our country was St. Nicodemus of Tismana. We have some fragments of the correspondence, on theological themes, between him and the Bulgarian patriarch, Euthymius Tarnovo, disciple of St. Gregory of Sinai. The Romanian Neohesychasm is known due to Abbot Basil of Poiana Marului Monastery and St. Paisius Velicicovschi. The latter, since the time spent on Mount Athos, realizes the importance of the Philokalic writings of the Holy Fathers, and gathers around him a number of monks to translate the writings from ancient Greek into Romanian and Slavonic.

Keywords

Hesychasm, Romanian monastic life, St. Gregory Palamas

A. Ο ησυχασμός

Ο ησυχασμός ευνοήθηκε από τους ησυχαστές μητροπολίτες που εκλέχθησαν στα μέρη βόρεια του Δούναβη και αναπτύχθηκε χάρη στις σχέσεις με το Μοναστήρι Παρωρία του Αγίου Γρηγορίου του Σιναΐτη από τη Βουλγαρία. Καθώς επίσης και από τις σχέσεις με το Άγιο Όρος.

Το 1372 πέθανε ο μητροπολίτης Ιννοκέντιος από την Αυλή του Άρτζες. Ο διάδοχός του ήταν ο ηγούμενος Χαρίτων¹ από τη μονή Κουτλουμουσίου, ο οποίος βρισκόταν συνεχώς σ' επαφή² με την Ρουμανική χώρα, όπου και πήγε άλλωστε πολλές φορές για να μαζέψει τα απαραίτητα για το μοναστήρι. Αυτός ο ηγούμενος είχε σχέσεις επίσης με τους βασιλιάδες της Βλαχίας: τον Νικόλαο Αλέξανδρο και τον Βλάικου Βλάντισλαβ. Στο έγγραφο που ονόμαζε μητροπολίτη τον Χαρίτονα, ο πατριάρχης Φιλόθεος υμνούσε τις αρετές του και μίλαγε για τις καλές σχέσεις με τη Βλαχία. Πραγματικά οι κάτοικοι και οι βασιλιάδες τον εκτιμούσαν πολύ. Ο Χαρίτων ήταν αναμφίβολα οπαδός του ησυχασμού αν λάβουμε υπ' όψη ότι διορίστηκε από ησυχαστή πατριάρχη λίγο μετά τον θρίαμβό του.

Ένας άλλος μητροπολίτης ήταν ο Αντίμ ο Κρητόπουλος³ του Σεβερίν που εκλέχτηκε το 1370 από τη Σύνοδο του Πατριαρχείου της Κωνσταντινουπόλεως. Αυτός ήταν μητροπολίτης της Μικρής Βλαχίας (σημερινή Ολτενία) και από το 1385, μετά το θάνατο του Χαρίτονος, μητροπολίτης στην Αυλή του Άρτζες και οπαδός του ησυχασμού. Είχε σχέσεις με τον πατριάρχη Ευθύμιο της Βουλγαρίας. Η αλληλογραφία τους υπάρχει και σήμερα⁴. Διορισμένοι κατ' ευθείαν από τους ησυχαστές πατριάρχες αυτοί οι μητροπολίτες όσο και οι καλόγεροι γύρω τους έφεραν το ησυχαστικό πνεύμα στα βόρεια του Δούναβη.

Ένα σημαντικό ρόλο έπαιξε το μοναστήρι Παρωρία της Βουλγαρίας χτισμένο το 1325 από τον Γρηγόριο τον Σιναΐτη. Αυτός ο άγιος δίδασκε

¹ Pr. Drd. Vasile Iorgulescu, *Mărturii privind monahismul pe pământ românesc înaintea Sfântului Nicodim*, în *Țara Românească și Banat*, στο «B.O.R.», C.T., 1983, nr. 3-4, σ. 261.

² Paul Lemerle, *Actes de Kutlumuş*, Paris, 1945, σ. 36 apud. Mitrop. Serafim, *Isihasmul, tradiție și cultură românească*, ed. Anastasia, București, 1994, σ. 53.

³ Pr. prof. Dr. Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol I, ed. I.B.M.B.O.R. București, 1980, σ.σ. 248-250.

⁴ Epifanie Norocel, *Sf. Eftimie, Ultimul Patriarh de Târnovo și relațiile lui cu Biserica Română*, στο «B.O.R.», LXXXIV (1966) 5-6, σ.σ. 552-573.

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έναν πρακτικό ησυχασμό. Ένα πλήθος μαθητών⁵ ήρθε στο μοναστήρι του για να ακούσουν και να εφαρμόσουν τις διδασκαλίες του Αγίου Γρηγορίου. Ανάμεσα σ' αυτούς ήταν και Ρουμάνοι⁶ οι οποίοι μετά γύρισαν στην πατρίδα τους και μετέδωσαν τα διδάγματα αυτά πριν τον ερχομό του αγίου Νικοδήμου της Τισμάνας.

Μια σημαντική συνεισφορά είχαν και οι μοναχοί που έμεναν στο Άγιο Όρος. Ο αριθμός τους ήταν πολύ μεγάλος τον 14^ο αιώνα και ειδικά στη Ρουμανική Λαύρα⁷, όπως ονομαζόταν η μονή Κουτλουμουσιού.

Εκτός απ' αυτά που αναφέραμε προηγουμένως, ένα σημαντικό ρόλο είχε και ο Άγιος Νικόδημος της Τισμάνας.

Ο Άγιος Νικόδημος της Τισμάνας

Ένα σημαντικό ρόλο στη μετάδοση του ησυχασμού από το Άγιο Όρος στη Ρουμανία, έπαιξε ο Άγιος Νικόδημος της Τισμάνας. Αυτός έφερε εκτός από τους κανόνες προσευχής του Ιησού που εφαρμόζανε εκεί και τον τρόπο της κοινοτικής ζωής. Με τη συμβουλή και το παράδειγμα της ζωής του χτίστηκαν μεγάλα μοναστήρια όπου οι καλόγεροι ζούσαν σε απόλυτη υπακοή και αδιαφορία για τα υλικά προβλήματα. Επίσης αποκτούσαν εσωτερική γαλήνη σύμφωνα με τη διδασκαλία του ησυχασμού. Αυτή αποκρυσταλλώθηκε μετά από διαμάχες που έλαβαν χώρα τον 14^ο αιώνα, ανάμεσα σε δύο μερίδες με επικεφαλής τον άγιο Γρηγόριο Παλαμά από τη μία και τον Βαρλαάμ Καλαβρό από την άλλη.

Δεν ξέρουμε με ακρίβεια την ημερομηνία, τον τόπο γεννήσεως και την καταγωγή του αγίου Νικοδήμου της Τισμάνας. Την παλαιότερη μαρτυρία για την καταγωγή του, μας άφησε ο αρχιδιάκονος και γραμματέας του Πατριάρχου Μακαρίου Αντιοχείας – Παύλος από το Αλέπ. Αυτοί έκαναν μεγάλο ταξίδι στη Βλαχία και τη Μολδαβία από το 1652 έως το 1659, επισκέφθηκαν πόλεις και μοναστήρια. Ο Παύλος από το Αλέπ μας πληροφορεί ότι ο πατέρας του αγίου Νικοδήμου ήταν Έλληνας από την Καστοριά και η μητέρα του από τη Σερβία⁸.

⁵ Tit Simedrea, *Viața Mănăstirească în Țara Românească înainte de 1370*, στο «B.O.R.» LXXX, 1962, nr. 7-8, σ. 677.

⁶ Αυτόθι, σ. 679.

⁷ Αυτόθι, σ. 683.

⁸ Emilia Ciocan, *Călătoriile Patriarhului Macarie de Antiohia în Țările Române, 1653-1658*, București, 1900, σ. 179.

Αργότερα, ο ιερομόναχος Στεφάνης της Τισμάνας λέει ότι ήταν από «το σλαβικό λαό της Σερβίας» και ότι είχε κάποια συγγένεια με τον Σέρβο ηγέτη Λάζαρο⁹. Σε δύο σύγχρονες σερβικές πηγές ονομάζεται «ο Νικόδημος ο Έλληνας» ή «του ελληνικού λαού»¹⁰. Ο Σέρβος επιστήμονας Οζόρδιε Ράντοζιτσι, υποστηρίζει ότι ο άγιος Νικόδημος ήταν Βλάχος από το Πριλέπ, κάστρο που βρισκόταν κοντά στο σερβικό ιεραποστολικό κέντρο του Νόβα Μπράντου και ότι ήταν συγγενής του Σέρβου ηγέτη Λαζάρου¹¹.

Η πλειοψηφία των Ρουμάνων ιστορικών με επικεφαλής τον Νικόλαο Γιόργκα, υποστηρίζουν ότι όντως ήταν Βλάχος από το Πριλέπ της Μακεδονίας¹². Υποθέτουμε ότι γεννήθηκε το 1310¹³ και γνωρίζουμε με απόλυτη ακρίβεια ότι παρέδωσε την ψυχή του στις 26 Δεκεμβρίου του 1406¹⁴. Ήδη απ' τα νιάτα του πήγαινε στο Άγιο Όρος και έμενε στη μονή Χιλανδαρίου. Εκεί χειροτονήθηκε ιερομόναχος και ύστερα εκλέχθηκε ηγούμενος¹⁵. Φαίνεται ότι ήταν ο πρώτος ηγούμενος της μονής.

Δεν ξέρουμε με μεγάλη σιγουριά αν γνώρισε προσωπικά τον Άγιο Γρηγόριο τον Παλαμά και τον Άγιο τον Γρηγόριο Σιναίτη, και άλλους σημαντικούς εκπροσώπους της ησυχαστικής πρακτικής, αλλά χωρίς αμφιβολία πρέπει να ήταν ενημερωμένος για τις συζητήσεις του 14^{ου} αιώνα πάνω σ' αυτό το θέμα. Γνωρίζουμε επίσης ότι όλοι οι καλόγεροι του Αγίου Όρους πήραν το μέρος του αγίου Γρηγορίου του Παλαμά. Αυτός ήρθε σε επαφή με πολλούς νέους αγιορείτες μοναχούς που είχαν ανώτερη πνευματική ζωή, όπως ήταν ο Ευθύμιος ο μέλλοντικός πατριάρχης του Τυρνάβου,¹⁶ ο Κυπριανός, μετέπειτα μητροπολίτης Κιέβου. Μ' αυτούς θα διατηρήσει αλληλογραφία αργότερα όπως θα δούμε παρακάτω. Δεν μας είναι γνωστός ο λόγος για τον οποίο εγκαταλείπει το Άγιο Όρος.

⁹ Ieromonahul Ștefan, *Viața Prea Cuviosului Părintelui nostru Nicodim Sfințitul, Arhimandritul Lavrei din Sfânta Monastire Tismana*, Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1883, σ. VII.

¹⁰ Emil Lăzărescu, *Nicodim de la Tismana și rolul său în cultura veche românească* (până la 1385), στο «Romanoslavica» XI Istorie, București 1965, σ. 254.

¹¹ Αυτόθι, σ. 78.

¹² Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Românilor prin călătorii* ed. a II-a, București, 1928, σ. 44.

¹³ Pr. Dumitru Bălașa, *Sfântul Ignatie Teoforul și Sfântul Nicodim de la Tismana*, στο «Μ.Ο.», XXIII, 1971, nr. 9-10, σ. 641.

¹⁴ Emil Lăzărescu, μν.ε. σ. 256.

¹⁵ Pr. D. Buzatu, *De la Vodița la Tismana*, στο «Μ.Ο.» XIII, 1961, nr. 10-12, σ. 752.

¹⁶ Pr. D. Bălașa și prof. Toma Hrisant, *Mănăstirea Tismana vatră străbună*, Craiova, 1983, σ. 30.

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Ξέρουμε μόνο ότι έχτισε δύο μοναστήρια στη Σερβία – στη Βράτνα και Μαναστιρίτσα¹⁷ και μετά πέρασε το Δούναβη για να πάει στη Βλαχία.

Εκεί έχτισε το 1370 το μοναστήρι Βοντίτσα¹⁸ με τη βοήθεια του ηγεμόνα Βλαίκου και ύστερα το 1378 το μοναστήρι Τισμάνα¹⁹ όπου και θάφτηκε και διατηρείται ο τάφος του. Αυτά τα δύο μοναστήρια διευθύνθηκαν από τον ίδιο τον άγιο Νικόδημο μέχρι το θάνατό του, σύμφωνα με την αρχή της «σαμοβλαστίας»²⁰ (η διεύθυνση της μοναστηριακής κοινότητας γίνεται χωρίς την επέμβαση οιασδήποτε ανώτερης εκκλησιαστικής ή πολιτικής εξουσίας). Έχτισε κι άλλα μοναστήρια όπως Τοπόλνιτσα, Κονίστσα, Κριβέλνικ, Βίσσυνα, Πρισλόπ²¹.

Το 1375 ο άγιος Νικόδημος συμμετέσχε σε μια συμφιλιωτική αποστολή ανάμεσα στο Πατριαρχείο Κωνσταντινουπόλεως και την Σερβική Εκκλησία, η οποία είχε ανακηρυχθεί αυτοκέφαλη Αρχιεπισκοπή. Αυτό είχε γίνει το 1346 από τον τσάρο Στέφανο Ντουσάν, χωρίς τη συγκατάθεση του Πατριαρχείου. Η αποστολή του Λαζάρου αποτελούνταν από τον Ησαΐα τον Χιλανδαρινό, τον Θεοφάνη, τον άγιο Νικόδημο ως μεταφραστή και δύο μαθητές του Ησαΐα²². Μ' αυτή την ευκαιρία, ο Άγιος προχειρήστηκε αρχιμανδρίτης από τον Πατριάρχη Φιλόθεο Κοκκίνο²³. Αυτός χορήγησε στον όσιο Νικόδημο τρία κομματάκια των λειψάνων του αγίου Ιωάννου του Χρυσοστόμου, του αγίου Ιγνατίου του Θεοφόρου και του αγίου Θεοφίλου, που υπάρχουν και σήμερα στο Μοναστήρι Τισμάνα.

Έχουμε πληροφορίες και για τη πνευματική και θεολογική δραστηριότητα του αγίου Νικοδήμου. Πρόκειται για την αλληλογραφία του με τον τελευταίο Πατριάρχη του Τυρνάβου, τον άγιο Ευθύμιο. Αυτός ήταν γνωστός θεολόγος, εκτιμημένος στις ορθόδοξες χώρες, εφόσον πολλοί ιεράρχες του έγραφαν για να του ζητήσουν συμβουλές σχετικά με δογματικά και ηθικά προβλήματα²⁴. Απ' αυτό το «αντάλλαγμα» διεσώθηκαν

¹⁷ Emil Lăzărescu, μν.ε., σ. 256.

¹⁸ D.I.R.B. Țara Românească, veacul XIII, XIV, XV, București, 1953.

¹⁹ Mitropolit Dr. Nestor Vornicescu, *Cuviosul Nicodim de la Tismana, ctitor de Sfinte Locașuri*, στο «Biruit-au gându - studii de teologie istorică românească», ed. Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova, 1990, σ.σ. 101-103.

²⁰ Radu Turdeanu, *La Monastere de Tismana*, București, 1966, σ. 10, apud. Mitropolit Nestor Vornicescu, μν.ε. σ. 102.

²¹ Pr. prof. Dr. Mircea Păcurariu, μν.ε., σ. 291.

²² Emil Lăzărescu, μν.ε., σ. 268.

²³ Αυτόθι, σ. 269.

²⁴ Pr. Drd. Vasile Dolofan, *Probleme canonice în corespondența Patriarhului Eftimie al Târnavei cu Mitropolitul Antim Critopol al Ungrovlahiei și Cuviosul Nicodim de la*

δύο απαντητικές επιστολές του πατριάρχη προς τον Άγιο Νικόδημο. Στην πρώτη ο ευρυμαθής ιεράρχης απαντάει σε έξι δογματικές ερωτήσεις για τους αγίους αγγέλους, για την ύπαρξη του κακού στον κόσμο, για τον Τίμιο Σταυρό, την μετενσάρκωση και την ψυχή. Από τη δεύτερη επιστολή διασώθηκε απάντηση σχετικά με την ηθική καθαρότητα εκείνων που θέλουν να γίνουν ιερείς²⁵. Από την ανάλυση των ερωτήσεων του αγίου Νικοδήμου, βγάζουμε το συμπέρασμα ότι ήταν εμβριθής αναγνώστης της Γραφής και ένας μοναχός που ήθελε να εμβαθύνει, να μελετήσει τα πιο λεπτά θεολογικά προβλήματα, όπως ήταν η ουράνια ιεραρχία του Ψευδο-Διονυσίου Αρεοπαγίτη. Είναι τέλος ο πρώτος μελετητής αυτών των έργων²⁶.

Το 1404 και το 1405, ο άγιος Νικόδημος καλλιγράφησε σε περγαμηνή ένα ωραίο **ΤΕΤΡΑΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟ** στην εκκλησιαστική σλαβική γλώσσα, σερβικής εκδόσεως. Είναι το πρώτο χειρόγραφο με σίγουρη ημερομηνία που υπάρχει στην χώρα μας²⁷.

Ο ιερομόναχος Στεφάνης αναφέρει ότι ο άγιος Νικόδημος πέρασε τα τελευταία του χρόνια σε συνεχή απομόνωση στη σπηλιά που «βρίσκεται πάνω από το μοναστήρι Τισμάνα, χτισμένη σε πέτρα, την οποία είχε ετοιμάσει από πριν, από τότε που είχε έρθει, γιατί χρειαζόταν ησυχία... και ανεβαίνοντας εκεί προσέφερε τον εαυτό του σε απόλυτη γαλήνη, περνώντας συχνά όλη τη νύχτα με το Θεό με νηστεία και αγρυπνία». Από 'κει κατέβαινε μόνο την Κυριακή και στις μεγάλες γιορτές «έκανε λειτουργία μαζί με τους άλλους ιερείς και μετά κοινωνούσε των Αγίων και Ζωοποιών. Μυστηρίων του Σωτήρα μας Ιησού Χριστού»²⁸.

Χάρη στη ζωή στην αγιότητα της ζωής του και τις προσευχές του, ο άγιος Νικόδημος έκανε πολλά θαύματα και όσο ζούσε: πέρασε από τη φωτιά χωρίς να πάθει τίποτα, γιάτρεψε την κόρη του βασιλιά Σιγισμούνδου

Tismana, στο «M.O.» 1983, nr. 7-8, σ.σ. 528-53.

²⁵ Mrd. Ierod. Epifanie Norocel, *Sfântul Eftimie, ultimul Patriarh de Târnovo și relațiile lui cu Biserica Românească*, στο «B.O.R.» LXXXIV (1966), nr. 5-6, σ. 566.

²⁶ Pr. Dr. Gheorghe I. Drăgulin, *Personalitatea și opera Sfântului Dionisie Areopagitul în teologia românească*, în B.O.R., XCIX 1981, nr. 5-6, σ. 632, apud. Pr. Prof. Dr. Viorel Ioniță, *Cuviosul Nicodim cel Sfințit de la Tismana*, στο «Sfinți Români și apărători ai legii strămoșești» εκδ. I.B.M.B.O.R. București, 1987, σ. 303.

²⁷ Pr. Prof. Dr. Viorel Ioniță, μ.ε., σ.σ. 303.

²⁸ Ατόθι, σ. 304.

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της Ουγγαρίας και έκανε και διάφορα θαύματα μετά θάνατον και γι' αυτό ο Ρουμανικός λαός τον τίμησε ως άγιο.

Πριν τον ερχομό του αγίου Νικοδήμου, οι μοναχοί ζούσαν σε μικρά μοναστήρια και σκήτες. Αυτός θεωρείται ότι αναδιοργάνωσε τον μοναχισμό – ακολουθώντας το παράδειγμα του Αγίου Όρους, σύμφωνα με τις αρχές της κοινοβιακής ζωής. Εκτός απ' αυτόν τον κανονισμό, μετέδωσε χάρη στη δική του ζωή και συμβουλές, τους κανόνες της προσευχής του Ιησού των Αγιορειτών.

Ξέρουμε επίσης ότι έστειλε 12 μαθητές στη Μολδαβία, που οργάνωσαν τον εκεί μοναχισμό και καθιέρωσαν τον ησυχασμό. Έτσι χτίστηκαν μεγάλα μοναστήρια όπου ζούσαν δεκάδες καλόγεροι ή ακόμα και εκατοντάδες. Τόσο οι μαθητές του όσο και πολλοί ηγεμόνες έχτισαν τους επόμενους αιώνες τεράστιες μονές και στη Βλαχία και στη Μολδαβία. Ήταν ο εξομολογητής τεσσάρων μεγάλων ηγετών της Βλαχίας: του Βλάϊκου Βλάντισλαβ, του Ράντου του Μαύρου, του Δαν Α' και του Μίρτσεα του Μεγάλου.

Η δραστηριότητα τεσσάρων δεκαετιών στη Ρουμανική γη του αγίου Νικοδήμου

«αποτέλεσε το θεμελιακό λίθο στην υποστήριξη και καθιέρωση της Ορθοδοξίας, δημιούργησε μια εποχή στη ρουμανική μεσαιωνική μόρφωση και τις αρχές της παράδοσης απ' όπου ξεκίνησαν καινούργια στάδια άνθησης και συνεχούς γονιμότητας στους επόμενους αιώνες».

B. Ο Ρουμανικός Νεοησυχασμός και οι εκπρόσωποι του 18^{ου} αιώνα

Η ησυχαστική παράδοση τον 14^ο αιώνα της Ρουμανικής χώρας, που προώθησε ο άγιος Νικόδημος της Τισμάνας, μεταδόθηκε και διατηρήθηκε στους επερχόμενους αιώνες. Χτίστηκαν μεγάλα μοναστήρια. Προς το τέλος του 17^{ου} αιώνα και τις αρχές του 18^{ου} διαπιστώθηκε μια κρίση της κοινοτικής ζωής των μονών. Πολλοί μοναχοί τις εγκατέλειπαν για να γλιτώσουν από τα υλικά και τα οικονομικά προβλήματα, που προκαλούσαν αναπόφευκτα οι μεγάλες ιδιοκτησίες. Μεγάλωσε ο αριθμός των σκητών. Τον 18^ο αιώνα υπήρχαν 83 σε σύγκριση με τα μεγάλα μοναστήρια που ήταν μόνο τέσσερα στη Μολδαβία και 93 ασκητήρια στη Βλαχία σε σύγκριση με τα 14 μοναστήρια που υπήρχαν. Αυτή την εποχή συναντάμε την ίδια

κρίση του μοναχισμού και στο Άγιο Όρος, όπου ο Παΐσιος Βελιτσκόφσκι δεν βρίσκει ούτε έναν πνευματικό πατέρα και μένει μόνος του τέσσερα χρόνια. Φεύγει από την Ουκρανία, όπου όχι μόνο ο μοναχισμός, αλλά ολόκληρη η εκκλησιαστική ζωή διέρχεται μια κρίση ειδικά μετά από τις μεταρρυθμίσεις του τσάρου Πέτρου του Μεγάλου.

Μέσα σε τέτοιο κλίμα υπήρχε βαθιά ανάγκη ανανέωσης της μοναχικής ζωής, επιστροφής στις διδασκαλίες των αγίων Πατέρων της εκκλησίας. Η αρχή αυτής της ανανέωσης εγκαινιάζεται στη Βλαχία από τον ηγούμενο Βασίλειο από την Ποϊάνα Μαρουλόι, ο οποίος θα ιδρύσει ένα είδος ομοσπονδίας με πάνω από δέκα ασκητήρια συνδεδεμένα με την Ποϊάνα Μάρουλοι. Αυτό αποτελεί μοναδικό γεγονός στην ιστορία του Ρουμανικού ησυχασμού. Στη Μολδαβία το έργο ανανέωσης αναπτύσσεται από τον Παΐσιο Βελιτσκόφσκυ. Αυτοί οι δύο εκπρόσωποι του νεοησυχασμού της Ρουμανίας βρήκαν εκεί την απαραίτητη γαλήνη – έχοντας και την κατανόηση των ορθοδόξων ηγετών αλλά και μεγάλες αποστάσεις από το ισλαμικό κέντρο ή από τα προβλήματα τις δίωξης που προκαλούσαν ο Πέτρος ο Μεγάλος και η Αικατερίνη Β΄ στη Ρωσία. Η τελευταία – το 1764 – δίνει ένα καινούργιο και δυνατό χτύπημα στη θρησκευτική ζωή κλείνοντας πολλά μοναστήρια.

1. Ο Ηγούμενος Βασίλειος από την Ποϊάνα Μαρουλόι

α) *Σύντομη Βιογραφία*

Ο όσιος Βασίλειος ο Ιερομόναχος²⁹ ήταν ο πνευματικός πατέρας και ηγούμενος του Αγίου Παΐσιου Βελιτσκόφσκυ κι ένας από τους πιο γνωστούς δασκάλους και εργάτες της προσευχής του Ιησού τον 18^ο αιώνα.

Γεννήθηκε το 1692 στην Ουκρανία. Πριν τον ερχομό του στη Βλαχία είχε ζήσει για αρκετό καιρό στη Ρωσία στα βουνά Μοσένσκι όσο και σε άλλα άγια μέρη. Αναγκασμένος να εγκαταλείψει τη χώρα του «όταν απαγορεύτηκε στους μοναχούς να ζουν στην ερημιά». Ο Βασίλειος και πολλοί ερημίτες ήρθαν και εγκαταστάθηκαν στις σκήτες της Μολδαβίας ή της Βλαχίας. Σ' αυτή τη χώρα «την προστα-τευομένη του Θεού», αυτός κατευθύνεται προς τη περιοχή του Μπουζάου, όπου θα μείνει στο

²⁹ Dario Racanello sub titlul *La preghiera di Gesu negli scritti di Basilio di Poiana Măru-lui*, Dissertatio ad lauream in Facultate S. Theologie, apud pontificiam Universitatem S. Thomae de Urbe, Alessandria, 1986, μεταφραση με το τίτλο «*Rugăciunea lui Iisus în scrierile starețului Vasile de la Poiana Măru-lui*», απο Maria Cornelia Oros και Diac. Ion I. Ică jr., κδ. DEISIS, Sibiu, 1996, σ. 335.

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ασκητήριο Νταλχαούτσι και σε μικρό χρονικό διάστημα γίνεται ηγούμενος. Αλλά επειδή κοντά του υπήρχαν πολλά χωριά, μετά από περίπου είκοσι χρόνια αποφάσισε να χτίσει ένα ερημητήριο όσο το δυνατόν πιο μακριά από τις ανθρώπινες κατοικίες. Από το 1730 έως το 1733 χτίζει με τη υλική βοήθεια του ηγεμόνα Κωνσταντίνου Μαυροκορδάτου, ένα κοινόβιο στην Ποϊάνα Μαρουλói. Μετακομίζει εκεί με 12 μοναχούς ενώ το ασκητήριο Νταλχαούτσι θα παραμείνει υπό την ηγεσία του. Η πνευματική ζωή που περνούσαν στην κοινότητα από την Ποϊάνα Μαρουλói ήταν γνωστή και αναγνωρισμένη. Έτσι ο Αλέξανδρος Υψηλάντης γράφει σ' ένα έγγραφο στις 23 Απριλίου 1803 ότι: «σ' αυτό το άγιο ασκητήριο μένουν ασκητές που έχουν μια αγγελική ζωή και που πάνω απ' όλα, προσεύχονται συνέχεια στον Θεό για όλους τους χριστιανούς»³⁰.

Οργανωμένο σύμφωνα με τις αρχές της ησυχαστικής ζωής και τους κανόνες του αγίου Βασιλείου του Μεγάλου και του Αγίου Όρους, το ασκητήριο Ποϊάνα Μαρουλói, γίνεται το πιο σημαντικό ησυχαστικό κέντρο της χώρας. Υπό την πνευματική καθοδήγηση του Βασιλείου, βρίσκονταν ένδεκα ασκητήρια της περιοχής, τα οποία επισκέπτονταν προσωπικά, τα έλεγχε ή απλά τους έδινε συμβουλές μέσα από τα γράμματά του³¹. Έτσι, η Ποϊάνα Μαρουλói γοήτεψε μοναχούς από παντού, ακόμα και από το Άγιο Όρος. Ένας αγιορείτης έγραφε εκείνη την εποχή: «το δεύτερο Άγιο Όρος βρίσκεται στην Ποϊάνα Μαρουλού της Ρουμανίας»³².

Το 1750, ο Ηγούμενος Βασίλειος σ' ένα ταξίδι στο Άγιο Όρος έκανε την κουρά του καλύτερου μαθητή του, του Πλάτωνα, ο οποίος θα γινόταν ο Παΐσιος Βελιτσκόφσκι.

Ο σεβάσμιος ηγούμενος πέθανε στις 25 Απριλίου το 1767 στην ηλικία των 75 ετών. Τα λείψανά του αναπαύονται αιώνια σ' ένα άγνωστο μέρος της Ποϊάνα Μαρουλói του νομού Βράντσεα. Στην μνήμη των μοναχών και των λαϊκών έμεινε ως «ένας άγιος ηγούμενος» ή «ένας άγιος άνδρας».

β) Τα Συγγράμματα του Ηγουμένου Βασιλείου της Ποϊάνα Μαρουλói

Ο ηγούμενος Βασίλειος από την Ποϊάνα Μαρουλói μας άφησε ένα έργο μικρό σε έκταση, γραμμένο στα Σλαβικά και μεταφρασμένο στα Ρουμανικά. Σήμερα αναγνωρίζονται 58 συλλογές ρουμανικών χειρο-

³⁰ Pr. Gabriel Cocora, *Cuviosul Vasile de la Poiana Mărului*, στο «Sfinții Români și Apărători ai legii strămoșești», București, 1987, σ. 423.

³¹ Mitropolitul Serafim, μν.ε., σ. 115.

³² Αυτόθι, σ. 115.

γράφων που περιέχουν τα συγγράμματα του Αγίου. Τα βρίσκουμε στο έργο του Νταριού Ρακανέλο που φέρει τον τίτλο «Η προσευχή του Ιησού στα γραπτά του ηγουμένου Βασιλείου της Ποϊάνα Μαρουλίου»³³. Τα απαριθμούμε παρακάτω:

Εισαγωγή στο έργο του Γρηγορίου Σιναΐτη.

Εισαγωγή στο έργο του Φιλόθεου Σιναΐτη.

Εισαγωγή στο έργο του Ησυχίου Σιναΐτη.

Εισαγωγή στο έργο του Νηλ Γόρσκι.

Παράρτημα (προσθήκη).

Περί της συγκρατήσεως των τροφίμων που είναι
απαγορευμένα στους μοναχούς.

Συμβουλές για την αποφυγή των κρεάτων.

Εικόνα για το πώς μπορούμε να βελτιωθούμε
μέσω της μετάνοιας.

Επιστολή προς τον ιερομόναχο Αλέξη.

Η Δίαίτα του ηγουμένου Βασιλείου.

Απ' όλα αυτά τα συγγράμματα, καταλαβαίνουμε ότι η βασική απασχόληση της ζωής του, ήταν ν' αναστήσει ανάμεσα στους καλόγερους της εποχής του την πρακτική της προσευχής του Ιησού.

Πολλές φορές την περιγράφει με τους όρους: «εργασία του νού», «εσωτερική προσευχή» ή «εσωτερική πρακτική», όταν αναφέρεται στο πρώτο της στάδιο, το πρακτικό. Την στιγμή που η προσευχή γίνεται δώρο του Αγίου Πνεύματος, ο άγιος χρησιμοποιεί τους όρους: «πνευματική προσευχή», ασκητική προσευχή» ή ακόμα «προσευχή της καρδιάς».

Σε αυτά τα συγγράμματα επιμένει στο καθήκον το κάθε μοναχού, αλλά και του λαϊκού να εξασκείται. Γι' αυτόν η προσευχή του Ιησού είναι το μέσο καθαρισμού «υπαπαντής» της ψυχής από τα πάθη και διαφυλάξεως του νού από τους πειρασμούς.

Η «πρακτική προσευχή του Ιησού», είναι εντελώς διαφορετική από την «ασκητική». Η πρώτη είναι προσιτή σε όλους τους ανθρώπους, ανεξάρτητα από το επίπεδο τελειότητάς τους. Μας το αποδεικνύουν μαρτυρίες των αγίων πατέρων, ειδικά εκείνη του αγίου Συμεών Θεσσαλονίκη, που λέει και συμβουλεύει: «τους επισκόπους, τους ιερείς, τους μοναχούς και όλους τους λαϊκούς να λένε αυτή την προσευχή»³⁴.

³³ Dario Racanello, *Rugăciunea lui Iisus în scrierile starepului Vasile de la Poiana Măruului*, Sibiu, 1996, σ.σ. 224-333.

³⁴ *Introducere la Grigorie Sinaitul*, Dario Racanello μν.ε., σ. 228.

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Παράλληλα εξάλλου ο άγιος τονίζει την αναλογία ανάμεσα σε μια ψαλμωδία και στην προσευχή. Κατ' αυτόν τον τρόπο, συγκρίνει το ψάλσιμο με την ανατολή του ηλίου και την προσευχή της καρδιάς με τον ίδιο τον ήλιο. Γράφει σχετικά: «Την ανατολή τη βλέπεις μια ώρα ή δύο, ενώ ο ήλιος λάμπει όλη μέρα»³⁵. Για να πείσει τους αναγνώστες ότι έχουν καθήκον να εξασκούνται σ' αυτή την προσευχή, φέρνει αυτό το επιχείρημα:

«Να ξέρεις ότι όχι μόνο στην ερημιά ή σε ασκητική μοναξιά υπήρχαν δάσκαλοι και δημιουργοί θείων πραγμάτων, αλλά πιο πολύ στα βάθη των πόλεων. Είναι αξιοθαύμαστο το πώς ο Άγιος Φώτιος καταλήγοντας στο Πατριαρχείο από την τάξη των γαιοκτημόνων και χωρίς να είναι μοναχός, συνήθισε αυτή τη νοητική άσκηση. Και τόσο εξελίχθηκε ώστε το πρόσωπό του έλαμπε σαν εκείνο του Μωυσή, δώρο του Αγίου Πνεύματος που βρισκόταν μέσα του».

Μάλιστα παρατηρεί ότι συνέταξε κι ένα βιβλίο για την πνευματική αυτή ενασχόληση, γραμμένο με όλη τη φιλοσοφική διάθεση. Λέει επίσης ότι

«και οι άγιοι πατριάρχες Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, ο Ιωάννης ο Χρυσόστομος, ο Ιγνάτιος και ο Κάλλιστος έγραψαν βιβλία γι' αυτά τα θέματα. Ο Πατριάρχης Κάλλιστος εξασκήθηκε στην προσευχή υπηρετώντας στην κουζίνα της ιεράς μονής Μεγίστης Λαύρας του Αγίου Όρους»³⁶.

Η φήμη του βελτιωμένου και επιδέξιου συμβούλου καθοδηγητή μιας υψηλής πνευματικής βιώσεως διαδόθηκε σε όλη την Ορθόδοξη Ρουμανία. Για να μη γίνει άθελά του, κανένα λάθος στις διδασκαλίες, το 1749 έλαβε μέρος στο Βουκουρέστι σε ένα συνέδριο το οποίο και ασχολήθηκε με την έρευνα αυτού του θέματος³⁷. Παρευρέθηκαν σ' αυτό οι πατριάρχες της Αλεξάνδρειας, της Αντιόχειας και των Ιεροσολύμων που βρισκόταν στη Βλαχία. Η διδασκαλία περί της ησυχαστικής ζωής και της προσευχής θεωρήθηκε από τους πατριάρχες «σύμφωνη με την Αγία Γραφή εφ' όσον σεβόταν ολόκληρο το δόγμα των αγίων πατέρων της Εκκλησίας». Οι Πατριάρχες χάρηκαν πολύ από τη συνάντηση με τον Ηγούμενο, τον

³⁵ *Introdúcere la capitolele Fericitulhui Filotei Sinaitul*, Dario Racanello, μ.ε., σ. 240.

³⁶ *Introdúcere la Grigorie Sinaitul*, Dario Racanello μν.ε., σ.σ. 228-229.

Filocalia, τομ. VIII, μεταρραση Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, București, 1979, σ. 593.

³⁷ Pr. Gabriel Cocora, μν.ε., σ. 430.

ευλόγησαν και έδωσαν ομολογία μπροστά σε όλο το Συνέδριο, ότι δεν υπήρχε καμιά αμφιβολία όσον αφορούσε στη διδασκαλία του³⁸.

2.Ο άγιος Παΐσιος Βελιτσκοφσκι

Ο άγιος Παΐσιος Βελιτσκοφσκι³⁹ είναι αυτός που επανέφερε στη ζωή τον Ρουμανικό μοναχισμό τον 18^ο αιώνα. Γεννήθηκε στις 21 Δεκεμβρίου 1722 στην πόλη Πόλταβα της Ουκρανίας και βαπτίστηκε με το όνομα Πέτρο. Ήταν το ενδέκατο από τα 12 παιδιά του ιερέα Ιωάννη και της πρεσβυτέρας Ειρήνης. Η Ειρήνη έγινε μοναχή προς το τέλος της ζωής της στο μοναστήρι της πόλεως. Ο παππούς και ο προπάππος του Πέτρο ήταν ιερείς στην Πόλταβα και άλλοι συγγενείς είχαν γίνει μοναχοί. Στην ηλικία των τεσσάρων ετών έμεινε ορφανός από πατέρα και μεγάλωσε με την μητέρα του και τον μεγαλύτερό του αδελφό, Ιωάννη, ο οποίος έγινε ιερέας στην ίδια ενορία όπου ήταν παλιά και ο πατέρας τους. Σπούδασε στο ενοριακό σχολείο και μετά στην «Πνευματική Ακαδημία» που είχε ιδρύσει ο Ρουμάνος μητροπολίτης Πέτρος Μογίλας στο Κίεβο. Παρακολούθησε μόνο τις πρώτες τέσσερις τάξεις, ύστερα την εγκατέλειψε για να αφοσιωθεί στην πνευματική ζωή. Το φθινόπωρο του 1740 μπήκε στο Μοναστήρι Μεντβεντόβσκυ, στη δεξιά πλευρά του Νίπρου, στην Ουκρανία, που βρισκόταν εκείνη την εποχή υπό ξένη κατοχή. Εκεί εκάρει ρασοφόρος στην γιορτή της Μεταμορ-φώσεως του Σωτήρα το 1741, παίρνοντας το όνομα Πλάτων.

Η εκκλησιαστική ζωή των ιερέων, μοναχών και γενικά των ορθοδόξων της Ουκρανίας έγινε πολύ δύσκολη όταν κατακτήθηκε από τη καθολική Πολωνία – σε μεγάλο μέρος. Πολλές φορές τα ορθόδοξα μοναστήρια έκλειναν, έδιωχναν τους μοναχούς και τους ιερείς, τους φυλάκιζαν ή ακόμα τους εξανάγκαζαν ν'ασπασθούν τη δική τους θρησκεία⁴⁰.

³⁸ Αυτόθι, σ. 430.

³⁹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, τομ. 2, București, 1994, σ. 262; Οσιος Παΐσιος Βλίσκοφση, μεταφραση - ειμελία Πετρου Μποτση, Αθήνα, 1990 σ. 23 κ.ο.κ., Pr. Dr. Paul Mihail, *Cuviosul Stareț Paisie de la Neamțu*, στο «Sfinți Români și apărători ai legii strămoșești», București, σ.σ. 485 – 495, Mitropolitul Serafim, μν.ε., σ.σ. 128 – 150, Protoiereul Serghiu Ceftericov, *Paisie, starețul Mănăstirii Neamțului din Moldova*, μετφρσηα π ρυσκα I.P.S.S. Dr. Nicodim Patriarhul României, Mănăstirea Neamțu, 1940, σ. 24 κ.ο.κ., Gheorghe Racoveanu, *Viața și Nevoințele Fericitului Paisie, starețul Sfintelor Mănăstiri Neamțul și Secu, Râmnicu Vâlcea*, 1935, σ. 14 κ.ο.κ.

⁴⁰ Pr. Prof. Mircea Păcurariu, μν.ε., σ. 563.

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Σ'αυτές τις δύσκολες στιγμές μετανάστευσαν στη Μολδαβία και την Ρουμανική χώρα. Ανάμεσά τους είναι και ο Πλάτωνας, ο οποίος μένει για μερικά χρόνια στα ασκητήρια Νταλχαούτσι και Ποϊάνα Μαρουλόι του νομού Βράντσα. Εκεί γνώρισε τον ιερομόναχο Βασίλειο από την Ποϊάνα Μαρουλόι. Πήγε επίσης στα ασκητήρια Τραϊστένι και Κίρνουλ του νομού Μπουζάου. Στο Κίρνουλ γνώρισε τον ιερομόναχο Ονούφριο⁴¹ κι άλλους πατέρες.

Μετά από τέσσερα χρόνια στη Ρουμανική χώρα πήγε στο Άγιο Όρος. Μαζί με τον ιερομόναχο Τρύφωνα έφτασε εκεί στις 4 Ιουλίου 1746 και κατέληξε στη μονή Παντοκράτορος, όπου υπήρχαν και πολλοί καλόγεροι σλαβικής καταγωγής. Ο σύντροφός του πέθανε την τέταρτη μέρα. Από τότε ο ρασοφόρος Πλάτωνας γύριζε σε όλα τα μοναστήρια ψάχνοντας έναν πνευματικό. Επειδή δεν βρήκε κανέναν αποφάσισε να μείνει μόνος⁴². Έτσι πέρασε μια δύσκολη περίοδο, ίσως την πιο δύσκολη της ζωής του.

Το 1750 τον επισκέφθηκε ο ηγούμενος Βασίλειος από την Ποϊάνα Μάρουλόι. Αυτός του εξήγησε τους κινδύνους της μοναχικής ζωής και τον συμβούλεψε να βρει τη συντροφιά άλλων δύο ή τριών αδελφών. Μετά του άλλαξε το όνομα από Πλάτωνα σε Παΐσιο, όνομα το οποίο θα κρατήσει μέχρι τον θάνατό του⁴³. Ήταν 28 χρονών όταν έγινε μοναχός. Λίγο μετά απ' αυτό το γεγονός ήρθε κοντά του ένας νέος μοναχός από τη Μολδαβία που λεγόταν Βησσαρίων και έψαχνε για πνευματικό. Είχε ακούσει ότι ήξερε ρουμανικά. ενώ βλέποντας τη σκληρή του ζωή, του άρεσε και τον παρακάλεσε να τον δεχθεί μαθητή του. Χάρη στο υψηλό πνευματικό του βίωμα γύρω από τον Παΐσιο μαζεύτηκαν πολλοί μαθητές. Ο ίδιος όμως αισθανόταν την ανάγκη ενός ιερέα. Οι μαθητές επέμεναν να δεχθεί να γίνει ιερέας. Χειροτονήθηκε από τον επίσκοπο Γρηγόριο το 1758⁴⁴. Όταν ο αριθμός των αδελφών μεγάλωσε ακόμα πιο πολύ μετακόμισε στο κελί του Προφήτη Ηλία, το οποίο ανήκε στη Μονή Παντοκράτορος. Εδώ ήταν τα θεμέλια του ασκητηρίου του Αγίου Ηλία όπου έχτισε μια εκκλησία, κελιά κι άλλα απαραίτητα κτίρια⁴⁵.

Το 1763, εξ αιτίας ελλείψεως κελιών ή των δυσκολιών και της κρίσης που περνούσε το Άγιο Όρος, ο ηγούμενος Παΐσιος αποφασίζει να γυρίσει

⁴¹ Αυτόθι, σ. 563.

⁴² Pr. Dr. Paul Mihail, μ.ε., σ. 487.

⁴³ Αυτόθι, σ. 487.

⁴⁴ Αυτόθι, σ. 487.

⁴⁵ Pr. Prof. Mircea Păcurariu, μν.ε., σ. 563.

στη Βλαχία, όπου υπήρχαν πολλά μεγάλα μοναστήρια. Μόλις έφτασε στη Ρουμανία, αφήνει τους άλλους στο ασκητήριο Βαρζαρέστι κοντά στο Φοσκάνι και πηγαίνει μαζί με τον Βησσαρίωνα και τον Γεώργιο στο μητροπολίτη του Βουκουρεστίου για να ζητήσει ένα μοναστήρι. Του το αρνήθηκαν⁴⁶. Πήγε μετά στο μητροπολίτη του Ιασίου, όπου τον δέχτηκαν με πολλή αγάπη. Ο μητροπολίτης ήταν ο Γαβριήλ Κλιμάχ. Αυτός, από το 1745 έως το 1760 ήταν μητροπολίτης της Θεσσαλονίκης και γνώριζε καλά τον Παΐσιο από το Άγιο Όρος.

Με την έγκριση του Συμβουλίου και του Βοεβόδα τού δόθηκε το Μοναστήρι Ντραγομέρνα που ήταν μέχρι τότε σχεδόν έρημο⁴⁷. Είχαν πολλή ησυχία έως το 1775, οπότε το βόρειο μέρος της Μολδαβίας πέρασε στην αυστριακή εξουσία⁴⁸ μετά τη ρωσοτουρκική σύγκρουση (1768-1774). Ο αριθμός των αδελφών και των μοναχών είχε ανέλθει στα 350 άτομα. Ο φόβος και η στάση της αυστριακής κυβέρνησης που έβλεπε με εχθρότητα τις εκκλησίες και τα ορθόδοξα μοναστήρια, έκαναν τον ηγούμενο Παΐσιο να δεχτεί την πρόσκληση του Μοναστηρίου Σέκου για να πάει να μείνει εκεί. Έτσι μετακομίζει με τους άλλους στις 14 Οκτωβρίου 1775. Σ' αυτήν τη μονή διοργανώνει την εσωτερική ζωή των μοναχών που γίνονται όλο και περισσότεροι με τον ερχομό των αδελφών από την Τρανσυλβανία και από την αρχιεπισκοπή της Αχρίδας, η οποία είχε κλείσει⁴⁹.

Το 1779 ο Βοεβόδας Κωνσταντίνος Μορούζι στην προσπάθειά του να βοηθήσει τον Παΐσιο στο πνευματικό του έργο, του χορηγεί το μοναστήρι Νεάμτς. Ο αριθμός των μοναχών φτάνει τους 700. Προέρχονταν από τη Μολδαβία, τη Βλαχία, τη Τρανσυλβανία, τη Ρωσία, την Ουκρανία, τη Βιελωροσία, την Ελλάδα, τη Βουλγαρία, τη Σερβία ακόμα και μη ορθόδοξοι που είχαν βαπτισθεί χριστιανοί⁵⁰.

Το 1771 η Μολδαβία κατακτήθηκε από το στρατό του τσάρου. Μητροπολίτης Μολδαβίας έγινε ο αρχιεπίσκοπος Αμβρόσιος Σερεβρενικών της Αικατερινοσλαβίας. Αυτός χειροτόνησε τον όσιο Παΐσιο αρχιμανδρίτη⁵¹. Στις 15 Νοεμβρίου 1794, ο ηγούμενος Παΐσιος Βελιτσκόφσκυ, παρέδωσε την ψυχή του σε ηλικία 72 ετών. Θάφτηκε στην μεγάλη εκκλησία του

⁴⁶ Pr. Dr. Paul Mihail, μ.ε., σ. 488.

⁴⁷ Pr. Prof. Mircea Păcurariu, μ.ε., σ. 564.

⁴⁸ Pr. Dr. Paul Mihail, μ.ε., σ. 489.

⁴⁹ Αυτόθι, σ. 489.

⁵⁰ Pr. Prof. Mircea Păcurariu, μ.ε., σ. 565.

⁵¹ Αυτόθι, σ. 565.

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μοναστηριού Νεάμτζ⁵². Τον Ιούνιο του 1988 η αγία Σύνοδος της Ρωσικής Εκκλησίας αναγνώρισε τον ηγούμενο Παΐσιο ως Άγιο.

Το έργο του Αγίου Παΐσιου Βελιτσκόφσκι

Εμβαθύνοντας στη σπουδή της ελληνικής γλώσσας στο Άγιο Όρος, ο άγιος Παΐσιος διαπίστωσε με λύπη ότι στα σλαβικά κείμενα των Πατέρων, τα μεταφρασμένα από τα ελληνικά υπήρχαν πολλά λάθη και πολλά σημεία αναλογίες που δεν ήταν σύμφωνα με το πρωτότυπο. Επίσης διαπίστωσε ότι κάποιες σλαβικές φράσεις είχαν γίνει ακατανόητες στην εποχή του.

Εκτός απ' αυτό πολλοί μοναχοί και ηγούμενοι ήταν τόσο τυπολάτρες που περιορίζονταν μόνο στους κανόνες της Εκκλησίας, πράγμα που δεν ωφελούσε και τόσο στην πνευματική βελτίωση. Αυτά τα συμπεράσματα όσο κι άλλα, προκάλεσαν τον άγιο Παΐσιο ν' αρχίσει τη μετάφραση των ασκητικών συγγραμμάτων. Με μεγάλο σεβασμό στο κείμενο, ο άγιος Παΐσιος συγκρίνει τις ρουμανικές μεταφράσεις με τις σλαβικές όσο και με το ελληνικό πρωτότυπο, το οποίο επίσης συγκρίνει με τα παλαιότερα έγγραφα. Ήταν πολύ απαιτητικός και επιθυμούσε πάρα πολύ το κείμενο που μετέφραζε να δείχνει με μεγάλη πιστότητα τη σκέψη των Αγίων Πατέρων.

Αφού ήρθε στην Ντραγομέρνα, ο ηγούμενος Παΐσιος συνέχισε να μεταφράζει απ' τα ελληνικά στα σλαβικά και ρουμανικά τα έργα κάποιων μεγάλων Πατέρων όπως του Μεγάλου Αντωνίου, του Ησαΐα του Ερημίτη, του Πέτρου του Δαμασκηνού, του Μεγάλου Μακαρίου, του Φιλοθέου Σιναΐτη, του Γρηγορίου Σιναΐτη, του Σίμωνα του Θεολόγου και πολλών άλλων. Δεν συνέχισε όμως μόνος του αυτή τη δουλειά, αλλά ενθάρρυνε κι άλλους μαθητές και πνευματικούς υιούς του. Έτσι δημιουργήθηκε μια αληθινή φιολογική σχολή μεταφραστών. Στο Μοναστήρι Νεάμτζ ο αριθμός των μεταφράσεων που εκπονήθηκαν εκείνο το χρονικό διάστημα είναι περίπου 300. Απ' αυτές περίπου 40 είναι δική του δουλειά. Έστειλε επίσης νέους καλόγερους στην Ακαδημία του αγίου Σάββα στο Βουκουρέστι για να σπουδάσουν ελληνικά. Αποτέλεσμα αυτών των μεταφράσεων ήταν ο μοναχισμός της Ρωσικής Εκκλησίας να προικιστεί με μια Φιλοκαλία, την οποία εξέδωσε στην Πετρούπολη ο μητροπολίτης Γαβριήλ Πετρόβ το 1793.

Εκτός από μεταφράσεις, ο Άγιος Παΐσιος, έγραψε και πολλές πνευματικές επιστολές. Πολλές διασώζονται στη βιβλιοθήκη της Μονής

⁵² Αυτόθι, σ. 565.

Νεάμτς ή σε διάφορες άλλες βιβλιοθήκες υπό τη μορφή χειρογράφων. Μερικά από τα συγγράμματά του δημοσιεύθηκαν στο βιβλίο του Πατρός Σεργίου Τσετβέρικοβ, «Ο Παΐσιος ο Ηγούμενος της Μονής Νεάμτς της Μολδαβίας», μεταφρασμένο το 1933 από τον επίσκοπο Νικόδημο, ηγούμενο επίσης της ίδιας μονής⁵³.

Στην πλειοψηφία τους τα πνευματικά έργα του αγίου Παΐσιου δημοσιεύθηκαν από τη Βαλεντίνα Πελίν σε δύο τόμους με μια εισαγωγή του πανεπιστημιακού διδάκτορα Βιρτζίλ Κίντεα⁵⁴.

Ο άγιος Παΐσιος πίστευε με όλη τη καρδιά του ότι η κοινοβιακή ζωή και η υπακοή ήταν ευλογημένη από τον Θεό. Δεν ήταν απλές ιδέες, αλλά έγιναν αρχές που τον οδηγούσαν και τις εφάρμοζε στα μοναστήρια όπου ζούσε. Αυτές οι αρχές μεταδόθηκαν μετά στους μαθητές του.

Σημαντικό ρόλο στα έργα του παίζει ένα «συμβουλευτικό» που αποτελείται από 28 σημεία⁵⁵. Αυτό το βιβλίο κανόνων περιέχει διάφορα πράγματα σχετικά με τη μοναχική ζωή, σύμφωνα με το οποίο το κέντρο βάρους της πνευματικής ζωής μιας μονής ήταν η θεία λειτουργία. Αυτή γινόταν σύμφωνα με το τυπικό του Αγίου Όρους.

Εκτός μονής οι μοναχοί έπρεπε να ζουν «με φόβο Θεού και σύμφωνα με τη παράδοση των Αγίων Πατέρων, προτιμώντας την άσκηση στην προσευχή του νού που πηγάζει όμως από τα βάθη της καρδιάς και την αγάπη για τον Θεό και την αρετή». Δεμένοι πλέον με την προσευχή, έπρεπε να συνηθίσουν επίσης τους ψαλμούς, την ανάγνωση της Παλαιάς και της Καινής Διαθήκης όσο και τις γραφές των αγίων Πατέρων. Ο άγιος Παΐσιος τόνιζε πολύ την υπακοή και την προσωπική ακτημοσύνη. Κανένας μοναχός δεν έπρεπε να έχει κάτι δικό του, τα πάντα ανήκαν σε όλους. Τα κτητικά επίθετα «δικό μου» και «δικό σου», δεν τα αναγνώριζε καθόλου⁵⁶.

Άλλο ουσιαστικό έργο του αγίου Παΐσιου είναι το «Βασική διδασκαλία για τη νοερά προσευχή»⁵⁷. Περιέχει μια εισαγωγή και διαιρείται σε έξι κεφάλαια. Το θέμα αναπτύσσεται και από τις απαντήσεις του σε κάποιους αντιπάλους του⁵⁸. Ακόμη από την εποχή της διαμονής του στο ασκητήριο

⁵³ Protoereu Serghie Ceftericov, μν.ε., σ. 300 κ.ο.κ.

⁵⁴ Sfântul Paisie de la Neamț, *Cuvinte și Scrisori duhovnicești*, εκδ. Tipografia Centrală Chișinău, τομ. I, 1998 και, τομ. II, 1999.

⁵⁵ Αυτόθι τμ. II, 1998, σ.σ. 84 – 123.

⁵⁶ Mitropolitul Serafim, μ.ε., σ. 138.

⁵⁷ Sfântul Paisie de la Neamț, *Cuvinte și Scrisori duhovnicești*, εκδ. Tipografia Centrală Chișinău, τομ. II, σ.σ. 129 – 161.

⁵⁸ Αυτόθι σ. 21 κ.ο.κ.

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του αγίου Ηλία του Αγίου Όρους, ο ηγούμενος Παΐσιος αντικατέστησε ένα κομμάτι της λειτουργίας με την προσευχή του Ιησού, για να εξοικονομήσει το χρόνο που απαιτούσε η επέκταση των κελιών. Ο Μολδαβός ηγούμενος Αθανάσιος από το ερημητήριο Καυσοκαλύβια που βρισκόταν κοντά, δεν έβλεπε με καλό μάτι τις μεταρρυθμίσεις του Παΐσιου και βρίσκει αφορμή να του προσάψει σφάλματα. Αυτά ήταν κυρίως: η παρεξήγηση των έργων του Αγίου Γρηγορίου του Σιναΐτη, η υπερβολική εμπιστοσύνη στα ελληνικά χειρόγραφα, η αντικατάσταση των λειτουργιών με την προσευχή του Ιησού. Στο τέλος τον συμβούλεψε να μετανοήσει και να μην απομακρυνθεί από τις συνήθειες του Αγίου Όρους. Ο άγιος Παΐσιος του απάντησε με μια επιστολή 14 κεφαλαίων, στην οποία δικαιολογείται επικαλούμενος το παράδειγμα των αγίων Πατέρων⁵⁹.

Όταν ήταν στη Ντραγομέρνα έπρεπε να αντιμετωπίσει την αντίδραση ενός μοναχού της Ουκρανίας από τα βουνά Μοσενκάι ο οποίος ήταν πολύ αντίθετος, σ' αυτήν την προσευχή. Αυτός είχε τόση επιρροή σε κάποιους αδύναμους αδελφούς, ώστε τόλμησαν να πετάξουν στον ποταμό Τιασμίν τα άγια Βιβλία που αναφέρονταν στη συγκεκριμένη προσευχή⁶⁰.

Στα έξι κεφάλαια του έργου ο άγιος Παΐσιος αναφέρει συστηματικά τις βιβλικές και πατρολογικές βάσεις της προσευχής του Ιησού, εκείνων που επιθυμούν να την κρατούν συνέχεια στην καρδιά τους και τις συνέπειες που προκαλεί μέσα τους. Δείχνει ότι αυτό που «πείθει ορισμένους να ξεσηκωθούν εναντίον της είναι η απόλυτη αγνωσία των Αγίων Γραφών και των ασκητικών συγγραμμάτων». Αυτά «πιο πολύ από τα άλλα είναι κατάλληλα για ανάγνωση μέσα στο μοναστήρι», επειδή περιέχουν ολόκληρη την κατανόηση της ζωής σύμφωνα με το Ευαγγέλιο. «Είναι τόσο απαραίτητα στους μοναχούς για το όφελος των ψυχών τους και την απόκτηση της πραγματικής σοφίας, εκείνης της σωστής και γεμάτης ταπείνωση, όσο είναι και η αναπνοή για τη ζωή»⁶¹.

Ο ηγούμενος Παΐσιος θεωρείται – και δικαίως βέβαια – ένας από τους πιο σημαντικούς συγγραφείς του 18^{ου} αιώνα. Τα έργα του χρησιμοποιήθηκαν από τους ασκητές Ιγνάτιο Μπριαντσιανίνοφ και Θεοφάνη Ζαβορίτουλ. Έχουν σκοπό να οδηγήσουν τους πιστούς στη σωστή κατανόηση των συγγραμμάτων των μεγάλων μοναχών της Ανατολής που δεν δέχτηκαν καμία δυτική επιρροή.

⁵⁹ Αυτόθι, σ. 21 κ.ο.κ.

⁶⁰ Mitropolitul Serafim, μν.ε., σ. 148.

⁶¹ Sfântul Paisie, μ.ε., τομ. II, σ. 135.

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Credința ortodoxă și viața bisericească¹

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Abstract

The study shows that the Orthodox faith and the church life are an inseparable unit. The Orthodox faith defines the content of the Church life and guarantees the authenticity of her life. Truth in Church is not theoretical, the intellectual receipt of the knowledge of the content of faith, but is mainly the mystery that lives by the Holy Spirit. Christian life is genuine when Church Theology confirms. Clean life is judged and becomes worthy only through the right faith, purity being confirmed by true faith. «No use is of pure life when the faith is wrong» emphasizes St. John Chrysostom, «nor is Orthodox faith useful when life is rotten, dirty».

Keywords

Orthodox faith, heresy, Church life, orthopraxis

Credința ortodoxă și viața bisericească se găsesc într-o unitate indisolubilă. Credința ortodoxă, înțeleasă ca adevăr dogmatic, delimitează conținutul

¹ Referat susținut în Mitropolia Moldovei și Bucovinei, la Iași, pe data de 7 noiembrie 2012.

² Domnul profesor Dimitrie Țelenghidis este considerat unul din cei mai mari dogmatişti ortodocși contemporani. În ultimii 20 de ani este implicat în problema dialogului dintre Ortodoxie și eterodoxie. Din anii tinereții a avut binecuvântarea să cunoască pe părintele Paisie Athonitul, în preajma căruia s-a aflat timp de mulți ani și a primit sfaturile lui patristice și duhovnicești. Are o vastă operă, din care cităm: *Teologia Ortodoxă și Viața, Soteriologia lui Luther, Har și libertate după tradiția patristică a secolului al XIV-lea, Contribuție la soteriologia Bisericii Ortodoxe*, etc. (n. trad.).

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vieții Bisericii și garantează autenticitatea vieții ei. În același timp, viața Bisericii este oglinda vie a conținutului credinței ortodoxe. Duhul Sfânt, ca Duh al Adevărului Ipostatic, cu prezența Lui harismatică în Biserică, asigură viața Bisericii în esența ei, și îi dă un sens autentic.

Credința ortodoxă și viața bisericească se exprimă la nivel existențial și de către fiecare membru al Bisericii. În mod special, viața bisericească, exprimată ca un fel nou de a fi al credinciosului, nu poate avea ca rezultat un mod de manifestare individualist și autonom. De altfel, fiecare om (membru al Bisericii celei Una) exprimă, în manifestările lui individuale Biserica. Astfel, ethosul ecleziastic al credinciosului se identifică cu fiecare lucrare a sa. Adică prin fiecare lucrare intelectuală, psihologică, artistică și în general, prin fiecare manifestare psihosomatică a credinciosului, se dezvăluie viața lui interioară bisericească. Astfel, în baza acestui fapt, putem să susținem că viața Bisericii se descoperă din viața membrilor ei.

Când credința ortodoxă se desparte și devine autonomă față de viața credinciosului, nu mai are caracter mântuitor. Aceasta înseamnă că acest fel de credință nu poate să mântuiască pe om. Credința ortodoxă capătă caracter mântuitor numai atunci când se leagă indisolubil și funcțional cu viața de fiecare zi a credinciosului. Atunci este și se numește viața lui, viața bisericească.

Desigur că nici viața bisericească, nici participarea la Sfintele Taine fără credința ortodoxă nu poate duce la mântuire. Aceasta înseamnă că nici o Taină a Bisericii, în această situație, nu ne poate mântui de la sine (adică fără ca noi să credem ortodox).

Ortodoxia deține și trăiește plinătatea adevărului. Viața și adevărul se înțeleg în primul rând la nivel existențial. Adevărul nu poate fi separat de viață în integralitatea și în autenticitatea lui, fără consecințe dezastruoase.

Viața, pentru Biserică, este cealaltă față a adevărului. Este necreată, este pururea fiitoare, este viața veșnică, despre care se vorbește în Evanghelie.

În această situație, este foarte edificatoare și expresivă legătura pe care o face Hristos între adevărul autentic și viața autentică. Hristos, ca Adevăr în Sine, ne adevărește că «aceasta este viața veșnică: să Te cunoască pe Tine, singurul Dumnezeu Adevărat, și pe Iisus Hristos pe care L-ai trimis» (Ioan 17, 3). Viața veșnică este cunoașterea adevăratului Dumnezeu. Dar, așa cum știm, în limbajul biblic, patristic și ecleziologic, cunoașterea este cauzată de trăire. Cunoașterea înseamnă experiență trăită. Experiența care se vede din participarea la adevăr. Din istoria și experiența arătată a Bi-

sericii, ortodoxia se concretizează prin exactitatea (acrvia) și integritatea învățăturii dogmatice a ei, în timp ce ortopraxia (dreapta făptuire a ei) se arată, prin excelență, în viața duhovnicească a membrilor îndumnezeiți ai Bisericii.

Credinciosul care are o viață duhovnicească lucrătoare este condus în toate manifestările sale de Duhul Domnului său. Deoarece Hristos există și trăiește înăuntrul nostru prin Duhul Său. Hristos, prin Duhul Său, devine «în toate primul» numai în membrele lucrătoare ale Trupului Său mistic, adică în membrii activi ai Bisericii. În practică, aceasta înseamnă că Hristos, prin Duhul Său, stăpânește în gândul, în cuvântul și în toată lucrarea acestui credincios. Împărăția lui Dumnezeu, care se identifică cu viața duhovnicească în cea mai curată înfățișare a ei, este aceea care stăpânește toate manifestările credinciosului în cadrul Bisericii. În această situație, credinciosul împărătește, este stăpânit de Duhul lui Dumnezeu de fiecare dată când arată o viață evlavioasă.

Și așa cum, în mod fericit însemnează Sfântul Chiril al Ierusalimului: «viața evlavioasă este susținută de dogma ortodoxă și de fapte bune, și nici dogmele fără fapte bune nu sunt primite de Dumnezeu, dar nici faptele care nu sunt însoțite de dogmele ortodoxe nu sunt primite de Dumnezeu».³ Virtuțile morale, după Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, primesc viață din puterea dogmelor, așa cum membrele trupului primesc viață de la suflet⁴, care sunt sfințite de dogmele ortodoxe⁵, care sunt agenții lucrării sfințitoare. Dar și după Sfântul Maxim «omul se sfințește prin mărturisirea exactă a credinței».⁶

Ca urmare, adevărul în Biserică nu este teoretic, adică nu este primirea intelectuală prin ascultare și studiu a cunoașterii conținutului credinței, ci este, în principal, taina care se trăiește prin lucrarea Duhului Sfânt⁷. Fără această participare, a lucrării, este imposibil ca omul să cunoască înțelepciunea lui Dumnezeu și să se împărtășească de Sfintele Taine ale credinței noastre⁸. Credincioșii sunt conduși către plinătatea adevărului de Duhul Adevărului prin trăire. De aceea ei rămân neclintii în aceasta, fără a le fi frică de amenințări, prigoană sau moarte. În această situație,

³ Vezi *Cateheze* 4, P.G. 35, 456B.

⁴ Vezi P.G. 60, 745.

⁵ Vezi P.G. 59, 443.

⁶ Vezi P.G. 90, 165A.

⁷ Vezi Sfântul Marcu Ascetul P.G. 65, 1001AB.

⁸ Vzi Sfântul Macarie P.G. 34, 904B.

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poate fi vorba despre maturitatea duhovnicească, despre care vorbește Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, referindu-se la cei care se hrănesc cu hrana tare a dogmelor, «deoarece aceștia au terminat viața copilărească și nu au nevoie de lapte, ei pot să se hrănească cu dogmele tari care îl desăvârșesc pe omul duhovnicesc»⁹.

Desăvârșirea duhovnicească, atunci când îl definește pe credinciosul ortodox, este întrepătrunsă cu conștiința ortodoxă și cu acrivia dogmatică.

După cum Ortodoxia trăită coexistă cu ortopraxia (dreapta făptuire), erezia nu poate fi deloc compatibilă cu evlavia, nu poate coexista cu ea. Este imposibil ca ereticul să fie evlavios și plin de virtuți. «Așa cum nu poate să iasă din zăpadă foc, tot așa, ba chiar cu atât mai mult nu poate ieși de la eretic smerenie», remarcă Sfântul Ioan Sinaitul, «îndreptarea este a credincioșilor și a evlavioșilor și, desigur, a acelor care au inima curată»¹⁰ exact din acest motiv ereticii se caracterizează ca neevlavioși (necredincioși) și erezia lor ca blasfemie¹¹.

Biserica Ortodoxă nu a despărțit niciodată adevărul dogmelor de viața și evlavia ei. Teologia și dogmele au fost întotdeauna legate de viața credincioșilor. Învățătura dogmatică a Bisericii și felul de a fi (etosul) al credincioșilor trebuie să se găsească într-o relație funcțională, în așa fel încât una să o adevărească pe cealaltă, ca două fețe ale aceleiași realități. În nici un fel de situație nu se poate permite a se separa viața credincioșilor de dogmele Bisericii. De aceea, atunci când se anulează una, încetează a avea putere și cealaltă. Desigur că această vedere unilaterală a unei însușiri fundamentale a Ortodoxiei a fost considerată întotdeauna ca o respingere a însăși identității Bisericii. Viața curată este judecată și capătă vrednicie numai din credința dreaptă, viața curată având ca monedă de schimb dreapta credință. «Nici un folos nu are viața curată atunci când credința este greșită» subliniază Sfântul Ioan Hrisostom, «dar nici credința ortodoxă nu e de folos atunci când viața este stricată, murdară»¹².

Viața credincioșilor este autentică atunci când confirmă Teologia Bisericii, adică atunci când constituie experiența trăită a conținutului credinței. Dar și adevărul dogmatic are valoare practică și mântuitoare, atunci când este trăită și se arată ca viață în Hristos, atunci când există viață curată

⁹ Vezi P.G. 31, 920A.

¹⁰ Vezi P.G. 88, 996B.

¹¹ Vezi Sfântul Atanasie cel Mare, P.G. 26, 1076C și P.G. 25, 221-225.

¹² Vezi P.G. 53, 31 și P.G. 59, 369.

duhovnicească. Părintele cel cu Gură de Aur spune hotărât: «Nici să credem că este suficientă pentru mântuire credința, dacă nu arătăm viață curată»¹³.

Felul de a fi eclesial, ca etos în Hristos, nu este o manifestare individuală, ci își exprimă existența sa în mod universal. De aceea și Hristos în «Predica de pe Munte» a unit credința către El cu ținerea voii lui Dumnezeu: «nu tot cel ce Îmi zice Doamne, Doamne, va intra în Împărăția Cerurilor, ci cel care face voia Tatălui Meu, Celui din ceruri» (Matei 6, 21).

Unirea dintre dogme și etosul credinței și al vieții, nu este mecanică, ci este lucrarea Duhului Sfânt, care presupune conlucrarea liberă cu omul. Ca să rămână credința nezdruncinată este nevoie de ajutorul și de lucrarea activă a Duhului Sfânt în credincios. Lucrarea activă a Duhului Sfânt în credincios este asigurată prin curățenia viețuirii. Viața curată face ca Duhul Sfânt să rămână lucrător și să întărească puterea credinței. De aceea este imposibil ca să nu se clatine credința aceluia ce are viață necurată¹⁴, deoarece viața prihănită devine piedică în trăirea exactă a dogmelor în așa măsură încât dogmele acestea se strâmbă în mintea lui și încep să corespundă cu viața sa întinată.¹⁵

Viața eronată și întinată împiedică înțelegerea înălțimii dogmelor credinței, deoarece, în mod practic, întunecă puterea de înțelegere a minții. Și, așa cum nu este posibil ca cineva care se găsește în înșelare dar trăiește corect (având smerenie, dragoste, moralitate, virtute, viață curată) să rămână într-un final în înșelare, tot așa cel care se găsește în viclenie, nu poate să ajungă repede la înălțimea dogmelor. Cel care caută adevărul, trebuie să se păzească neîntinat de orice patimă. Cel care se eliberează de patimi, și din înșelare se va elibera și va cunoaște adevărul. Dumnezeu cheamă și conduce la adevăr pe orice om care are frică de Dumnezeu și viață virtuoasă. Nu există situație, spune Sfântul Ioan Hrisostom, ca un om de altă religie sau eretic, să rămână în înșelare, atunci când este bun și iubitor de oameni. Întotdeauna Dumnezeu îl va conduce la Biserica Sa. Dacă se întâmplă însă, să rămână în înșelarea sa, atunci există cu siguranță o altă patimă pe care o are, cum ar fi slava deșartă, nepăsarea sau lenea sufletească, lipsa de grijă față de propria mântuire, etc. «Dumnezeu îi atrage pe cei care se găsesc în înșelare, atunci când au viața curată».¹⁶ Un

¹³ Vezi P.G. 59, 77.

¹⁴ Vezi P.G. 51, 280.

¹⁵ Vezi P.G. 55, 50 și P.G. 62, 93.

¹⁶ Vezi P.G. 61, 70 și P.G. 57, 243-244.

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exemplu este Apostolul Pavel, care era un prigonitor și luptător cumplit împotriva Bisericii lui Hristos. Deoarece avea o viață ireproșabilă, nu numai că a primit credința Bisericii, dar și pe toți i-a întrecut.¹⁷

Cât privește legătura dintre credință și viață în cadrul Bisericii, vom sublinia următorul fenomen tragic și paradoxal. În zilele noastre, mulți creștini ortodocși ne arătam a crede după credința Răsăritului, dar ne comportăm și trăim apusean. Aceasta este o problemă foarte gravă, deoarece confirmă o fracturare interioară existențială. De aceea, se înțelege de ce în vremea noastră se schimbă adevăruri înrădăcinate de secole, în ciuda recomandării clare scripturistice și patristice de a nu «schimba granițele veșnice pe care le-au așezat Părinții Bisericii».¹⁸ Felul apusean de a trăi, care de la început și prin construcția sa este definit ca arogant și plin de mândrie, are ca rezultat nașterea oricărei erezii, dar și a panereziei ecumenist sincretiste, erezie ce se referă nu numai la sincretismul interreligios, ci și la sincretismul intercreștin, la minimalismul dogmatic, la acordul de la Balamant, teoria ramurilor, recunoașterea unei presupuse succesiuni apostolice și a Tainelor în afara Bisericii, teoria «Bisericii Surori», teoria «celor doi plămâni ai Bisericii», și la acordul de la Chambesy care ar recunoaște pe eterodocșii anticalcedonieni condamnați de Duhul Sfânt prin Sinoadele Ecumenice, ca fiind ortodocși, rugăciunile în comun cu eterodocșii, căsătoriile mixte, primirea eterodocșilor în Biserică fără Taina Botezului, etc.¹⁹

Pericolul ca printr-o viață necurată să se ajungă la o credință strâmbă este iminent. Este doar o problemă de timp când și cum se va întâmpla. De aceea este nevoie mereu de însoțire dintre viață și dogme, «așa fel încât viața noastră să evedențieze dogmele credinței și dogmele să adeverească buna-credință a faptelor noastre».²⁰ Nu avem nici un folos din dreapta credință, dacă viața noastră este necurată.²¹ Dacă cunoașterea și trăirea adevărului recomandă împreună Ortodoxia, atunci erezia este deviația de la această cunoaștere și participare.

După Sfânta Scriptură, erezia este în primul rând învățătura demonilor, adică este inspirată de duhurile viciene (cf. I Timotei 4, 1). După

¹⁷ Vezi E.P.E. 18, 222-224.

¹⁸ Vezi P.G. 59, 63 și Paremi 22, 28: «Nu muta granițele veșnice pe care le-au pus Părinții tăi».

¹⁹ Nota traducătorului cu îndemnul și avizul autorului.

²⁰ Vezi P.G. 64, 500C.

²¹ Vezi P.G. 59, 59-61.

Scrierile Ascetice ale Bisericii, diavolul însuși a adus în lume toate credințele greșite și ereziile. După Stâlpul Ortodoxiei Atanasie cel Mare, «erezia nu provine de la apostoli, ea provine de la demoni și de la tatăl lor, diavolul, și este fără roadă, stearpă, irațională și nebunească».²² În același duh, Părinții Sinoadelor Ecumenice îi caracterizează pe eretici ca având rațiunea deteriorată, ca fiind nebuni (duhovnicește). Marii Părinți ai Bisericii folosesc attribute grele în privința ereziei și a ereticilor. Numesc erezia necredință și ateism și pe eretici necredincioși și ate. În mod special, Sfântul Atanasie cel Mare îi caracterizează pe eterodocși ca cei ce neagă adevărul, dușmani, colaboratori ai diavolului²³, și premergători ai antihristului.²⁴

Erezia este legată strâns de înșelare, fiind o deviație de la adevăr și totodată o deviație de la ceea ce înseamnă viața deplină, autentică. „Așa cum acela care se depărtează de drumul cunoscut se rătăcește pe drumuri străine, fără să știe unde merge”, notează Sfântul Nil Ascetul, „așa și omul care nu crede în Treimea cea de o ființă se găsește în rătăcire”.²⁵ Acela care rătăcește, nici la scopul ultim nu ajunge, deoarece se află în afara drumului, nici de siguranță nu se bucură, înstrăinându-se de ceea ce este ființial viața sănătoasă. Este uzual în Scrierile Patristice a se evalua erezia ca fiind mult mai gravă decât orice păcat moral al omului deoarece erezia, prin excelență, îl desparte pe om de Dumnezeu. Despărțirea omului de Dumnezeu este confirmată și instituțional de către Biserica Sinoadelor Ecumenice prin afurisire (oprirea de la Sfânta Împărtășanie) și anatematizare (tăierea din trupul Bisericii) a acelor care nu primesc hotărârile dogmatice date sub inspirația Duhului Sfânt.

Dar în Scrierile Fundamentale Patristice este amintită des și partea morală a ereziei, ca fiind strâns legată de importanța ei dogmatică. În opoziție cu însușirea Bisericii de a uni, erezia are însușirea de a dezbină. Nimic altceva nu au făcut Bisericii ereziile și ereticii, decât să nu ne iubească pe noi, pe Dumnezeu și pe ei înșiși.²⁶

Devierea ereticilor de la dreapta credință are ca urmare firească și devierea lor de la viața duhovnicească veritabilă. De aceea, și viața lor este

²² Vezi P.G. 26, 960B.

²³ Vezi P.G. 25, 541C-544C.

²⁴ Vezi P.G. 26, 25B și 941A.

²⁵ Vezi P.G. 79, 1237C.

²⁶ Vezi P.G. 87, 2925B.

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caracterizată de violență, calomnie și atrocități. Sfântul Atanasie cel Mare, Sfântul Vasile cel Mare și Sfântul Grigorie Palama ne mărturisesc astfel de experiențe. Nu sunt scutiți de comportări similare romano-catolicii și protestanții, așa cum ne informează istoria cruciadelor și a prozelitizmului din Orientul Mijlociu și din Europa de Est.

Atunci când este în pericol credința ortodoxă, cei credincioși cu adevărat arată o mare sensibilitate și se arată ca apărători ai dogmei Ortodoxe și ai evlaviei Ortodoxe. De altfel, aceeași sensibilitate pe care o au credincioșii pentru trăirea și apărarea integrității credinței, se intensifică în lupta împotriva rătăcirii ereticilor. Este firesc ca cei care trăiesc adevărul eclezial să fie și apărători ai credinței și neînfrigați luptători împotriva ereziei, deoarece erezia are ca rezultat contrazicerea vieții în Duhul Sfânt a Bisericii. Astfel încât, toți care luptă pentru credința Ortodoxă universală, se luptă, în esență, pentru apărarea experienței harismatice a Bisericii, care înseamnă și viața lor personală. În această situație, credincioșii, care sunt în mod obișnuit toleranți și pașnici, se arată ca «războinici» ne va spune Sfântul Grigorie Teologul.²⁷ Aici, apologetica și starea de război a credincioșilor, și prin excelență a păstorilor sfințiți ai Bisericii noastre, nu trebuie să fie înțeleasă greșit, deoarece aceasta este cu adevărat lupta de apărare. Adică, atunci când Biserica îndură un pericol real din partea ereticilor, credincioșii ortodocși care au conștiință se luptă să o apere, dând în felul acesta mărturia rămânerii statornice în credință. „Am rămas statornici, prin lupta noastră, darului de obște, comorii pârintești a credinței sănătoase”.²⁸

Lupta creștinilor ortodocși, chiar dacă este pentru viața lor însăși, nu este îndreptată împotriva ereticilor ci împotriva ereziei, care amenință să erodeze adevărul în conștiința membrilor Bisericii și prin extensie în viața ei. Ortodoxia nu a adoptat niciodată violența împotriva ereticilor, ci elaborează teologia apologetică, pentru a convinge cu rațiunea și cu argumente corecte, subliniind în principal trăirea în Duhul Sfânt a membrilor ei.

Scopul acestei poziții a Ortodoxiei în fața provocării ereticilor este dublu. Pe de o parte apără trupul bisericesc de a nu fi molipsit, iar pe de altă parte dă posibilitatea ca rătăciții să revină la credința sănătoasă a Bisericii. Aceasta se adevărește și din faptul că Părinții apologeți, deși folosesc un

²⁷ Vezi P.G. 35, 1112A.

²⁸ Vezi *Scrisoarea* 243, P.G. 32, 908C.

limbaj dur la adresa ereticilor, nu simt ură față de aceștia.²⁹ Vis-a-vis de ei părinții sunt neținători de minte a răului, blânzi și iubitori de oameni, deși aceia sunt puși pe ceartă. În mod evident socotesc prietenia și tovărășia cu ereticii ca o «stricăciune» și ca o «pierdere a sufletului».³⁰ Dialogul cu ereticii trebuie să se desfășoare numai în cadrul recomandat de Sfântul Apostol Pavel: «de omul eretic, după întâia și a doua mustrare depărtează-te, știind că unul ca acesta s-a abătut și a căzut în păcat, fiind singur de sine osândit» (Tit 3, 10). Dialogul trebuie să se limiteze «numai până la sfatul pentru întoarcerea lor la dreapta credință», după Sfântul Atanasie cel Mare.³¹ Fiind mișcat de același duh al Sfintei Scripturi și al practicii Sfinților Părinți, marele teolog al vederii luminii necreate, Sfântul Grigorie Palama, pune ca și condiție pentru un dialog cu Romano-catolicii scoaterea lui Filioque din Simbolul de Credință.³² După cum este Hristos, așa sunt și Sfinții Săi, întotdeauna cer credință curată ca și condiție absolut necesară pentru vindecare și mântuire. Este specifică, în mod deosebit, condiția pe care o pune Marele Atanasie în privința dialogului cu ereticii. Nu se poate să se discute nimic altceva cu aceștia, spune el, până când nu se va verifica chestiunea credinței. Mai întâi trebuie să fie acordul în credință. Această metodă ecleziastică este întemeiată de însuși Hristos, care nu vindeca pe cei ce pătimeau până nu își exprimau credința lor către El.³³

Ortodoxia, ca gândire și trăire a credinței, se vede în mod special, în perioada când apar ereziile. Și astăzi, figuri harismatice ale Bisericii devin centre de referință pentru o orientare stabilă a dreptei credințe și a vieții duhovnicești în fața confuziei produse de diversele interpretări ale conținutului credinței și mai ales în cadrul dialogului în curs de desfășurare dintre ortodocși și eterodocși.

Ortodoxia a fost exprimată întotdeauna în mod autentic de către sfinți, de către purtătorii de harisme ale vieții ei în Duhul Sfânt. Putem să fim siguri și optimiști că nu suntem în pericol, doar în măsura în care mergem pe urmele Sfinților Părinți ai Bisericii.

Traducere din limba greacă și note
pr. Matei Vulcănescu

²⁹ Vezi Sfântul Atanasie cel Mare, P.G. 26, 937C.

³⁰ Vezi Sfântul Atanasie cel Mare, P.G. 26, 940C.

³¹ Vezi P.G. 26, 940B.

³² Vezi *Despre purcederea Duhului Sfânt*, Cuvantul 1, 4, 27-31. P. Hristu, Vol. A, p. 31.

³³ Sfântul Atanasie cel Mare, *Περί των γεγεννημένων παρ'αρειανών* 36, V.E.P., 31, p. 260-261.

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Beyond the B.E.M. document (Lima 1982). Possible contributions of Orthodoxy to overcoming the ecumenical impasse

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Abstract

The theological document *Baptism, Eucharist and Priesthood* (BEM) is an expression of the considerable world wide theological efforts.

The Mystery of communion of life of the Holy Trinity is connected with the mystery of human existence; for man is the materialization of the created image of God, in a continuous aspiration to the Trinitarian prototype, according to which man was created. We may see here a principle of love, life and motion, which the Holy Trinity involves.

In this context, the Orthodox theology of the last century has developed an ecclesiology of communion, closely related to the communion of love and life of the Holy Trinity, which encourages the approaching of the common elements existent in different churches, each one trying to identify those theological and ecclesial coordinates that will be able to meet other Christians, witnesses of the same theological values that promote fellowship, according to the image of the Trinity. This type of ecclesiology takes into account the profound unity of Christians, and their diversity, having as paradigm the Holy Trinity.

Keywords

World Council of Churches, sacraments, Orthodoxy, the Holy Trinity, catholicity, ecumenical dialogue

A significant moment in the twentieth century ecumenical plan is the theological document technically entitled B.E.M. namely: *Baptism, Eucharist and Priesthood*, as an expression of the considerable theological efforts, world wide, over many years, in order to find aspects of common belief on three major theological themes or Sacraments of the Church: the Baptism, the Eucharist and the Priesthood. In order to prepare this document, Great Protestant and Orthodox theologians dedicated to the cause of overcoming doctrinal separation of Christians, as well as Roman Catholic theologians participated with their theological expertise, especially to the elaboration of the documents of the Commission of Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches (WCC). The launch for public debate of this document was due to the intention the great family of churches represented in WCC to go further and to synthesize those theological issues that have reached a certain degree of common acceptance of the major Eastern and Western theologians.

The document is relevant for at least two reasons: on one hand, it contains everything that has been crystallized as value and theological significance over several decades of efforts, discussions, theological dialogues between different theologians and churches, and on the other hand, it is meant to revive the debate, i.e. deepening these three themes or Sacraments, so that together the theologians from different cultural, historical and spiritual universes can rethink these issues in order to boldly advance towards the theological dialogue and to approach the same apostolic faith by the Churches they represent, in this theological and ecumenical effort in order to confess “a single mouth and heart” the faith of the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic” Church.

In the present contribution is necessary to underline other issues, aspects and teachings that can contribute to approach in the same faith and life the Church of Christ. We will try in the present study to understand how some fundamental teachings of the Orthodox Church have in themselves the germs of a generous opening towards others, their ecumenical valences and how they can help to achieve the visible unity of Christians.

1. Working methods of ecumenical dialogue

Before attempting to enumerate some of the Orthodox theses with Ecumenical meanings, we must stress some theological principles or methods

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of approaching the issues which have ecumenical impact. Since the beginning of any theological dialogue it was mentioned that the Orthodoxy is a theological legacy, liturgical and canonical, of which it must take care when it is presented in dialogue with other forms of theological confession, which are relevant for the universal Church. In other words, the Church of the first Christian millennium should be taken as a reference point for restoration of visible unity of all Christians.

In the 70's Father Stăniloae spoke of a method of paradoxical expression of the truths of faith, which has certain ecumenical meanings, as it has been demonstrated throughout the Ecumenical Councils of the first eight centuries. By this method, shortages of one theological position can be filled by joining the other positions, contradicting the former, but which through synthesis it captures valuable elements of each theological positions. Therefore, from the theological point of view is extremely important to achieve that "paradoxical balance" that takes into account also the positions of the unilateral theological discourse. This method is not arbitrary, for it is based on the way that the mystery of faith and redemption is presented in the Holy Scripture. For example, St. Paul speaks on the one hand, about the redressing thought faith, but on the other hand, he also speaks of the moral duties of the believers, such as: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6, 2) or: Apostle James: "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2, 20). Such paradoxical enunciation can be found in many places in Holy Scripture. In the period of the Ecumenical Councils we meet the same method of paradoxical expressions, when the Church held a certain unilateral position, which filled in the other unilateral position, combining them in a comprehensive review. This approach can help on the way of ecumenical effort, to retain certain elements of Western theology, embedded in a more complex view of the Eastern, so that everyone can say: no one will give away what is his and can not claim that any of the other give up what is his, but each one may find that what I believe has remain and it has been added what the other believes. "We, the Orthodox, must understand Orthodoxy in a larger, more comprehensive way, and the others (the Protestants) also must properly understand their faith, according to God's infinite wealth. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God

(Romans 11, 33). I believe that we must raise our eyes to the “ampleness”, “width” and “height” of Christ, to Whom man is aspiring”.¹

2. Ecumenical and communion valences of the Holy Trinity - the foundation of the Church and spirituality

For the Orthodox Christians the Holy Trinity dogma is the beginning and the ending of any thoughts about God and the world, the source and fulfilment of piety and, generally, of Christian life. For the Orthodox thinking is essential to keep in mind that God-Love is not an abstract reality, motionless and without any connection with the life of the world and humans, but he is a God of Revelation, Whom became known to people as Trinity of Persons. In this revelation, Christians may sense the fact that each Person of the Trinity a plenary divine existence, with all the attributes and works of the Divinity.

“The Theology of the Holy Trinity contributes to a deeper understanding not only of the human person, but also the human community. The Orthodox Christians had an important contribution to the ecumenical convergence thought which the Trinitarian conception of God is supported as the foundation of the ecclesial life. If we dare today to talk about Catholicity and Eucharistic communion as specific for the ecumenical community is because we have reached a profound consensus in our conception of the Trinity.”²

The life of love and communion of the Trinity was made accessible to people through the Incarnation, the Passion, the Death and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This means that this Trinitarian life of communion must be known and lived by all those who confess Him who revealed this life of communion of the Trinity. The ethos of living the life of the Trinitarian communion is reflected in the thinking and practical life of Christians.

¹ See also *Die Heilige Schrift, die Tradition und das Bekenntnis*. Eine Dokumentation über das 1 Theologische Gespräch mit der Rumänischen Orthodoxen Kirche, in Goslar 1979, Verlag Otto Lembeck, Frankfurt am Main, 1982, p. 151-153.

² Ion Bria, *Sensul Tradiției Ecumenice. Mărturia și viziunea ecumenică a Bisericii Ortodoxe*, Editura Universității „Lucian Blaga”, Sibiu 2009, p. 61-62.

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They can't believe randomly, selectively and superficial, based on their subjectivity, but only what Christ has revealed to people, urging them to believe in Him and in Whom sent Him – the Father, through the work of the Holy Spirit. "Christians have only one reference point to establish the standards of unity and justice: the life of the Trinity as it was revealed in Jesus Christ and as it was lived in the Eucharistic communion of the Holy Spirit. However, this life can not be reduced to a set of principles, rules or criteria. It is both a life to be lived and a vision to be found in the Eucharistic community".³ The Mystery of communion of life of the Holy Trinity is connected with the mystery of human existence; for man is the materialization of the created image of God, in a continuous aspiration to the Trinitarian prototype, according to which man was created. We may see here a principle of love, life and motion, which the Holy Trinity involves. The Orthodoxy pointed out that in God-the Holy Trinity

"is a unit or communion of will and being (Isaiah 9, 5), but remain as People or different Hypostasis: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is a single Being of God, but it moves in three Persons, each having specific attributes. The way of existence and movement or specific property of the Father is unbegottenness, fatherhood and the monarchy, of the Son is the birth from the Person of the Father, of the Spirit is the proceeding from the Father... And here it becomes evident that the Triune principle is a principle of motion coherence and action."⁴

The Fathers masterly showed the way of life and communion of the Trinity and its consequences for human life and creation. "The path to God's knowledge starts from The Holy One, (passes) by the Son (and gets) to the Father. And vice versa: the goodness, the holiness and the royal dignity (starts) from the Father (passes) by the Son and reaches The Holy Spirit".⁵

³ Ion Bria and C. Patelos, (ed.), *Orthodox Contributions to Nairobi*, C.E.B., 1975, p. 28. see also: Dumitru Popescu, *Teologie și viață. Relevanța teologiei ortodoxe în lumea contemporană*, Convorbiri cu Cristinel Iojă, Editura „Cartea Ortodoxă”, Alexandria 2009, p. 127.

⁴ Ion Bria, *Ortodoxia în Europa. Locul spiritualității române*, Editura Mitropoliei Moldovei și Bucovieni, Iași 1995, p. 148.

⁵ Vasile cel Mare, *Despre Duhul Sfânt*, cap. XVIII, trad. rom. EIBMBOR, București 1988, p. 62.

The doctrine of the Trinity is so overwhelming and complex that it has implications for all the Christian teaching. Nothing can be understood in Orthodox theology without the Holy Trinity, starting with the creation and ending with the eschatology. And nothing in the Christian life can not be justified and testified without referring to the mystery of the Trinity. It is not only a symbol of the Revelation, but also an icon of the unity of the Church, "that they may be one, as we are." (John 17, 11). "This transcendental communion of the Trinity is the norm for the communion between the Christians but is also represents a discipline with real significance for the human community."⁶ The Holy Trinity opens encouraging perspectives for a dialogue between the Christians because it has a dynamic of its life.

3. One of the Trinity became man for us and our salvation

I could have not known the communion of the Trinitarian life, if one of Trinity would not have become man, for people to rise to the communion with the Trinity. The Logos or the Word of the Father became man so that man to be healed from the inside and to share the power that Christ gives him. The assumption of the kenosis, and thus of the Incarnation is a wealth of gifts that Jesus Christ shares to the impoverished and disoriented humanity because of the lack of communication and communion with God-Love. Through incarnation the human being is reviewed and restored its intimate resorts. Thus, it is achieved an ontological bond between Christ and humanity, which He assumed through the incarnation. In Christ the human being develops, renews and bears the imprint of eternity.

"This development of the union of human with Christ has two consequences: the salvation is indivisible and regards all the dimensions of human existence, both personal sanctification and the transformation of the environment, of the creation. The purification of selfishness, the holiness and deification of creation through the Holy Spirit are inseparable from the changing of the world, the liberation of violence, injustice, poverty".⁷

⁶ Idem, *Sensul Tradiției Ecumenice*, p. 62.

⁷ Idem, *Hermeneutica teologică. Dinamica ei în structura Tradiției*, Editura „Andreiana”, Sibiu 2009, p. 182.

Ioan Tulcan, *Unitatea Bisericii și temeiurile ei dogmatice în teologia ortodoxă și evanghelică-luterană mai nouă*, Arad, 1999, p. 38

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Jesus Christ becomes the foundation of the Church and its unity only by passing his humanity through all stages or states, beginning with the incarnation and culminating with the resurrection and the ascension into heaven. All these reflect the direct consequences in people's lives because the man was raised from the death of his selfish loneliness and was put into a sealed connection with God and with the others. This could have a quite positive role in the ecumenical dialogue of Christians. Renouncing their own selfishness, people could get one another spiritual richness. In this context, the meaning of the sacrifice of Christ and of the believers, from the power of His sacrifice, is of particular importance.⁸ Christians confess Christ as the Son of God made man for their salvation, so all must come to know Him, His work, leaving themselves to be carried by the Spirit of sacrifice, by His power and His resurrection. Doing so, they can found themselves as brothers in faith and witnesses of He in Whom "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2, 9).

4. Presence of Christ in the Church through the Holy Spirit - manifested in the catholicity of the Church

Beginning with the day of Pentecost a new reality appears in history - the Church, as the Body of Christ, revealing the joy and the gifts of God's kingdom. "The coming of the Holy Spirit in the Church is not an isolated historical event, but a gift that gives life to the Church permanently, ensuring its existence in the life of humanity, making possible its testimony about God's kingdom. The Holy Spirit is the divine power through Whom the Church is able to obey the command of the risen Lord: "Go ye, therefore and teach all nations..." (Matthew 28, 19), "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Mark 16, 16 Luke 24, 47).⁹ The whole church worship is worn by the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit, who keeps the

⁸ Idem, *Sensul Tradiției Ecumenice*, p. 62.

⁹ Vezi: G. Tsetsis (ed.), *Orthodox Thought: Reports of Orthodox Consultations Organized by the WCC, 1975-1982*, Geneva, CEB, 1983, p. 38 u; Damaskinos Papandreou, *Einheit der Kirche aus orthodoxer Sicht*, in: *Orthodoxe Rundschau* 20, 1971, p. 262-282.

Church in the world, as a pillar of light and testimony of God's work in His creation, in order to turn it into a "new heaven and new earth".

The Orthodox theology always had a propensity to speak not only about the Trinity, but also about the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of communion of Jesus Christ, a theme which we bravely introduced it in the ecumenical debates. The Eucharistic Liturgy highlights for us the fact that there comes a time when human work must cease, so the Holy Spirit can work through the epiclesis of the Church. "Basically the ecumenical initiative is not based on human powers and material resources. The Church must contribute with a huge effort, but through the Church the Holy Spirit is working on building an ecumenical community".¹⁰ The Holy Spirit is a power and an inspiration to Christians, to constantly renew not only the life and faith, but also to continually find new ways to manifest Christian love and its materialization as a sacred vow taken before Christ, Who prayed for all His disciples, "that they may all be one" (John 17, 21). "The Western theology has not been very clearly and specifically about the Holy Spirit as a Person and work of the Triune God. The language and thinking about the Holy Spirit are introduced by the Orthodox Christians into ecumenical dialogue. Thus they enabled a corrective influence for the theology to become more Trinitarian, opening the path for new ways of understanding the nature of the Church and its unity".¹¹

The Orthodox theology always had the gift to maintain a constant freshness of the Orthodox theology of the Holy Spirit, helping to recover some biblical and patristic senses, values and significations, keeping it on a golden thread of the diachronic Tradition through which it capitalizes the events and situations in the perspective of God's kingdom. It reminds us of the biblical expression of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. 5, 24), through which Christians can learn new ways of communion and solidarity.

For the Orthodox theology, the Holy Spirit deeply realizes the catholicity of the Church, which we understand in the original meaning of the word. By this, the catholicity is a work of the Holy Spirit present in the Church and in the world, Who keeps every person, every community and every nation in a mutual, ontological, lively connection, maintaining

¹⁰ Ion Bria, *Sensul Tradiției Ecumenice*, p. 75.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

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all in a profound unity and defending their diversity, through the work of the same Spirit. The Catholicity of the Church means the fact that it expresses the existence of the fullness of the salvation in a visible form through which it is addressed to all people. The Churches mentioned in the New Testament, and especially those in Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, etc were “Catholic” Churches as they had essential elements in their fullness. By this means, the Church addresses to the whole world, all the people in a spatial universality of which nobody is excluded. By this we are able to understand the universal and ecumenical dimension of the Church, keen to include in its area of work on all people. The essential question that arises in this context is therefore to identify the elements of latent or explicit “catholicity” in other churches and denominations, which Christians discover in a communion of thought, prayer and service.

Holy Spirit is the person Who returned to us the life and the saving work of Christ through His uncreated energies. This paper addresses the whole Church and every member of it in part, releasing the Church from a closed, static and monotonous way of life and Christian witness.

5. The expression of the completeness of the Church through its sacramental work, and especially, the Eucharist

Often is stated that an important theological divergence between East and West is the issue of the sacraments of the Church, and especially the Eucharist. Theological dialogue between the Orthodox Church and other churches brought to light the fact that there is a consensus among the great churches regarding the need of the sacraments in the Church as holy works, through which the believers share the sanctifying and saving grace. Therefore, the sacraments are important, necessary and public works which share with us the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. For the Orthodox theology was very important the statement that in the early Church were present all seven sacred works (sacraments), which corresponded to the different needs of people’s lives, even if the number was not fixed at first as seven sacraments. The Church existed, but many more acts or sacred works, such as: the tonsure into monachism, the sanctification of the

water and so on, but these have never been considered as sacraments like the Baptism, Holy Orders and the Eucharist. The reason for such a perception was simple: what is shared by Baptism, for instance, is different from what is communicated through the tonsure or the sanctification of water that is by other holy acts or religious services.

The Holy Spirit works through all the sacraments of the Church. He updates the saving work of Christ for every generation of Christians. A special place is the Mystery of the Eucharist, the real presence of Christ crucified, dead and risen, Who updated His saving work in the Church, so that all may partake His gifts. By the epiclesis of the Church, the gifts of bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, which are offered to the believers for the forgiveness of the sins and eternal life. The Eucharist also highlights the fact that it is the mystery of the transfiguration of matter, guiding the Christians to the “new heaven and new earth” of the kingdom of God. The Problem of love and keeping the creation has become an important task for both people of faith and for today’s secularized world. Everyone became increasingly aware that they can not ignore, abuse and disfigure God’s creation forever, which waits to be reconsidered, revaluated and kept in the synthesis presented by God, the Creator of all visible and invisible things. Through the Eucharist the faithful have access to the risen Christ, victorious over evil, over the devil and death. The Christians are alive, because they are united to the risen Christ and they die because they are separated from Him by sin” (according to II Timothy 2, 11). Every believer should participate to His Passion and Death. Every Eucharist means the intercession of the entering of the life of Christ in our lives. He lives always to intercede between God and us (according to Hebrew 7, 25)”.¹²

Through the Eucharistic sharing the Christians became bearers of Christ, by building themselves into His ecclesial body “as a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, peculiar people ...” (I Peter 2, 9). This way, the Christians are the carriers of an ethos, of a new way of thinking and feeling of the ecclesial responsibilities and social committing, serving a continuous liturgy, inspired by the Eucharistic Liturgy.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 62 u.

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6. Reflection of the “catholicity” in the approaching of the Church under local and universal aspect

For the Orthodoxy, the Church must be understood both in terms of local and universal. Universal Church subsists in the communion of local churches that everyone has full catholicity of the Church, as long as they keep the unity of the faith, of the liturgical life and the canonical organization. The local churches are in full communion in faith and in the sacraments, in other words, the local church are the fullness of the universal Church, in a particular place and time. Each local Church has the fullness of faith by confessing the same dogma, the Liturgy, the Christian life, being united with each other, although they differ culturally, ethnically and linguistically.

The universal church is embodied in the local church, which receives its legitimacy from the universal one. “The institutional structures of the different local Churches are important, but the unity of the Churches should be based on their unity in the unique Church, the Body of Christ. The unity of the Church does not mean creating a global organization or structure. The one Church can not be realised by putting together all the individual and local churches and denominations in a global structure”.¹³ It is the Holy Spirit who brings the local churches in a symphony of confession of the same content of the apostolic faith and ministry in today’s world, in the spirit of love of Jesus Christ. On the basis of this commitment of the love of Christ, the local churches must find inspiration and courage to initiate gestures of solidarity with those deprived of this love, witnessing Jesus Christ in the dynamic of His saving love. The local church needs to know if there is a deep ontological connection of the embodied Logos with every man, regardless of the place where he lives and cultural or spiritual horizon. Within His humanity, Christ summary included all people and the churches are called to currently make the inclusion of all people under the power, faith, love and sacrifice of Christ, that each partake in the sacraments of the Church, and especially the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

The Orthodox theology, permanently guided by the Fathers, forcefully and argumentatively highlights this contemporary mission of the Church

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

to accommodate all, in a real and current way into the real ecclesial Body of Christ. In other words, we clearly see here the ecumenical implications, complex and necessary, which motivates the mission of the Church in every time and context to continuously remain faithful to Christ's command to be "salt of the earth" and "light of the world" (Matthew 5, 13-14). A Church truly doctrinal faithful to its Saviour can not otherwise manifest in history, but as a Church inspired by the miss of gathering all the people in one Church. For the Orthodox, there is no personal centre, universal of the unity of the Church, as we find in the Roman Catholic Church, nor one based solely on personal subjectivity, individual believes, but a unity based on truth, which testifies into the communion and expressed itself in a conciliar or Catholically manner, as we find in the New Testament and as it was indicated by the early theological authority of the Christian Church.

The whole effort of the ecumenical and Christian witness is worn and justified by the reference to the significance of understanding of the relationship between the universal Church and the local Church or, in other words, to highlight the relationship between local and universal. Before the Orthodox theology many perspectives of theological approach open, whereby to retain the fundamental aspects of Orthodox theology in the affirmation of local and universal context, and to outline the mission of the Church in this world.

7. Findings and perspectives

We could continue to list other possible theological themes and or theological theses, relevant ideas for the XXIst century by representatives of different churches to reach further on the way of dialogue, but for a first phase of our considerable debate, I think that the most important issues have been raised to reaffirm and encourage the deep theological and ecumenical dialogue platform. One thing must be noted: the Orthodox theology has to communicate a wealth of ideas and theological nuances to other theologians, thus it does not leave the theological debate to shift to outlying areas, unessential for Christian witness of today. The Orthodoxy must always restore the debate about the theological and ecclesiastical "recep-

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tion". I mean, what sense or value have the agreements or the theological convergences obtained towards theological dialogue, when, for example, there is no substantive disagreement between the Orthodox Churches and the non-Chalcedonian. The dialogue was successful but the seen drive did not materialize. Moreover, the Orthodoxy can always come up with a sacramental spirituality that can help to regain the meaning of the sacraments also by those who have not developed a theology of their own. This is because the Orthodox theology brings its statement together with theological richness, a model of Christian life, which is in continuity with the apostolic era and the early Church, a reference point for all Christian churches.

In this context, the Orthodox theology of the last century has developed an ecclesiology of communion, closely related to the communion of love and life of the Holy Trinity, which encourages the approaching of the common elements existent in different churches, each one trying to identify those theological and ecclesial coordinates that will be able to meet other Christians, witnesses of the same theological values that promote fellowship, according to the image of the Trinity. This type of ecclesiology takes into account the profound unity of Christians, and their diversity, having as paradigm the Holy Trinity.

Hence, opens a wide field of reflection on the coordinates of the Church as sacrament and communion. The presentation by the Orthodox of these issues is crucial for the progress of the process of rapprochement between Christians, called to witness their faith in a world increasingly divided and devoid of spirituality. Looking to others, both Orthodox and those who profess other forms of Christian faith, which has however a certain historical continuity, I may refer to other elements of catholicity, which must be identified, highlighted and developed in anticipation of finding together in the same spirit of communion and faith, as premise of full unity of the Church.

In the future, the Churches will be confronted with a certain indifference regarding the unity of the Church and a certain timidity in the decided approaching of the exigencies related to the overcoming the division between Christians, which represents a counter-witness in today's world. The world today is in a state of division and separation emphasized on several levels, and on the other hand, it deeply seeks a communion, a

convergence and a general unit. Here is the great chance of Orthodoxy to capture the opportunity that stand before it, but also to imagine an always fresh vision, which is based on the Gospel, the Fathers thinking, but also to be in correspondence with the fundamental aspirations of the world in which we live.

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Η «εις ὕψος αναδρομή» της κκλησιαστικής οικονομίας και η «ἐξ ὕψους συγκατάβαση» της Θείας Οικονομίας στο μυστήριο της Μετανοίας. Η οιονεί ταυτοσημία «οικονομίας» και «διακριτικής ευχέρειας» κατά την ἐξατομίκευση των επιτιμίων

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Abstract

Jesus Christ made particular therapeutic interventions in the community by curing people's hearts and souls through forgiveness and compassion. One may find the equivalent of Jesus' therapeutic touch in the Church's treatment by *epitimia* (penances), incorporated in the Sacrament of Penance which retains its communal character and leads man from absolution to complete cure. *Ecclesiastical Economia* is the meeting point of the ascending Church with the descending *Divine Economia* and may not be fully identified with the legal nature of any institution of common law because, like any other institution of the Church, apart from its visible side, it also has a mystical (mysterious) one.

As much as the accounting of all the mysteries of the Church is humanly unfeasible, the strict, detailed accounting of penances is also unfeasible.

In individualizing penances, a confessor relies on the law and ethos of the Church; in other words, *Akriveia* (accuracy) and *Synetheia* (habit). Furthermore,

by the „εις ὕψος ἀναδρομή“, the confessor seeks Christ’s wish-to-be-done in a particular individualization of penance. The phrase „εις ὕψος ἀναδρομή“ originates from Gregory of Nyssa. It translates literally as „returning myself upwards to a height“, but what Saint Gregory really means is that the confessor should turn to God, in order to decide on the proper penance. On the other hand, the penitent, by receiving absolution, becomes receptive to correction through the means of his contrition and the measure of appreciation of his guilt.

The study of fundamental sources of Canonical Law allows a bypass of the semantic axis of *Economia* and *Akriveia* and its replacement by the triangular figure of *Akriveia-Economia-Syneitheia*. *Akriveia* is the given form of Church law. *Syneitheia* is the Church ethos, as tested and confirmed over time. As a rule, *Akriveia* is sought in the provisions of primary sources of Church law, while *Syneitheia* is usually associated with a more lenient application of penalties, established amongst representatives of law as a traditional and secure healing treatment.

A bypassing of the most extreme degree of *Akriveia* results in an unforgivable infringement of Church law. A bypassing of the most extreme degree of *Syneitheia* also results in an unforgivable violation of Church law: both constitute unacceptable and excessive novelties.

Ecclesiastical *Economia* in individualizing penalties is expressed through the application of the method of “*Akriveia*” and “*Syneitheia*” of the Holy Spirit, that is, through the law and ethos of the Church, in finding the proper cure for the disease of sin.

Ecclesiastical *Economia* takes into consideration and applies canonical principles for a rational application of justice, as instituted by Divine Grace, placing them at the disposal of Divine Consent, which influences the communal body of the Church in a supernatural and invisible manner.

Keywords

The Sacrament of Penance, epitimia, canon law

Είναι δύσκολο να ορίσει κανείς τί είναι ζωή. Είναι επίσης δύσκολο να την περιγράψει. Υπάρχουν αναρίθμητοι φιλοσοφικοί ορισμοί. Στους περισσότερους η έννοια της ζωής προσεγγίζεται ως συμβάν ή σειρά συμβάντων που προκαλούνται από ένα «αυτοκινούμενο» άγνωστο μυστήριο. Η προσωκρατική φιλοσοφία, η πρώτη ιστορικά επιστημονική κοσμολογική προσέγγιση, εγκαταλείπει την απόπειρα συσχετισμού σύμπαντος και συμβάντος σε μια οριζόντια διάσταση. Δεν φαίνεται να έχουν γίνει μεγάλα βήματα από τότε, καθώς ο σύγχρονός μας Αμερικανός καθηγητής της Φιλοσοφίας Gene James αποδίδει το γεγονός της ζωής στις εξαιρετικά περίεργες ιδιότητες του ατόμου του άνθρακα. Το περί ζωής φιλοσοφικό ερώτημα συνεχίζει να επαναλαμβάνεται, να αναδιατυπώνεται και να παραμένει αναπάντητο.

Η «εις ύψος αναδρομή» της κκλησιαστικής οικονομίας...

Στον χώρο της Φιλοσοφίας του Δικαίου, από πολύ νωρίς είχε διαπιστωθεί η άμεση συνάφεια του ερωτήματος περί ζωής με το περί δικαίου ερώτημα, και ειδικότερα με τον προσδιορισμό του ιδεολογικού θεμελίου της ποινής. Από τον Πλάτωνα και τον Αριστοτέλη μέχρι σήμερα, η ανθρωπότητα στοχάστηκε πολυτρόπως πάνω στο ζήτημα, χωρίς να καταλήξει σε τελική οριστική θέση. «Τελική» θέση, προς το παρόν, μετά τις φιλοσοφικές μελέτες του Popper, του Dworkin και του Burke, θα μπορούσε να θεωρηθεί η παραδοχή της αδυναμίας «εντελούς» συλλήψεως των αξιών και της αλήθειας της ποινής και η στροφή της θεμελίωσής της προς την κατεύθυνση του αγνώστου¹.

Γεγονός είναι ότι στην αρχαιότητα η θρησκεία, κινούμενη στην προς τα άνω κάθετη διάσταση της προσέγγισης του θεϊκού όντος, δίδει τελικές απαντήσεις στο περί δικαίου ερώτημα περιβάλλοντας τις ποινικές της προβλέψεις με το κύρος και την εξουσία της υπερφυσικής τους προέλευσης. Τούτο δεν είναι εμφανές μόνο στα θεοκεντρικά καθεστώτα των ανατολικών λαών, αλλά και στην προομηρική ελληνική αρχαιότητα². Καινοφανές γεγονός για τις προχριστιανικές έννομες τάξεις αποτελεί η πρωτοβουλία του Μωυσή να θραύσει τις ιερές πλάκες του θεόδοτου Νόμου. Η πράξη αυτή δεν καταδικάζεται από τον Θεό ως ιερόσυλη, αλλά ως δικαιολογημένη αντίδραση στην άνομη λατρεία ενός λαού, χάριν του οποίου, και προς όφελός αυτού, θεσπίστηκε ο αχειροποίητος Νόμος³. Πρόκειται για τη «σπερματική» σύλληψη μιας πρωτότυπης για την ανθρωπότητα ιδέας: ότι το δίκαιο έχει ανθρωποκεντρικό χαρακτήρα, ακόμη και όταν είναι «έργον Θεού»⁴. Ωστόσο, η γέννηση και η ανάπτυξη αυτής της ιδέας δικαίως αποδίδεται στους Έλληνες. Υπό την πίεση των κοινωνικών και πολιτικών μεταβολών κατά τους 8ο με 6ο αι. π.Χ., οι φιλοσοφικοί, νομικοί αλλά και επικολυρικοί στοχασμοί, χωρίς να έρχονται τις περισσότερες φορές σε μετωπική σύγκρουση με τις παραδεδομένες περί της θείας προέλευσης του Νόμου θρησκευτικές αντιλήψεις, προώθησαν σταδιακά την ανθρωποκεντρική θεώρηση του Νόμου, ο οποίος κατά τους κλασικούς και τους ελληνιστικούς χρόνους έχει πλήρως αποπροσωποιοηθεί⁵.

¹ Βλ. την αξιολογή μελέτη της Βιργινίας Γκιούλη, η οποία αξιοποιεί τα ευρήματα των Popper, Dworkin, Burke και άλλων, χωρίς να προσδίδει στην έννοια του αγνώστου «προοπτική ενός υπερφυσικού όντος» (Β. Γκιούλη, *Φιλοσοφία της ποινής*, εκδ. Αντ. Σάκκουλας, Αθήνα-Κμοτηνή 2003, σελ. 37).

² Π. Κυριακοπούλου, *Αρχαίο Έλληνικό Δίκαιο*, εκδ. Σύγχρονη Έκδοτική, Αθήνα, χ.χ., σελ. 171.

³ *Εξοδ.* 32:15-35.

⁴ *Εξοδ.* 32:16.

⁵ Π. ΚΥΡΙΑΚΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, *ό.π.*, σελ. 172-177.

Ο Χριστός εμφανίζεται σε μια ιστορική στιγμή συνάντησης του παραδοσιαρχικού θρησκευτικού Νόμου του Ισραήλ με το Ρωμαϊκό Δίκαιο, το πλέον συστηματικό και εξελιγμένο δίκαιο της αρχαιότητας, σαφώς επηρεασμένο από την ελληνική φιλοσοφία και θεωρητικά θεμελιωμένο στην απρόσωπη έννοια της δικαιοσύνης. Κηρύττει ότι Αυτός είναι η Οδός, η Αλήθεια και η Ζωή και πάρα τούτα σταυρώνεται. Με τη σταυρική Του θυσία, ο Χριστός καταδεικνύει ότι δεν επιδιώκει να καταλύσει την ανθρωποκεντρική δομή της κοσμικής δικαιοσύνης, παρά το γεγονός ότι αυτή πόρρω απέχει από τη θεία τελειότητα⁶. Με τη ρήση «ἀπόδοτε τὰ τοῦ Καίσαρος τῷ Καίσαρι καὶ τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῷ Θεῷ»⁷ εγκαινιάζει μια νέα δικαιοταξία, αλλότρια και διακριτή της κοσμικής και, όσο και αν ακούγεται παράξενο, εμφυτεύει στη συνείδηση της ανθρωπότητας την ιδέα της απο-ιεροποίησης της κοσμικής εξουσίας. Από την άλλη πλευρά, όταν ο Χριστός απαντά στον Πιλάτο ότι «ἡ Βασιλεία ἡ ἐμὴ οὐκ ἐστὶν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου», αποφαίνεται κατά της εκκοσμίκευσης της πνευματικής Του εξουσίας⁸.

Στις κοινωνίες όπου επικρατεί ο χριστιανισμός, είναι σαφές ότι θεαρχική δομή μπορεί να έχει μόνον εκείνο το δίκαιο, του οποίου Νομοθέτης, Νομοκράτωρ και Κριτής είναι ο Θεός, η Αυτοζωή, το Α και το Ω του σύμπαντος κόσμου⁹. Ο Χριστός ως Κύριος του Νόμου κηρύττει ότι δεν έγινε ο άνθρωπος για το Σάββατο (Νόμο), αλλά το Σάββατο για τον άνθρωπο¹⁰ και θέτει ως κορωνίδα όλων των εντολών την αγάπη προς τον πλησίον και προς τον εχθρό¹¹. Θεμελιώνει τον Νόμο της Εκκλησίας Του στις παραπάνω γενικές αρχές, οικοδομώντας ένα σύστημα δικαίου όχι μόνον ανθρωποκεντρικό, αλλά και ιδιαζόντως φιλόανθρωπο. Η αξιολογική αρτιότητα και ηθική τελειότητα αυτού του δικαίου, αποδίδεται από τους ίδιους τους κοινωνούς του στη θεανδρική φύση του Νομοθέτη. Ο Χριστός κηρύττει έμμεσα τη θεανθρωπότητά του, όταν λέγει στους μαθητές του ότι

⁶ Ο Ιερός Χρυσόστομος εκφράζει τη γενική αντίληψη της πρωτοβυζαντινής περιόδου, ότι οι «ἐξώθεν» νόμοι προέρχονται από τη δικαιοσύνη των ανθρώπων, η οποία είναι «εὐτελής καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσα τὸ τέλειον καὶ ἀπηρτισμένον καὶ ἐξ ἀνθρωπίνων συγκεκριμένη λογισμῶν» (Βλ. Ιωάννης Χρυσόστομος, *Εἰς Ψαλμούς*, 5, 4, PG 55,67).

⁷ *Ματθ.* 22: 21.

⁸ *Ιωαν.* 18: 36. Πρβλ. Κ. ΜΟΥΡΑΤΙΔΗ, *Ἡ οὐσία καὶ τὸ πολίτευμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας κατὰ τὴν διδασκαλίαν Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου*, ἐν Αθήναις 1958, σελ. 168 επ.

⁹ *Αποκ.* 1:8.

¹⁰ *Μαρκ.* 2:27.

¹¹ *Ματθ.* 5:44, 22:39.

Η «εις ύψος αναδρομή» της κκλησιαστικής οικονομίας...

με την έλευσή Του καταργούνται τα στεγανά μεταξύ ουρανού και γης¹². Τη θέση τής, άπαξ και σε έναν μόνον άνθρωπο, τον Ιακώβ, αποκαλυφθείσας κλίμακας¹³ λαμβάνει η Εκκλησία Του, ως διαρκές, ενεστωτικό γεγονός των επιγείων και των ουρανίων θεωριών και ως το έσχατο συμβάν της Ιστορίας. Η Εκκλησία έχοντας ως κεφαλή της τον Χριστό, δεν έχει ίδιαν υποστατική (απόλυτη) αγιότητα¹⁴. Η αγιότητά της, οντολογική και ηθική¹⁵, οφείλεται στο ομοφυές¹⁶ του σώματος με την κεφαλή. Συνεπώς, η βούληση της Εκκλησίας δεν μπορεί παρά να ακολουθεί και να υποτάσσεται στο θέλημα του Χριστού.

Η Δύση, μέσω της αυγουστίνειας απόλυτης εννοιολογικής ταύτισης της Εκκλησίας με τη Βασιλεία του Θεού,¹⁷ σμίκρυνε και σε μερικές περιόδους εξαφάνισε το χάσμα μεταξύ κοσμικής και εκκλησιαστικής δικαιοταξίας. Στην Ανατολή, οι δύο νομοθετικοί αρμοί ουδέποτε συνενώθηκαν. Τούτο γίνεται εμφανές όταν οι Οικουμενικές Σύνοδοι νομοθετούν, χωρίς να επικαλούνται ή να λαμβάνουν υπόψη την ισχύ αντίστοιχων πολιτειακών διατάξεων. Με την ηθελημένη αγνόηση του πολιτειακού Νόμου υπογραμμίζεται η εμμονή της Ανατολικής Εκκλησίας στους διακριτούς ρόλους των δύο εννόμων τάξεων¹⁸.

Για την Ορθοδοξία, η Εκκλησία είναι η μετοχή της κτίσης στην άκτιστη δόξα της Βασιλείας¹⁹. Η εκκλησιολογική αυτή αρχή επηρεάζει άμεσα τη δικαιοπλαστική της λειτουργία. Αποκλείει την οποιαδήποτε μεμονωμένη και αυτόνομη αυθεντία. Η Μία, Αγία, Καθολική και Αποστολική Εκκλησία εκφράζεται αυθεντικώς μέσω της Οικουμενικής Συνόδου. Οι συνοδικοί πατέρες των Οικουμενικών Συνόδων, εμφορούμενοι από το ήθος της διακρίσεως της πνευματικής τους εξουσίας από την κοσμική, «ἐξ ἑνὸς γὰρ ἅπαντες καὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ Πνεύματος ἀυγάσθέντες, ὥρισαν τὰ συμφέροντα»²⁰. Μακρο-

¹² Ιωαν. 1:5. Ματθ. 22:21.

¹³ Γεν. 21:12.

¹⁴ Ν. ΓΕΩΡΓΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, *Communio Sanctorum*, Η Εκκλησία ως κοινωνία Αγίων, Αθήναι χ.χ., σελ. 104.

¹⁵ Ι. ΚΑΡΜΙΡΗ, *Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησιολογία*, Αθήναι 1973, σελ. 277.

¹⁶ Γρηγόριος Νύσσης, *Περὶ τελειότητος*, PG 46, 273.

¹⁷ Ν. ΜΑΤΣΟΥΚΑ, *Η Δογματική καὶ Συμβολική Θεολογία Β΄*, Έκθεση τῆς ὀρθόδοξης πίστεως σέ ἀντιπαράθεση μέ τή δυτική χριστιανοσύνη, εκδ. Πουρναρά, Θεσσαλονίκη 1996, σελ. 371-373.

¹⁸ Βλ. Ε. ΧΡΙΣΤΙΝΑΚΗ-ΓΛΑΡΟΥ, *Η αρχή της νομιμότητας στους Ιερούς Κανόνες. Ι. Η αρχή της μη αναδρομικότητας των ποινών στους Κανόνες των Οικουμενικών Συνόδων*, εκδ. Αντ. Σάκκουλα, Αθήνα 2007, σελ. 269, 277, 288, 349, κ.α.

¹⁹ Βλ. Ν. ΜΑΤΣΟΥΚΑ, *ό.π.*, σελ. 379-380.

²⁰ 1ος κανόνας Εβδόμης Οικουμενικής Συνόδου, *ΡΠ* 2, σελ. 556.

πρόθεσμα, η διαφορετική οπτική ως προς την υφή της εκκλησιαστικής δικαιοταξίας, οδήγησε στη σύγκρουση των τοπικών Εκκλησιών Ανατολής και Δύσης, καθώς η πρώτη έμεινε σταθερά προσκολλημένη στην δικαιική παράδοση δεχόμενη μόνον την έννοια της ανανέωσης και επικαιροποίησης του δικαίου της με περαιτέρω εξειδικεύσεις (*αρχή της συνέχειας*²¹), ενώ η δεύτερη ακολούθησε την οδό της καινοτομίας και των ριζικών αναδομήσεων. Στην Ορθοδοξία κάθε δικαιοταξική εξέλιξη της Εκκλησίας κρίνεται με βάση το ιστορικό κριτήριο της εναρμόνισής της με την Παράδοση. Εφόσον η Εκκλησία πορεύεται στον χρόνο, μπορεί να εξελίσσει το δίκαιό της τηρώντας «όλοκληρον καὶ ἀσάλευτον τὴν διαταγὴν»²², όπως αυτή αναδύεται από το δίκαιο των Ιερών Κανόνων, τις αποστολικές και ευαγγελικές επιταγές και σε τελική ανάλυση την Κυριώνυμη εντολή της αγάπης.

Δεν είναι προσιτός στην ανθρώπινη διάνοια ο τρόπος, με τον οποίο το δίκαιο της Εκκλησίας, ως έκφανση της ζωής της, μπορεί να «κινείται» εξελικτικώς παραμένοντας «αμετακίνητο». Για την Εκκλησία, όμως, είναι μια εμπειρική πραγματικότητα, είναι ζωή, η οποία προσεγγίζεται περιγραφικά, αν μιλήσει κανείς με θεολογικούς όρους και ανατρέξει στις διατυπώσεις του δόγματος της Θείας Οικονομίας. Ο άγιος Νικόδημος ο Αγιορείτης μας βοηθά να ψάξουμε την άκρη του νήματος. Συμπυκνώνοντας την πατερική σκέψη, εξηγεί ότι ο Θεός «Ακίνητος ὢν καὶ τὰ πάντα κινῶν», ὄντας Τέλεια και μη χρίζων κινήσεως, «ἐκινήθη» για να δημιουργήσει τα πάντα εσαεί κινούμενα προς την απόλαυση της «κατὰ φύσιν αὐτῶν τελειότητος»²³, ώστε «ἂν παύσουν νὰ κινοῦνται, ἢ κατὰ φυσικὴν ἀδυναμίαν, ἢ προαιρετικὴν, εὐθὺς χάνουν καὶ τὰς τελειότητάς τους, καὶ φθείρουν τὸ εἶναι τους»²⁴. Η θέση αυτή βασίζεται στη χριστιανική ανθρωπολογική διδασκαλία περί της κατ' εικόνα και καθ' ομοίωση κατασκευής του Αδάμ, η οποία τον τοποθετεί σε ένα παραδείσιο σχεσιοδυναμικό πεδίο ατελεύτητης πνευματικής αυξήσεως και κοινωνίας με τον Δημιουργό του, στην προπρωτική Εκκλησία. Μεταπτωτικά, η Εκκλησία συνεχίζει την πορεία της με Θεία καθοδήγηση, ώστε με την Ενανθρώπιση του Λόγου να γίνει η «ένσαρκος πολιτεία Του»²⁵. Ο Υιός και Λόγος του Θεού είναι προαιώνιος, άχρονος και άρα αναλλοίωτος στους αιώνες, ο Ίδιος και ο Αυτός. Ωστόσο προ-

²¹ Βλ. Ε. ΧΡΙΣΤΙΝΑΚΗ-ΓΛΑΡΟΥ, *ό.π.*, σελ. 304.

²² 1ος κανόνας Εβδόμης Οικουμενικής Συνόδου, *ΡΠ* 2, σελ. 556.

²³ Ψευδο-Διονύσιος Αεροπαγίτης, *Περὶ θείων ὀνομάτων*, IX, 9, PG 3,900-918.

²⁴ Νικόδημος Αγιορείτης, *Πνευματικά Γυμνάσματα*, εκδ. Β. Ρηγόπουλος, Θεσσαλονίκη 2004, σελ. 5-6.

²⁵ Βλ. Ν. ΜΑΤΣΟΥΚΑ, *ό.π.*, σελ. 373.

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τυπώνεται στους προχριστιανικούς λαούς, φανερώνεται σκιωδώς στον Ισραήλ, ενσαρκώνεται με τη Γέννησή Του από την Παρθένο Μαρία, αποκαλύπτει τη θεανθρωπότητά του με την Ανάστασή Του, δοξάζεται στους θρόνους του ουρανού μετά την Ανάληψη, γίνεται ο μελιζόμενος και μη δαπανώμενος Αμνός, που προσφέρεται προς αγιασμό των μελών της Εκκλησίας Του, και αναμένεται ως ο ευλογημένος Ερχόμενος κατά τα Έσχατα. Ο Χαλκηδόνιος θεανδρισμός, που συνεπάγεται την ασύγχυτη ένωση του άχρονου με το χρονικό, ανακλάται σε κάθε πτυχή της ζωής της Εκκλησίας Του, και βεβαίως δεν θα μπορούσε να λείπει από τη διαμόρφωση της κανονικής της συνείδησης²⁶.

Οι διατυπώσεις του πρώτου κανόνα της Πενθέκτης Οικουμενικής Συνόδου, αφενός «Τάξις άριστη, παντός άρχομένου και λόγου και πράγματος, έκ Θεού τε άρχεσθαι, και εις Θεόν αναπαύεσθαι», και αφετέρου «και νυν άρχήν τών ιερών ποιούμενοι λόγων χάριτι θεία όρίζομεν», καταδεικνύουν ότι η πίστη των κοινωτών του δικαίου των ιερών κανόνων στη θεαρχικότητά τους είναι δομικό στοιχείο του ποινικού θεμελίου τους. Αυτό δεν συνεπάγεται ότι η θεολογία των ιερών κανόνων υπαγορεύει άκαμπτο νομικό φορμαλισμό. Κάθε άλλο. Και τούτο διότι, κατά την Ορθόδοξη διδασκαλία, έννοιες όπως η τιμωρία, η αποκατάσταση και η ανακαίνιση προσδιάζουν στα κτιστά όντα, ενώ η Δικαιοσύνη, η Κοινωνία και η Αγάπη είναι καταρχήν θείες κατηγορίες. Κατά την αυτομαρτυρία των Ιερών Κανόνων, η νοητική τους αρχή είναι οντολογική²⁷, και άρα κινητική, ζωντανή, πρωτοβουλιακή, σχεσιοδυναμική.

Είναι μάλιστα αξιοσημείωτο ότι και η θεωρία του κοινού ποινικού δικαίου έχει απομακρυνθεί από τη νομική τυποκρατία και αναζητεί ένα υπερ-θετικό (vorpositiv) κριτήριο για τον προσδιορισμό της πράξης που προσβάλλει ένα έννομο αγαθό και τη δικαιολόγηση της τυποποίησης της πράξης αυτής ως κοινωνικώς ορατού εγκλήματος. Η διαρκώς μεταβαλλόμενη όμως κοινωνική ηθική αδυνατεί να ορίσει την υπερ-θετική έννοια του εννόμου αγαθού. Η συνείδηση του δικαίου κινείται αποκλειστικά επί της οριζόντιας διάστασης της κριτικής παρατήρησης της ιστορικής εμπειρίας και της τρέχουσας πραγματικότητας. Ακόμη και η σύγχρονη θεωρία του κοινού ποινικού δίκαιο έχει εγκαταλείψει τη στατικότητα του θετικισμού, χάριν της κινητικότητας του λειτουργισμού. Όμως, δεν βασίζεται στην απλή ομογνωμία, αλλά στην πλειοψηφική συνθετι-

²⁶ Πρβλ. Π. ΕΥΔΟΚΙΜΩΦ, *Η Όρθοδοξία*, μτφρ. Α. Μουρτζόπουλος, εκδ. Β. Ρηγόπουλου, Αθήνα 1972, σελ. 253.

²⁷ Βλ. Ε. ΧΡΙΣΤΙΝΑΚΗ-ΓΛΑΡΟΥ, *ό.π.*, σελ. 302-303.

κή συναίνεση των κοινωνιών του δικαίου. Συνεχίζει να εντάσσεται και πάντα θα εντάσσεται σε ένα σύστημα «αποπροσωποποιημένου ορθολογισμού»²⁸. Αντιθέτως, το δίκαιο της Ορθοδοξίας παραμένει πιστό στη μέθοδο του ορθοτομούμενου ρεαλισμού. Η αναζήτηση του προσήκοντος επιτιμίου διενεργείται, την ώρα του μυστηρίου της Εξομολογήσεως, διαπροσωπικά μεταξύ εξομολόγου, εξομολογούμενου και Χριστού, κατά το «ὅπου εἰσι δύο ἢ τρεῖς συνηγμένοι» στο ὄνομά Του «καὶ Αὐτὸς εἶ ἐν τῷ μέσῳ αὐτῶν»²⁹. Η δια του Αγίου Πνεύματος φάνερωση του θελήματος του Χριστού αποκλείει οιαδήποτε μορφή δικανικού σχετικισμού και συνιστά ένα αμετάθετο υπερ-θετικό κριτήριο, κείμενο υπεράνω κάθε σύμβασης, χρονικής, συγκυριακής, κοινωνικής, υπεράνω και αυτού ακόμη του θετού δικαίου.

Το δίκαιο των Ιερών Κανόνων αυτοπροσδιορίζεται ως αποτέλεσμα της συνεργίας ανθρώπινης θέλησης και Θείας πρωτοβουλίας, και γι' αυτό η αυθεντικότητα κάθε προσπάθειας εφαρμογής του δοκιμάζεται και κρίνεται από το κατά πόσον βρίσκει το σημείο συνάντησης δύο κινήσεων, της «εἰς ὕψος ἀναδρομῆς» της εκκλησιαστικής οικονομίας με την ἐξ ὕψους συγκατάβαση της Θείας Οικονομίας. Στην Εκκλησία ενεργείται η υποστασιοποίηση της απρόσωπης έννοιας της δικαιοσύνης στο πρόσωπο του Χριστού. Το σύνολο της εκκλησιαστικής δικαιοταξίας έχει δομηθεί με ζητούμενο όχι την ικανοποίηση της Θείας Δικαιοσύνης, κάτι το αδύνατο, αλλά την εκπλήρωση της ανταποκρίσεως του ανθρώπου στη Θεία Αγάπη. Η εύρεση του κατάλληλου επιτιμίου οφείλεται στην αγιοπνευματική υφή του μυστηρίου της Μετανοίας, η οποία «κινεί» την αδιάσειστη και αμετάλλαχτη περί δικαίου συνείδηση της Μίας, Αγίας και Καθολικής Εκκλησίας προς ανεύρεση της κατάλληλης θεραπείας, χωρίς να την «μετακινεί» από την Αλήθεια.

Ειδικότερα, στο μυστήριο της Μετανοίας, ο Πνευματικός καλείται να εξατομικεύσει τη θεραπευτική αγωγή των επιτιμίων, ώστε με ασφάλεια να οδηγήσει τον πιστό στην ίαση της νόσου της αμαρτίας και στην ενδυνάμωση της κλυδωνισθείσας σχέσης και αγαπητικής του κοινωνίας με τον Θεό. Κατά την εξατομίκευση των επιτιμίων, ο Πνευματικός οφείλει να ανατρέξει στην ευαγγελική, αποστολική και κανονική βάση της Εκκλησίας. Όμως, αν παραμένει σε αυτήν την οριζόντια διάσταση δεν θα μπορέσει να βρει το κατάλληλο για τον συγκεκριμένο πιστό φάρμακο θεραπείας. Ο Γρηγόριος Νύσ-

²⁸ Βλ. Ε. ΧΡΙΣΤΙΝΑΚΗ-ΓΛΑΡΟΥ, «Ο Γρηγόριος ὁ Θεολόγος καὶ ἡ συμβολή του στὸ δίκαιο τῶν ἱερῶν κανόνων», *Στὰ Βήματα τοῦ Αποστόλου Βαρνάβα, Χριστήριος Τόμος Αρχιεπισκόπου Κύπρου Χρυσόστομου Β΄*, Λευκωσία 2008, σελ. 807-819.

²⁹ *Ματθ.* 18:20.

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σης εκφράζει αυτήν την αντίληψη με την εξής διατύπωση: «Τοῦτο δ' ἂν εἴη τὰ νόμιμά τε καὶ τὰ ἔθη τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, οἷς τρέφεται ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ ἀδρύνεται, ἐντεῦθεν τῆς εἰς ὕψος ἀναδρομῆς τὰς ἀφορμὰς ποιουμένη»³⁰. Ο Πνευματικός, έχοντας ως εφαλτήριο τον νόμο και το ἔθος της Εκκλησίας, με άλλα λόγια την ακρίβεια και τη συνήθεια, καλείται να αναδράμει εις ὕψος, αναζητώντας το θέλημα του Χριστού στη συγκεκριμένη περίπτωση.

Η ἐκτίση των επιτιμίων δεν αποτελεί προϋπόθεση για τη λήψη της ἀφέσεως. Τουναντίον, η ἀφεση συνιστά λογικό πρότερο της επιβολῆς του επιτιμίου. Μόνη προϋπόθεση για την ἀφεση εἶναι η ομολογία των αμαρτιῶν και η υπόσχεση του εξομολογουμένου ὅτι με τη συνεργία της Θείας Χάριτος θα επιστρατεύσει ὅλες τις βουλευτικές του δυνάμεις και θα καταβάλει κάθε προσπάθεια για να ἀπέχει ἀπὸ το κακό στο μέλλον³¹. Το επιτίμιο ἐντάσσεται στο πλαίσιο αὐτῆς της προσπάθειας. Ο 52ος Αποστολικός κανόνας τιμωρεῖ με καθάρση τον ἐπίσκοπο ἢ πρεσβύτερο, ὅταν ἀρνεῖται στον εξομολογούμενο την παροχή ἀφέσεως, διότι «λυπεῖ Χριστόν, τὸν εἰπόντα, χαρὰ γίνεται ἐν οὐρανῷ ἐπὶ ἐνὶ ἀμαρτωλῷ μετανοοῦντι»³².

Η ορμή της κινήσεως της εις ὕψος ἀναδρομῆς κρίνεται ἀπὸ τη συντριβὴ του εξομολογουμένου. Ο Ἰησοῦς δίδει την ἀφεση σε ὅλους, ὅσων ἀναγνώριζει, ὡς καρδιογνώστης, το «συντετριμμένον τῆς καρδίας» τους³³, ἄλλοτε με λόγο³⁴, ἄλλοτε με ἔργα³⁵, ἄλλοτε με διάλογο³⁶ και τις περισσότερες φορές ἐν μέσω πλήθους ἢ μαρτύρων, πρὸς ψυχικὴ ωφέλεια ὅλων, υποδειγματισμό της συγγνώμης και εἰρήνευσης της κοινότητος. Μετὰ την Ἀνάληψη του Χριστοῦ, ἔπρεπε να βρεθεῖ το λειτουργικὸ ἰσοδύναμο αὐτῆς της κοινοτικῆς θεραπευτικῆς διαδικασίας. Καὶ αὐτὸ το λειτουργικὸ ἰσοδύναμο εἶναι ἡ ἐνταξη της επιτιμιακῆς θεραπευτικῆς αγωγῆς στο μυστήριο της Εξομολογήσεως, ἡ ὁποία, ὡς γνωστόν, στα πρώτα βήματα του χριστιανισμοῦ εἶχε δημόσιο χαρακτήρα³⁷.

Αντιλαμβάνεται κανεὶς ὅτι ἡ ἀναζήτηση του πραγματικοῦ θελήματος του Χριστοῦ δίδει ~~μπα~~ κάθετη κατεύθυνση στη διακριτικὴ ευχέρεια του Πνευματικοῦ να ἐπιλέξει κάθε φορά το κατάλληλο

³⁰ Γρηγόριος Νύσσης, *Περὶ τοῦ βίου Μωνάσεως*, PG 44,329C.

³¹ Νικόδημος Ἀγιορείτης, *Εξομολογητάριον*, ἐκδ. Παναγόπουλος, Ἀθῆναι 2002, σελ. 102.

³² Αποστ. 52, ΡΠ 2, σελ. 68.

³³ Λουκ. 4:8.

³⁴ Λουκ. 7: 48, Μαρκ. 2:5.

³⁵ Λουκ. 19:5-10.

³⁶ Ἰωαν. 8: 7-10.

³⁷ Ε. ΧΡΙΣΤΙΝΑΚΗ-ΓΛΑΡΟΥ, «Επιτίμια», *ΜΟΧΕ* 7 (2012)

επιτίμιο. Η Εκκλησία χρησιμοποιεί τον όρο οικονομία για να αποδώσει τον βαθμό ελευθερίας κινήσεως του Πνευματικού κατά την εξατομίκευση των επιτιμίων. Στο κοινό ποινικό δίκαιο κάτι ανάλογο είναι η διακριτική ευχέρεια του δικαστή κατά την επιβολή ποινής. Η διακριτική ευχέρεια μπορεί να περιγραφεί με ποσοτικά και ποιοτικά κριτήρια οριοθέτησης αυτής της ελευθερίας. Όσον αφορά τον ποινικό δικαστή συνιστά οριζόντια οριοθέτηση των περιθωρίων ελευθερίας, που του παρέχονται, για τη διαμόρφωση δικανικής πεποίθησης και σύννομης αποφασιστικής βούλησης κατά την επιβολή της ποινής. Τα όρια της διακριτικής ευχέρειας μπορεί επιτρεπτά να υπερβεί ο δικαστής μόνο σε έκτακτες περιπτώσεις, εφόσον συντρέχουν οι εξαιρετικοί όροι του λειτουργικού κριτηρίου της νομικής έννοιας της δικανικής επιείκειας. Αλλά μέχρι εκεί. Νομικοί σχολιαστές έχουν επιχειρήσει να ορίσουν την εκκλησιαστική οικονομία ως κανονικό όρο ταυτόσημο με τη διακριτική ευχέρεια ή τη δικανική επιείκεια³⁸. Δεν λαμβάνουν όμως επιπροσθέτως υπόψη τους την πίστη των κοινωνιών του δικαίου στη μυστική συνεργία του Αγίου Πνεύματος κατά το μυστήριο της Εξομολογήσεως προς ανεύρεση του πραγματικού θελήματος του Χριστού. Έτσι, ενώ η διακριτική ευχέρεια και η δικανική επιείκεια αντιμετωπίζονται αποκλειστικώς με λογικές κατηγορίες, όπως αυτή της θεωρίας της στάθμισης των εννόμων αγαθών, της αρχής *summum iuris summa iniuria*, κ.α., η οικονομία λαμβάνει μεν υπόψη αυτές τις αρχές ορθολογικής απονομής της δικαιοσύνης και εξορθολογισμού των ατεχνιών της, αλλά τις υποτάσσει στην έννοια της δια του Αγίου Πνεύματος υπερφυούς και αδήλως ενεργουμένης Θείας Δικαιοσύνης. Και ενώ η Θεία Δικαιοσύνη είναι εξω-νομική έννοια για το κοινό δίκαιο, η πίστη των κοινωνιών του δικαίου στην ύπαρξη της και στην ενεργό δια της Θείας Συγκαταβάσεως ανάμειξη της στους κανονικούς θεσμούς και την εφαρμογή τους, εξυφαίνει τη μοναδική και ιδιότυπη νομική φύση της εκκλησιαστικής οικονομίας. Η οικονομία, κατά τη γνώμη μου, δεν μπορεί να ταυτιστεί πλήρως με τη νομική φύση οποιουδήποτε θεσμού του κοινού δικαίου, διότι εμπεριέχει, όπως όλοι οι θεσμοί της Εκκλησίας, εκτός από την ορατή και μια μυστική (μυστηριώδη) πλευρά³⁹.

³⁸ Ε. ΤΣΑΓΡΗ, «Η νομική φύσις τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς οἰκονομίας», *EEN* (1972) 876-879.

³⁹ Πρβλ. το λήμμα «Économie» στο Γλωσσάριο του Καθηγητή Αρχιμ. Γρηγορίου Παπαθωμά, το οποίο περιλαμβάνεται σε διάφορες εκδόσεις νομοκανονικών μελετών (βλ. πρώτη δημοσίευση στο GRIGORIOS PAPATHOMAS, *Le Patriarcat œcuménique de Constantinople* (y compris la Politeia monastique du Mont Athos) dans l' Europe unie (Approche nomocanonique), [Νομοκανονική Βιβλιοθήκη 1], ed. Épectasis, Thessalonique-

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Στη θεωρία του Κανονικού Δικαίου έχει επικρατήσει η γνώμη ότι ο όρος ακρίβεια αντιπαρατίθεται προς τον όρο οικονομία (με διακριτικές παραμέτρους την αυστηρότητα και την επιείκεια, την προσήλωση στο γράμμα και την αναζήτηση του πνεύματος μιας δι-
άταξης, την πλήρη εφαρμογή και την παρέκλιση από τον κανόνα με γνώμονα το σωτηριολογικό κριτήριο και όριο το δόγμα)⁴⁰. Και,

Katerini 1998, σελ. 685-686, και ίδια τη διατύπωση: «L' économie contitue une *kénose* (=s' épuiser de soi-même) de l' Église pour le salut de monde» (ό.π., σελ. 686).

⁴⁰ Βλ. κυριότερη ελληνική βιβλιογραφία του 20ού αι. περί οικονομίας, Κ. ΔΥΟΒΟΥΝΙΩΤΟΥ, *Περί τῆς ἑνώσεως τῆς Ἀγγλικανικῆς Ἐκκλησίας μετὰ τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου καὶ τοῦ κύρου των ἀγγλικανικῶν χειροτονιῶν*, Ἀλεξάνδρεια 1932, Α. ΑΛΙΒΙΖΑΤΟΥ, *Ἡ Οἰκονομία κατὰ τό Κανονικόν Δίκαιον τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας*, Ἀθῆναι 1949, ΙΕΡΩΝΥΜΟΥ ΚΟΤΣΩΝΗ, *Προβλήματα τῆς Ἐκκλησιαστικῆς Οἰκονομίας*, Ἐν Ἀθήναις 1957, ΒΑΡΘΟΛΟΜΑΙΟΥ ΑΡΧΟΝΤΩΝΗ, ἀρχιμ. (τώρα Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριάρχου), «Ἡ οἰκονομία ἐν τῇ ὀρθοδόξῳ ἐκκλησίᾳ». Ἀπόσπασμα ἐκ τῶν παρατηρήσεων ἐπὶ τῆς σχετικῆς Εἰσηγήσεως τῆς Διορθοδόξου Προπαρασκευαστικῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς τῆς Μεγάλης Συνόδου τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας, *Ἐπίσκεψις* 50 (1972) 13-14, ΔΠΕ (=Διορθοδόξος Προπαρασκευαστική Ἐπιτροπή), «Πρὸς τὴν Μεγάλην Σύνοδον. Εἰσηγήσεις τῆς Διορθοδόξου Προπαρασκευαστικῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς ἐπὶ τῶν ἑξ θεμάτων τοῦ πρώτου σταδίου, ΣΤ', Ἡ οἰκονομία ἐν τῇ Ὁρθοδόξῳ Ἐκκλησίᾳ», *Ὁρθόδοξον Κέντρον τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου*, Chambesy Γενεύης 1971, σελ. 50-65, ΤΙΤΟΥ ΜΑΤΘΑΙΑΚΗ, *Ἐξομολογητική*, Ἀθῆναι 1976², ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΟΥ ΜΑΤΖΟΥ-ΝΕΑ, *Ἐκκλησιαστικόν Ποινικόν Δίκαιον*, Ἀθῆναι 1979, ΧΡΥΣΟΣΤΟΜΟΥ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΙΔΟΥ, *Ἡ Ἀναγνώριση τῶν μυστηρίων τῶν ἑτεροδόξων στίς διαχρονικές σχέσεις Ὁρθοδοξίας καὶ Ρωμαιοκαθολικισμοῦ*, ἐκδ. Ἐπέκτασις, Θεσσαλονίκη 1995, Ι. ΚΟΝΙΔΑΡΗ, *Εγχειρίδιο Ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ Δικαίου*, Ἀθήνα-Κομοτηνὴ 2000, ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΟΥ ΚΑΛΛΙΑΚΜΑΝΗ, *Μεθοδολογικά Πρότερα τῆς Ποιμαντικῆς. Λεντίω ζωννύμενοι*, ἐκδ. Μυγδονία, Θεσσαλονίκη 2000, Κ. ΜΟΥΡΑΤΙΔΟΥ, *Κανονικὸν Δίκαιον. Πανεπιστημιακαὶ Παραδόσεις*, Ἀθῆναι 1975, Π. ΜΠΟΥΜΗ, «Οἰκονομία», *ΘΗΕ* 9 (1966) 678, ΤΟΥ ΙΔΙΟΥ, *Ἡ ἐκκλησιαστικὴ «οἰκονομία» κατὰ τό Κανονικόν Δίκαιον*, (ἀνάτυπο ἀπὸ το περιοδικό «Ἐκκλησία»), Ἀθῆναι 1971, Π. ΜΠΡΑΤΣΙΩΤΟΥ – Π. ΤΡΕΜΠΕΛΑ – Κ. ΜΟΥΡΑΤΙΔΟΥ – Α. ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΥ – Ν. ΜΠΡΑΤΣΙΩΤΟΥ, *Ἡ Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Οἰκονομία, Ὑπόμνημα εἰς τὴν Ἱερὰν Σύνοδον τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, Ἀθῆναι 1972, Π. ΠΑΝΑΓΙΩΤΑΚΟΥ, *Σύστημα Ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ Δικαίου κατὰ τὴν ἐν Ἑλλάδι ἰσχὺν αὐτοῦ*, τόμ. Γ', *Τὸ Ποινικόν Δίκαιον τῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, Ἐν Ἀθήναις 1962, ΠΑΝΤΕΛΕΗΜΟΝΟΣ ΡΟΔΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, *Μαθήματα Κανονικοῦ Δικαίου*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1980, ΠΑΝΤΕΛΕΙΜΟΝ ΡΟΔΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, «Οἰκονομία nach Orthodoxem Kirchenrecht», στο *Παντελεήμονος Ροδοπούλου, Μελέται, Α', Κανονικά - Ποιμαντικά - Λειτουργικά - Οἰκουμενικά - Διάφορα*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1933, σελ. 229-240, ΜΕΛΕΤΙΟΥ ΣΑΚΕΛΛΑΡΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὸν Δίκαιον τῆς Ανατολικῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας μετὰ τοῦ ἰσχύοντος νῦν ἐν τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ Πατριαρχείου καὶ ἐν Ἑλλάδι*, Ἐν Ἀθήναις 1898, Σ. ΤΡΩΙΑΝΟΥ, *Παραδόσεις Ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ Δικαίου*, Ἀθήνα-Κομοτηνὴ 19842, Ε. ΤΣΑΓΡΗ, «Νομικὴ φύσις τῆς Οἰκονομίας», *ΕΕΝ* 1972, σελ. 876-879, ΜΕΘΟΔΙΟΥ ΦΟΥΓΙΑ, «Περὶ τῆς Ἐκκλησιαστικῆς οἰκονομίας. Ἀπάντησις εἰς τοὺς καθηγητὰς τῆς θεολογίας», *Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς Φάρος* 56 (1974) 5-55, 261-270, 57(1975) 65-79, 309-353, 58(1976) 5-24, Α. ΧΡΙΣΤΟΦΙΛΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, *Ἑλληνικὸν Ἐκκλησιαστικόν Δίκαιον*, Ἀθῆναι 19652, ARISTARCHOS BISHOP OF XENOUPOULIS, *The notion of economy in the Greek Orthodox Church* «Εἰς μνήμην Μητροπολίτου Ἰκονίου Ἰακώβου (Στεφανίδου), ἐν Ἀθήναις 1984, σελ. 117-131.

παρόλο που η κανονική θεωρία έχει καταλήξει ότι η έννοια της οικονομίας είναι «αληθώς παράλληλη και εκκλησιασκάς „συν-ώνυμη” αρχή -και όχι αντιτιθέμενη ή αντίθετη- στην απόπειρα της σωτηρίας του ανθρώπου»⁴¹, οι δύο αυτοί όροι έχουν επιβληθεί στη νομοκανονική φιλολογία και κυρίως στην εκκλησιαστική νομολογία ως ένα ισχυρό εννοιολογικό δίπολο. Ωστόσο, προσεκτικότερη εξέταση των πρωτογενών πηγών του Κανονικού Δικαίου, της Αγίας Γραφής και της Ιεράς Παραδόσεως, μας επιτρέπει να υπερβούμε τον εννοιολογικό αυτό διπολισμό και να εισέλθουμε στο τριαδικό σχήμα *Ακρίβεια - Οικονομία - Συνήθεια*.

Κατά την Εξομολόγηση, ο Πνευματικός οφείλει να εξετάσει το πρόσωπο του εξομολογουμένου (προσωπικότητα, βαθμός εν Χριστώ μορφώσεως, κ.ά.), τα περιστατικά της αμαρτίας, τη μετά την τέλεσή της συμπεριφορά, την τυχόν θεληματική υπαναχώρηση⁴². Αναλυτικότερα, σε κάθε περίπτωση, για την επιβολή ή μη επιτίμιου και την αύξηση ή μείωση της διάρκειας ή της βαρύτητας αυτού, λαμβάνονται υπόψη α) η πράξη της αμαρτίας (τα περιστατικά τελέσεως, το στάδιο τελέσεως, το μέγεθος της απαξίας, ήτοι της βαρύτητας της πράξης, η ποιότητα των κινήτρων του υπαιτίου και τα λοιπά υποκειμενικά και αντικειμενικά στοιχεία που θεμελιώνουν τον άδικο χαρακτήρα της πράξης, ή/και ύπαρξη λόγου που αίρει αυτόν τον άδικο χαρακτήρα, ή τον καταλογισμό) β) η μετά την τέλεση της αμαρτίας συμπεριφορά του υπαιτίου, είτε θετική, όπως η έμπρακτη μετάνοια, είτε αρνητική, όπως η τέλεση νέων αμαρτιών προς συγκάλυψη της πρώτης ή την εδραίωση, αύξηση ή παράταση των βλαπτικών συνεπειών της ή του αποκομισθέντος οφέλους του υπαιτίου, και γ) η αναχαίτιση της επικείμενης αμαρτίας στο στάδιο της εν διανοία τελέσεώς της, ή της απόπειρας ή των προπαρασκευαστικών πράξεων, από τον ίδιο τον υπαίτιο, λόγω θεληματικής υπαναχώρησης, και όχι από άλλους παράγοντες. Παράμετροι, όπως, η προσωπικότητα του υπαιτίου, η ύπαρξη ή έλλειψη επαρκούς παιδείας και εν Χριστώ μορφώσεως, η ανατροφή και οι καταβολές του επίσης λαμβάνονται υπόψη⁴³. Από τα παραπάνω γίνεται αντιληπτό ότι όταν ένας Πνευματικός εξατομικεύει το επιβαλλόμενο επιτίμιο δεν μπορεί να είναι σίγουρος ότι ενεργεί κατ' ακρίβεια ή κατ' οικονομία, ακόμη και αν έχει επιβάλει το επιτίμιο που ορίζει ο ιερός κανόνας. Όλα τα παραπάνω κριτήρια δεν είναι αυθαίρετα, αλλά εξάγονται και συνάγονται από τις ευαγγελικές, αποστολικές και κανονικές εντολές και διατά-

⁴¹ ΓΡΗΓΟΡΙΟΥ ΠΑΠΑΘΩΜΑ, «Ακρίβεια», *ΜΟΧΕ* 2 (2010) 74-75.

⁴² Νικόδημος Αγιορείτης, *Εξομολογητάριον*, σελ. 33-34.

⁴³ Ε. ΧΡΙΣΤΙΝΑΚΗ-ΓΛΑΡΟΥ, «Επιτίμια», ό.π.

Η «εις ύψος αναδρομή» της κκλησιαστικής οικονομίας...

Ξεις της Εκκλησίας. Συνεπώς, από πλευράς μεθοδολογικής εφαρμογής του δικαίου, ο Πνευματικός, λαμβάνοντας υπόψη τα παραπάνω κριτήρια, *οικονομεί κατ' ακρίβεια*, ακόμη και αν ενεργεί οικονομικώς -εδώ το επίρρημα «οικονομικώς» χρησιμοποιείται με την κρατούσα ερμηνεία, δηλαδή κατά παρέκκλιση από τον κανόνα, ή σύμφωνα με το πνεύμα και όχι το γράμμα του κανόνα, ή κατ' επιείκεια.

Ο κανονικός όρος «οικονομία», όταν αναφέρεται στην εξατομίκευση των επιτιμίων, δηλώνει μέθοδο του θετικού δικαίου της Εκκλησίας, και άρα υπ' αυτήν την έννοια δεν συνιστά απόκλιση από την ακρίβεια, αλλά τήρηση της ακρίβειας. Δεν ταυτίζεται με τη φιλανθρωπία και την επιείκεια κατά την επιβολή των επιτιμίων, καθώς κανείς δεν λαμβάνει την άφεση επειδή είναι άξιος αυτής, αλλά σε κάθε περίπτωση φιλανθρωπώς και επιεικώς κανονίζεται. Υπό τη μεθοδική αρχή της οικονομίας των επιτιμίων, τίθενται ως βάση τόσο η ακρότατη ακρίβεια όσο και η συμπαθέστερη συνήθεια. Η ακρίβεια είναι ο παραδοθείς τύπος του νόμου της Εκκλησίας. Η συνήθεια είναι το δοκιμασθέν στον χρόνο και βεβαιωθέν έθος της Εκκλησίας. Κατά κανόνα, η ακρίβεια στοιχείται με τις τιμωρητικές προβλέψεις των θεμελιωδών πηγών του δικαίου της Εκκλησίας, ενώ η συνήθεια με μια, τις περισσότερες φορές, επιεικέστερη κυρωτική πρακτική, η οποία, όμως, έχει επίσης εγκαθιδρυθεί στη συνείδηση των κοινωτών του δικαίου ως παραδοσιακή και ασφαλής θεραπευτική αγωγή. Πρέπει, όμως να γίνει αντιληπτό, ότι στο δίκαιο των Ιερών Κανόνων, κριτήρια ορθολογικής εφαρμογής της συνήθειας, όπως το ποσοτικό και το χρονικό δεν είναι απολύτως ασφαλή, αν δεν συνοδεύονται από το ποιοτικό στοιχείο της Παράδοσης. Κατά τη σκέψη του Πατριάρχη Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Νικολάου Γ' του Γραμματικού (Κυρδιανιάτου), η συνήθεια δεν είναι εφαρμοστέα μόνο από το γεγονός ότι «δοκεί τοίς πολλοίς», ή επειδή είναι «μακρά»⁴⁴. Σήμερα, που ελάχιστα στοιχεία από το αρχαίο και παλαιό δίκαιο της Εκκλησίας παραμένουν στο πλαίσιο της άγραφης Παράδοσης, καθώς τα περισσότερα έχουν ενσωματωθεί σε γραπτούς κανόνες δικαίου, η διατύπωση του Νικολάου „οὐδὲ ἡ μακρὰ συνήθεια, τὸ ἀπαρχῆς ἀνυπόστατον, εἰς ὑπόστασιν ἄξει ποτέ”⁴⁵ μπορεί να αποβεί εξαιρετικά χρήσιμη στον εφαρμοστή του δικαίου, όταν καλείται να κινηθεί μεταξύ ακρίβειας και συνήθειας. Ο Νικόλαος τοποθετεί ένα διαφορετικό κριτήριο παραδεκτής εφαρμογής της συνήθειας κατά την υπαγωγική δικανική κρίση: τη „μετὰ λογισμοῦ” χρήση. Ο „λογισμός”, η δικανική δηλαδή εκτίμηση δεν πρέπει να είναι αυθαίρετος, αλλά να έχει ως αναφο-

⁴⁴ Νικόλαος Γραμματικός, *ΠΠ5*, σελ. 73.

⁴⁵ Ο.π.

ρά τον „λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας“, να ορθοτομείται με βάση τα διδάγματα της „αὐτοαλήθειας“ του Λόγου του Θεοῦ και να μην αποσκοπεῖ στην ικανοποίηση ιδιοτελών σκοπῶν και παθῶν⁴⁶. Οι σοφιστείες και οι συλλογισμοί „ἐκ φαινομένων ἐνδόξων, μὴ ὄντων δε, πόρρω τοῦ ὄντος καὶ ἐπιστήμης εἰσιν“⁴⁷. Ο Βαλσαμών ορθῶς χρησιμοποιεῖ για τη συνήθεια τον προσδιορισμό «συμπαθέστερη» της ακριβείας, ἐπιλέγοντας συγκριτικό βαθμό, διότι και η ακρίβεια εἶναι συμπαθής και φιλάνθρωπη, αφού κανείς δεν λαμβάνει την ἀφεση αξιόμισθα.

Ο Πνευματικός λοιπόν «κινεῖται» στην οριζόντιο ευθεία μεταξύ του ακρότατου σημείου της ακριβείας και του ακρότατου σημείου της συνήθειας. Υπέρβαση του ακρότατου σημείου της ακριβείας σημαίνει ανεπίτρεπτη καταστρατήγηση του νόμου της Εκκλησίας. Υπέρβαση του ακρότατου σημείου της συνήθειας σημαίνει ανεπίτρεπτη παραβίαση του νόμου της Εκκλησίας. Και τα δύο συνιστούν απαράδεκτες καινοτομίες. Κατά τη στάθμιση όλων των επιμετρητικών του επιτιμίου κριτηρίων, ο Πνευματικός καλεῖται να ἐπιλέξει το καταλληλότερο σημείο της ευθείας αυτής, ως ἀφετηρία της εἰς ὕψος ἀναδρομῆς. Αμετάβλητη βάση και της κατ' ἀκρίβεια και της κατὰ συνήθεια ἐπιμετρήσεως εἶναι οι πρωτεύοντες κανόνες των ευαγγελικών, αποστολικῶν και κανονικῶν διατάξεων, εἴτε ἐπιτακτικοί (λ.χ. ἀγάπα τον πλησίον σου ως εαυτόν), ἢ ἀπαγορευτικοί (λ.χ. οὐ φονεύσεις) που ορίζουν ποια πράξη ἀποτελεῖ παράβαση θείας ἐντολῆς και καταδεικνύουν την ἀπαξία της.

Αυτοὶ οι πρωτεύοντες κανόνες εἶναι ἀμετάβλητοι⁴⁸. Δεν εἶναι, ὁμως, ἀμετάβλητο το εἶδος καθαντό ἢ το ὕψος του ἐπιτιμίου, διότι, παρὰ το γεγονός ὅτι στην ἱστορία του ἀνθρωπίνου γένους η ἀμαρτία δεν παρουσιάζει ἰδιαίτερη πρωτοτυπία, οι παγίδες της ἀλλάζουν μορφή και οι μορφές της μηχανεύονται νέες παγίδες. Ὅπως διδάσκει ο Γρηγόριος Νύσσης στη κανονική του ἐπιστολή, η ποικιλία των μορφῶν και των συνθηκῶν των ἀμαρτημάτων ἐπιβάλλει την ποικιλία των ἐπιτιμίων⁴⁹. Για παράδειγμα, η σιωπή του νόμου, ως προς την τυποποίηση ἐκάστου ἐκ των πολυποίκιλων σαρκικῶν ἀμαρτημάτων, δεν συνεπάγεται την ἐξαίρεσή τους ἀπὸ το ἀξιόποινο. Ἀντιθέτως, υπαγορεύει την ἐπιτρεπτή συμπερίληψη μιας καταρχὴν ἀπροσδιό-

⁴⁶ Ο.π., σελ. 75.

⁴⁷ Ο.π.

⁴⁸ Ε. ΧΡΙΣΤΙΝΑΚΗ-ΓΛΑΡΟΥ, *Κριτικὴ ἀποκατάσταση καὶ χρῆση τοῦ Α' Τιμ. 3:6 στοὺς ἱερούς κανόνες*, [Νομοκανονικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη 24], ἐκδ. Ἐπέκταση, Κατερίνη 2009, σελ. 19-21.

⁴⁹ Γρηγόριος Νύσσης, *ΠΙ* 4, σελ. 296: «πολλῆς οὔσης καὶ ἐν τῇ ψυχικῇ νόσῳ τῆς τῶν παθῶν ποικιλίας, ἀναγκαίως πολυειδὴς γενήσεται ἡ θεραπευτικὴ ἐπιμέλεια, πρὸς λόγον τοῦ πάθους ἐνεργοῦσα τὴν ἴασιν».

Η «εις ύψος αναδρομή» της κκλησιαστικής οικονομίας...

ριστης σε έκταση και είδος ποικιλίας επιτιμιών στο πραγματικό ενός γενικού κανόνα, ώστε ο επιβάλλων τα επιτίμια να αντιμετωπίζει κάθε μορφή της νόσου με την αντίστοιχη κατάλληλη θεραπεία⁵⁰.

Ο άγιος Συμεών ο Νέος Θεολόγος εξηγεί ότι δόθηκε η εξουσία του «λύειν και δεσμεῖν» στους Αποστόλους από τον ίδιο τον Χριστό χωρίς περαιτέρω εξειδίκευση των επιτιμιών, διότι επρόκειτο να λάβουν τη φώτιση και τη σχετική καθοδήγηση από τον Παράκλητο («οὐδὲν περὶ ἐπιτιμιῶν τέως αὐτοῖς ἐντέλλεται ὡς παρὰ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος μέλλοντες διδάσκεσθαι»⁵¹. Την τακτική της μη εξαντλητικής παράθεσης και πρόβλεψης όλων των επιτιμιών ακολούθησε η Ορθοδοξία από τα πρωτοχριστιανικά χρόνια μέχρι και σήμερα, ακριβώς γιατί επειδή αναγνωρίζει στο Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα το προβάδισμα σε κάθε ανακαινιστική και θεραπευτική πρωτοβουλία της Εκκλησίας. Ὅσο είναι ανθρωπίνως αδύνατη η απαρίθμηση όλων των μυστηρίων της Εκκλησίας⁵², τόσο αδύνατος είναι επίσης και η αυστηρή, εξαντλητική απαρίθμηση των επιτιμιών.

Ο Πνευματικός θα επιλέξει το σωστό επιτίμιο κατά το «ιδίωμα τῆς περιστάσεως»⁵³. Σε αυτήν τη διεργασία θα πρέπει να έχει πάντα υπόψη του τέσσερα «οὐ». Πρώτον ότι «οὐκ ἔστιν ἁμαρτία νικῶσα τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ φιλανθρωπῖαν»⁵⁴, που σημαίνει ότι οφείλει την ἄφεση, όσο ειδεχθῆς και αν είναι η πράξη. Δεύτερον, ότι «οὐ μικρὸν τὸ παρὰ μικρόν», σύμφωνα με το ρητό ανωνύμου σοφού, που ενσωματώνεται στον πρώτο κανόνα του Διονυσίου Αλεξανδρείας. Οικονομία δεν θα πει προχειρότητα, ἀμέλεια ως προς το ἔργο της διόρθωσης του εξομολογουμένου, ἀκριτε υποβάθμιση της σημασίας της ἁμαρτίας και υποτίμηση της βλαπτικής επίδρασης των μελλοντικών συνεπειών

⁵⁰ Από την ἄλλη πλευρά, ἡ ἄσκηση τῆς κκλησιαστικῆς οικονομίας, ναι μεν, δεν γίνεται προς ικανοποίηση τῆς θείας δικαιοσύνης, οφείλει ὅμως, ἀσχέτως αν αὐτὸ δεν επιτυγχάνεται πάντοτε σε ἓναν μεταπτωτικό κόσμο, νὰ μὴν προσκρούει, ἀλλὰ νὰ ἀκολουθεῖ τὰ προστάγματά της, τὰ ὁποῖα ἀποκαλύπτονται στὴν Ἐκκλησία διὰ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος.

⁵¹ Συμεών Νέος Θεολόγος, *Περὶ Ἐξομολογήσεως Α΄, Ἔργα Γ΄*, ἐκδ. Ὁρθόδοξος Κυψέλη, Θεσσαλονίκη 1990, σελ. 434.

⁵² Ν. ΜΑΤΣΟΥΚΑ, *Δογματικὴ καὶ Συμβολικὴ Θεολογία Γ΄*, ἐκδ. Πουρναρᾶ, Θεσσαλονίκη 1997, σελ. 269. Χωρὶς τὴν ἀνωτέρω ἀγιοπνευματικὴ θεώρηση τῶν επιτιμιῶν, ἡ Ἐκκλησία δεν θὰ μποροῦσε, στὸ πλαίσιο τῆς Ἱερᾶς Ἐξομολογήσεως, νὰ προσφέρει ποικιλότητα στὸ εἶδος καὶ τὴν έκταση τῶν θεραπευτικῶν τῆς μέτρων, χωρὶς νὰ κινδυνεύει νὰ κατηγορηθεῖ γιὰ ἀνεπίτρεπτη ἀπόκλιση ἀπὸ τὴ γενικὴ ἀρχὴ τῆς nulla poena stricta καὶ scripta.

⁵³ Βλ. διατύπωση στὸν 74ο κανόνα τοῦ Μ. Βασιλείου, *ΠΠ 4*, σελ. 211.

⁵⁴ Βαλσαμών, ἐρμηνεία στὸν 52ο κανόνα τῶν Ἀγίων Αποστόλων, *ΠΠ 2*, σελ. 69.

της, αν δεν αντιμετωπιστεί εγκαίρως. Οικονομία δεν θα πει αμελής επιείκεια και απαρατηρησία. Για να μην εγκλωβίσει, όμως, αυτή η αρχή, το δίκαιο της Εκκλησίας σε μια στείρα τυποκρατική προσήλωση στο γράμμα του νόμου, ο Πνευματικός δεν πρέπει να λησμονεί το τρίτο ρητό: «οὐ καλὸν τὸ καλὸν ὅταν μὴ καλῶς γίνηται»⁵⁵. Πρόκειται για σοφιολογική ρήση, που την οποίαν εισήγαγε στη κανονική φιλολογία ο Ζωναράς ως μεθοδολογικό εργαλείο για την επιμέτρηση της εκκλησιαστικής ποινής, χάριν του οποίου βρίσκουν πεδίο εφαρμογής και στο κανονικό δίκαιο ερμηνευτικές αρχές και μέθοδοι, όπως αυτή της ιεράρχησης των εννόμων αγαθών, η δικανική επιείκεια, η αρχή της *summum iuris summa iniuria* κ.ά.

Το τέταρτο «οὐ» είναι το σημαντικότερο και αποτελεί τη λυδία λίθο του δικαίου της Εκκλησίας. Το «οὐχ ὁ ἄνθρωπος διὰ τὸ Σάββατον, εἰ μὴ τὸ Σάββατον διὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον»⁵⁶ σταθμίζει την αναγκαιότητα της επιτιμήσεως και δεν δαπανά την κινητική της οικονομίας ενέργεια σε άσκοπες πρωτοβουλίες. Ο νόμος δεν είναι αυτοσκοπός. Το επιτίμιο θα πρέπει να έχει κάποιο νόημα στη ζωή του πιστού, γιατί διότι μόνον έτσι τον οδηγεί στη διόρθωση. Τα επιτίμια πρέπει να επιβάλλονται κατά το «μέτρον τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως» του μυστηρίου της πίστεως. Ο Συμεών ο Νέος Θεολόγος διδάσκει ότι το μόνο ενδεδειγμένο επιτίμιο για τον βαπτισμένο μεν, ακατήχητο και αδιάδακτο δε, χριστιανό είναι, η μαθητεία στον λόγο της ευσεβείας⁵⁷.

Τα στοιχεία που δηλώνουν, το μέτρο της επιγνώσεως της απαξίας μιας πράξης, δηλαδή την αυθεντικότητα της μετανοίας, είναι τα εξής: α) η έμπρακτος μετάνοια, η επανόρθωση· β) «τὸ ὑπερβάλλον τῆς ἐξομολογήσεως» μέγεθος της ψυχικής οδύνης και ενοχής που βιώνει ο εξομολογούμενος σε σχέση με τη σοβαρότητα του αμαρτήματός του⁵⁸ - και τούτο, διότι η υγιής συνείδηση είναι η ελεγκτική της αμαρτίας συνείδηση⁵⁹. γ) ο μείζων πόνος, που προκαλεί στον μετανοούντα η πράξη του και που σηματοδοτεί την πλήρη διόρθωση και ανάρρωση του πάσχοντος μέρους της ψυχής και την υγιή λειτουργία του μηχανισμού της ενοχής. Είναι αποτρεπτικός της επανάληψης της πράξης. Σε αυτήν την περίπτωση, κατά τον Μέγα Βασίλειο, ο

⁵⁵ Ζωναράς, ερμηνεία στον 66ο κανόνα των Αγίων Αποστόλων, ΠΠ 2, σελ. 84.

⁵⁶ Μαρκ. 2:27.

⁵⁷ Συμεών Νέος Θεολόγος, *Τὰ εύρισκόμενα πάντα*, μτφρ. Διονυσίου Ζαγοραίου, Λόγος 37ος, σελ. 177.

⁵⁸ Μ. Βασίλειος, *Ἐπιστολαὶ II*, ΟΔ', PG 31,804.

⁵⁹ Β. ΤΣΑΚΩΝΑ, *Ἡ περὶ συνειδήσεως διδασκαλία τοῦ Ἀποστόλου Παύλου*, εκδ. Συμμετρία, Ἀθήναι 1994, σελ. 95-97.

Η «εις ύψος αναδρομή» της κκλησιαστικής οικονομίας...

Πνευματικός μπορεί, κατά διάκριση, να συντάμει τον χρόνο της επιτιμήσεως⁶⁰.

Ο ΣΤ' 102 θετικοποιεί τις εξής κατευθυντήριες γραμμές της μεθόδου επιμέτρησης των επιτιμιών:

α) Τα επιτίμια, ως φάρμακα, δεν προκαλούν την ίδια πικρία σε όλους. Η δυσκολία της ανεύρεσης του σωστού φαρμάκου, λόγω της υποκειμενικότητας της ψυχικής πρόσληψής του, αντιμετωπίζεται με τη χρήση του εξής αντικειμενικού κριτηρίου: Ο Πνευματικός παρέχει «τά ενάντια τοῖς ἐναντίοις ἰάματα»⁶¹. Στο *Εξομολογητάριο* του αγίου Νικοδήμου του Αγιορείτου προτείνονται η ελεημοσύνη ως φάρμακο κατά της φιλαργυρίας, η εγκράτεια ως ἰαμα της φιληδονίας, η νηστεία ως αντίδοτο στη λαιμαργία κ.ο.κ.

β) Η δυσανάλογη ένταση στη βίωση της ενοχής του εξομολογούμενου σε σχέση με τη βαρύτητα της πράξης του, υπαγορεύει ελαφρύτερα επιτίμια για να μην οδηγηθεί ο εξομολογούμενος στην απόγνωση, αλλά και διότι ήδη ο πάσχων «πρὸς τὴν ὑγίαν νεύει». Διαφορετικά, αν βιώνεται επιδερμικά η ενοχή, με απροθυμία ως προς την εγκατάλειψη της αμαρτίας και με διάθεση αυτοποιμάνσεως, θεραπείας δηλαδή «διὰ τῶν οἰκείων τρόπων», ο Πνευματικός καλείται «τὸν ἔλεον κατ' ἀξίαν ἐπιμετρῆιν».

γ) Ο Πνευματικός εναλλάσσει τα «στυφότερα» ή «ἀπαλότερα» επιτίμια και δοκιμάζει τους «καρπούς της μετανοίας» και αναλόγως αυξάνει ή μειώνει τη δοσολογία ή αλλάζει αγωγή, αλλά πάντως πρέπει με οποιονδήποτε τρόπο να προσπαθεί να επιφέρει την ἴαση με τη μέθοδο της δοκιμής.

δ) Η ἴαση από την αμαρτία σχετίζεται άμεσα και εξαρτάται από την ἴαση της παθολογικής ενοχής. Η υγιής ενοχή ωθεί τη βούληση σε αλλαγή νοός και διόρθωση. Η παθολογική ενοχή ακινητοποιεί τις βουλητικές δυνάμεις του ανθρώπου, είτε δια της απογνώσεως, όταν είναι υπέρμετρη, είτε δια της αδιαφορίας για τον κίνδυνο του πνευματικού θανάτου, όταν είναι υποτονική. Ο ΣΤ' 102 κανόνας επιτάσσει και επιτρέπει στον Πνευματικό να πράξει ό,τι χρειάζεται και να μεταχειριστεί κάθε μέσο, για να βιώσει ο πιστός στο κατάλληλο μέτρο την οδύνη της αμαρτίας, ώστε να δεχθεί να υποστεί τον έμπονο κάματο της θεραπευτικής επιτιμήσεως. Ο Πνευματικός καλείται να μην αρκεστεί στα τυποποιημένα φάρμακα των κανονικών εγχειριδίων και εξομολογηταρίων, αλλά να αποφασίσει με ευρύχωρη ελευ-

⁶⁰ Μ. Βασίλειος, *Ἐπιστολαὶ II*, ΟΔ', PG 31,804: «τῆς ἐν τοῖς Γραφαῖς ἱστορίας γνωρίζουσης ἡμῖν τοὺς μετὰ μείζονος πόνου ἐξομολογουμένους ταχέως τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ φιλανθρωπίαν καταλαμβάνειν».

⁶¹ Νικόδημος Αγιορείτης, *Ἐξομολογητάριον*, σελ. 108.

θερία και πλήρη ευθύνη και να κινήσει τον πιστό προς την ηθική και πνευματική του ανύψωση, βασίζοντας, τη δυναμική θεραπεία του στη μέθοδο της δοκιμής. Ο ρόλος του Πνευματικού δεν σταματά στην παροχή της αφέσεως, αλλά είναι θεραπευτικός της παθολογικής ενοχής, η οποία προκαλεί είτε την πνευματική «αναισθησία» ή τη βουλητική ακινησία του εξομολογουμένου. Ο εξομολογούμενος, αποκτώντας δια του κατάλληλου επιτιμίου ρεαλιστική αίσθηση της βαρύτητας της πράξης του, βιώνει την ενοχή στο μέτρο που απαιτείται, για να εξέλθει από τη-συνειδησιακή ακαμψία. Υπό το βάρος της μεμετρομένως ασύμμετρης αυτής ενοχής, υποχωρεί η ενδοσκοπική ψυχραιμία, που του επιτρέπει να δικαιολογεί τις πράξεις του και να φθάνει μέχρι και σε σημείο αυτοδικαίωσης, και εισέρχεται σε κατάσταση συντριβής, δακρύων και ελικρινούς μετανοίας.

Η επιβολή των επιτιμίων δεν είναι αναγκαίο συστατικό στοιχείο του μυστηρίου της Εξομολογήσεως, αλλά πραγματοποιείται εντός του πλαισίου του, για να υπογραμμιστεί ότι η ανακαινιστική επένεργεια της οικονομίας είναι αφενός αγιοπνευματική, και όχι μεθοδική, και αφετέρου ότι αφορά όχι μόνο τον εξομολογούμενο, αλλά και όλη την εκκλησιαστική κοινότητα και τον κόσμο⁶².

Η εκκλησιαστική οικονομία είναι η μέθοδος της κατά περίπτωση εφαρμογής του δικαίου της Εκκλησίας, με την οποία η αγία Εκκλησία «κινεί» αγαπητικώς όχι μόνο τα μέλη της αλλά και τον σύμπαντα κόσμο προς τη σωτηρία, ώστε να πληρούται το θέλημα του Χριστού και η Κυριώνυμη εντολή της Αγάπης. Η οικονομία κατά την εξατομίκευση των επιτιμίων είναι η δια της καθοδηγήσεως του Αγίου Πνεύματος άσκηση της εν Χριστώ ελευθερίας, προς ανεύρεση του σύμφωνου με το θέλημα του Χριστού κατάλληλου ιάματος για τη θεραπεία της νόσου της αμαρτίας.

Η εκκλησιαστική οικονομία τηρεί και λαμβάνει υπόψη τις «Θεία Χάριτι» θεσπισθείσες κανονικές αρχές ορθολογικής απονομής της δικαιοσύνης, τοποθετώντας τες στην υπό την διά του Αγίου Πνεύματος υπερφυή και αδήλως ενεργούμενη Θεία συγκατάβαση. Η εκκλησιαστική οικονομία είναι κίνηση, της οποίας κινητήριοις δύναμη είναι η Θεία Οικονομία. Η αμαρτία, βάλλοντας κατά του σχεσιοδυναμικού πεδίου τηρήσεως της εντολής της αγάπης, αναπτύσσεται επίσης σχεσιοδυναμικά, και ουδέποτε, από το προπατορικό αμάρτημα και

⁶² Τα επιτίμια υλοποιούνται κατά τον Θεόδωρο Στουδίτη, «εὐτάκτως καὶ μετρίως καὶ κατὰ τὸν δέοντα καιρὸν καὶ τόπον, ἵνα ἐντεῦθεν ἀρετὴν ἐπ' ἀρετὴν προσλαμβάνοντες καὶ προκοπὴν ἐξευρίσκοντες εἰρηνικὸν τὸν βίον διατελώμεν» (*Λόγος Κατήχητικός ΡΚΔ'*, ἐλεγκτικὸς ἅμα καὶ διδακτικὸς, στο Μεγάλη Κατήχησις, εκδ. Παπαδόπουλου - Κεραμέως, Πετρούπολις 1904, σελ. 930-931).

Η «εις ύψος αναδρομή» της εκκλησιαστικής οικονομίας...

εξής, ήταν και είναι προϊόν ευθύνης ενός και μόνον. Επειδή, όμως, ο καθένας φέρει ακέραια τη δική του ευθύνη, γι' αυτό και τα αντίδοτα της αμαρτίας, η μετάνοια, η άφεση, τα επιτίμια λειτουργούν επίσης σχεσιοδυναμικά. Τούτο διότι αφενός η άρση των βλαπτικών ενεργειών από τον εμπράκτως μετανοούντα αποτελεί συμβάν που επηρεάζει επανορθωτικά και προληπτικά τη ροή των γεγονότων, και διότι αφετέρου δεν αποκλείεται το παράδειγμα του μετανοούντος να υποκινήσει και άλλους στη μετάνοια. Κυρίως, όμως, διότι, διά της Εξομολογήσεως ενός και μόνο μετανοούντος, διασώζεται εντός του κινούμενου προς τη φθορά του «φθαρτοῦ καὶ ρέοντος κόσμου»⁶³ η αντίρροπος κίνηση της ανθρωπότητας προς την τελειότητα της φύσης της. Όταν έστω και ένας πιστός καταφέρνει να «σταυρώνει» το αυτεξούσιό του, μιμείται τον Έναν και μόνον Αναμάρτητο, τον Αίροντα την αμαρτία του κόσμου. Τα επιτίμια οικοδομούν το ήθος της σταυρικής χριστομιμησης. Με αυτό το ήθος η Εκκλησία πορεύεται στους αιώνες, διατηρώντας σε κίνηση το μυστήριο της σωτηρίας προς ιλασμό και τελείωση των πάντων, και όχι μόνο των μελών της⁶⁴. Ο προσερχόμενος στο μυστήριο της Μετανοίας εισέρχεται και μετέχει ενεργά στο μυστήριο της καθολικής υποταγής⁶⁵. Η καθολική υποταγή δεν καταργεί την ιεραρχία, αλλά τη θέτει σε ισορροπία και αρμονία. Η καθολική υποταγή ισοδυναμεί με την ανάπαυση των πάντων στην καθολική ελευθερία. Όταν η εξ ύψους αναδρομή και εις ύψος συγκατάβαση συνάξουν την Εκκλησία στη Βασιλεία, τότε μαζί με τον αιώνιο Σαββατισμό της Εκκλησίας θα επέλθει και η αιώνια ανάπαυση, ο Κυριακός Σαββατισμός του δικαίου της. Ο Σαββατισμός του δικαίου της θριαμβεύουσας Εκκλησίας αποτελεί το εσχατολογικό κριτήριο αυθεντικότητας της από γης εις ύψος αναδραμούσας εκκλησιαστικής οικονομίας.

Πώς κρίνεται η αυθεντικότητα μιας οικονομικής λύσης; Ακριβώς όπως διαπιστώνεται η αγιοπνευματική σφραγίδα οποιασδήποτε απόφασης στην Εκκλησία. Εκ του τρόπου με τον οποίο τοποθετείται απέναντί της το πλήρωμα της. Οικονομία που δεν οδηγεί στην ειρήνευση των ψυχών, των ανθρώπων, των εκκλησιών, των κοινωνιών και του κόσμου στερείται της αγιοπνευματικής κινήσεως. Είναι ψευδής, κίβδηλη, καθώς ο Σαββατισμός της όντως Ζωής αποτελεί συμβάν που αναπαύει τα σύμπαντα. Γι' αυτό και ιστορικό κριτήριο της αυθεντικής εκκλησιαστικής οικονομίας είναι η ειρήνη της Εκ-

⁶³ Πενθ. 45, ΡΠ 2, σελ. 412.

⁶⁴ Πρβλ. Α' Τωαν. 2:1-2.

⁶⁵ Α' Κορ. 15:28: «ὅταν δὲ ὑποταγῇ αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα, τότε [καί] αὐτὸς ὁ υἱὸς ὑποταγέσεται τῶν ὑποτάξαντι αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα, ἵνα ὁ θεὸς [τὰ] πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν».

κλησίας - όχι η κατ'επίφαση ή καθ' υπολογιστικούς συσχετισμούς δυνάμεων ειρήνη, αλλά η ειρήνη της αυθεντικής αγάπης. Η αγάπη είναι η πλήρωση του Νόμου⁶⁶. Όταν αυξάνει, μειώνεται η ανάγκη του Νόμου, ο οποίος, σε κάθε περίπτωση, είτε κατ' ακρίβεια, είτε κατὰ συνήθεια, πρέπει να εφαρμόζεται, στην Εκκλησία του Χριστού, οικονομικώς, δηλαδή κινητικώς προς τη Θεία Αγάπη και Συγκατάβαση.

Συμπεράσματα

Το λειτουργικό ισοδύναμο της συγχωρητικής-θεραπευτικής ιστορικής παρουσίας του Θεανθρώπου είναι η αγωγή των επιτιμιών της Εκκλησίας. Η αγωγή αυτή εντασσόμενη στο μυστήριο της Ιεράς Εξομολογήσεως, διατηρεί τον κοινοτικό της χαρακτήρα και οδηγεί τον άνθρωπο από την άφεση στην πλήση ίαση, τη διόρθωση.

Η εκκλησιαστική οικονομία είναι το σημείο συνάντησης της εις ύψος ανόδου της Εκκλησίας, με την εξ ύψους συγκαταβαίνουσα Θεία Οικονομία. Δεν μπορεί να ταυτιστεί πλήρως με τη νομική φύση οποιουδήποτε θεσμού του κοινού δικαίου, διότι εμπεριέχει, όπως όλοι οι θεσμοί της Εκκλησίας, εκτός από την ορατή και μια μυστική (μυστηριώδη) πλευρά.

Όσο είναι ανθρωπίνως αδύνατη η απαρίθμηση όλων των μυστηρίων της Εκκλησίας, τόσο αδύνατη είναι επίσης και η αυστηρή, εξαντλητική απαρίθμηση των επιτιμιών.

Κατά την εξατομίκευση των επιτιμιών, ο Πνευματικός έχει εφελτήριο τον νόμο και το έθος της Εκκλησίας, με άλλα λόγια την ακρίβεια και τη συνήθεια, και δια της εις ύψους αναδρομής αναζητεί το θέλημα του Χριστού στη συγκεκριμένη περίπτωση. Ο πιστός, πάλι, λαμβάνοντας την άφεση, κινείται προς τη διόρθωση δια της ορμής της συντριβής του και του μέτρου της επιγνώσεως της ενοχής του.

Η μελέτη των θεμελιωδών πηγών του Κανονικού Δικαίου, επιτρέπει την υπέρβαση του εννοιολογικού διπόλου Οικονομίας και Ακρίβειας και την «ανάδυση» του τριαδικού σχήματος Ακρίβεια-Οικονομία-Συνήθεια. Η ακρίβεια είναι ο παραδοθείς τύπος του νόμου της Εκκλησίας. Η συνήθεια είναι το δοκιμασθέν στον χρόνο και βεβαιωθέν έθος της Εκκλησίας. Κατά κανόνα, η ακρίβεια ταυτίζεται με τις προβλέψεις των πρωτευουσών πηγών του δικαίου της Εκκλησίας, ενώ η συνήθεια με μια κατὰ κανόνα «συμπαθέστερη» και επιεικέστερη πρακτική επιτιμήσεως, η οποία έχει εγκαθιδρυθεί στη

⁶⁶ Γαλ. 5:14.

Η «εις ύψος αναδρομή» της κκλησιαστικής οικονομίας...

συνείδηση των κοινωνιών του δικαίου ως παραδοσιακή και ασφαλής θεραπευτική αγωγή.

Υπέρβαση του ακρότατου σημείου της ακρίβειας σημαίνει ανεπίτρεπτη καταστρατήγηση του νόμου της Εκκλησίας. Υπέρβαση του ακρότατου σημείου της συνήθειας σημαίνει ανεπίτρεπτη παράβαση του νόμου της Εκκλησίας. Και τα δύο συνιστούν απαράδεκτες και καταχρηστικές καινοτομίες.

Η εκκλησιαστική οικονομία κατά την εξατομίκευση των επιτιμίων συνιστά την αγιοπνευματική μέθοδο εφαρμογής της «ακρίβειας» και της «συνήθειας», του νόμου και του έθνους της Εκκλησίας προς ανεύρεση του κατάλληλου ιάματος της νόσου της αμαρτίας. Η εκκλησιαστική οικονομία τηρεί και λαμβάνει υπόψη τις «θεία Χάριτι» θεσπισθείσες κανονικές αρχές ορθολογικής απονομής της δικαιοσύνης, θέτοντας τες στη διάθεση της Θείας Συγκατάβασης, η οποία δια του Αγίου Πνεύματος υπερφυσώς και αδήλως επενεργεί στο κοινοτικό σώμα της Εκκλησίας.

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The Diaconate in the Ages of the Apostolic Fathers

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Abstract

The principle of the diaconate as an office and function in the Church is rooted in the nature of the Church itself as it was originally founded and lived in the pre-Nicene world. The first principle of that Church as it came into being was that it was laos, the people of God. The Church was called into being by God and made “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people (I. Pet. 2, 9). In this study I try to emphasize the character and function of the diaconate in the ages of the apostolic fathers, beginning with the Letter of Clement to the Church of Corinth, and continue with the Shepherd of Hermas, the Didache, Ignatius and Polycarp.

Keywords

deacon, diaconate, presbyter, bishop, episcopate, monepiscopate, laos, Didache, episcopos, agape

Introduction

The five centuries from 100 to 600, or from Ignatius of Antioch to Gregory the Great, have been called the Golden Age of the diaconate¹. In this

¹ Edward R. Hardy, *The Deacon in History and Practice*, in *The Diaconate Now*, ed. Richard T. Nolan, Washington: Campus Books, 1968, p. 15; Edward Echlin, *The Deacon in the Church Past and Future*, Staten Island, New York, Alba House, 1971, p. 25,

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period deacons flourished in numbers and in importance. They oversaw the pastoral care of the Church. They were administrators of the Church's charities. They had a major role in the Church's liturgies. They were the great symbol of the servant ministry to which the Church has been called by Christ.

Councils in the early fourth century, such as Arles and Nicaea, demonstrate the importance of the diaconate by admonishing deacons to "keep within their proper bounds"² as presbyters were growing in importance by assuming the functions of the pre-Nicene bishop. At Rome in the time of Pope Damasus, 366-384, Ambrosiaster could write his treatise "On the Boastfulness of Roman Deacons"³. Jerome, writing in the late fourth or early fifth century, reports that presbyters at Rome are ordained only on recommendation of a deacon and are "less thought of"⁴. Even the seventh century Council of Toledo, 633, finds it necessary to direct that in choir deacons "are not to raise themselves above the presbyters"⁵. There is no doubt, as we shall see, that their very importance, coupled with the lack of any clear definition of their relationship to the presbyter, was a major factor in their decline.

It is when we move outside the New Testament, in the sub-apostolic age, that we see more clearly the character and function of the various offices within the Church as they underwent a transformation from the apostolic age. This change, however, is not to be considered simply a natural development in a human society. The charisma of the Holy Spirit was fully at work in the Church, guiding its development. Lampe reminds us,

57, refers to the golden age of the diaconate as being from Ignatius to Nicaea. Though the decline begins in the fourth century, the diaconate continues to flourish long after.

² Canon 18, Nicaea, in *A New Eusebius: Documents Illustrative of the Church to A. D. 337*, ed. J. Stevenson, New York, Macmillan, 1957, p. 363.

³ S. L. Greenslade, *Introduction: to Letter 14 of Jerome*, in *Early Latin Theology*, trans. S. L. Greenslade, in Library of Christian Classics, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1956, vol. 5, p. 286.

⁴ Jerome, *Epistle 146*, 2, in *Early Latin Theology*, vol. 5, p. 388. The translator dates this letter after 388 (vol. 5, p. 383-384). The evidence might suggest c. 400. Jerome died in 419 or 420 (vol. 5, p. 286).

⁵ Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church from the Original Documents. A.D. 451 to A.D. 680*, trans. William R. Clark in *A History of the Councils of the Church*, Edinburgh, T and T Clark, 1895, vol. 4, 1895, p. 454.

“Though in one aspect, the change was due to the natural pressure of altered circumstances, it did not happen without the guidance and authority of the Holy Spirit”⁶.

1. The Diaconate in the Letter of Clement to the Church of Corinth

References to the diaconate outside the New Testament in the sub-apostolic age are relatively plentiful. The first of these, the letter of Clement to the Church at Corinth (c. 96), provides the only other reference generally assigned to the New Testament period mentioning bishops and deacons⁷. This writing is of great importance, having been held in such esteem in antiquity that it was counted among Scriptures by the Syrian Church and appended to the biblical *Codex Alexandrinus*⁸. Clement, the author, was listed by Irenaeus as the third bishop of Rome⁹ but he can better be described as one of the leading presbyters or, possibly, presbyter-bishops of Rome.

Cyril Richardson rightly points out that to call Clement the third bishop of Rome implies that the moniscopate was already established at Rome, which is highly unlikely, since Clement himself refers to the Church rules both as bishops and as presbyters, using the terms interchangeably. Richardson believes that a hint in the *Shepherd of Hermas* may indicate that Clement acted as a “kind of foreign secretary for the Church”. He adds, “It must suffice to call him a leading – perhaps *the* leading – presbyter-bishop of the Roman Church”¹⁰. Echlin calls Clement “a leading

⁶ G. W. H. Lampe, *Some Aspects of the New Testament Ministry*, London, S.P.C.K., 1949, p. 20 (hereafter cited as *N. T. Ministry*).

⁷ C. D. F. Moule, “Deacons in the New Testament”, in *Theology*, 58, London, 1955, p. 407.

⁸ Berthold Altaner, *Patrology*, trans. Hilda C. Graef, New York, Herder and Herder, 1960, p. 99.

⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3, 3, 3., in vol. 1: *Early Christian Fathers*, in Library of Christian Classics, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1953, p. 372. Irenaeus also says that Clement, along with many others still alive, had known the apostles and had “their traditions before his eyes”, vol. 1, p. 373.

¹⁰ Cyril C. Richardson, “The Letter of the Church of Rome to the Church of Corinth, Commonly called Clement’s First Letter – Introduction”, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 36-37.

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Roman presbyter”¹¹. Shepherd says that the Roman Church at this time was governed by a council of presbyters, which probably had a chairman appointed by seniority¹². There is much to be said for the interpretation of Walter Lowrie that in 1 Clement not all presbyters were bishops but only those *appointed* to liturgize¹³.

Clement wrote anonymously but on behalf of the Church at Rome to help settle a controversy in which a group in the Corinthian Church had thrust their leaders out of office¹⁴. He tells us that the Apostles:

“after receiving their orders and being fully convinced by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and assumed by God’s word, went out in the confidence of the Holy Spirit to preach the good news that God’s Kingdom was about to come. They preached in country and city, and appointed their first converts, after testing them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of future believers”¹⁵.

Clement further writes in reference to the office of bishop that the Apostles “appointed the officers we have mentioned. Furthermore, they later added a codicil to the effect that should these die, other approved men should succeed to their ministry”. He also speaks of appointment being by the Apostles “or later on and with the whole church’s consent, by others of proper standing”¹⁶. Clement calls the leaders of the Church at Corinth “bishops and deacons”, as we have seen, but he uses “presbyters” for these leaders elsewhere¹⁷. While he does seem apparent that the terms “bishops” and “presbyters” are used here interchangeably, a careful reading of the text does not enable us to say that the “deacons” are in that category. In the light of what we know subsequently, it seems likely that Clement means to include them here as important leaders of the Corinthian Church but not the

¹¹ Edward Echlin, *The Deacon in the Church Past and Future*, p.14.

¹² Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., *Smyrna in the Ignatian Letters: A Study in the Church Order*, in „Journal of Religion”, 20 (1940), p. 156 (hereafter cited “Ignatian Letters”). Cf. C. Richardson, “Clement”, p. 39.

¹³ Walter Lowrie, *The Church and Its Organization in Primitive and Catholic Times*, New York, Longmans, Green and Co., 1904, p. 341-350. Lowrie, however, is probably not correct in arguing that the term “presbyter” (“elder”) in 1 Clement does not denote an office (p. 348-352) except when they are called “appointed presbyters”.

¹⁴ I Clement 44, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 63-64.

¹⁵ I Clement 42, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 62.

¹⁶ I Clement 44, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 63-64.

¹⁷ I Clement 44, 47, 57, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 63-65, 69.

same as the presbyter-bishops. Dom Gregory Dix sees in this letter the first Christian description of the way in which the Eucharist was performed. He renders his own translation of the pertinent lines:

“Unto the high-priest (= the celebrant-bishop) his special “liturgies” has been appointed, and to the priests (= presbyters) their special place is assigned, and on the levites (= deacons) their special “deaconings” are imposed; the layman is bound by the ordinances for the laity. Let each of you, brethren, make Eucharist to God according to his own orders, keeping a good conscience and not transgressing the appointed rule of his “liturgy”¹⁸.

However, this would seem to be reading back into Clement later thought. As we have seen, the Corinthian Church apparently had presbyter-bishops and deacons, but not yet the later threefold structure. The term “priest” was not yet applied to any Church official. The reference of Clement here would rather seem to be, when taken in context, to the order found in the religion of the Old Testament. He moves from that to speak of the order in the Church established by God through Jesus Christ¹⁹.

As valuable as 1 Clement is, it does not shed any light upon the function of the deacon at that time²⁰. It does assert that apostolic authority and succession is to be transmitted in an orderly fashion by the direction of the Apostles through the proper appointment of the presbyter-bishops and deacons with the assent of the whole Church. We may see in this an apostolic succession for both the bishops and deacons²¹.

2. The Diaconate in the Shepherd of Hermas

The *Shepherd of Hermas*, once widely read and considered Scripture by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Irenaeus²², contains in its original

¹⁸ Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, Westminster, Dacre Press, 1945, p. 1. (Reference is to 1 Clement 40 and 41).

¹⁹ 1 Clement 42, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 62-63.

²⁰ Echlin argues that since deacons were associated with the bishops “both in their ministry and in their expulsion, we may conclude that the diaconal function involved ministry of liturgy and charity”. His reference is to 1 Clement 44, but this has nothing to say at all about liturgical function.

²¹ Bo Reicke, “Deacons in the New Testament and in the Early Church”, in *The Ministry of Deacons*, ed. Department of Faith and Order, Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1965, p. 11.

²² Edgar J. Goodspeed, *A History of Early Christian Literature*, rev. and enlarged, Robert

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section (c. 96)²³ a reference showing the importance of the deacons in the life of the Church. In his vision Hermas sees a tower under construction as a symbol of the building of the triumphant Church. Some stones fit perfectly, others are rejected, as will be those in the Church who do not repent. Hermas writes:

“Now hear about the stones that go into the building. The stones that are square and white and fit their joints are the Apostles and bishops and teachers and deacons who have lived in the holiness of God, and have been bishops and teachers and deacons for God’s chosen in purity and reverence”²⁴.

Hermas again mentions deacons in one of the parables towards the end of his work²⁵. These are men who have betrayed the trust of their office. In his concern for repentance he writes:

“The ones that are spotted are deacons who served badly and plundered the living of widows and orphans, and made profit for themselves from the ministry they had accepted to perform. So if they persist in the same desire, they are dead and have no hope of life. But if they turn and perform their service purely, they will be able to live”²⁶.

The care for the poor and especially of widows and orphans was a special and major concern of the Church in the ancient world, and here as elsewhere the evidence shows that the deacons had direct responsibility in this work.

M. Grant, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1966, p. 32 (hereafter cited *Early Christian Literature*).

²³ The first section of the *Shepherd*, Visions 1-4 (in Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Apostolic Fathers / An American Translation*, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1950), probably was written during the last years of the leadership of Clement of Rome, which ended in 97 (see Goodspeed, *Early Christian Literature*, p. 30-34). Cf. Johannes Quasten, vol. I: *Beginnings of Patristic Literature*, in *Patrology*, Westminster, Md., Newman Press, 1950, p. 92-93.

²⁴ Hermas, *Shepherd*, Vision 3, 5, 1, in Goodspeed, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 112.

²⁵ The second section of Hermas, *Shepherd*, Vision 5 through the end, is to be dated in the second century a few years after the first, though Parables 9 and 10 may be still later additions. Goodspeed and Grant’s (*Early Christian Literature*, p. 30-34) argument for this dating and against the time of Pius I (140-155) is to be preferred.

²⁶ Hermas, *Shepherd*, Parable 9, 26, 2, in Goodspeed, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 193.

3. The Diaconate in the *Didache*

Though the date of the *Didache* is uncertain, its section on Church order, Chapters 6 to 15, seems to reflect the rural churches of Syria in the sub-apostolic age. It probably was originally a separate document dating from the late first century, which was placed with the first section and the last chapter and edited by a scribe in Alexandria c. 150²⁷.

Therefore, consideration of the *Didache* belongs in the sub-apostolic age, when primary leadership of the Church was undergoing a transformation from that of Apostles, apostolic delegates, prophets, and teachers to that of bishops, presbyters, and deacons. The author of the *Didache* first discusses teachers, Apostles, and prophets in that order²⁸. He then writes:

“You must, then, elect for yourselves bishops and deacons who are a credit to the Lord, men who are gentle, generous, faithful, and well tried. For their ministry to you is identical with that of the prophets and teachers. You must not, therefore, despise them, for along with the prophets and teachers they enjoy a place of honor among you”²⁹.

The clear implication here is that bishops and deacons are being added to the leadership of the Church for the same functions as had heretofore been rendered by the prophets and teachers alone³⁰. The admonition to give them honor along with the older form of prophets and teachers suggests that they are not yet considered on a par and entirely accepted by all. Further, whereas the prophets and teachers had been primarily charismatic, the bishops and deacons are apparently elected by the Church and commissioned through the laying on of hands. They too then are given the charisma of the Spirit but in a more orderly fashion³¹. This commissioning through the laying on of hands is to be seen as the confirmation of the charisma given by the Spirit³².

²⁷ Cyril C. Richardson, “The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, Commonly Called the *Didache*”, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 162-165.

²⁸ *Didache* 11-13, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 176-178.

²⁹ *Didache* 15, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 178.

³⁰ Reginald Fuller, *Early Catholicism in the New Testament*, lectures at the Graduate School of Theology, Sewanee, Tn., 1970. Cf. W. Lowrie, *The Church and Its Organization in Primitive and Catholic Times*, p. 331-342.

³¹ Reginald Fuller, *Early Catholicism*.

³² W. Lowrie, *The Church and Its Organization in Primitive and Catholic Times*, p. 342.

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It is noteworthy that in the *Didache* the term “bishops” is used in the plural not the singular. Further, the bishops and deacons are lumped together and are said to fulfill the same function as the prophets and teachers did. Clearly, the office of bishop was not the same office as that of deacon, just as that of prophet was not the same as that of teacher. Rather, the mention of the two together may well have been due to their together constituting a ruling council for the local Church, though we cannot be certain.

Echlin argues from the next cited of the *Didache* that both bishops and deacons preached and taught as well as performing certain other functions³³. Brockman maintains, on the other hand, that deacons were chosen by the community for only a “catechetical role... to undertake the instruction of the faithful with edification”³⁴. He consistently avoids ascribing to deacons the role of preaching liturgically. In light of the evidence here and elsewhere it would seem likely that the bishops and not the deacons took over the prophets’ functions of presiding at the Eucharist, preaching, and teaching. It seems highly unlikely in view of the lack of the other evidence that deacons preached. The deacons would, as other sources indicate, have liturgical functions at the Eucharist in addition to their other functions. But it is important to remember that functions in the Church were not then so rigidly defined and “the official *charismata* of the early church were not then severally exclusive. Any individual could perform as many functions as his spiritual endowments allowed”³⁵.

4. The Diaconate in the Letters of Saint Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius is an exceptional figure of Christianity, “a man of intense devotion³⁶”, who lived and offered his episcopal ministry in the years of the so-called primitive Church.

Ecclesiastical History has only preserved a few biographical elements about Ignatius; most of them come from his own writings. But his Epistles are not historical-biographical texts. Thus, they contain only very few details about Ignatius.

³³ Edward Echlin, *The Deacon in the Church Past and Future*, p. 17.

³⁴ Norbert Brockman, *Ordained to Service: A Theology of the Permanent Diaconate*, Hicksville, New York, Exposition Press, 1976, p. 21.

³⁵ Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., “Ignatian Letters”, p. 154.

³⁶ Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*, Penguin Books, London, 1988, p. 30.

From what we know he had been the second bishop of Antioch, starting his ministry at about 70 A.D. It is certain that he had met with some of the Apostles. The social environment in which he was brought up might have been Greek culture (this is a conclusion we reach by studying his writings).

During the years of the Roman persecution by Emperor Trajan, Ignatius was arrested and was brought to Rome in order to receive martyrdom. The common view today is that he was put to death at the Roman Stadium called Colosseum³⁷, sometimes between the years 107 and 117. He called himself “*Theophorus*”³⁸, which is a very distinctive title for Christians and means the “God-bearer”. The title signifies the close spiritual relationship that he had with Christ. His memory is commemorated in the Eastern Orthodox Church on 20th December and in the Roman on the first of February.

At his last days before he died he wrote seven Epistles. These are the follows: to the Ephesians, to the Magnesians, to the Trallians, to the Romans, to the Philadelphians, to the Smyrnaeans and to Polycarp. The first four were written from Smyrna and the remaining three from Troas, in Asia Minor³⁹.

The Epistles of Ignatius, written at a relatively early date, “have played an important role in the theological reflections of the Church and represent a central point of contention in the scholarly discussions of Christian origins”⁴⁰. The significance of the Epistles is so great, basically because in them we find the first clear and direct reference to the threefold ministry and the settlement of the ecclesiastical authority, the centre of which is the bishop⁴¹. These texts are of great importance to all of Christendom and because of them Ignatius has been acknowledged as “the first great theologian of the post-apostolic period and the first Father and Teacher of the Church”⁴².

³⁷ S. Papadopoulos, *Patrology*, vol. I, Athens, 1982, p. 178. E. W. Barnes, *The Rise of Christianity*, London, 1948, p. 261, believes that “the story of the martyrdom of Ignatius is edifying legend, not contemporary history”, suggesting that this is “the invention of a hagiographer”, because “of Ignatius himself little is known”.

³⁸ P. Chrestou, “Ignatius”, in *Threskeutike kai Ethike Enkyklopedeia*, vol. VI, Athens, 1965, p. 705.

³⁹ M. W. Holmes (ed.), *The Apostolic Fathers*, Apollos-Leicester, 1989, p. 80.

⁴⁰ W. R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters*, Philadelphia, 1985, p. 1.

⁴¹ D. Balanos, *Patrology*, Athens, 1930, p. 43 ff.

⁴² S. Papadopoulos, *Patrology*, p. 178.

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In the Epistles which Ignatius, the martyr-bishop of Antioch, wrote as he journeyed from Syria to suffer his martyrdom in Rome in the reign of Trajan, 98-117⁴³, there emerge for the first time the clearly distinguishable orders of bishops, presbyters (or elders), and deacons. This picture represents a stage of development beyond that found in the Pastoral Epistles and I Clement⁴⁴. In the latter the local churches are governed by councils of officials, probably presbyters and/or presbyter-bishops, with deacons possibly being included in some places. These councils were subject to apostolic delegates such as Timothy and Titus.

But in the Ignatian Epistles the single bishop emerges as the leading figure in the Church. The Ignatian bishop represents the monepiscopate, a term denoting rule of the local church by a council of presbyters (possibly including deacons)⁴⁵ over which one bishop presides⁴⁶. Though the Ignatian letters have often been thought to picture the monarchical episcopate in the churches of Asia Minor in the early years of the second century⁴⁷, the Asian bishop did not possess the autocratic authority implied by that term⁴⁸. Lemaire thinks the language of the Ignatian letters probably

⁴³ Eusebius dates the martyrdom of Ignatius at 107 in his *Chronicles*, fn. *Church History* 3, 36, in vol. I: *Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, Oration in Praise of Constantine*, trans. and ed. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Father of the Christian Church*, Second Series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 14 vols., Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952, p. 169. However, modern scholars generally agree only that he was martyred in Rome in the reign of Trajan (98-117); Kirsopp Lake, "Introduction to the Epistles of Ignatius", in *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I, Cambridge, Ma., Harvard University Press, 1912, p. 166; Cyril Richardson, "Introduction to the Letters of Ignatius", in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 75.

⁴⁴ Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., *Ministry, Christian*, in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick, New York, Abingdon Press, 1962, vol. III, p. 391. Cf. C. Richardson, *Introduction to the Letters of Ignatius*, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 76.

⁴⁵ Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., *Ignatian Letters*, p. 142.

⁴⁶ Cyril Richardson, *Introduction to the Letters of Ignatius*, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 76. Reginald Fuller (*Early Catholicism*) sees the same development and the emergence of the monepiscopate in Ignatius.

⁴⁷ E.g., Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, trans. Frank Clarke, London, SCM Press Ltd., 1961, p. 154; Hans Lietzmann, *A History of the Early Church*, vol. I: *The Beginnings of the Christian Church*; vol. II: *The Founding of the Church Universal* (bound together), trans. Bertram Lee Wolf, New York, The World Publishing Co., Meridian Books, 1961, vol. II, p. 58; and John Knox, *The Early Church and the Coming Great Church*, New York and Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1955, p. 121.

⁴⁸ Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., *Ignatian Letters*, p. 141.

indicates that “the ministerial vocabulary first became fixed at Antioch and that the word *episkopos* has designated the president of the local Christian community”⁴⁹. He quotes K. A. Strand in seeing the struggle of the Church with heresy as a major reason for the development of the monepiscopate as it did at that time in the East⁵⁰. The monepiscopal Ignatian bishop was not a monarch ruling over the Church but rather was president of the community and of the presbyteral council, which possessed the authority to rule in the local church.

Ignatius uses the symbolism of the bishop as the type of God the Father, the presbyters as that of the college of the Apostles, and the deacons as Jesus Christ:

“Correspondingly, everyone must show the deacons respect. They represent Jesus Christ, just as the bishop has the role of the Father, and the presbyters are like God’s council and an apostolic hand. You cannot have a Church without these”⁵¹.

Dix sees here the same ordering of the Church in its Eucharistic assembly that he finds reflected in the Revelation. The “Church” which at this time was never thought of in terms of a building⁵², was arranged so that the bishop sat at the front in a chair covered by a white linen cloth facing the people across the altar. The presbyters were seated in a semicircle on either side of the bishop. Two of the deacons stood beside the bishop with the others either at the front of the congregation or scattered through it⁵³.

The subdeacons and acolytes assisted the deacons and guarded the doors. Other members, men on one side and women on the other, faced the bishop with the catechumens and visitors at the back. Dix believes this arrangement was adopted by the end of the first century, because it is reflected in the vision of the heavenly assembly in the Revelation, which

⁴⁹ André Lemaire, *The Ministries in the New Testament: Recent Research*, in „Biblical Theology Bulletin”, III, 2, June, 1973, p. 145.

⁵⁰ André Lemaire, *The Ministries in the New Testament*, p. 145-146.

⁵¹ Ignatius, *Trallians* 3, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 99; cf. Ignatius, *Magnesians* 6, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 95.

⁵² Dix points out that the word “church” means “invariably ... the solemn assembly for the liturgy, and by extension those who have a right to take a part in this” until the third century. (G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, p. 20). Cf. Reginald H. Fuller, “Church”, in *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, ed. Alan Richardson, New York, Macmillan, 1951, p. 46.

⁵³ G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, p. 28.

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he dates c. 93⁵⁴. Whether or not Dix is correct in this early date, and some details such as the presence of subdeacons and acolytes by Dix's own testimony do not come until later, the general arrangement pictured is that of the universal practice as it shortly came to be and reflects both the nature of the Church and the character of its offices which continued throughout the pre-Nicene period.

In Ignatius's Epistle to the Trallians we find specific references to the liturgical function of the deacons at the Eucharist⁵⁵: "Those too who are deacons of Jesus Christ's "mysteries" must give complete satisfaction to everyone. For they do not serve mere food and drink, but minister to God's Church"⁵⁶. In 1 Corinthians Paul speaks of being "stewards of the mysteries of God" (I Cor. 4, 1; cf. 1 Cor. 2, 7; 13, 2; 14, 2). Though the Greek word "mystery", used here, generally refers to sacred rites, and Christians later applied it to the sacraments, Paul uses it rather to mean secret knowledge of God's plan revealed in the gospel⁵⁷. Thus, Ignatius's use of "mysteries" in connection with the deacons would not itself be sufficient to infer liturgical function. However, his statement that the deacons "minister to God's Church" when set beside his contrast to their not merely serving food and drink, a probable reference to the Christian "agape" or "fellowship meal", does indicate their participation in the Eucharist liturgically. Ignatius uses the terms "Eucharist" and "agape" to denote the same type of the assembly, both describing the entire service of worship. Conclusive evidence for the separation of the Eucharist and the agape into independent gatherings comes, at least in the East, only at the end of the second century⁵⁸.

It is also probable that Ignatius's exhortation to a single Eucharist implies a liturgical function for the deacons⁵⁹:

"Be careful then, to observe a single Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and one cup of his blood that

⁵⁴ Dix may have intended rather that the *general arrangement* was adopted by the end of the first century, since he states later (*Shape of the Liturgy*, p. 35), that the "minor orders" came into existence by the end of the second century.

⁵⁵ Cyril Richardson, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 99.

⁵⁶ Ignatius, *Trallians 2*, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 99.

⁵⁷ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New York, Harper and Harper Row, 1968, p. 99-100 (hereafter cited *I Corinthians*).

⁵⁸ Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., *Ignatian Letters*, p. 149.

⁵⁹ Edward Echlin, *The Deacon in the Church Past and Future*, p. 21.

makes *us* one, and one altar, just as there is one bishop along with the presbyters and deacons, my fellow slaves”⁶⁰.

The admonition to “a single Eucharist” here is probably due to separate Eucharists held by a group of Judaizers⁶¹. But this mention of “one flesh”, “one cup”, “one altar”, and “one bishop”, all being an integral part of the Eucharist, would clearly indicate that along with the “one bishop”, “the presbyters and deacons”, who are his “fellow slaves”, also have a prominent place in the Eucharist.

It has been asserted that deacons are said to preach in Ignatius’s epistles⁶². In one of the texts cited Ignatius writes:

“Consequently, it would be a nice thing for you, as a church of God, to elect a deacon to go there [Antioch] on a mission, as God’s representative, and at a formal service to congratulate them and glorify the Name”⁶³.

The function of this deacon would, however, seem to be that of a special representative or ambassador to the Church of Antioch. In the light of no other evidence it seems unlikely that the phrase “glorify the Name” is a reference to preaching. Echlin refers to another passage in *Philadelphians* to support diaconal preaching in the Ignatian epistles, though a fair translation of the passage will not bear this interpretation. Richardson renders the text, “Now about Philo, the deacon from Cilicia. He is well spoken of and right now he is helping me in God’s cause...”⁶⁴. Echlin bases his argument on a translation which runs, “Philo ... is at present giving me his help in preaching God’s word”⁶⁵. Other authorities do not support this reading⁶⁶. It must be concluded that there is insufficient evidence in these

⁶⁰ Ignatius, *Philadelphians* 4, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 108.

⁶¹ Cyril Richardson, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 108 fn.

⁶² Urban T. Holmes III, *The Future Shape of Ministry: A Theological Projection*, New York, Seabury Press, 1971, p. 25 (hereafter cited *Future Shape*). Edward Echlin, *The Deacon in the Church Past and Future*, p. 21.

⁶³ Ignatius, *Philadelphians* 10, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 111.

⁶⁴ Ignatius, *Philadelphians* 11, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 111.

⁶⁵ Edward Echlin, *The Deacon in the Church Past and Future*, p. 21.

⁶⁶ See Gerald G. Walsh, *The Letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch*, in vol. I: *The Apostolic Fathers*, in *The Fathers of the Church*, trans. Francis X. Glimm, Joseph M. F. Marique, and Gerald G. Walsh, New York, Cima Publishing Co., 1947, vol. I, p. 117, which reads “ministering in the word of God”. A similar reading is found in vol. 1: *The Apostolic Fathers with Justyn Martyr and Irenaeus*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations and Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James

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letters to maintain that preaching was a function of the diaconate in these writings.

It is sometimes assumed that the deacon's position as seen in the writings of Ignatius was that of assistant to the bishop, as the latter emerged a single figure in the monepiscopate⁶⁷. It is true that at times they did act in this capacity. Philo, the Cilician deacon, was helping Ignatius at the time he wrote to the Philadelphians; but in the same sentence we are told that so was Rheus Agathopus, which is described as "a choice person" and is apparently not a deacon⁶⁸. Ignatius asks the Church of Ephesus to let their deacon, Burrhus, whom he describes as "my fellow slave", remain with him⁶⁹. But Burrhus is said to be a deacon of the Church at Ephesus, not of the Bishop, and his position seems incidental to the request. The position of the deacon in these letters appears to be that of a servant of the Church, who naturally at times acts to assist its leading officer.

However, the most striking aspect of Ignatius's epistles regarding the place of the deacon in the Church is his reference to their symbolizing Jesus Christ. Ignatius at this point refers to the bishop as a figure of God the Father and the presbyters as symbolizing the apostolic council. He then says, "Let the deacons (my special favorites) be entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ who was with the Father from eternity and appeared at the end (of the world)"⁷⁰. In a similar context, as we have noted before, he writes that they are to be respected because "they represent Jesus Christ"⁷¹. Ignatius can think in these terms and use this order with the deacons in the third place yet representing Jesus Christ because ministerial order was not conceived by him or others in terms of status or rank but rather of function. So long as we think in categories of rank and status we cannot understand the development of these orders in the ancient Church⁷². The office of the deacon, though mentioned third, is not inferior but is in fact that of Christ himself.

Donaldson, Amer. reprint ed. A. Cleveland Coxe, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956, vol. I, p. 85: "... who still minister to me in the word of God".

⁶⁷ Cyril Richardson, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 76.

⁶⁸ Ignatius, *Philadelphians* 11, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. 1, p. 111.

⁶⁹ Ignatius, *Ephesus* 2, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. 1, p. 88.

⁷⁰ Ignatius, *Magnesians* 6, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. 1, p. 95.

⁷¹ Ignatius, *Trallians* 3, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. 1, p. 99.

⁷² Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., *Ignatian Letters*, p. 158.

It is because of the high esteem in which the deacon was held that he may have been included in the governing council and was mentioned at one point along with the bishop and presbyters as among those to whom obedience is to be given. The basic concern of Ignatius is for the unity of the Church as he writes:

“Flee from schism as the source of mischief. You should all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ did the Father. Follow, too, the presbyters as you would the apostles; and respect the deacons as you would God’s law. Nobody must do anything that has to do with the Church without the bishop’s approval. You should regard the Eucharist as valid which is celebrated either by the bishop or by someone he authorizes”⁷³.

It is also to be noted that in view of the functional nature of the offices, the respected place of the deacon, and the liturgical function already possessed by the deacons, it is entirely conceivable that the bishop could have authorized a deacon to preside at the Eucharist when he was unable to be present at this early time.

From his epistles, we can conclude:

a) The purpose of the various diaconal references in Ignatius’ epistles

It is true that the Epistles of Ignatius are full of references to the diakonos and to the diaconal function in the early Church. But it is also true that those references do not constitute the central theme in any of the Epistles. The diaconal theme appears in these texts as part of the greater discussion concerning the ecclesiastical authority and the threefold ministry. Diaconal references may be found in all Epistles except that addressed to the Romans.

For the first time in the history of the Church the three ranks of priesthood are clearly mentioned together⁷⁴, in exactly the same order as we know them today. The deacon is placed on the lowest level, or on the first rank of the Christian ministry, while presbyteros is on the second and the episkopos on the third and obviously the highest. Ignatius is very clear on

⁷³ Ignatius, *Smyrneans* 8, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. 1, p. 115. Cf. Ignatius, *Polycarp* 6, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. 1, p. 119.

⁷⁴ A. D. Salapatas, *The Diaconate in the Eastern Orthodox Church*, in *Diaconal Ministry, Past, Present and Future*, ed. Peyton G. Craighill, Rhode Island, 1994, p. 41.

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this matter of the Church ministry. He makes a great contribution to the Ecclesiastical History by:

1. offering the names of the titles of the three officers (diakonos, presbyteros, episkopos)⁷⁵;
2. presenting their functions, liturgical and pastoral, as they are found in his time;
3. making the point that they are different in function and distinct among themselves;
4. interpreting the threefold Church ministry as the earthly and visible ministry which resembles the heavenly prototype⁷⁶; and
5. emphasizing the idea of unity of the Church, in accordance with the unity experienced within the Holy Trinity⁷⁷;

Ignatius firmly believes that deacons, presbyters and bishops are “appointed according to the will of Jesus Christ”⁷⁸. He supports the view that deacons, presbyters and bishops are definitely a separate category of people, called to minister to the faithful. With his “prophetic voice” Ignatius calls the lay people to pay attention to them. Therefore it becomes quite clear that the diaconal references in Ignatius are obviously offered as part of his theory of the ecclesiastical authority and the Christian ministry.

(b) Episkopos – Diakonos relationship according to Ignatius

There are many interesting passages in Ignatius’ Epistles, where references may be found to the spiritual and even pastoral and liturgical relationship between the bishop and deacon. Some of them are symbolic, others are realistic.

The bishop Ignatius calls the deacons his “fellow slaves”⁷⁹, and this is obviously a very important symbolic expression, which shows how highly the bishop regarded his deacons. The word “*syndoulos*” means that they are both (bishop and deacons) following the same spiritual path; they believe and follow the same Christ and to Him they are both spiritually answerable.

⁷⁵ Ignatius, *Trallians* 3, 1; 7, 2; *Smyrneans* 8, 1; *Polycarp* 6, 1.

⁷⁶ Ignatius, *Magnesians*, 6, 1, *Trallians* 2 and 3, 1.

⁷⁷ According to Hans von Campenhausen, “Just as Christ was united to his Father, so must Christians be subject to their presbyters and deacons and all of them to the bishop...” (*Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*, London, p. 100).

⁷⁸ J. R. Wright, *The Emergence of the Diaconate*, in „Liturgy” („Journal of the Liturgical Conference”), vol. 2, No 4, Washington D.C., 1982, p. 20.

⁷⁹ Ignatius, *Ephesus* 2, “*syndoulos*”, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 88.

The deacon is “subject to the bishop”⁸⁰. A big discussion could open here. In our case we prefer only to point out some of the questions. Which are the areas in which the deacon is subject to the bishop? Is it on the administrative level? Is it connected to the pastoral work and responsibility that the deacon might have had? Or is it related to the diaconal liturgical function? The actual fact is that the deacon in all these Ignatian writings seems to have been an “assistant to the bishop”⁸¹. He does the will of the bishop as Jesus did the will of the Father⁸². At the same time he is regarded by Ignatius as “most dear to him”⁸³, who has been “entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ”⁸⁴.

According to W. R. Schoedel, “There is an especially close bond between bishop and deacon in Ignatius”⁸⁵. He interprets this relationship by suggesting that:

“This may reflect an earlier stage in the development of the ministry when these two offices had not yet merged with the presbyterate. But other factors probably suffice to explain the special attention given to deacons by Ignatius: their active role in practical matters; in particular, their service to Ignatius personally; and a special concern on Ignatius’ part to support those whose position sometimes put them in difficult situation”⁸⁶.

As far as the relationship between deacon and the presbyters is concerned there is only one reference in Ignatius’ writings, where the deacon appears to be responsible to the presbytery. This relationship has not been defined very well “presumably because this is not essential mark of the office”⁸⁷.

(c) Diakonos: model of Christ

In Ignatius text references are found of the deacon being a model of Jesus Christ Himself⁸⁸. It is quite obvious that Ignatius loves his deacons

⁸⁰ Ignatius, *Magnesians* 2, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 90.

⁸¹ James M. Barnett, *The Diaconate. A Full and Equal Order*, New York, 1981, p. 50.

⁸² Ignatius, *Magnesians* 6, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 95.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ W. R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters*, p. 46.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ J. V. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*, New York-Oxford, 1990, p. 240.

⁸⁸ W. R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters*, 113-114.

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and regards them very highly. The deacon, who is closely working with the bishop, is “respected” as Jesus Christ, having been “entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ”⁸⁹. According to Ignatius the bishop is over the people “in the place of God”⁹⁰, being “a type of the Father”⁹¹. The presbyters are also compared with the Apostles. In all the relevant references the deacon appears to be a model, or a “symbol”⁹², or even a “representation”⁹³ of Christ. This idea seems to have been based on the New Testament. Our Lord, speaking about Himself and His ministry on earth, states that “the Son of Man came not to be served (*diakonethenai*) but to serve (*diakonesai*)” (Matth. 20, 28). Thus, He regarded Himself as a diakonos of the Church and of the people, offering therefore a diaconal prototype of the Christian Church.

It could also be suggested that the deacon, as an ecclesiastical figure who represents Christ, according to Ignatius, appears to have been more important than the presbyter, at least in the Church of Antioch, although he (the deacon) certainly stands in the third place of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. It is interesting to note that Ignatian view of the deacon being a model of Jesus Christ, is also found in some other early Christian writings, such as the Letter of Poycarp to the Philippians, Didascalia Apostolorum and Apostolic Constitution.

5. Diaconate in the Letter of Polycarp

In the letter of Polycarp to the Philippians, which comes after the martyrdom of Ignatius and is probably to be dated c. 115-120⁹⁴, the qualifications set forth for deacons are reminiscent of those in 1 Timothy:

⁸⁹ Ignatius, *Trallians* 3, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. 1, p. 99.

⁹⁰ Ignatius, *Magnesians* 6, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. I, p. 95.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² James M. Barnett, *The Diaconate. A Full and Equal Order*, p. 50-51.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Massey Shepherd argues convincingly for the unity of Polycarp’s letter and, therefore, for the traditional dating of it (“Introduction” to “The Letter of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, to the Philippians”, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. 1, p. 122-123). However, some follow the theory of P. N. Harrison, in which chap. 13 and possibly 14 are considered one letter and dated at this time and chap. 1-12 are thought to be another letter from c. 135 (in B. Altaner, *Patrology*, p. 111).

“Likewise the deacons should be blameless his [God’s] righteousness, as servants of God and Christ and not of men; not slanderers, or double-tongued, not lovers of money, temperate in all matters, compassionate, careful, living according to the truth of the Lord, who became “as servant of all”⁹⁵.

Here it is worth noting that the deacons are to be “servants of God and of Christ and not of men”, which in effect indicates that the deacons have not yet become assistants of the bishops. Polycarp also speaks of the necessity of the people within the Church “being obedient to the presbyter and deacons”, who together may have comprised the ruling council at Philippi.

Conclusion

By the end of the age of the apostolic fathers the leadership of the Church is clearly passing from charismatically appointed apostles, prophets, and teachers of the primitive Church to the threefold orders of bishops, presbyters (or elders), and deacon. While at first the bishops and deacons may have had responsibilities only for the business affairs of the Church, they seem almost immediately to have begun to assume liturgical and pastoral functions. Though various factors were involved in this change, such as decreasing number of prophets possessed with charismatic gifts, and the threat of Gnosticism, it is to be remembered, also, that the change did not occur “without the guidance and authority of the Holy Spirit”⁹⁶, and in this sense “can be understood as of divine institution”⁹⁷.

The three orders, however, do not constitute the ministry of the Church. The ministry of the Church continues to be, as it had been from the first, the service remembered by all of the Church’s people to God, to one another, and to others. The three orders were delegated certain functions within this ministry. At this time moniscopate has developed in some churches with a single bishop presiding both over a council of presbyters (and deacons) and over the Eucharistic assembly. Presbyters acted as a council for the

⁹⁵ Polycarp, *Philippians 5*, in *Early Christian Fathers*, vol. 1, p. 133.

⁹⁶ G. W. H. Lampe, *Some Aspects of the New Testament Ministry*, p. 20.

⁹⁷ Karl Rahner, *Bishops: Their Status and Function*, trans. Edward Quinn, Baltimore, Helicon Press, 1964, p. 17.

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governance of the local Church, and deacons served those in need and participated liturgically at the Eucharist.

The deacons had liturgical and administrative of their own. They were a full order with *leiturgia* and *diakonia* which were distinctive. These functions were firmly bound together and were increasingly not to be interchanged with those of other orders⁹⁸. But we must wait to learn from succeeding writers more about these functions.

Though the deacons were subject to the ruling council of the local Church, they were “servants of the Church” and “of God”, not of another order or official. It is undoubtedly true that the deacons from the outset had a close relationship with the bishops. However, it is all too easy to read back into the first and second centuries what is to be found later in this connection. It would seem probable that it was more as the monarchical episcopate developed, following the monepiscopate, and assimilated the role of the corporate presbyterate that the deacons came more and more to be thought of as the liturgical and administrative assistants of the bishop rather than of the Church. From the time the primary leadership of the Church passed from the Apostles or apostolic delegates, prophets, and teachers to the bishops (or presbyter-bishop), presbyters, and deacons, the bishop did possess a sacramental and liturgical dominance⁹⁹. But it is to be remembered that this was only in the context of the Church. The bishop was the “high priest” and not the “priest”, because the priesthood was in this early period seen to belong to the whole body of the Church¹⁰⁰. The presbyter had no liturgical function, though he may have been designated by the bishop to assume liturgical functions at the Eucharist, when the bishop could not be present, as reported by Ignatius¹⁰¹. It is, however, entirely possible, as we have observed, that a deacon could have been the one so authorized. But, in any event, the deacon appears from the earliest time to have had liturgical function which was not derived from the bishop.

⁹⁸ Dom G. Dix, *Shape of the Liturgy*, p. 112.

⁹⁹ G. Dix, *Shape of the Liturgy*, p. 33.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29-34.

¹⁰¹ Ignatius, *Smyrneans* 8, in *early Christian fathers*, vol. 1, p. 115. Cf. G. Dix, *Shape of Liturgy*, p. 34.

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Spiritual Fatherhood in the Tradition of Desert Fathers

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Abstract

In Orthodoxy the spiritual father is a sinner. Abba does not believe himself to be a „saint”, but a sinner called to Christ likeness, to communion and sharing of God’s gifts. He is aware that the Christian life is a continuous process of resemblance and this purpose is constantly before him. He acknowledges that he lives crucified on the Cross, following the example of Christ Himself. He also realizes that God’s love made him worthy of God’s deifying charismas. He ascends all the steps of perfection by God’s grace; he enjoys seeing the uncreated light and contemplates all the reasons of creation. All these are related to spiritual direction of Fathers’ tradition.

Keywords

Paterikon, Desert Fathers, spiritual guidance, relationship, repentance, prayer

To believe in God means „believe in the One who has absolute power”.¹ But believing in a hierarch or a spiritual father is the same thing? That is the question. The examples are numerous in the patristic literature, where Abba’s authority seems to wear a divine aura. We have the impression that Abba is a „Pantocrator” at a small size, fully responsible for all and also for

¹ Cf. I. Hausherr, *L’obéissance religieuse*, Toulouse, 1966, p. 7.

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everything that happens under his always awake eyes². The fourth century saw the emergence of Christian monasticism in Egypt and produced some of the most valuable texts ever written³ in the evangelical tradition of heart repentance or, rather, of the whole person.

If the spiritual life is seen and understood as a capacity of the conscious to know God, then sin is darkness, cloud and burial of the conscious. „Man is sick of not knowing his purpose”, says St. Maximus⁴. Compared with the gift of freedom that completes and is creative, sin is slavery⁵. It is manifested in the structure of our inner selves, especially the heart and conscience. Perversion of consciousness requires repentance, which means *metánoia* (internal conversion) and *episthréfein* (whose connotation means a change in the personal life practice). Repentance is „a document for a new life signed with God”⁶ a resurrection. Repentance not only anticipates the resurrection, not only prepares us for the Resurrection, but is itself the beginning of the transition into life in its fullness inner being. I invite the reader to not hinder the „colours of the desert” (Wüstenkolorit) which gives monastic specifics of Fathers aphorisms but stepping beyond, to submit to their general psycho-spiritual human core: fighting evil with his triple aspect: demon - mind - passions that concerns us all as human beings⁷, regardless of our social and spiritual position.

Man cannot resurrect from the dead by himself and he cannot confront sin and confess God's grace alone. To receive God's saving grace, man must open to at least one other person. A true Abba replaces thousands of books and provides essential support to strengthen and health of the soul. This is not always easy in a world that teaches us and encourages us from an early age to be sufficient to ourselves and to address life issues firmly on our own. Go on your own! Epistle to the Colossians describes the situation in which some Christians work for the spirit of the world. However, the way of life prescribed in the Gospel and Church tradition is not self sufficiency, selfish love or spiteful individuality.

² Cf. Antiochus Monachus, *De his qui praesunt*, hom. III, PG 89, 1773.

³ *Αποφθέγματα των αγίων Γερόντων*, PG 65, 76A-440D.

⁴ S. Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Către Talasie*, prolog, PG 90, 253 cd.

⁵ Cf. Sf. Grigorie de Nyssa, *La Fericiri*, PG 44, 1228 b; Sf. Grigorie de Nazianz, *Cuvântarea* 19, 13 PG 35, 1060 b.

⁶ Cf. Sf. Ioan Scărarul, *Scara*, PG 88, 764 b.

⁷ G. Bunge, „Einleitung”: Evagrius Pontikos, *Über die acht Gedanken*, Würzburg, 1992, p. 22.

This situation comes from the fact that man is dialogic being who lives in the community and in communion with others. We need each other, even to repent. This relationship of reconciliation is made in the context of ecclesiastical, divine-human life of its renewing ethos. Sin breaks the relationship I - Thou that we have with God and with others; this sacred relationship is the way back. Living in harmony with others and with God is a natural and healing matter for humans. There can be no harmony between people without God's presence in the centre and edges of our community.

Abba Dorotheus used the image of a compass to describe how our connections with other people influence our relationship with God: „Suppose we take a compass, set the top on the paper and outline a circle. The central point is equidistant from any point in the circumference... Suppose this circle is the world and God is its centre; straight lines drawn from the circumference towards the centre are people's lives.” To be closer to God, people need to move from the circumference towards the centre of life: „The more close to God, the closer to each other, and both are closer to each other, the closer to God... Such is life. The more we remove or love God, the greater the distance that separates us from our fellow”⁸.

We need people who care about us and that we in our turn care about them. Everyday experience shows us our inability to truly love, inner inability to distinguish between right and wrong. We repent moving towards people, and God answers us sending people to whom we can turn when we repent. If we begin with repentance and we put it as a pledge of our life, we will receive and die in a state of true love. Sometimes we need people because the wounds are too deep to be accepted and evil too painful to be faced alone. In the Church we can be „in the same space with the other”; this idea includes the literal sense of the word *syn-choresis*, forgiveness. Sometimes we need people to help us acknowledge and assume sins of the past, to treat the present with liability.

Perhaps before starting to believe - in others and in God - we must learn to trust one another. The ability to share with each other is always a sign that we are on the right track. We become human through sharing. Our pains, problems and passions cannot be hidden and should not be denied. In fact, potentially, their recognition is the source of spiritual vitality and renewal. If we look carefully, they might give us clues about our route,

⁸ *Αποφθέγματα των αγίων Γερόντων*, ediția în engleză *Discourses and Sayings*, trad. E. Wheeler, Cistercian Publications Kalamazoo, 1977, p. 138-139.

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where we are in relationship with others and with God. Moving from person to person makes us know the truth.

According to Abba Anthony, Christ gathered us and He still gathers us „from all parts of the world until our souls will rise from the earth and He will teach us that we are all made of the same leaven, and part of each other. For he who loves his neighbour, loves God, and he who loves God, loves his own soul.”⁹ St. Anthony expresses this idea succinctly, saying „Our life and death are related to our brother and sister”.

When I can testify my strangeness and collapse to someone who doesn't make me feel ashamed, who plays the role of a minister of the Church of Christ and that of witness before God, then my healing can begin. So start looking for the health of salvation. Salvation is being into Church, sharing the only love and life of Jesus Christ. When I removed *the mask* and clearly analyze my vulnerability, then start my rebuilding and spiritual rebirth. The man starts to become spiritual when he begins to see his own sins and stops judging the others. Of course it's not an easy thing; it's much easier to continue to hide. The unrealistic self-image covers all our spiritual human senses. To clean the dark image of God in us - that is the task that stands before us! That finger of God writing when He leans toward our repentance cannot ever be forgotten. Sometimes repentance is a painful process, like wearing a baby in the womb. In this process the will is not defeated, but rather it is „buried alive” in a tomb that becomes the matrix of new life¹⁰. „Repentance is a contract with God for a second life”¹¹.

To repent means not simply to retrieve lost innocence but to transcend the condition of the fallen man. Passions are created due to the lack of working of virtues: „When the soul turned away from virtue through bodily pleasures, it created the passions which strengthened over him”¹². Repentance requires time, advancing with insignificant speed. Its wife is patience, its support is hope. It requires hard work - one must really want healing. It requires tears, sighs. Tears are the power of real repentance. Tears of who's in this way are promises of a new life, like newborn crying. Tears are the premise of resurrection from the darkness of sin. Tears are

⁹ *Scrisori*, 6.

¹⁰ Cf. Sf. Ioan Scărarul, *Scara*, treapta 4, 4, PG 88, 680. See *Αποφθέγματα των αγίων Γερόντων*, Avva Sisoe 3, Avva Zaharia 3, Avva Hyperechios 8.

¹¹ *Scara*, treapta 5, 1.

¹² Avva Dorotei al Gazei, *Învățăture*, 12, 6, PG 88, 1757.

the sign we began to cross the border of repentance and gradually enter the large space of virtue. *Virtue* is older than sin. In this regard, St. Gregory Palamas says that „sin is newer because it is a figment of our evil, later born desire, while virtue is primary because it is eternal in God and entered our souls from the beginning by grace”¹³. We repent therefore we cry. We mourn therefore we are healed, and then we hope. Repentance is our hope after sinning, says St. Basil the Great. Sin is a system of brackets and the radiant centre of Christian virtue is Christ. The Christian life cannot compare with anything in this world. Few are those who see its beauty „and depth and height”¹⁴. We feel a new life and see a new light: the life and light of Christ ascended to Heaven.

Repentance turns cosmos in haven but also my soul or yours. Repentance is the beginning, is rising up toward freedom of Christ. In the person of the spiritual mentor, the Church gives us someone with whom we can share our soul. This person is a willing companion that accompanies us on our spiritual path, not a guide or simply an observer. He is the witness of my repentance, a bearer of my cross, a comforting soul, a parentally doctor, a father who completely forgives his loved son. When we interact with a Father who reached perfection, we cannot find anything super-human; nothing surprises us or intimidates us, but rather something profoundly human and humble, something that inspires peace and fortitude. He measures everything through love, through the salvation of all and not through imaginary activity of each separately. The miracle of salvation comes only through love. The commitment that occurs can be very intense and relationship - very close. In part this is due to mentor's apatheia and to communion with God in Trinity. The spiritual father is the person who lived years in fear of God's commandments. Through his experience he can talk to others as he feels and knows. Although perhaps not yet fully glorified by God, he has a free of passions soul. The passions were stopped and he began lighting.

When a mortal being takes advice from other with total honesty, opening his soul, the depth of immortality is revealed both of them. Paraphrasing St. John Climacus, „one mortal plus one mortal don't equal two mortals, but immortality”. In spiritual life, one plus one equals eternity. Grace of salvation comes only through love. All sacrificed for love of neighbour are stored, kept intact, and multiplied in eternal life. Love illuminates man and

¹³ Sf. Grigorie Palama, *Omilii*, 3, PG 151, 37.

¹⁴ Efes. 3, 18.

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introduces him into a spiritual paradise even from this life. When we love our life is paradise rational, spiritual.

On our way to resurrection through repentance we are never alone. We have the spiritual father and, more importantly, we have each other. The spiritual mentor is one who advises us without obliging us. We depend on this person for food, for encouragement, for reading our interiority, for identifying our disease. We get to the Resurrection with and through him. The resurrection of Christ is the seed of new life, a life that is greater than sin, deviation from the right path and death. True Fathers testify by their presence, by simply moving. They talk to you by their life cross and by their presence in the Church. They are crucified and part of the Church, they are teophoric and sons of the resurrection. Our resurrection takes place by simply expressing our soul by confessing our thoughts and following the guidance and example that God sent us to be our living icon. The simple act of sharing the personal burden with your father contains a healing and life-giving. The spiritual experience from the Egyptian desert urged that it is always better to do something by sharing it to someone than by doing it by yourself. Once a monk came to Abba Pimen and „told Abba all about his demons and was immediately comforted”.

So, we learn to repent from another person and this learning is not optional. Our salvation depends on it. Advising us with others, we allow our burdens to be borne by someone else and in the same process we ourselves bear the burdens of others. We learn what it is to be forgiven and to forgive at the same time. We enter the community of forgiveness. We learn to let ourselves be loved and so we begin to love ourselves and others. Learning to receive the repentance of others is a matter of Christian listening as complex as learning our own repentance. After all, we belong to each other. The other is my brother testifies St. Nilus the Ascetic, „for inside me my brother is like a party”¹⁵.

Repentance is Resurrection happiness strewn everywhere in our lives. It is therefore very important to be honest with ourselves in the presence of our spiritual advisor, or else „our repentance has not even started”¹⁶. We should be cautious about any insincere „pleasantries” occurring in our relationships, in marriage, in the Church, „pleasantries” that undermine the sacred act of confession and the feeling of communion with the other. We are called to love, not to pretend to love, to be virtuous, not „nice”, to

¹⁵ Sf. Nil Ascetul, PG 79, 513.

¹⁶ *Αποφθέγματα των αγίων Γερόντων*, Avva Sisoe, PG 65, 369.

be honest, not hypocritical. Clearly, repentance involves more than mere memories of the past. Every moment we should be the reflection of this mystery of penance, of repentance, the power of the Other that lifts us. Whenever we are down, we feel uplifted by the Other. We feel that we fall, and He is the resurrection, we are non-beings, and He is the Being itself. When we fell, He picked us up and He still raises us every moment. He takes us into the arms of forgiveness, infinite patience and understanding.

The nature of the relationship between an Abba and his disciples is a subject that can be largely clarified by the individual stories contained in *Αποφθέγματα των αγίων Γερόντων*, The Holy Elders' (or Abbas') Aphophthegms. If there are Abbases', saints, God Fathers bearers, it means that God is with us¹⁷. In the relationship with his disciples, the spiritual advisor represents Christ Himself. In this relationship, the Holy Tradition of the Church proves to be interpersonal love in Christ. A „spiritual father” is never a teacher who teaches, but one who sends the image of the heavenly Father. In *The Coptic Life of Saint Pachomius* there is this idea referring to apprenticeship: „after God, their father was Pachomius”¹⁸. In this way we should be understood that St. John says „my sons,, and that St. Paul passes through labour of birth. Spiritual fatherhood is related to the cross. Abba Longin sends the Fathers' teaching: „Give your blood and receive the Spirit”.

Paternity art is not taught like a science in school. The Genealogy of „Neptic fathers' evokes the transmission of their charisma using the verb „to give birth”. Importance of the topic of spiritual direction in *Apo-phthegmata* was actually recognized and studied both in itself and for its role in developing a tradition of spiritual guidance in monastic Christianity

¹⁷ What a beautiful and ancient language is used in the prologue of the Life of Blessed „abbot” Paisius of Neamț, written by Isaac Dascălul: “Following the example of the old Holy Fathers, and imitating from youth their good deeds and their life with zeal, the saints „showed” and shows „God is the same and unchangeable and is close to all who calls upon Him (according to David), and He upholds them and protects them from temptations beyond their power and help them at all times, and climbs them to the top of committing good deeds. They shut the mouths of those who fallen in unbelief in their idleness, and say that the perfect good cannot be done now, nor to climb through it at the top of perfection and become perfect man and at the measure of the stature fullness of Christ – according to St. Paul”. ed. D. Zamfirescu, *Revista Fundației Drăgan*, Roma, nr. 3–4/1987, p. 470.

¹⁸ *Βίος του αγίου Παχουμίου (Sancti Pachomii Vitae Graecae)*, ed. Francisci Halkin, Subsidia Hagiographica 19, Bruxelles 1932, p. 1-96 (first part) și p. 272-406 (third part).

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in general¹⁹. When analyzing Paterikon we should consider *the mystery of spiritual relationship* that lies hidden behind and *the mystery of spiritual guidance* that is transmitted through Apophthegms. These „Sayings” recount their spiritual path of their authors, whether in a positive or negative, constructive or apparently destructive ways. They are a kind of map that must be unfolded and read carefully. To understand the story optimally and to follow the map correctly, one must be on the same road, with a guide: „He who climbs a mountain for the first time must follow a known path and needs to have with him a companion and mentor, someone who climbed the mountain once and knows the way”²⁰.

If we follow the Paterikon fathers in our lives we will understand them. They were quite aware of the tensions and problems inherent in the spiritual

¹⁹ For a more general study on the spiritual direction of ancient monasticism, see K. Ware, 'The Spiritual Father in Orthodox Christianity', in J. Garvey (ed.), *Modern Spirituality: An Anthology* (London, 1986), p. 39-58; T. Merton, 'The Spiritual Father in the Desert Tradition', in *Contemplation in a World of Action* (London, 1971), p. 269-93; F. Lilienfeld, 'Anthropos Pneumatikos – Pater Pneumatophoros: neues Testament und Apophthegmata Patrum', SP 5 (TU 80; I. Hausherr, *Spiritual Direction in the Early Christian East* (CSS 116; Kalamazoo, Mich., 1990). On *Apophthegmata*, see H. Dörries, 'The Place of Confession in Ancient Monasticism', SP 5 (TU 80 Berlin, 1962), p. 287-90; J.-C. Guy, *Educational Innovation in the Desert Fathers*, ECR 6 (1974), p. 44-51; *Les Apophthegmes des Pères*, I-IX, „Sources Chrétiennes” 387, Cerf, 1993. C. Stewart, 'Radical Honesty about the Self: The Practice of the Desert Fathers', „Sobornost”, 12 (1990), p. 25-39; Berlin (1962), p. 382-92, re-printed in *Spiritualität des frühen Wüstenmönchtums*, p. 1-13; A. Hamilton, 'Spiritual Direction in the *Apophthegmata*', „Colloquium”, 15 (1983), p. 31-8; Louf, 'Spiritual Fatherhood in Literature of the Desert'; L. Regnault, *Obéissance et liberté dans les Apophthegmes des Pères*, in „Studia Anselmiana” 70 (Rome, 1977), p. 47-72, re-printed in *Les Pères du désert à travers leurs Apophthegmes*, p. 87-111; 'Qui sont les Pères du désert?', p. 28-34; și *La Vie quotidienne des Pères du désert en Egypte au IV^e siècle* (Paris, 1990), p. 139-151; Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church*, p. 19-32; B. Ward, *The Saying of Desert Fathers: the Alphabetical Collection*, *Apophthegmata Patrum*, „Cistercian Studies” 59, 1984. Idem. *The Wisdom of the Desert Fathers: Systematic Sayings from the Anonymous Series of the Apophthegmata Patrum*, SLG 48, „Cistercian Publications”, 1986; Idem, *Spiritual Direction in the Desert Fathers*, „The Way”, 24 (1984), p. 61-70; Graham Gould, *The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community*, „Oxford early Christian studies”, 1993. Φώτιος Ν. Παπανικλάου, *Η έρημος και η πόλη στην ασκητική γραμματεία των πρώτων αιώνων*, Θεσσαλονίκη, 2000. John Chrysavgis, *Soul Mending, The art of Spiritual Direction*, Holy Cross, 2000. Ierom. Teofan Mada, *Paternitatea duhovnicească după Sfinții Părinți*, Agnos, 2008.

²⁰ K. Ware, *The Spiritual Father in Orthodox Christianity*, in „Cross Currents” 24, 1974, p. 296.

guidance. It is an unfortunate situation that those who put on paper their „sayings” failed to convey the composition and dynamics of spiritual life, leaving behind only their learning *outcomes*. What we received over the centuries is therefore the diluted wisdom of their words, without describing the process of their wise lives. „The transition”, observed by Columba Stewart, „from a fluid, dynamic way based on the telling and re-telling stories to a written and rather static form”²¹ involved more than formal linguistic or stylistic changes. Reviewing and rearranging the „sayings,, throughout generations inevitably meant a compression, even sometimes a distortion of the original oral tradition, which probably would have sent a more comprehensive vision of the desert literature and ascetic life.

The whole life of the ascetics was a fully *askesis* for life and the kingdom of God. [The perspective of things changed slightly in the framework of the fresh air of the desert, by the „immense silence,, from Nitria, Sketis and the Cells. They said: „There is no greater labour than the prayer to God. For whenever man wants to pray, his enemies, the demons, try to stop him, because they know that only by returning him from prayer can impede him on his way ... Prayer is a battle fought to the last breath”²².

Abba Sisoës when he was dying, although his face „shone like the sun”, said: „I think I could not make good start”²³. We encounter something very similar in a life of a contemporary Abba: St. Silouan. Before going to the infirmary, Father Sophronius asked him if he died, and he answered this: „I did not achieve humility yet”. The abbats are those who pray for the world and their words echo Evagrius’s famous apothegm: „The monk is separated from all and one with all”²⁴.

The intensity of the love of God is reflected now in a passionate love for all peers without distinction, or, rather, by one and the same Divine Love (as shown by St. Maximus the Confessor in his famous Epistle II on agape²⁵). Abba or Saint opens and unites more fully and at the same time both to God and humanity. They pray for the whole Adam. The primary responsibility for Abba²⁶ - or „the old man” (γέρων) - is to teach his disciple

²¹ *The World of the Desert Fathers: Stories and Sayings from the Anonymous Series of the Apophthegmata Patrum*, SLG 95, Cistercian Publications, Oxford, 1986, xi-xii.

²² *Αποφθέγματα των αγίων Γερόντων*, Avva Agathon 9.

²³ Abba Sisoës.

²⁴ *Despre rugăciune* 124.

²⁵ Cf. Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., în *Mitropolia Ardealului* 33 (1988), nr. 1, p. 37–59.

²⁶ The title and form of address „Abba” suggesting a disciple respect to a father and tea-

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how to accomplish spiritual life and how to cope with problems and temptations in this process difficult. For the disciple, the learning process requires self-disclosure, patience and obedience. But these attitudes must be found at the father too, albeit in a different form, if he wants to provide instruction with the same integrity and efficiency that Desert Fathers did it, by seeing it as the end of their lives.

„The Sayings of the Desert Fathers,, narrates many stories about spiritual guidance; they describe the fathers and record their memorable words offering their extraordinary examples. However, these stories should be analyzed in context. No Abba or Amma declared himself as a spiritual authority or an oracle of wisdom”²⁷.

They belong to a *tradition* of authority and spiritual guidance that was perpetuated over the centuries, and is associated with the titles of Abba and Amma. The fathers were the disciples of other oldest Abbas. Derwas Chitty wrote a „genealogy of spiritual authority”. Along with Institutional „apostolic succession” there was a kind of „charismatic succession”, the two overlapping in some cases²⁸. The confessors are fathers or abbats to such an extent that these collections of facts and words remain forever some *Paterika*.

As part of the body of Christ and the communion of saints, people depend on each other and God. We support each other in our trials, because „if one member suffers, all suffer together, and if one member is honoured, all rejoice together”²⁹. To understand life in all its connections means recognizing that no one is entirely independent. This is not so because we are inherently weak, but because by nature are closely related to each other, interdependent from birth. This mysterious life networking is a fundamental factor in healing and our resurrection. We are created *to be together; to live together and to be saved along with others*. We are saved together. By breaking the narrow limits of self closure and selfish

cher, authoritative and experienced adviser, is in itself an indicator of the importance of spiritual guidance of Apophthegmata: cf. L. Regnault (trans.), *Abba, dis-moi une parole* (Solesmes, 1984), p. 7-8; B. Ward (trans.), *The Wisdom of the Desert Fathers* (Oxford, 1975), p. XIII.

²⁷ Cf. P. Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian*, OUP, 1978, p. 25.

²⁸ *The Desert A City*, Mowbrays, 1966, p. 67-68.

²⁹ I Cor. 12, 26.

individualist separation of sinful man and by crucifying them, humility and prayer open the soul to God and to all creation: man hugs Adam throughout the whole world and all humanity, like Christ on the cross. Far from being an individualistic ascetic living, or „self-realization”, „self-improvement” and selfish solitary, true monastic withdrawal is actually revealed to be a serious putting into practice of the double commandment of unconditional love of God and neighbour - only essence and law of spiritual and eternal life.

The literature of the desert, perhaps designed to carry the most profound influence on Orthodox spirituality, was a true „encyclopedia or summary of Hesychasm”³⁰. It wanted to be for all Christians a „mysterious school of mind prayer” united in heart. It was intended to be an „an instrument of deification” of man, of transfiguring union of the Christian with God through ceaseless invocation of the Sweet Name of Jesus in the depths of his renewed and united being (mind - heart and soul - body) through methodically watchfulness and prayer out of time³¹. In the world of the desert the abbas did not simply pursue a theoretical teaching guidance. Its essence was the life in Christ, freedom from passions, adoption, being one with Christ, theosis. The Fathers’ Apophthegmata are prayer and the book of the Abba and his disciple on the way of „charismatic apostolate”. T. Spidlik understood and constantly reaffirmed „the spiritual primacy in understanding Christian east”³², that Eastern theology is spirituality par excellence. The content of the Orthodox spirituality is acquiring love that is nothing but the state of unceasing prayer. Repentance as resurrection and Prayer of love involves a thorough understanding of the theology of Baptism’s: unceasing prayer is update the mystery of human adoption in the Holy Spirit. This is found in the heart of the gospel and salvation and redemption in Christ. (Deification of man is concrete union with God - Trinity by grace as adoption and sanctification: filled by the Holy Spirit, the believer becomes a child of God by grace - son in the Son - and enters in the relationship of eternal and uncreated love between Son and Father). In the heart of desert literature, and especially of Paterikon and Philokalia in general, there is the mystery of spiritual sonship and fatherhood, the relationship Abba (father) - son.

³⁰ K. Ware, „Philocalie”, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* X (1977), col. 1334–1352, aici col. 1335, 1334.

Idem, *The Spirituality of Philokalia*, „Sobornost” 13, 1 (1991), p. 6–24.

³¹ Idem, *The Spirituality of Philokalia*, „Sobornost” 13, 1 (1991), p. 6–24.

³² „Pour comprendre l’Orient chrétien: la primauté du spirituel”, in „Orientalia Christiana Periodica” 33 (1967), p. 351–369.

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The Sacrament of Confession: Canonical Aspects

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Abstract

This paper examines various aspects of the Holy Sacrament of Confession in the Eastern Orthodox Church as they relate to the Canons and the teachings of the Church Fathers. The Sacrament of Confession is found to have its origin in the Gospels and New Testament Epistles and above all in the ministry of Christ Himself. It is the means whereby the soul of the believer is restored to its likeness unto God. Confession and subsequent penance are the medicine of the soul, and the Church Fathers were acutely aware that the confessor should treat each individual soul not inflexibly, but by taking its growth and its passions as unique. The Canons relating to Confession have remained the same in all their essential aspects to the present day, but the author examines some differences relating to the age at which believers first become spiritually capable of confessing and the age at which priests are able to assume the spiritual responsibility of ministering the sacrament to penitents.

Keywords

Canon law, The Sacrament of Confession, Orthodox Church, canons

The Sacrament of Confession, like the other Sacraments of the Church, is a sacred work of our redemption and construction in Christ. The verb

to confess means to acknowledge together (*confiteri, con-fateri*), and by this is to be understood together with God the Word and in His Spirit. In this sense, St John the Evangelist teaches us: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1, 9) and from all that separates us from Him, in order that we might become like unto Him, 'the righteous' (1 John 2, 1). As Father Constantin Galeriu puts it: "Confession is thus essential, cleansing, a release from sin, in the light of the life of Christ. It is a meeting with Christ. The confession of sins and the confession of Christ are one in the Gospels"¹.

For this reason, Saint John, before talking of the confession of sins, firstly proclaims: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1, 5-8).

Communion with Christ and in His Spirit is the meaning and deeper purpose of confession. Viewed spiritually, in the Sacrament we confess our sins, we judge ourselves before Christ. Indeed, the confessor says to the penitent: "Behold, son, Christ stands here unseen, receiving thy confession". The priest is the *oikonomos* (steward, superintendant) of the Sacrament, the servant, the visible *martyr* (witness) of Christ. It may also be noted that the Holy Scriptures name Christ Himself ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός, "the faithful witness" (Revelation 1, 5). And so, in the *oikonomia* of redemption, and implicitly the *oikonomia* of this Sacrament, Christ is the faithful witness of the Father, and through his confession before the priest who receives it the believer likewise becomes a witness of Christ, a witnessing/confession of His revelation.

Wherefore the Lord also says: "Who so ever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10, 32). Having viewed it thus, fundamentally, as a confession before Christ and of Christ, we may understand the meaning that Orthodoxy invests in this Holy Sacrament, in reciprocity with the

¹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Constantin Galeriu, *The Sacrament of Confession*, in "Studii Teologice", nr. 3-4, 1974, p. 451.

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other Holy Sacraments, of course, and in which the believer is so intensely and personally involved. More than being a disburdening of sins, it is the redemptive and edifying Sacrament. It edifies us, shapes us spiritually, in accordance with the image of Christ, which reveals life in the Holy Ghost. Christ is the icon, the supreme, infinite model of our ceaseless edification and growth in His grace. And it befits us not to forget for a single moment that we are made in His image and destined to be endlessly like unto Him; that we should assimilate the icon, His divine image, through grace in the Holy Ghost. The Kingdom of God is founded on those like unto Him, and the Sacrament of Confession is a means to this end.

The Sacrament is at the same time a profound confrontation with sin, which, properly, is the sole obstacle in the path of mankind, in the path of our Christian edification. And this is because it separates us from the Model, Christ our proto-image, from the God of light and love, and casts us aside and into the shadow of death. It wrests us away from the edifying and luminous meaning of life in Christ and diverts us into a world of meaninglessness, vanity and corruption, it places us in "fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Ephesians 5, 11), where we no longer have the support, the confession of truth.

Ἀμαρτία (sin) is separation from confession, in the sense of revealing, of divine witnessing of the truth in Christ, and therefore means no longer being a witness of His life. According to John Chrysostom: "Sin is a disease of the mind"². Similarly, St John the Evangelist names sin "lawlessness" (ἀνομία): "for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3, 4). It is therefore the distortion of the law, that is, the order given to the living creature by the fact that is alive, its God-given deeper structure, the wisdom wherein the meaning of the world resides. The Sacrament of Confession is the antidote, the means and the path of return, absolution from sin in order to gain 'a new heart ... and a new spirit' (Ezekiel 36, 26). But before we examine it as a sacramental work of the Church, we must observe that the Sacrament is, in its being, a part of the Gospels, that the Saviour Himself applies it in the concrete and perfect form of forgiveness³.

For this reason, like any Holy Sacrament, Confession has been the subject of many of the Church's canonical provisions and rules. The

² St. Ioan Gură de Aur, *Life issues*, Egumenița Press, Bucharest, 2006, p. 33.

³ Andrei Andreicuț, *Confession and Communion*, Reîntregirea Press, Alba Iulia, 2008, p. 54.

Orthodox Church has always been concerned that the Sacrament of Confession should be ministered according to these provisions and rules, that is, according to the Nomocanon and the decisions of the Church Fathers, recorded in the Canons of the Eastern Orthodox Church. This permanent canonical concern on the part of the Orthodox Church has also found expression in the current canonical legislation of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Neglect of the prescribed ritual in officiating holy works and violation of the secrecy of the confessional are treated by the Procedural Regulations as disciplinary offences and are punishable with transference and deposition respectively⁴.

Knowledge and application of the canonical norms of the Orthodox Church allows our priests to minister the Sacrament of Confession according to the ceremonial laid down by the Nomocanon.

The Sacrament of Confession involves three principal moments: the confession of sins, the absolution of sins, and the granting of the priest's blessing to take the Holy Eucharist.

According to the confession of sins, the Church allows a Christian to judge the deeds he commits after baptism and the possibility of receiving the Holy Eucharist, which unites him with Jesus Christ. The confession of sins committed since the previous confession is the substance of the Sacrament, and the prayer of absolution is the form of the Sacrament⁵.

The officiators of the Sacrament are validly ordained bishops and priests, on the basis of the commission that the Saviour gave to his disciples when He said: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18, 18) and "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose so ever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose so ever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20, 22-23). Apostolic Canon 52 lends juridical expression to the words of the Saviour, mentioning bishops and priests as the officiators of this Holy Sacrament: "If any bishop or presbyter does not receive him who turns away from his sin, but rejects him, let him be deposed"⁶. Through the act of ordination, bishops and priests acquire the grace to minister the Holy Sacraments.

⁴ Dr. Nicodim Mişaş, *Eastern Ecclesiastical Law*, trans. V. Cornilescu and D. Radu, Bucharest, 1915, p. 357.

⁵ Pr. Constantin Pârveu, *Canonical Regulations regarding the Great Fast*, in "Glasul Bisericii", nr. 3, 1958, p. 231.

⁶ Dr. Nicodim Mişaş, *The Canons of the Orthodox Church accompanied by Commentaries*, vol. 1, Arhidiecezană Press, Arad, 1930, p. 267.

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The administering of the Sacrament of Confession lends its officiator the special status of judge of the inner forum of human deeds. Of course, upon this status is also incumbent a special responsibility. This explains why the Church from its very beginnings has taken care that its servants should fulfil the conditions demanded for ordination, including the canonically required age. According to the established rules, in the life of the Christian Church in the beginning the age for ordination was left to the discretion of the head of the Church in question, while also taking into account the Canons and the interest of the community.

The first canonical provision connected with setting an age for ordination was laid down by Canon 11 of the Synod of Neo-Caesarea, according to which "a presbyter shall not be ordained before the age of thirty, even if he be a man worthy in all things, but he shall wait. For, Jesus Christ was baptised at the age of thirty years and began to teach"⁷. The canonical age requirement for priests was also generally binding for bishops, although initially bishops were ordained only after reaching the age of fifty, on the grounds that they would thereby be protected from the intemperance of youth. The provisions of Canon 14 of the Trullo Synod reinforced the Canon of our holy and God-bearing Church Fathers, according to which presbyters were not to be ordained before the age of thirty⁸. Over the course of time, this canonical provision ceased to be followed for various reasons. It seems that in regard to setting the canonical age, it was life that had the last say. When the age fell below thirty, the question arose of whether clergymen would be able to fulfil the rôle of confessor.

If at ordination the priest was not of the canonical age and received the *cheirothesia* at the same time as the *cheirotomie*, or subsequently, but still before the legal age for ordination, the validity of the Sacrament could not be placed in doubt "if on reaching the legal age, the ordained is otherwise blameless"⁹, as the primary canonical condition demanded of the candidate for ordination remains an understanding of the significance of this Holy Sacrament and the sacred duty to carry it out worthily, as stipulated by Canon 15 of the Trullo Synod, which states that "*cheirotomia* shall not

⁷ Arhid. Prof. Dr. Ioan N. Floca, *The Canons of the Orthodox Church*, ed. Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, Bucharest, 1991, p. 186.

⁸ Dr. N. Milaș, *op. cit.*, p. 363.

⁹ Asist. Univ. Dr. Iorgu D. Ivan, *The Age for Ordination of the Clergy*, in "Biserica Ortodoxă Română", nr. 1-2, 1937, p. 25.

be bestowed except upon those capable of understanding its meaning and exercising it worthily”¹⁰.

Also connected with the officiators of the Sacrament is the problem of the penances, to which the Canons of the Church make so many references (Canons 19, 38, 68, 76 and 80 of St Basil the Great). Originally, in the Early Church, the right to impose penances, to verify whether these were just or not, to excommunicate and to revoke excommunication was given only to the bishop, as Apostolic Canon 39 attests: “Let not the presbyters or deacons do anything without the sanction of the bishop”¹¹. Canon 57 of the Synod of Laodicea reaffirms this provision, making express mention priests only, who are forbidden thus to act without the sanction of their bishop.

Canon 6 of the Synod of Carthage, held in the year 390, confirms that this practice existed in the Early Church: “Fortunatus the bishop, said: In former councils we remember that it was decreed that ... the reconciliation of penitents ... be not done by presbyters ... and the bishops of Carthage replied ... it is not permitted to a presbyter to reconcile anyone in the public mass”¹². The bishops also had the right to determine the length of the penitence, the manner in which it was to be performed, and the manner in which the penitents were to be forgiven. According to Canon 5 of the Synod of Ancyra: “the bishops have the right, after considering the character of their conversion, either to deal with them more leniently, or to extend the time”¹³.

In ministering the Sacrament of Confession, the rôle of the priest today can not be reduced merely to receiving the confession and absolving the penitent from sin, but rather the priest also has the difficult task of diagnosing each penitent’s sins and prescribing him the appropriate medicament, so that his charismatic life, having been restored in the soul, might endure and develop, thereby ensuring his progress in virtue and perfection. As is well known, the priest is the *oikonomos*, the “steward of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4, 1) and the “labourer together with God” (1 Corinthians 3, 9). As the officiator of the Sacraments, the priest is the organ whereby God shares the grace specific to each Sacrament with

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Dr. N. Milaş, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

¹² Ioan N. Floca, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

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those who believe in Him. In ministering the Sacrament of Confession, the priest confessor plays a special rôle, also fulfilling at the same time an act of pastoral guidance.

In exercising his rôle as pastor, the priest confessor must contribute to the rectification of the penitent, to determining him to work together with the divine grace of forgiveness, which descends into his awareness through the act of confession. Mediating the penitent's reconciliation with God, the priest as the officiator of the Sacrament has the duty also to contribute through a salutary and pedagogical act to the rectification¹⁴ of the penitent.

According to the rules of the penitential discipline, the searching of the conscience must be undertaken seriously, zealously, meticulously, methodically and lastingly. The penitent is instructed as follows:

“before going to the confessor, for two or three weeks ... sit silently and bowing your head search your conscience and make yourself neither the advocate nor the judge of your sins ... make a reckoning of how many sins you have committed since you confessed, in deed, in word, in thought ... make a thorough reckoning, to discover each of your sins”¹⁵.

Those who may receive the Sacraments are validly baptised Christians, who have confessed their sins and received absolution in order to take the Holy Eucharist. According to the canonical rule, the age at which sins are taken into account is ten. Canon 18 of Timothy of Alexandria, although it lays down this rule, draws to the attention of confessors that the principal criterion in establishing age remains the knowledge and wisdom of the individual. Based on this canonical principle, the confessors of the autocephalous Orthodox Churches have taken into account the character and temperament of each individual when determining age, raising or lowering it where appropriate¹⁶.

In our Church, the age of seven is regarded as the earliest age at which sins may be confessed. This age has its physiological and psychological importance. It is the age at which the child is considered to have a separate

¹⁴ Pr. Prof. Petre Vintilescu, *Confession and Spirituality*, ed. Ortodoxă Română, Alba Iulia, 1995, p. 29.

¹⁵ Nicodim Arghioritul, *Book Beneficial to the Soul*, Egumenița Press, Galați, 2001, p. 149.

¹⁶ Pr. Lector dr. Emil Cioară, *The Confessor and the Sacrament of Confession in the Orthodox Church*, Editura Universității, Oradea, 2007, p. 35.

identity in his physical and psychical behaviour and to act rationally. Thus, the decisive criterion for establishing the age at which children should make confession is their individual power of discernment. It nevertheless remains established that on reaching the age of seven the functions of reason and free will imply responsibility on the part of the individual in working consciously towards his perfection. It is therefore at this age that children may be an especial object of concern for the confessor.

According to Canon 32 of St Basil the Great, Canon 27 of the Synod of Carthage, Apostolic Canon 69 and others, the obligation to confess one's sins also falls upon the clergy, including bishops. Simeon of Thessaloniki gives the following guidance: "Bishops and priests alike, ceaselessly, mindfully, humbly and with confession, officiating the Holy Liturgy, let us share in the fearful Sacraments"¹⁷.

In the confessional, the confessor prescribes the canon of confession. Before setting the canon, the confessor needs to bear in mind the following conditions of the penitent: temperament; morality, physical and psychical strength; living environment; the manner, nature and gravity of the sin; the disposition towards rectification; the publicness of the sin; the motive, intention and purpose of the sin; the time and general circumstances of the sin; backsliding and accumulation of sins, etc¹⁸. Apart from a thorough knowledge of the penitent and his religious psychology, when setting the canon for confession the confessor must also have knowledge of the following: his own religious psychology¹⁹, in other words he must know himself, on the one hand, and the canonical provisions and rules regarding the application of penitence, on the other.

By knowing himself, the confessor will know how to demand of his penitents that they return to the active state of sincere repentance for their sins. He will know that he has to have a moral conscience and moral authority. Knowing himself, the confessor will not forget that each man is a separate person, that each penitent has his own spiritual needs, which await comfort from the confessor. "Repentance is the fruit of grace. In the light of grace, of the divine order, I see and I recognise myself as I am in my own being, in my authentic unity as an image of God in this world, and the state into which I am led by sin"²⁰.

¹⁷ Ioan N. Floca, *op. cit.*, p. 375.

¹⁸ P. Vintilescu, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

¹⁹ Pr. Prof. Petru Rezuş, *Spirituality and Psychology*, in "Glasul Bisericii", nr. 1-2, 1959, p. 42.

²⁰ Constantin Galeriu, *op. cit.*, p. 453.

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In setting penances for the pious, the confessor will naturally recommend canons of a spiritual nature, that is, religious meditation, prayer, Bible readings, and so on. Such penances will therefore be aimed at strengthening and augmenting them in virtue. For those fallen into sin, the penances will be correctional, rectifying and healing in nature.

When setting the canon, the good confessor will have in view repentance and the circumstances that determined the gravity of the sin, as well as the preparedness for rectification. Canon 102 of the Trullo Synod tells us:

“Wherefore he who professes the science of spiritual medicine ought first of all to consider the disposition of him who has sinned, and to see whether he tends to health or (on the contrary) provokes to himself disease by his own behaviour, and to look how he can care for his manner of life during the interval. And if he does not resist the physician, and if the ulcer of the soul is increased by the application of the imposed medicaments, then let him mete out mercy to him according as he is worthy of it”²¹.

Application of the canon of repentance has a dual purpose, both positive and negative. The positive aim of the penance is to discipline the bodily senses²² and unshackle the human psychology “from the appetite to sin, from the desire and necessary inclination towards it”²³. In spiritual therapeutics, the Church Fathers formulated and methodically practised the principle of *contraria contrariis urantur* (contraries are cured by contraries), that is, when applying the canon of penance remedies contrary to the sin are stipulated. Consequently, the confessor must determine the penitent to carry out deeds contrary to his past sins, which is to say, to practise the virtue opposite to the sin in question. The effect of Confession as a Sacrament is consummated in the confession of and sincere repentance of sins.

These constitutive moments of the Sacrament confer forgiveness upon the penitent, via the priest confessor, which is to say, restoration of grace and reconciliation with God. In this context, the penance is a remedy for sin, an act of repentance for sin. Through confession and the canon of penance, the penitent thereby achieves correction. The prayer of absolution has the

²¹ N. Milaş, *op. cit.*, p. 488.

²² P. Vintilescu, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

effect of forgiving sins, but not also dispensation or canonical absolution. Prohibition from taking Holy Communion does not constitute a canon or a penance²⁴. It is merely “a period set for correction with a view to a certain degree of recovery of health, towards which it tends”²⁵.

In respect to fixing penances, the regulations laid down by the Church Fathers constitute the guiding norms for confessors to this day. According to the regulation laid down by St John Chrysostom,

“in setting the penance account should be taken not so much of the frequency of the sin, as much as of the will of the sinner, that is, lest in trying to sew something together you make the hole larger and lest in raising him who has fallen you work him greater harm; since those who are sick and distraught and in general those who incline to worldly pleasures, like those who are wont to take pride in their lineage and power, will no less wish to think upon their sins and only gradually will they be rid of the affliction that has befallen them. And he that wishes all at once and strictly to lead them to the right path may easily find that they repent all the less. For, the soul, if it has been led into insensibility, falls into despair and no longer listens to fair speech and is no longer afraid of any threat, and nor is it strengthened by charity, but becomes more wicked ... for this reason the pastor requires much knowledge in order to be able to penetrate from every side to the willingness of the soul. For, many despair of their redemption, not being able to take bitter medicine, and likewise there are some who, not having been punished as befitted their sin, no longer take any interest in their souls, they become more wicked and sin all the more. Because of this, the priest must take account of all things and weighing them all well employ whatever method necessary lest his efforts remain without result”²⁶.

According to this canon, knowledge of the human soul in all the profundity of its manifestations constitutes the beginning and foundation of

²⁴ Pr. lect. dr. Emil Cioară, *The Canon or Epitemia in the Holy Sacrament of Confession* (I) in “Orizonturi Teologice”, Oradea, year VII (2006), nr. 2, p. 118 - 138.

²⁵ Pr. Dr. Nicodim Belea, *The Duties of the Confessor according to the Holy Canons*, in “Studii Teologice”, nr. 9-10, 1951, p. 486.

²⁶ N. Milaş, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

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the cure of the various afflictions. Examination of the aetiology of the disease and its correct diagnosis are not possible without a careful and complete knowledge of the soul of the penitent.

In order to understand the canonical regulation in regard to how those who have sinned should cure their the disease of their soul, St Gregory of Nyssa advises the confessor to apply the treatment proper to each sin, since “there being many kinds and passions in the diseases of the soul, there is a need for the treatment to be of many kinds, producing the cure appropriate to the cause of the suffering”²⁷. According to the same Father of the Church, contained in Canon 2, sins that “affect the rational part of the soul,” for example falling away from faith in Christ, “are more destructive and require greater, more thorough and more exhaustive repentance”²⁸. Consequently, the penitence that the confessor will impose for each such sin will be harsher and longer.

The Fathers of the Church also handed down rules for cases in which the confessor is allowed to absolve the penitent from the canon of fasting. In Canon 10, St Timothy of Alexandria tell us: “If someone be sick and weakened from chronic disease ... it is fitting that he be absolved to take as much food and drink as he might bear, for it is just that the invalid should partake of oil”²⁹.

In regard to the canonical effects of repentance, a number of aspects need to be taken into account.

In the first place, the effect of absolution from sin resides in the restoration of the penitent’s status as an active member of the Church. The clergyman or layman who, not having been absolved, is received in another city (Apostolic Canon 12) will be excommunicated, as one who has deceived the Church of God (Apostolic Canon 13). Thus, he will no longer figure as a member of the Church.

In the second place, those who have not received absolution for their sins may not take communion. Canon 10 of the First Ecumenical Council, Canon 16 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, Canon 102 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, Canons 2, 5 and 7 of the Synod of Ancyra, Canons 6 and 43 of the Synod of Carthage, Canons 2, 54, 74, 84 and 85 of St Basil the Great, Canons 4, 5 and 7 of St Gregory of Nyssa, and Canon 3

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

²⁸ Ioan N. Floca, *op. cit.*, p. 380.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 374.

of St Athanasius the Great require that those guilty of grave sins should be forbidden to take Holy Communion for a limited or unlimited time. The canonical effect of the non-absolution of such sins is therefore that the penitent is forbidden to take Holy Communion for a limited period or is excommunicated. For example, the sin against the Holy Ghost is one that can never be forgiven, either in this life or the next. The anathema may be lifted if it has not been imposed for the sin against the Holy Ghost and if the penitent demonstrates reformation and repentance (Canons 7 and 43 of the Synod of Carthage).

Finally, the absolution granted to heretics and persons deposed by Orthodox bishops is nullified. According to Canon 5 of the Third Ecumenical Council, the restoration of such persons is uncanonical and “they shall not be profited thereby, but shall remain deposed nonetheless”³⁰.

³⁰ Pr. Asist. Dr. Nicolae V. Dură, *The Sacrament of Confession in the Light of the Canonical Provisions and Norms of the Orthodox Church*, in “Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei”, nr. 4-6, 1983, p. 253.

The Faculty of Theology „Ilarion V. Felea” Arad – Excellence in the Development of the Orthodox Dogmatic

For several years, the town of Arad is known as the „capital” of the dogmatic theology, both by the dogmatist Romanian theologians and by those in the pan-Orthodox landscape. This statement is based on the fact that recently, in Arad took place important events regarding this scientific theological discipline, events to which attended important personalities of the Orthodox world.

We refer of course to the first National Orthodox Colloquium of Dogmatic Theology, which took place on 30th and 31th of March 2006 at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the University “Aurel Vlaicu” in Arad, a premiere in the Romanian theology. This manifestation was aimed to be homage to the religious and theological figures who served with dignity, with zeal and self-sacrifice the Romanian Orthodox Church and the theology for three centuries, and it was stressed the development of the dogmatic theology in the twentieth century. This colloquium entitled *The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology at the beginning of the third millennium. The contribution of the dogmatists of Arad: accents, problems, perspectives*, brought together almost all the professors of dogmatic theology from the Faculties of Theology in Romania, among which we mention Dumitru Popescu, Dumitru Radu and Ilie Moldovan. Within this national symposium were pointed the major directions to be followed in future research in Dogmatic Theology and the challenges addressed to this discipline at present time. Therefore, this national symposium aims to notify the general state in which the Orthodox Dogmatic is in Romania, at the beginning of the third millennium.

On the other hand, from 6th to 8th of June 2007, the Orthodox Theological Faculty of Arad also hosted the first International Symposium of

Dogmatic Theology, held in Romania, called *Accents and perspectives of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology for the mission of the Church in the contemporary world*. This event brought together in our city theologians of real value from all over the Orthodox area, authorized and credible voices of our contemporary Orthodoxy, representing all types of Orthodox Theology: Slavic, Greek, Arabic, Latin, Western and American, all these demonstrating that theology of Arad is open towards the universal, towards the ecumenical vocation of Orthodoxy. Within this theological major event we came to some conclusions regarding the present and future of dogmatic theology as a fundamental discipline of the Orthodox Theology. We present only a few conclusions presented in the final document, produced at the end of the symposium: the Dogmatic Theology is one of the basic disciplines of Theology, as a ministry of the Church; the Symposium was an opportunity to reflect on what has been accomplished in this area, during a century, being notified the great syntheses that were made, highlighting the representing figures in the theological dogmatic theology and surprising accents, directions and perspectives that can be found in common in the past age; the contemporary dogmatic theology's approach goal is to captures those aspects, accents and openings in order to respond to the great questions and challenges that the modern world are addressing today to the Church in its mission and ministry; also, it has been highlighted the need for closer relations with other subjects of the Dogmatic Theology, with the other theological disciplines, especially biblical theology, showing and that it should be encouraged the dialogue between Science and Theology, Theology and Culture; there is now the need for closer links between research and thorough presentation of the truths of faith and the life and spirituality of the ecclesial community.

At the end of this scientific work of the International Symposium was formed the Orthodox Association of Dogmatists under the leadership of Rev. Ioan Tulcan, Dean of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Arad. This association aims at achieving a closer connection between teachers of Dogmatic Theology in Europe and America.

Finally, from 11th to 13th of June 2009, the Faculty of Orthodox Theology Ilarion V. Felea” hosted the second meeting of the entire Orthodox dogmatist theologians, under the title *Tradition and Dogma: what Dogmatic Theology we suggest for nowadays?*, attended by the professors of dogmatic theology from universities all over the country (Bucharest,

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Sibiu, Cluj, Craiova, Constanța, Oradea and Arad) and Orthodox countries (Russia, Bulgaria and Greece) and Orthodox Diaspora (United States, France and Germany). At this second Symposium of the dogmatist theologians the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church himself, His Beatitude Daniel Ciobotea send his the message called *The Orthodox Dogma – Faithful to the Tradition and Innovation of the Tradition* and local hierarch, His Eminence Archbishop Timotei Sevcicu, present at works of this Symposium, expressed his hope that discussions of will provide concrete solutions to help preserve the catholic unity of Orthodoxy from all over the world, calling the meeting in Arad, to be a “providential” one.

We must note that all three events which took place at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Arad, were held with the blessing of His Beatitude Patriarch Teoctist, for the first two, and His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel Ciobotea for the meeting from 2009 and His Eminence Timothy Sevcicu, Archbishop of Arad.

The organization and the good success of the three theological manifestations is due to both Prof. PhD, Ioan Tulcan and PhD. Cristinel Ioja who watched closely to the smallest details of the progress, in order to ensure the good deployment of the scientific work.

The third international meeting of the Orthodox dogmatist theologians was held in Thessaloniki, Greece, between 23th and 26th of June 2011, under the title *The Function and the Limits of Reason in Dogmatic Theology*. The particularly valuable papers presented within this International Symposium were published in a volume bearing the logo of the International Association of Dogmatist Theologians, volume published in 2012, with the support of the Cultural Council of Arad, through the efforts of the coordinators of the volume: Ioan Tulcan, Michel Stavrou, Peter Bouteneff and Cristinel Ioja. This volume of an exceptional theological value brings together the studies of the participants from the third international meeting of dogmatist theologians from all over the Orthodox area. The contents of the volume is divided into seven major parts, corresponding to the seven sections of the scientific papers presented at the Symposium in Thessaloniki, all grouped around the central theme stated in the title.

The first part, entitled **Reason in the Theology of the Fathers (I)**, brings together two studies of theologians Petr Mikhaylov (*The Use of Reason in Christian theology According to the Cappadocian*) and Despina D. Prassas (*To the Limits of Reason and Beyond: St. Gregory of Nazianzos's, Theological Orations 27 and 28*).

The second part brings together under the title **Reason of the Theology of the Fathers (II)**, the following studies: Peter C. Bouteneff, *The Transfiguration of Reason in Dionysius*, Ioan Tulcan, *The Role of Reason in the Perception of God According to St. Maximus the Confessor*, and Alexey Fokin, *Rational Methods in Latin Patristic Trinitarian Theology*. The third volume, **Reason in Medieval Byzantine Theology** has in its content two studies, the first is of the theologian Michel Stavrou, *La raison illuminée par la foi dans la théologie byzantine du XIII^e siècle* and theologian Stavros Yangazolou, *Discours théologique et expérience ecclésiale dans le cadre du conflit hésychaste du XIV^e siècle*. The fourth volume, entitled **Reason in 20th-c. Orthodox Theology** brings together two studies: the one of the theologian Christoph Schneider, *Beyond the Limits of Reason: Reflections on Pavel A. Florensky's "The Pillar and Ground of the Truth" (1914)*, and of the theologian Pantélis Kalaitzidis, *La théologie comme science et doxologie: logocentrisme, apophatisme et théologie mystique chez quelques auteurs orthodoxes contemporains*. The fifth volume, entitled **Reason in the Theology of Rev. Dumitru Stăniloae**, contains the studies of Crisinel Ioja, *The Function of Human Reason in the Interrelationship Between God, Man and the World as Reflected Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae's Annotations to the Romanian Philokalia* and the one of Professor Nicolae Razvan Stan, *The Human Mind and the Knowledge of God According to Father Dumitru Stăniloae. An Analysis of his Annotations in the "PSB" Collection*.

The penult part of the volume brings together under the title **Rational or Spiritual Theology? The East - West Encounter**, the following studies: Nicholas Loudovikos, *Mind and its Limitations in Maximus the Confessor and Thomas Aquinas*, Nicolae Moşoiu, *"We have the mind (nous) of Christ" (I Cor. 2, 16). Rational and Spiritual (Noetic) Knowledge and Spiritual (Noetic) of God and of the Creation*, Georgios Martzelos, *Vernunft Und Offenbarung In Der Theologie Luthers Und In Der Orthodoxen Überlieferung* and Adrian Niculcea, *The Role of Reason in Obtaining Knowledge of God in the "Personal" Theology of Karl Barth and in Orthodox Dogma*.

The last part of the volume, entitled **Theological Reason within an Orthodox Vision**, contains the following studies: Valer Bel, *Participative Logic and Iconic Ontology in Theological and Ecclesial Knowledge*, Ştefan Buchiu, *Le rôle et les limites de la raison dans la connaissance apophatique dans la pensée de Pere Stăniloae*, Aristotle Papanikolaou, *The Role of*

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Reason in the Formation of the Doctrine of the Trinity. At the end of the volume there are published the program of the International Symposium, held in Thessalonica, as well as the final document overwrought and signed by the participants.

Therefore, the content of this volume should be considered as a valuable Dogmatic Theology treatise, which analyses the issues of the function and of the role of reason in the Dogmatic Theology. Also the names of the authors of the material within this volume draw the attention because of the prestige they have acquired in the Orthodox theological area.

We congratulate the ones who made possible the publication of such a useful volume, Fr. PhD. Ioan Tulcan, Dean of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology “Ilarion V. Felea” of Arad and PhD. Cristinel Ioja, the President of the Senate of the University “Aurel Vlaicu” and professor at the Faculty of Theology.

Rev. Ph. D. Lucian Farcașiu

BOOK REVIEWS

Rev. Ph. D. Lucian Farcașiu, *The Theology of the Hymns of the Great Feasts of Our Saviour Jesus Christ - fixed feast*, „Aurel Vlaicu” University Press, Arad, 2012, 460 p.

The present study is the work of Rev. Ph. D. Lucian Farcașiu from the Faculty of Theology in Arad, entitled *The Theology of the Hymns of the Great Feasts of Our Lord Jesus Christ - fixed feast* (Universitatea „Aurel Vlaicu” Press, Arad, 2012, 460 p.) and it is part of a liturgical trilogy referring to the theology of the hymns of the great feasts in the Orthodox Church, of which the first study concerns the theology of the hymns of the feasts of the Paschal cycle (Publishing University ”Aurel Vlaicu” Arad, 2010, 370 p.), while the third upcoming study, approaches the same subject, the theology of the hymns, with reference to the feasts dedicated to the veneration of the Virgin Mary. Of course, this liturgical trilogy will be completed, the author having a project regarding the theology of the hymns of the feasts dedicated to the veneration of saints.

This paper is preceded by a vast and welcomed introductory study (p. 17-41), referring to “The Epiphany Character of the Divine Worship. The Theology of Presence”, mentioning that “our presence at the ministry, as the work of the Holy Spirit, integrates in the celebrated event. From this perspective we can say that the ministry is a foretaste and an anticipated descent among us of the Kingdom of God.”

On a general view, this work is divided into two parts, of which the first part (p. 43-133) consists of two chapters. The first chapter, entitled “Theological and Practical Issues Regarding the Liturgical Hymns and the Church Singing” (p. 45-61), refers in its first part to the Hymns, the Psalms and the spiritual life, viewed as a relationship in the Orthodox spirituality, i.e. that the hymns of the Church integrates in the entire ascent of the believer to perfection. The second part of this chapter deals with the canonical provisions relating to the singing in church and the church

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singers. The second chapter contains “Elements of History of the Hymns of the Fixed Feasts. Hymn-Writers Saints and Melodists of the Church, with Elements of Their Biography and Hymns” (p. 61-133).

The second part of the work consisting of six chapters (p. 133-409) refers to the theology of the hymns of the fixed feasts of the Saviour Christ, in which each chapter is dedicated to one of feast of the Lord, as follows: Feast of the Nativity of Christ, the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ, the Feast of Theophany or Epiphany, the Feast of the Presentation, Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord and the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross.

At the end of the work, the Conclusions (p. 411-420) - translated into English - punctually reproduce the summary of the book based on the concrete results of the research. The novelty that this study brings to the theological liturgical literature, along with the one entitled “The Theology of the Hymns of the Feasts of the Paschal Cycle” (presented as a doctorate thesis at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest), lies in the connection that the author makes between the dogma confessed in the public divine worship, occasioned by the commemorating of a particular event in the history of our salvation, and the spiritual message that the feast transmits, as a foretaste and a descending of the Kingdom of God in the life of the church community and personal lives of the believers, who actually share the gifts of the spiritual feast. Thus, it is pointed out in the ecclesial experience of the believers, the interrelation between the content of the hymns (dogma), their doxological expression in the worship and their spirituality as a process of sanctification and holiness, as communion with God.

Thus, understanding the job as an event of the kingdom of God in the ecclesial life, in addition to its commemorative aspect, of evocation of historical reality in a specific circumstance, ought to be permeated by the entire spiritual loading, by the fullness of grace that the celebrated event transmits in the divine worship. The author explicitly and concretely states that the commemorative aspect of worship can never be considered in isolation but only in relation to its epiphany, showing, discovery and presence character as life in the Holy Spirit. To understand a great feast as a commemoration, a history, a memorial, or remembrance, “means to fall within the sphere of formalist pietism, of form without substance ... During the ministry we are most real in God’s presence. Therefore, the question of God’s knowledge can not be separated from the liturgical experience.

It must emerge from the encounter with the eternity, the ecclesial body... The ecclesial unspoken belief ... is just a replay, just hearing, having no dimension of the «powerful word». To be incarnated, that is accomplished, it must be confessed liturgical, in a doxological manner”, as a praise of God in communion with bodiless beings; in a cosmic manner, by the participation of the surrounding nature with all its components to be offered to God for transfiguration; symbolically, as fellowship to the realities which it discovers; eschatological as anticipation of the kingdom of God «to come», as a «happy settlement of the soul into the age to come» ... Only the presence of the celebrated event that the ministry gives can put us in a bound with the Risen Christ ... And only from here we can take the «powerful word», the word of faith, filled the power of the Spirit ... “.

The natural consequence of this liturgical reality it must be carefully considered in approaching the study of theology, meaning that, “the dogma would not remain only in the intellect, but it should be incarnated, becoming accomplishment. Therefore, the Dogmatic and the Liturgical Theology should be seen only together because what we think we really need to live and what we live, we must take thoughts”... Thus, “the theology must necessarily be liturgical, i.e., integrated into the dimension of the experience lived as a spiritual reality” (p. 412). In this manner an organic and functional link is established between *credendi lex* - *lex orandi* and *lex vivendi* (the confession of the faith through prayer and spiritual life).

At the end of this brief presentation, we consider suitable to make a few assessments of the contribution that this work makes to the approaching of the study of theology in general and liturgical theology in particular.

1. Along with the other 29 studies, of which 4 of pastoral theology and 25 of liturgical theology, published in our journals, as well as the communications with the same themes, presented by the author at 22 international symposiums and 14 seminars and national symposiums, the present work from the mentioned trilogy, fills up a gap in the Romanian theology, opening the prospect of an effective and creative approach.

2. The author has researched a rich theological literature (91 patristic works, 14 liturgical works, 20 dictionaries, lexicons and collections, 11 works, 113 specialty works, 55 studies and articles) in Romanian language and foreign languages, proving to be well informed regarding the literature, as well as the complex problems regarding the theme.

Rev. Ph. D. Lucian Farcașiu, The Theology of the Hymns...

3. In the same context, we say that the author possesses the theological research method, specific for the liturgical theology, proving the power of analysis and synthesis, and the form of exposure is adequate to the scientific works dealing with issues at a senior level in a sober style.

In conclusion, we consider that the scientific work of Rev. Ph. D. Lucian Farcașiu stands the Faculty of Theology in Arad, Department of Liturgy and Pastoral and honours and at the same time the Theological Seminary in Caransebeș, where he learned the alphabet of the theology

Rev. Ph.D. Sorin Cosma

Stanley E. Porter and Cynthia Long Westfall (eds.) *Empire in the New Testament*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011, Hardback, 305 p. ISBN: 978-1-60899-599-8

The twelfth work issued in the „New Testament Studies Series” of MacMaster School of Divinity School highlights a trend in interpretation that developed much lately in New Testament exegesis, and especially in the last fifteen years. Experts such as Richard Horsley and Neil Elliot have already been studying for some time the relationship of the Holy Apostle Paul with the Roman Empire; however, their evaluation, as well as that of other authors who have treated the subject of Empire in the New Testament, is expressed in postcolonial terms. Just recently has this matter begun to be addressed from the more „historical” point of view of biblical exegesis. In 2008, Seyoon Kim wrote, from this perspective, a monograph entitled: *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke*. However he looks skeptical that the Empire has directly influenced the Pauline and Lukan works. *Empire in the New Testament* is the first work that sums up a number of different assessments of the influence of empire on the writings of the New Testament, by a ‘historical’ exegesis of the biblical text (although, as we shall see, some of the authors of this compilation are still tributary to postcolonial and poststructuralist thought).

The volume comprises nine studies on the relationship between the empire and certain biblical texts. Although the title of the collection is *Empire in the New Testament*, the first two articles deal with the imperial context of Old Testament. They help to establish the cultural and religious background inherited by the New Testament authors. Douglas K. Stuart tries this with regard to the Ancient Near Eastern mentality to the empire and that of the Old Testament as well, a very ambitious goal for a relatively short article. The strong point of this study is the appeal to primary texts in an attempt to determine the attitude towards empire. The conclusion is that the position of the Ancient Near East with respect to the empire is

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positive, while the Old Testament's is negative. The author concludes by assessing how the two mindsets are found in David's effort to build an empire; although David understood the right attitude to empire, as exposed in the Old Testament, he allowed himself to be lured into the Ancient Near Eastern conception.

In the second article about the Old Testament relationship with the empire, Mark J. Boda shows that in the book of Isaiah is reflected, for the first time in prophetic literature, the interaction of Judah with the empire. For Boda, the book of Isaiah is the main text that would „shape Judah's response to empire" (p. 57). Boda discerns in Isaiah Judah's response to three empires: Assyrian (Isaiah 6-39), Babylon (Isaiah 40-55) and Persian (Isaiah 55-66). Each empire threatens the Zion tradition presented in the book of Isaiah as a whole, but especially emphasized in chapters 1-5; Boda argues that the whole book should be read through these Zionist, counter-imperial lenses.

Craig Evans, in „King Jesus and His Ambassadors", comes with a broader approach to the relationship between the early Church and the Roman Empire. Evans argues that in all four Gospels Jesus is King in direct opposition to Caesar. This idea is thought to would have continued in subsequent generations of Christians who would have considered themselves as ambassadors of 'potentate' Jesus. The author bases his assumptions on primary texts, such as *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, and epigraphic evidence. Using social-scientific criticism, Evans made a foray into patron-client relationship, so important in Greco-Roman world.

John was considered less suitable for imperial interpretation, due to the idea that it would have a stronger theological emphasis than the Synoptics. Tom Thatcher questions this assumption in his article „I Have Conquered the World: The Death of Jesus and the End of Empire in the Gospel of John". Thatcher examines the practice of crucifixion in the Roman world and asserts that the way in which John presents the Crucifixion scene can be seen as a reversal of power: 'Caesar and his agents [become] helpless victims of the Christ who conquered the world' (p. 140). Like Carter, Thatcher uses methodologies that go beyond historical-critical exegesis. Thus, he evokes the concept of 'countermemory' of the postmodern philosopher and sociologist Michel Foucault to show how St. John undermines the Roman imperial power by his presentation of Crucifixion.

In articles six and seven, Stanley Porter and Matthew Frost deal with St. Paul's relationship with the Roman Empire. Both state that the Apostle devalues the empire by virtue of his theological presuppositions. Porter is primarily concerned with the cult of the emperor and how its vocabulary, observed in several inscriptions, is used in the Epistles to the Romans and I, II Corinthians for Jesus' lordship. One of the most important aspects of Porter's article is his analysis of Rom 13, 1-7, a fragment considered problematic for counter-imperial interpretation, whereby he concludes that Paul does not call for „unqualified obedience to the state.” (p. 185) Lowe examines the minor Pauline epistles on the assumption of their overall authenticity. St. Paul's redemption ideology is essential counter-imperial; in the face of the death imposed by empire, redemption offers crucified and resurrected life.

Cynthia Long Westfall browses the Judeo-Christian literature of the New Testament, looking at how each of these writings answer to a particular aspect of imperial discourse. She states that „each one of the texts of early Jewish Christianity... has a tendency to negotiate one aspect of empire more distinctively than others” (p. 14). Given that Jewish literature is inclined towards open opposition against the empire, it is understandable that the writings Westfall examines show a resistance towards empire more direct than the Pauline corpus or the Gospels. Thus, for Westfall, the counter-imperial tendency is more visible here than in the rest of the New Testament.

The volume concludes with a contribution of Gordon Heath. He looks to the writings that were produced immediately after the New Testament and notes that they are not obviously anti-imperial. For Heath, the refusal of the declaration „Caesar is Lord” does not automatically mean that the New Testament authors are in radical opposition to the Roman Empire. While it is true that in the New Testament counter-imperial rhetoric can be found, researchers should use cautiously these new methodologies and interpretations, which often neglect the author's intention. Heath's critique is incisive, being similar to that of Seyoon Kim (*Caesar and Christ*, 2008): counter-imperial interpretations are often based on a fallacy which he calls 'parallelomania' (p. 28). Thus, some authors detect words that have a counter-imperial tinge in a certain context and interpret in a counter-imperial perspective all texts containing those words, despite the absence of any other counter-imperial elements. Of course, such slippages

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occur in any developing field, and those who practice counter-imperial interpretation should be aware of them. However, avoidance of this mistake does not eliminate all counter-imperial elements that can be identified in the New Testament; the mission of this new school is to recognize and interpret these elements.

Another direction in which this new type of interpretation needs to develop is that of hermeneutics. Although postcolonial science provides some direction in this regard, no article in this collection tries an extended Christian application of it. If a commentator will present a substantial counter-imperial interpretation of a text, some readers, especially among those living in an imperial environment, will want a Christian hermeneutic to justify that exegesis. To achieve this goal we need a good starting point. This collection of studies, *Empire in the New Testament*, can provide such a point.

Rev. Ph.D. Adrian Murg

Panayotis Nellas, *Christ, God's Justice and our Correctness - for an orthodox soteriology*, Deisis, Sibiu 2012, 362 p

The book of the orthodox theologian Panayotis Nellas "Christ, GOD'S Justice and our Correctness for an orthodox soteriology" impresses through its flamboyant contents, and reflects at the same time his thinking, which succeeded to renew and actualise, in neopatristic spirit, the orthodox theology. The book treats the problem of man's restoration and correctness in Christ, this problem being the centre of the theological thinking starting even with the first Christian century.

In the first part of the book, Panayotis Nellas goes to the beginnings of the apostolic Christianity, showing the problem of correctness viewed through the eye of Saint Paul Apostle, who criticised the Judaism behaviour, who corrected themselves by respecting certain rules of the Old Law, and they were in an outside level with God, their salvation didn't depend on God, but only to respect strictly some rules (p. 11). Owing to some Judeo-Christian disputes, the Paul Apostle developed a theology of God's justice and of Man's correctness. The justice of the law (Philippians III, 36), the Saint Paul Apostle opposes the God's Justice (Philippians III.9, Romans X, 5-13) showing at the same time that Jesus Christ's life didn't mean the organising of life around of a certain law and the fulfil of a command but it was new way of existence. The salvation came only from Christ and it consisted in the crucifixion with Jesus Christ (Galatians II, 20) resurrection with Christ (Ephesians II, 6; Colossians II, 12; III, 1) and dressing in Christ (Galatians III, 27). By this concept, Paul emphasises the fact that Christocentrism constitutes the basis of the soteriology on one hand and on the other hand that salvation is an anthropocentric or theocentric event. The book reveals the fact that the God's justice revealed in man's correctness realised by Christ in his body, and the Man's dressing in Christ, through the God's justice, represents the correctness or deification of mankind.

The second part of the Greek theologian is intituled "The Learning about Correctness of Saint Nicholas Cabasilas – contribution of the orthodox soteriology" this is also his doctoral thesis. This section is structured on three chapters preceded by a comprehensive introduction which presents the man's correctness organigram from the apostolic period going on with Pelagius, Celestin, Julian and Saint Augustin passing to the Latin theologians of the Middle Age: Anselm of Canterbury, Toma d'Aquino, and arriving to the nominalist theologians of the XIV century John Duns Scottus, William Ockham and Gabriel Biel. Here, Nellas presents the importance of man's correctness boot also the method of approaching it in the eastern theology, representing the thinking of Cabasilas, as well as in the western medieval theology in the works of Wilhelm Gass, Jean Riviere and Severien Savelie.

The book has as basis the conception of Saint Nicholas Cabasilas relating to the God's justice. This is viewed as love (friendship) and kindness; God has perpetual work the communication of good and his love to the all created existences. It is also said about the primordial man's state with ontological connection between the God's Justice and Man's justice, but also about the Man's communication as God's face with his Archetype. Also, the origin and structure of the human being are presented as Christocentric, which means that human perfection coincides with his deification or with his adoption through grace by God. It is also presented the problem of the Evil, which non existing ontological, becomes through the sin existent and makes that the real existence of the person, being ontologically in connection with Trinitarian Persons to become non-existing, transforming in an isolating individual (p. 91). In order to the God's Justice man had to be restored. Or better, the restoration of God's justice is, in fact, man's correctness (p. 102) which is not produced in a forced way or automatically, but synergically. The working of man with God for correctness is done in order the man not to become alienated but also, not to be substituted to God (p. 109).

Searching Nicholas Cabasila's work, Nellas shows that his theology is distinguished and superior to Anselm's theology which presents more a satisfaction of God for the punish (p. 116) but Cabasilas speaks about the Christological and anthropological dimension of man's correctness. Cabasilas shows that the discover of God through Inhuming of the God's Son relativities any offence bringing by man to God and it means the

surpassing of any enmity and insult. Since, death appeared by the ignorance of God, hurting the man, it is naturally that revelation of God by the Being of His Son to reestablish his justice, and knowing the God to realise the cure and coming back at the completely peaceful life with God, by other words, to realise the man's correctness (p. 111).

It is important that now here in Cabasila's papers doesn't appear a satisfaction of the God's honour, but about a restoration which means the re-creation of a new life, because the restoration has as a subject the hurt and degraded man meanwhile the satisfaction as a subject God who is offended. Through the economy and through God's extraordinary and great deeds („Magnalia Dei”), Cabasilas affirms that his not satisfied by God, but the human nature wounds are cured: through Jesus Christ's Death was revived the dead man through the sin. The contents of the redeem price is the heavenly love which cure and liberates the nature by the evil forces. Jesus Christ demolished the hostile wall, releasing the man by the hate against God. The self-punishment comes through divine pedagogy, a cure of the human nature affected by degradation and death.

By this work, Panaiotis Nellas presents a rich and original theological synthesis of Saint Nicholas Cabasilas, showing that this theology is a Eucharistic and liturgical one. The man's correctness, by re-establishing the God's justice (love), is not only a re-establishing of his original justice before fall sin, but is much more: human adoption by God and the unification with Him by the Sacraments. Redemptive work receives, thus, a deeper characteristic, not seeing as compensation from slavery and from the death of the sin, but is a true re-birth at a new life in and with Jesus Christ.

Răzvan Emanuel Fibișan

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The description of the theoretical framework of the theme

- accuracy in description and presentation;
- present interest and relevance of the bibliography used in connection with the theme;
- relevance of the information regarding the theme;

The aim of the study

- accuracy of expression;
- originality;
- relevance of the aim for the analysis and the innovation of the suggested theme;

The objectives of the study

- accuracy of expression;
- relevance and operational degree according to the stated aim;
- relevance regarding the stated theme;

The advanced hypothesis and the considered variables

- accuracy of expression;
- relevance of hypothesis according to the stated theme, aim and objectives;
- correlation between hypothesis and variables;

The description of the research methodology

- accuracy of building up research techniques;
- accuracy in applying the research techniques;
- relevance of the used methodology according to the theme, aim and objectives;

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- relevance of the results according to the theme, aim and objectives;

- quality of the results and their presentation according to the stated aim;
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- relevance of interpretation according to the hypothesis, aim and objectives ;
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Suggestions

- innovative degree of suggestions;
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Remarks:

- the author is obliged to specify the domain of the scientific research of the study;
- the consultant and the editorial staff reserve the right of publishing the article according to the epistemic or/and the editing requirements;
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Articles should be accompanied by an abstract (max. 150 words), preferably in English. The abstract should present the main point and arguments of the article.

The academic affiliation of the author and his e-mail address must write at the first note of the article.

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