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The Mission through Theological Culture within the Universities

In Romania the Orthodox Theological Faculties are part of the mission of the Church. They are integrated into the state system of higher education, being numerous and distributed throughout Romania – which is an Orthodox majority country. The Orthodox Theological Faculties play an important role in the mission of the Church both in the academic environment and in the whole Romanian society. Thus, by the very manner of their manifestation, the Faculties of Theology have a strong missionary dimension with social, ecumenical and interdisciplinary opening.

In contrast to the communist period when in Romania there were only two Academic Theological Institutes separated from the State Universities, since the fall of communism twelve Faculties and Departments of Orthodox Theology opened under a dual guardianship: Church and University. In this context, there is a radical shift from an educational closed between the “walls” of the Church to a theological education present in the University, but also an educational change from focusing on quality to focusing more on quantity.

In the University, the Faculty of Theology has a spiritual and missionary role and not only scientific-pedagogical. Moreover, it has a formative and not only informative and sometimes distant role. In fact, the great challenge to the Romanian theological education that joined the University is maintaining and asserting its *ecclesiality*. This means maintaining and asserting its ecclesial character, with spiritual-sacramental and personalist-communitarian implications, and to research the sources in connection with the current world aspirations and trends. The ecclesial character of the theological education involves the notion of *vocation* that makes it remaining distinct although integrated in the University. Therefore, the vocation of the Faculty of Theology is imperative to enroll and stay on the line of Church vocation¹. This statement comes in the

¹ Prof. Dr. Nicolae Achimescu, *Relationship between Faculty and Church*, in “Theological Studies” Series III, year I (2005), no. 1, p. 194-199, here p. 195.

context of the growing depreciation of theology ecclesial conscience and of a real questioning regarding priestly vocations situation. Thus, although integrated in the University, the Theological Faculty must remain on the line of the Church vocation. This does not refer to a simple historical task, but a historical-eschatological mission of preparing people for the demands of God's kingdom

The mission of the Theological Faculty in the University is not only to prepare future ministers of altars or theology departments, but also to spread rays of light and spirituality within it. Its perspective is a more profound understanding of the Christ's Gospel message in the world with all its soteriological and eschatological implications arising. Without an ecclesially-sacramentally structured conscience and a well-defined theology the high theological education at the University is first at risk of the secular trends. Secondly, in responding to these trends, which are real, it is at risk of misunderstanding "spirituality" or, better to say a risk to perceive it in an exclusive, bigoted and narrowed way. Thus, the theological education needs to delimit from the secular trends of the world where it permanently expresses its identity and spiritual vigor. It also has to put a stop between itself and the pietistic and bigoted tendencies that close it in a dead traditionalism without authentic social, cultural and religious relevance. The reaction of theological training based only on experience opposite the training just based on scientific exactness is neither orthodox nor authentic, and it has no chance of success regarding the Church mission in the contemporary world. The theological education seen as a Church education integrated into university is necessary to consider the interrelationship between spiritual and scientific dimension of training Church's new ministers. This avoids both the isolation of the Church's mission, the exclusive and anti-ecumenical events and the secularization, the indifference and the lack of ecclesial-sacramental consciousness of some future ministers of the Church.

There are several interdisciplinary programs on theology-philosophy-science taking place at universities in Romania, in which are present theologians, philosophers, scientists. Their purpose is to find and further develop the convergent aspects of these fields in order to build a coherent vision of reality. The theologians' mission is to highlight the imperishable values of the perfect revelation in Jesus Christ through an appropriate language and selectively undertake the results of the current science

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research by paradoxical methodology. We consider that the theologians, the philosophers and the scientists make a significant contribution for overcoming the artificial conflict between science and theology created during the communist time. Of course, the requirements of Church mission in Universities are ongoing and ask for theologians' full accountability. This is necessary both to their specific contribution in overcoming ideological divisions of all kinds and to make Christ more accessible for today's world consciousness.

PhD. Cristinel Ioja

Apostolos Nikolaidis¹

Kirche in diaspora: Soziologische Kommentare

Zusammenfassung

Das Diasporathema stellt eine wichtige Herausforderung der Orthodoxen Kirchen in der heutigen Welt dar. Diese Problematik deckt sich mit der ekklesiologischen Grosse auf, indem man gefragt wird, wie verhält sich die locale mit der universalen Kirche in ihrer konkreten missionarischen Aufgabe.

In der Diasporafrage geht es um ein Phänomen von kirchlichen, nationalen oder politischen Erwägungen mit sehr persönlichen und insbesondere antikirchlichen Merkmalen. Kirchen in der Diaspora sind diejenigen, die außerhalb der kirchlichen Jurisdiktion der übergeordneten (Mutter-)Kirche (Patriarchat oder Autokephale Kirche) verstreut sind. Die Gründe der Entstehung dieser Kirchen finden sich in der Regel nicht in der Mutter-Kirche, sondern beziehen sich auf lokale Gegebenheiten und auch auf die Entwicklung, auf verschiedenen Gebieten, der Gesellschaften in der modernen Welt.

Stichwörtern

Kirche, Diaspora, Bischöfe, Universalität des Christentums, nationales Bewusstsein, Gottesdienst und Verwaltung

1. „Kirche“, „Diaspora“, „Kirche in Diaspora“ sind Begriffe, die institutionellen Handlungen und Verhaltensweisen mit interner und externer Bezugnahme angeben, interne, in Bezug auf die Kirche, externe, in Bezug auf die Gesellschaft. So ist es offensichtlich, dass sie soziologischen Beobachtungen unterliegen, die mit dem grundlegenden Prinzip anfangen, dass religiöse Ereignisse gesellschaftliche Phänomene sind und dass religiöse und soziale Phänomene direkt verwandt und aufeinander bezogen sind.

¹ Prof. PhD., University of Athens.

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Die Kirche, soziologisch betrachtet, ist eine Institution. Die Institutionalisierung der Kirche ist das Ergebnis der Bereitschaft, die profane soziale Realität zusammen mit den Menschen zu erneuern. Zu diesem Zweck institutionalisiert sie Glauben, Gottesdienst und Verwaltung. Voraussetzung dafür ist die Kopierung der säkularen Verwaltungs- und Verhaltensnormen. Ein solches Modell wird die Diaspora, die am Anfang als ein Mittel der christlichen Mission in den Nationen verstanden wird, gemäss dem Wort Christi: „Gehet hin und machet alle Völker zu Jüngern“². Dieser Weg bescheinigt die Universalität des Christentums und der Kirche, die dazu führt, dass, wenn sich Gläubige und Länder vermehren, lokale Kirchen ohne Abspaltung der einen Kirche Christi errichtet werden. Die Gründe dieser Dezentralisierung sind mit der Notwendigkeit einer dynamischen und effektiven kirchlichen und theologischen Aktivierung verbunden. Notwendige Ergänzung dafür ist die Weihe von Bischöfen und die Hierarchisierung der Kirchen. Es folgte die Gründung der fünf Patriarchate und später, nach der Entstehung der Nationen und der Konsolidierung des nationalen Bewusstseins, ergaben sich die nationalen Kirchen, die Autokephalie und Autonomie von dem kirchlichen Zentrum einfordern, das nicht immer bereit war, diese einfach ohne Widerstände und Konflikte zu gewähren.

2. Der Begriff „Kirche oder Kirchen der Diaspora“ beschreibt jedoch etwas anderes³. Es geht um ein Phänomen von kirchlichen, nationalen oder politischen Erwägungen mit sehr persönlichen und insbesondere antikirchlichen Merkmalen. Kirchen in der Diaspora sind diejenigen, die außerhalb der kirchlichen Jurisdiktion der übergeordneten (Mutter-) Kirche (Patriarchat oder Autokephale Kirche) verstreut sind. Die Gründe der Entstehung dieser Kirchen sind finden sich in der Regel nicht in der Mutter-Kirche, sondern beziehen sich auf lokale Gegebenheiten.

Die Kirchen in der Diaspora entstehen sich auf zwei Arten:

Erstens: Von der Notwendigkeit, religiöse und ethnisch-religiöse Bedürfnisse von Individuen und Gruppen, die sich im Ausland aus verschiedenen, vor allem aus wirtschaftlichen und politischen, Gründen befinden,

² Math. 28,19.

³ Zu bibliographische Informationen sehen Sie in Gr. D. Papatomas, *Essai de bibliographie (ad hoc) pour e' Etude des questions de l'Autocephalie, de l'Autonomie et de la Diaspora*, Katerini 2000, 69 ff.

zu befriedigen. In diesem Fall bemüht sich die Mutter-Kirche Pfarreien zu gründen und Bischöfe und Priester zu installieren, die im Stande sind, aufgrund der sprachlichen und nationalen Tradition zu amtieren. Ihr Hauptziel ist die Bewahrung der nationalen und kulturellen Identität.

Zweitens: Von der Dienstanziierung einiger Einzelpersonen oder Gruppen aus der Mutterkirche als Protest gegen jegliches Fehlverhalten bei der Nominierung bischöflicher Autorität. Nachdem diese ausgeschieden sind, gründen sie ihre eigenen Kirchen, suchen politische Stützen und versuchen, Beziehungen mit anderen Kirchen ausserhalb der Mutterkirche zu errichten.

Die Geschichte der Gründung, der Verlauf und die kirchliche Praxis der Russischen Kirche im Ausland⁴ ist bezeichnend für das oben Genannte. Ich erwähne es kurz: Nach der Oktoberrevolution, der Metropolit von Kiew Antonius wird nicht zum Patriarchen von Moskau gewählt, deshalb flüchtet er in den Westen, errichtet und organisiert die russische Kirche im Ausland und arbeitet daran, dass in seinem Land das zaristische Regime wiedererrichtet wird. Das Letztere verursacht zwei Abspaltungen: das Schisma des Metropoliten Paris Evlogios, der später dem Ökumenischen Patriarchat untergeordnet wird, und das Schisma des Metropoliten von America Plato, der sich dem Patriarchat von Moskau unterstellt. Später entstehen in der Russischen Kirche im Ausland verschiedene neue kirchliche Gruppierungen, darunter auch die Gruppen von Vitalius, von Agathangelos, von Valentin, von Alexander, von Tychon. Das gleiche Schicksal hatte die Kirche Griechenlands, mit der Entstehung mehrerer und sogar widersprüchlicher und entgegengesetzter Fraktionen, die dem alten Kalender folgen.

3. Nach diesem allgemeinen Befund kann man einige Besonderheiten, die für die Soziologie des Christentums interessant sind, erwähnen:

3.1 Die Kirchen der Diaspora ergeben sich oft aus der Notwendigkeit, gegen die Mutterkirchen zu reagieren und zu protestieren, sie zu beschuldigen, dem Säkularismus und sozio-politischen Ideologien verfallen zu sein. Dies führt zwangsläufig zur Spaltung, ein zeitloser kirchlicher Lieblingssport, der ein dauerhaftes Problem für das Christentum ist. In diesem Teilungsprozess spielen manchmal die politischen Bedingungen im

⁴ D. Adelbert, (Hrsg.), Die russische Diaspora in Europa im 20. Jahrhundert, Frankfurt a.M. u.a. 2008. G. Seide, *Verantwortung in der Diaspora*, München, 1989.

Kirche in diaspora: Soziologische Kommentare

Land der Mutterkirche eine wichtige Rolle, die als Vorwand der Division dienen. Es ist schon bekannt, dass die russische Diaspora als Reaktion auf das russische kommunistische Regime kam, sie die offizielle Kirche vorwarf, dass sie sich freundlich dem Kommunismus und feindlich zum Zarismus verhält.

3.2 Die Kirchen der Diaspora entstehen und wachsen personenkultisch. Was neue Möglichkeit zu Ausweitung und Aktivierung eröffnet. Aus dem gleichen Grund, aber vor allem nach dem Tod des Gründers oder nach einer Veränderung der Gruppestimmung, oder nach der Änderung der internen Zusammenhänge, folgen Fragmentierungen, die von gewaltsamen Konflikten, Ausgrenzungen, Misstrauen, Verleumdungen, Klagen, Anathemata und Exkommunikationen begleitet werden (siehe Gruppen in Griechenland, die behaupten, dass nur sie die orthodoxe christliche Wahrheit bewahren, und den Titel „Matthaiikoi“, „Chrysostomikoi“, „Afxentiakoi“, „Kyprianites“ führen, etc.). All dies hat zur Folge, dass ein negatives Bild für die Kirche Christi geschaffen wird. Das ist sehr schlecht für die Seelsorge und belastet jede missionarische Tätigkeit.

3.3 Aus der Sicht der orthodoxen Ekklesiologie betrachtet, erscheinen die Kirchen im Ausland als Beispiel, wie man die Kirche dekonstruieren kann. Ganz allgemein stellen sich die Fragen, ob die Diaspora Kirche ist⁵, ob Kirche und Diaspora koexistieren können. Es ist aber paradox, dass beide Seiten den gleichen Kanon (in diesem Fall den 28. des Vierten Ökumenischen Konzils) für die Rechtfertigung der einen und die Verurteilung der anderen Seite, verwenden. Es ist klar, dass dieses Spiel nicht zur Einheit, sondern zur Distanzierung und Division führt. Die Schaffung von verschiedenen „Versammlungen“ (Synoden) mit verschiedenen Präsidenten und Erzbischöfen verletzt das synodale System in der Kirche und die Kirche selbst. Zusätzlich ruft bei den einfachen Gläubigen, und besonders bei den Proselyten, eine Vielzahl von Verwirrungen hervor. Es ist ein Glück, dass ein großer Teil der Diaspora dieses Problem versteht, dass sie Selbstkritik übt und bereit ist mit dem Ökumenischen Patriarchat und den entsprechenden übergeordneten Kirchen über die Behebung der Schwierigkeiten zu diskutieren.

⁵ Vgl. G. May, *Diaspora als Kirche*, in: „Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie“, Berlin, 1940, S. 459-480.

3.4 Die Kirchen der Diaspora fühlen sich als religiöse Minderheit⁶, die verpflichtet ist, eine wichtige Rolle in drei Richtungen zu übernehmen: zu der Mutterkirche, zum Gastland und zum Weltchristentum.

-In Richtung zur Mutterkirche, gibt es auf der einen Seite Konflikte und Entfremdungen, Einstellungen die zu Dämonisierung der anderen Seite führen, und andererseits gibt es Koexistenz und Zusammenarbeit, dort wo das Gefühl herrscht, dass die Diaspora, eine Erweiterung der Mutterkirche.

-In Richtung zum Gastland, fühlt sich jede Gemeinde verpflichtet, um ihre Identität zu kämpfen, um weltweite Anerkennung zu gewinnen im Rahmen der verschiedenen religiösen und kulturellen Gruppen, die in der Regel heterodox sind, aber auch neben den vielen und verschiedenen religiösen ethnischen Gemeinschaften (Gemeinden von Griechen, Russen, Arabern, Syrern, und anderen) und noch neben den Gemeinden mit dem gleichen ethnischen und kirchlichen Charakter, aber mit unterschiedlicher kirchlicher Referenz (Gemeinden des alten Kalenders, Gemeinden des neuen Kalenders). Selbstverständlich, sind diese Bedingungen günstig für die Entstehung verschiedener religiösen Rivalitäten, während sie katastrophale Konsequenzen für die Kirche und die Gesellschaft haben. Auf der anderen Seite, bringen diese Bedingungen die orthodoxe Kirche vor den Augen der Heterodoxen in Verruf. Die Abwesenheit einer einheitlichen Vertretung nicht nur in der Kirche, sondern auch im sozialen Raum, die internen Streitigkeiten und Konflikte, das Fehlen der gemeinsamen Feier der grossen Festtage, das Wiedertaufen von orthodoxen Christen, Fremden oder sonst anderen Orthodoxen, die andere Bischöfen Referenz haben, all dies hat Auswirkungen und negative Konsequenzen nicht nur auf die Zuverlässigkeit der Orthodoxen, aber auch auf die Gesamtorthodoxie selbst. Es scheint dass diejenigen Recht zu haben, die über die Dringlichkeit einer Art „ökumenischer Bewegung“ sprechen, um den Dialog, das Vertrauen und die Einheit unter den Orthodoxen wiederherzustellen.

-In Richtung zum Christentum, sorgen die Kirchen in Diaspora dafür, dass sie Kult- oder Sektenmerkmale in soziologischem Verständnis haben⁷. Sie versuchen die Reinheit und Echtheit der Identität und der Verkündigung der Alten Kirche, Orthodoxie und Orthopraxis, zu gewinnen. So sprechen sie von radikaler Ethik, revolutionärem Predigt, von Konsistenz, vom

⁶ AP. N. Nikolaidis, *Heterodoxen und Orthodoxen*, (griech.) Athens, 2004, S. 39 ff.

⁷ Vgl. AP. Nikolaidis, *Soziologie der Haeresien*, (griech.), Athens, 2009.

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Bewusstsein der absoluten Differenz und Andersheit. Aus diesem Grund erscheinen sie in den lokalen Gemeinden und auf der christlich-religiösen Szene als Elite mit kräftigen Eigenschaften eines religiösen Egoismus. In diesem Zusammenhang ist viel von Charismata, von Heiligkeit der Führer, vom charismatischen und apokalyptischen geistlichen Charakter der Gruppe, von Echtheit des Mitgliederglaubens, von Monopol der Orthodoxie die Rede. Dieser Elitismus ist nicht nur zwischen den Kirchen in Diaspora und den Mutterkirchen entwickelt, sondern auch zwischen den verschiedenen Gemeinschaften und Gruppen in der Diaspora. Der Vorwurf des Säkularismus, des Ökumenismus, des Irrglaubens, auch des Atheismus und so weiter in Bezug auf die Mutterkirche, ist Ausdruck der Abwertung der Empfänger und der Anerkennung der Sprecher. Diese Gewohnheit verursacht Intoleranz, Anathemata, Fanatismusgefühle und nähert sich den kirchlichen Narzissmus.

3.5 Die Existenz der Diaspora drückt eine starke Verbindung der kirchlichen Institution mit nationalrassistischen und anderen ideologischen Tendenzen und Verhaltensweisen⁸. Was die sogenannte „nationale Ekklesiologie“ betrifft, wo die Teilnahme der orthodoxen Gläubigen am kirchlichen Körper mit dem Erhalt und die Verherrlichung der ethnischen Identität verbunden wird, diese bildet gewöhnlich die ekklesiologische Grundlage der Diaspora, obwohl Ethnophyletismus und die bezügliche Theologie von der Kirche als Ketzerei verurteilt wurde. Es ist auch klar, dass die Diaspora gleichzeitig mit der Gründung von nationalen Kirchen geboren ist. Die Diskrepanz zwischen der theologischen und der kanonischen Fundierung des Nationalrassismus, durch die Erklärung, dass die „lokale“ oder „territoriale“ Kirche eine Sache und die „nationale“ eine andere Sache ist, verursacht theologische und institutionelle Konflikte, die das Bild der Kirche Christi, in dem ihre Predigtzuverlässigkeit in Frage stellt, verdunkelt. Es ist wirklich schmerzhaft für die Kirche Christi, an ideologischen, ethnischen oder nationalistischen Abhängigkeiten zu leiden, als ob die Nation die wahre Religion, und die Kirche ihre Magd wäre!

3.6 Auch wenn die oben genannten Phänomene negativ beurteilt werden, gibt es noch eine andere Seite, die positive Konsequenzen der Diaspora sowohl im kirchlichen Raum als auch in der säkularen Welt, unterstreicht.

⁸ Zum Ethnophyletismus vgl. AP.Nikolaidis, *Kritische Theorie und soziale Funktion der Religion*, (griech.), Athens, 2005, S. 284 ff.

-In Bezug auf das kirchliche Leben, enthält die Kirche in Diaspora Persönlichkeiten, die die theologische Literatur als auch das kirchliche Leben mit der Heiligkeit ihres Lebens, mit den bemerkenswerten Missionaren, pastoralen und sozialen Aktion angereichert haben. Es waren Persönlichkeiten, die sich weigerten, sich an religiösen oder politischen Machtspielen zu beteiligen, oder die bereit waren, falsche Entscheidungen zu revidieren. Besondere Merkmale findet man auch bei den ordentlichen Mitgliedern dieser Gemeinschaften, wo Konservatismus und Fundamentalismus dominieren, nicht als Besonderheiten des Glaubens, sondern als Spezifitäten der Verhaltensweisen. Die Frömmigkeit und die Einhaltung der Tradition, und auch die Entwicklung von starken familiären Bindungen sind hier typisch. Es ist klar, dass hier die Stellung des Priestertums so verbessert ist, dass es sogar oft zu seiner „Apotheose“ führte.

-In Bezug auf die säkulare Wirklichkeit, die Kirchen im Ausland beeinflussen und bereichern das soziale Leben, indem sie verschiedene neue Traditionen eingliedern, was sie kulturellen Mittler zwischen den verschiedenen Traditionen macht. So werden die Gesellschaften zu multikulturellen Gesellschaften umgewandelt. Sichtbare Zeichen dafür sind die Tempeln und die Klöster, die Ausdruck einer besonderen Architektur und Kunst sind, so wie auch die kulturellen Veranstaltungen, die Veröffentlichungen und die verschiedenen kultischen Bräuche.

4. Und jetzt komme ich zum Fazit:

Erstens: Die Diaspora ist ein religiöses und soziales Phänomen. Ihre Merkmale nötigen die soziologische Forschung, die Diaspora als eine Art christlicher Sekte identifizieren. Es ist ein Gebilde, das sich in Konkurrenz zu Kirche befindet. Die Diaspora behauptet, dass sie die Reinheit und Authentizität der christlichen Verkündigung und Praxis erhält. Die Wahrheit ist, dass sie erstens ein kirchliches Produkt ist, und zweitens dass sie eine zum Königtum, und nicht zum Sozialismus, freundliche politische Richtung folgt.

-Zweitens: Die Diaspora ist ein typisches Beispiel von kirchlichen Machtspielen, ein Mechanismus, der immer wieder zum Zerfall führt. Wo es Herrschsucht gibt, entsteht Schisma. Die Diaspora ist ein Kind der Division und immer wieder zu Fragmentierung führt. Ein bekanntes Phänomen, wenn man denkt, was im Schisma von 1054 passiert ist. Seine Folgen beweisen die Wahrheit des Gesagten. Am Anfang hatten wir Östliche

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und Westliche Kirche, danach Katholische und Evangelische Kirche, und später eine grosse Kirchenmenge. Es geht um das gleiche Spiel, das die Wiederherstellung der Einheit der Kirchen verhindert und täglich zu neuen Spaltungen führt. Der Fall der griechischen Altkalenderkirchen ist dazu bezeichnend. Ich hoffe, dass dies nicht für die Diaspora im allgemeinen gilt.

-Drittens: Das Phänomen der Orthodoxen Diaspora erinnert uns an das Problem der Beziehungen zwischen der Kirche Christi und den nationalen Ideologien. Der Ethnophyletismus war immer und ist immer noch ein Spaltungsmittel und deshalb eine Katastrophe für das Christentum. Es wäre tragisch sich vorzustellen, dass Christus seine Kirche gegründet hat, um sie dem Nationalismus dient.

-Viertens: Die Diaspora denkt und handelt so, dass die Kirche weder Eine ist (nicht Eine, da in einer und der selber Stadt kann es orthodoxen Gläubigen geben kann, die zu zahlreichen verschiedenen auf nationaler Basis gebildeten Gruppen und Kirchengemeinden gehören), noch Heilige (nicht Heilige, weil das Verhalten von Klerus und Laien weit von dieser Heiligkeit liegt), noch Katholische (nicht Katholische, weil hier die Kirche mit einem Bild von Spaltungen, Divisionen, Exkommunikationen oder Ausschlüssen konfrontiert ist) noch Apostolische Kirch (nicht Apostolische, weil die eine Seite die anderen als häretisch und im Irrtum ansieht).

-Fünftens: Weil nie das Böse nur schlecht ist, d.h. dass es auch das Gute impliziert, man kann behaupten, dass die Diaspora zur kirchlichen Selbstkritik und Selbstbewusstsein beigetragen hat. Die langjährige kirchliche Erfahrung hat deutlich gezeigt, dass die Machtsucht im Denken und in der Praxis immer zu Schismata führt⁹.

⁹ Vgl. AP. Nikolaidis, *Machtspiele*, (griech.) Athens, 2006, S. 29 ff.

Cristinel Ioja¹

Ioan Irineu Mihălcescu - Orthodox Apologetics Coordinates in Interwar Romania

Abstract

The work of professor Ioan Irineu Mihălcescu reveals a remarkable theologian for his time, not only in terms of dogmatic and symbolic studies or history of religions studies, but also apologetic studies. Ioan Irineu Mihălcescu was not only a dogmatist, but also an apologist, a pioneer in dogmatics and apologetics. The presentation of the relationship between religion, philosophy, science and religion, and morality and art was a true leitmotif of interwar apologetic approaches. However, in terms of Orthodoxy, our theologians' apologetic attitudes were not fed by the Eastern patristic model, but by the arguments of the conflict the Western theology started to modernity. Yet, we notice that our theologians were aware of the influence different theories hostile to Christianity could exercise over the masses mentality, which entered into a kind of relativism, indifferentism and frenzy after the exploitation and grabbing of the matter at the expense of the soul. Although with some specific gaps in defending the truth of Orthodoxy, the theologian Ioan Irineu Mihălcescu's thought remains a reference one for the development of the Romanian Orthodox apologetics thinking of the twentieth century.

Keywords

Orthodox Apologetic, Ioan Irineu Mihălcescu, Religion, Morality and Arts; Religion-Philosophy-Science

1. The general context of the evolution of the Orthodox apologetic thinking in interwar Romania.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, like most Romanian theology, the Romanian apologetics was based on translations. The next period meant the gradual switch between the translations period and the development

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of Romanian theology own works, certainly influenced by scholastic apologetic model and by the Russian theology as well. At the end of the nineteenth century Romanian theology was using *Christian Apologetics* (2 volumes) by Rojdestvenschi, translated by C. Nazarie (1898). Professor Vasile Găină from Chernivtsi had a contribution that failed to impose a definite direction in Romanian Orthodox apologetics because of his premature passing into eternity. Although before Professor Vasile Găină there were Romanian theology apologists or apologetics aspects approached directly or indirectly by some Romanian scholars, however Apologetics as a theology discipline was founded through the efforts of theologian Vasile Găină, educated at Chernivtsi, Vienna, Berlin, Bonn and Athens, where he came in contact with both Western and Orthodox theology. He replaced the dogmatist Alexiu Comoroșan and was appointed private docent and substitute teacher at the Department of Dogmatic Theology, after writing the thesis *Theorie der Offenbarung* (1898). One year after (in 1899) he was appointed extraordinary professor in dogmatic theology and Christian philosophy. The young theologian's guidelines are heading more towards the apologetic theology than to the dogmatic, Alexiu Comoroșan's apologetics being integrated in the general dogmatics. The habilitation thesis provides a theological-philosophical vision on Revelation, the theologian Găină bringing arguments to prove the supernatural character of Christianity. Rev. Prof. Petru Rezuș considered this work as normative in the Romanian theology of the second half of the twentieth century by the way it solves the problems and questions raised².

Starting with Professor Ioan Mihălcescu, the Romanian Orthodox Apologetics reach certain heights of thought and demonstrate the superiority of Christianity over other religions and of Orthodoxy to the other denominations. Apologetics was regarded as a preamble to Dogmatics, as an introduction to it. Due to the blending of Apologetics and Dogmatics within the same department, Ioan Mihălcescu was formed both as dogmatist and as apologist³.

² Rev. Prof. Petru Rezuș - *Professor Vasile Găină, the Man and His Work. Fifty Years after His Death*, in „M.M.S”, year XXXIII (1957), no. 1-2, p. 127-134, p. 131. A presentation of the book is made in “The Church and the School”, year XXIII (1899), no. 49, p. 392-394. This writing is considered to be appropriate in the context of the infiltration of a ““ dangerous skepticism“ in the society as “many erudite men speak to the reader through the book”. Attacks against the mysteries of faith are rejected by rational arguments to prove the existence of God.

³ Nichifor Crainic, *Irineu Mihălcescu*, p. 11.

Even if Ioan Mihălcescu wanted to strengthen the Romanian Orthodox apologetics as scientific apologetics, it was not separated from the major problems of society and the world, or from the concrete human moral and spiritual interrogations. That is why in his apology Ioan Mihălcescu included concrete attitudes against atheistic concepts and trends which existed in the Romanian society of the time. Although scientific and specialized, the Apologetics of Professor Mihălcescu proves its resilience and dynamism, able to meet the man beset on all sides by non-Christian conceptions, mentalities, attitudes and rituals. From this perspective, in 1923 he will dedicate four studies to the challenges raised by Freemasonry to the Christian life and thought in Romanian society and not only⁴. Also, our theologian's apologetics thought entered not only in the Romanian superior theological education⁵, but also in school as he was the author of several textbooks. Our theologian's apologetic positions included of various aspects of the interwar Romanian society: Church and cinema⁶; labor issue in response to those who accused Christianity and the Church as having an ignorant attitude towards work⁷; the faithful's relation to the Bible by keeping the middle way between Roman Catholic intransigence on reading the Bible by the faithful and the Protestant libertinism⁸; the

⁴ See Ioan Mihălcescu, *Freemasons and the Church*, in "BOR", year XLI (1923), no. 11, p. 756-763, *The past of the Freemasonry* in "BOR", year XLI (1923), no. 12, p. 791-898; *Something about Freemasonry*, in "Solidarity", year IV (1923), no. 4-6, p. 99-104; *About Masonic Symbolism and Ritual* in "BOR", year XLI (1923), no. 14, p. 1019-1027.

⁵ See Rev. Ioan Mihălcescu, *Fundamental Theology and Apologetics Course*, vol. I, Paul Suru Bookshop, Bucharest, 1932, p. 279. This course includes material from two classes occurred in 1925 and 1926, preceded by an Introduction about the definition of apologetics and followed by a history of it. The content of this course is as follows: Chapter I: Being or essence of religion, Being of religion theories, Intellectualist, proactive, sentimentalist, and aesthetic theories. Chapter II: The origin of religion: animism, fetishism, naturalism, naturalistic-evolutionary hypotheses, rationalist assumptions, anti-rationalist assumptions. Religions: Introduction: Beginning and development of religious history, religious division. Primitive religion: Introduction, Primitive religion in Asia, Primitive religion in Africa, Primitives religion in America, Primitive on the Australian continent.

⁶ Idem, *Church and the Cinema*, in „The Orthodox Magazine”, year II (1914), no. 5, p. 147-152.

⁷ Idem, *Work in the Light of Christian Teaching*, "BOR", Series II, year XL (1921), no. 1, p. 33-48.

⁸ Idem, *Can Laymen Read the Scripture?* "B.O.R", Series II, year XLI (1922), no. 5, p. 341-352.

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Gospel perspective on earthly goods⁹, Christ being not a social or economic reformer as thought, though His teaching influences both society and human economic vision. Against communism which, according to some would resemble Christianity having the existence of the first community of Jerusalem as common model, Ioan Mihălcescu stands up by showing that communism of Lenin and Trotsky differs profoundly from early Christianity, both in purpose, starting point and in its achievement¹⁰. Of course there were some questionable positions of Ioan Mihălcescu such as hearing the Liturgy on the radio, action that he considers profane, generator of impiety and even sacrilegious¹¹, but also some strong positions on the political, social and religious state of the period.

Ioan Irineu Mihălcescu brings outstanding contributions in apologetics culminating in 1932 with *the Apologetics Course* backed up by numerous studies and articles on Apologetics. Professor Ioan G. Savin had the same major contribution regarding the Romanian Orthodox apologetics, even if some aspects are resumatively referred in his course in contrast to the study in extenso by Professor Ioan Mihălcescu.

This period of the first half of the twentieth century as an apologetics period by excellence in the Romanian theology, the apologetic works being more and more present in the specialized magazines. The translations of the Christian apologetics of the early centuries¹² or translations of contemporary

⁹ Idem, *The Gospel Teaching on Earthly Goods*, "BOR" series II year XLII (1922), no. 8, p. 609-618.

¹⁰ Idem, *Christian Communism and Religious Communism*, "BOR" series II, year XLI (1923), no. 10, p. 673-680.

¹¹ Idem, *Liturgy at the Radio?* "The Ray of Light", year V (1933), no. 4, p. 307-308. We must mention Mihălcescu's concern for service books and the Scriptures, which he corrects and interprets for people and especially for the Liturgy which he corrects and interprets in several occasions using the original sources (see, for example, *The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, Printing House of Religious Books, Bucharest, 1936, 108 p (with Paraschiv Angelescu), *The new Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Psalms*, Holy Synod Publishing, Printing House of Religious Books, Bucharest, 1937, 462 p. 120 (with Prof. Teodor M Popescu).

¹² Tertullian, *Apologetics or Defending Christian Against Pagans*, translated by Rev. N. Georgescu, "BOR", year XXVIII (1904), no. 5, p. 555-564, "BOR", year XXVIII (1904), no. 6, p. 715-720, "BOR", year XXVIII (1904), no. 8, p. 951-955, "BOR", year XXVIII (1904), no. 9, p. 1035-1042, "BOR", year XXVIII (1904), no. 11, p. 1222-1232, "BOR", year XXIX (1905), no. 1, p. 35-42, "BOR", year XXIX (1905), No. 2, p. 209-215, "BOR", year XXIX (1905), no. 5, p. 560-565, "B.O.R.", year XXIX (1905), no. 6, p. 643-648, "B.O.R.", year XXIX (1905), no. 9, p. 1049-1055,

apologists¹³ began to appear in Romanian theology too, through the efforts of teachers and priests. Also some Romanian scholars wrote apologetic works and studies being connected to the evolution in science and modern philosophy, They provided the Church theology perspective, combined with positive and convergent reception of the scientific discoveries¹⁴, while some authors highlighted the value of the first centuries of Christian apologetics¹⁵.

“BOR”, year XXIX (1905), no. 10, p. 1170-1175, “BOR”, year XXIX (1905), no. 11, p. 1283-1289, “BOR”, year XXIX (1905), no. 12, p. 1410-1416, “BOR”, year XXX (1906), no. 1, p. 102-104. D. Boroianu will translate the letters of St. Cyprian with comments on each letter (Cyprian in “BOR”, year XXX (1906), no. 12, p. 1321-1338, “BOR”, year XXXI (1907), no. 1, p. 54-66, “BOR”, year XXXI (1907), no. 2, p. 186-198, “BOR”, year XXXI (1907), no. 3, p. 298-304, “BOR”, year XXXI (1907), no. 4, p. 461-469, “BOR” an XXXI (1907), no. 5, p. 536-550, “BOR”, year XXXI (1907), no. 6, p. 674-787, “BOR”, year XXXI (1907), no. 7, p. 747-762, “BOR”, year XXXI (1907), no. 8, p. 892-902; “BOR”, year XXXI (1907), no. 9, p. 996-1008,” BOR “an XXXI (1907), no. 10, p. 1108-1119,” BOR “, year XXXI (1907), no. 11, p. 1238-1249, “BOR”, year XXXI (1907), no. 12, p. 1384-1395, “BOR”, year XXXII (1908), no. 1, p. 25-36, “BOR” XXXII year (1908), no. 2, p. 138-153,” BOR “, year XXXII (1908), no. 3, p. 292-304,” BOR “, year XXXII (1908), no. 4, p. 414-426, “BOR”, year XXXII (1908), no. 5, p. 550-563, “BOR”, year XXXII (1908), no. 6, p. 623-635. D. Boroianu will translate from Greek apologists as well, such as: Theophilus of Antioch, Athenagoras of Athens, Tatian, Justin, Epistle to Diognetus, Minucius Felix. (see *From Patristic Literature* in “BOR”, year XXX (1906), no. 3, p. 335 - 340, “BOR”, year XXX (1906), no. 4, p. 406-418, “BOR”, year XXX (1906), no. 5, p. 564-579, “BOR”, year XXX (1906), no. 6, p. 652-672. He will analyze the writings of Clement of Alexandria (see D. Boroianu, *Clement of Alexandria* “BOR”, year XXX (1906), no. 8, p. 888-899, “BOR”, year XXX (1906), no. 9, p. 981-996.

¹³ De Cord Manning, *My Faith Reasons*, translated by Rev. N. Georgescu, “BOR”, year XXXII (1908), no. 4, p. 376-394, “BOR”, year XXXII (1908), no. 5, p. 583-589, “B.O.R”, year XXXII (1908), no. 6, p. 656-665, “BOR”, year XXXII (1908), no. 7, p. 782-787, Ernest Luthardt, *Man*, translated by Eugeniu and Fotius G. Balamaci the “BOR”, year XXVI (1902), no. 5, p. 530-544, “B.O.R”, year XXVI (1902), no. 6, p. 654-663, Dr. Franz Hettinger, *Religious Skepticism - Apologetic Study*, translated by Prof. Dr. Nicolae Balan, Archdiocesan Printing House, Sibiu, 1915, 47 p.

¹⁴ For a critique of materialism, evolutionism and transformism see: Father Ioan N. Ionescu, *Is there soul?* Bucharest, 1941, 96 p. Teofil M. Ploșteanu, *Monistic*, in “BOR”, year XXXVI (1912), no. 4, p. 382-395, “BOR”, year XXXVI (1912), no. 6, p. 521-536, Fr. Dimitrie N. Stefanescu, *Being and Matter* in “BOR”, year XXXVIII (1914), no. 11, p. 909-926; Dr. Constantin Săndulescu-Godeni, *The Relationship Between Science, Metaphysics and Religion in the Cartesian System*, Thoughts, Bucharest 1944, Constantin C. Radu, *Religion and Science*, Bucharest, 1938.

¹⁵ D. Boroianu, *The Defense of Christian Doctrine*, in “BOR”, year XXXII (1908), no.

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In Romanian apologetics of the early twentieth century there was trend a to write works closely following a writing or more of a well-known Western apologist and even to train priests in homiletics by assimilating and transmitting of the West apologetic ideas¹⁶. We must point out numerous apologetic attitudes of some priests and the appearance of eminently apologetic headings, meant to bring to the readers - priests or laymen - the scientific evidence to prove the existence of God or against the unbelief¹⁷.

7, p. 758-770, "B.O.R", year XXXII (1908), no. 9, p. 1024-1035, "B.O.R" an XXXII (1908), no. 10, p. 1136-1148, "BOR", year XXXII (1908), no. 11, p. 1239-1247. Alexandru Musetescu, *Deism*, in "BOR", year XXX (1906), no. 5, p. 558-563, "B.O.R", year XXX (1906), no. 9, p. 1045-1049, "B.O.R", year XXX (1906), no. 10, p. 1230-1233, "BOR", year XXX (1906), no. 11, p. 1400-1405. D. Boroianu, *The Truths of the Faith and our Duty to Defend Them*, in "BOR", year XXX (1906), no. 10, p. 1106-1120, Ibidem, *Historical and Dogmatic Glimpse*, year XXX (1906), no. 10, p. 1155-1159, Idem, *Cyril of Alexandria and His Work Against Julian the Apostate*, in "BOR", year XXX (1906), no. 11, p. 1234-1245. Dr M Popescu, *Christian Apologists in the Second Century*, in "BOR", year XXXV (1911), no. 11, p. 1226-1232, "BOR", year XXXV (1911), no. 12, p. 1373-1380, "BOR", year XXXVI (1912), no. 1, p. 54-59, "B.O.R", year XXXVI (1912), no. 2, p. 143-150, "B.O.R", year XXXVI (1912), no. 3, p. 269-276, "BOR", year XXXVI (1912), no. 4, p. 376-382, "B.O.R", year XXVI (1912), no. 5, p. 453-458, "BOR", year XXXVI (1912), No. 6, p. 555-560, "BOR", year XXXVI (1912), no. 7, p. 659-664. Badea Mangâru, *Different Theories on the Soul*, in "BOR", year XXXV (1911), no. 11, p. 1268-1277, Idem, *Gnosticism*, in "BOR", year XXXVI (1912), no. 7, p. 665-672, Dr. Constantin Săndulescu Gode-ni, *Early Christian Attitude towards Greek Philosophy*, Printing House of Religious Books, Bucharest, 1945.

¹⁶ C. Erbicianu, *On Divine Revelation*, in "BOR", year XXXII (1908), no. 9, p. 974-992, "BOR", year XXXII (1908), no. 10, p. 1085-1107.

¹⁷ Archimandrite Iuliu Scriban, *Documents Supporting the Religion Against Free Thinking*, in "BOR", year XXXIV (1910), no. 6, p. 665-673. Archimandrite Iuliu Scriban opens a new section in the magazine *The Romanian Orthodox Church*, dedicated to the reporting of scientific arguments against unbelief and materialism, which will replace another heading - *Free thinking and free thoughts*. He sees the paradigm shift in the science of the twentieth century, from positivist materialism to the energy theories. He also wanted the Romanian theology to be connected to these intense debates that marked the western world and that were not present in the Romanian theology and society because some Romanian scholars were still rooted in the materialist view of the world and life. Here's how he motivates the apologetic project: "Materialism is losing ground. Perhaps free thinkers from our country do not know it and live according to the ideas 20-30-40 years ago. What are we, the servants of religion, doing about this? My opinion is that we must observe everything that is new as the result of science, in favor of religion and in general favor of an anti-materialist concept of life and spirit affirmation over the domain of matter. Besides bulky and hard to read books, abroad there appear brochures and magazine articles dealing with these matters and, if it were known we would make the world understand that religious reasons are not shaken and

All these was an attempt to answer the various challenges coming from the positivist science, atheism and evolution to theology, as well as from the various philosophies which by their variety disoriented man and threw him into an existential confusion without precedent which intensified the religious indifferentism. For example, at the beginning of the last century Professor Constantin Erbiceanu will translate fragments from the work of the German apologist Ernest Luthardt, concerning God, man, religious feeling and the person of Christ as the Savior of mankind. This translation was preceded by a word to readers of the *Romanian Orthodox Church*, which tried to make them aware of the dangerous phenomenon of religious indifferentism and to strengthen them through methodological and content offering of the Western vision on these topics mentioned. In this period the Romanian Orthodox theology groped in finding Christian methods and sources forgotten in the mists of Church history or “fake” after the fall of Constantinople¹⁸.

the jolt begins to be evident elsewhere. Well, I reckon that religion servant's duty is to use such means to show the world that “the living God” is still living God. This should be done in Romania. Because I possess much material for brochures and magazines in this regard, which often sadly looked closed and unused, I wanted to begin this work. I'll start translating articles, pamphlets, fragments of larger works and I will put them through advertising, to those who need them, in order to show them to the Romanian public who need to be spiritually reborn. We will see that monism, which dares to raise its head at us and watch us from above, was destroyed by the great men of science; we will see also how free thinking in the dogmatic sense of the word, was a negative work that sounds empty and that could not give the world what it needs. Our Monism follows the way we will declare to be necessary here; it translates and makes statements as the only scientifically valid. We must show the world what is really true, and this starts here “. (See also Idem *Documents Supporting the Religion Against Free Thinking*, in “BOR”, year XXXIV (1910), no. 7, p. 786-796; *Scientific Documents Against Unbelief*, in “BOR”, year XXXIV (1910), no. 9, p. 923-929, “BOR”, year XXXIV (1910), no. 11, p. 1167-1173, “BOR”, year XXXIV (1910), no. 12, p. 1251-1259, “BOR” an XXXV (1911), no. 1, p. 50-58, “BOR”, year XXXV (1911), no. 2, p. 139-152.). Also see idem *Why Tolstoy Was Condemned by the Russian Church?*, in “BOR”, year XXXIV (1910), no. 10, p. 1083-1091. A new section containing apologetic and youth education is developed by Dr. P. Garboviceanu (see *Anti-Religious Literature* in “BOR”, year XXXV (1911), no. 2, p. 135-139, “BOR”, year XXXV (1911), no. 3, p. 315-318, “BOR”, year XXXV (1911), no. 8, p. 906-913). A year after free thinkers Congress held in London (1938), Dr. Adina C. Ilescu published some relevant comments in defense of Christianity (*Some observations on the free-thinkers of Congress*, *Theologia Magazine*, XXIX year (1939), no. 12, p. 499-502).

¹⁸ C. Erbicianu, *To the Readers of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, in “BOR”, year XXIX (1905), no. 3, p. 279-280.

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Motivated by the state of society in the early twentieth century society in which man lost his “compass” sinking into religious indifferentism and atheism, Constantin Erbiceanu decides to publish a series of apologetic articles necessary to the contemporary man. He chooses to approach a few key themes: God, man, the religious feeling and the person of Jesus Christ, his method and content being dependent to the German apologists Ernest Luthardt. The Romanian theologian urges the readers of the *Romanian Orthodox Church* to read these articles in order to gain solid and reliable answers to their interrogations or of those who do not believe. He notes that their faith is the foundation on which they build all the apologetic arguments, “for without internal faith it is not possible to persuade another”¹⁹. We notice that in the Romanian theology from the early twentieth century there was this legitimate concern of the Church’s faith defense from the attacks launched against her by the philosophy and modern science. In the perspective of this action, the Romanian theologians will appeal not only to the apologetic models of the first Christian centuries – e.g. Dimitrie Boroianu’s apologetic positions, who was professor at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest - but also to the philosophical apologetic and even scientific arguments, speculated on and formed in the West within the confrontation between Western theology and its detractors. In other words, the apologetic arguments of the Christian West, where there was already great battle between theology and science, were assimilated in the Orthodox theology often both within the method and the content.

Ioan Irineu Mihălcescu and Ioan G. Savin had a major contribution to the development of apologetics in the Romanian Orthodox theology, by submitting a considerable effort in affirming aspects of the Christian faith through rational- philosophical and rational-scientific arguments. They offer the contemporary an Apologetics written with the philosophical and scientific arguments of the twentieth century, when science made rapid and spectacular progress, thus provoking the Christian thought to give answers to the various problems and aspirations of the man. The Orthodox apologetics was challenged to find arguments to prove the existence of God, existence denied by some of the scientists of the time, the militant atheism becoming a serious problem in the early twentieth century that started to penetrate the consciousness of the masses. The Orthodox

¹⁹ Idem, *On God and His Reality and Personality* in “BOR”, year XXIX (1905), no. 3, p. 279-293, p 280.

apologetics problem related to the context in which it was formed and the context of the Orthodox theology at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In this period the Orthodox apologetics as well as the Orthodox theology were more influenced by Western thought and theology than by the patristic theology and thought. Its disciples almost completely forgot the patristic and apologetic method of making theology that had to be expressed not only in its rational side, but rather spiritual. The Orthodox apologetics was identified with a *theologia militans* called to show people the essential truths of life and to affirm the human values against naturalism, rationalism and anthropocentrism. The apologetic attempted to bring not only strong arguments in favor of Christianity and Orthodoxy, but also to create a Christian conscience in the world. The main accusations made by the “infidels” to the Christianity by combating Christ religion principles were: the antisocial attitude of Christianity, Christianity - the religion of poverty, it maintains the religious fanaticism weakening the social cohesion, it supports humility and disarming before the enemy, it supports monasticism that cultivates contempt for society, it disregards the body, the religion-science conflict, the Christian religion and its doctrine are lost in forms and symbols, Christianity stops the scientific concerns by replacing them with the religious ones, the Christian is fatalistic, expecting everything from Heaven and he is indifferent to the urgent problems of life²⁰. All these accusations formulated in one way or another struck at the foundation of the Church’s faith, throwing priests and ministers of the Church in an inferiority and minority to the representatives to atheism.

Towards the end of the first half of the twentieth century, *the Romanian Christian apologetics* is summarized in a biographical, alive and attractive way. The Romanian Christian apologetics consciousness reached a certain maturity. Thus, the most famous Christian apologists are: Vasile Găină, Nicolae Bălan, Irineu Mihălcescu, Nichifor Crainic, Ioan G. Savin, Dumitru Stăniloae – who is considered to be not only “the greatest religious thinker of the Romanian theology, but also of a great Christian apologist who brought so much hope”. They are likened to Nicolai Rojdestvenski, Paul Svetlov, Vladimir Guétée, Raoul Allier. Also, there also are mentioned: Nicolae Paulescu, GG Longinescu, Simion Mehedinti, Ioan Petrovici,

²⁰ See Pr Gh. Verșescu, *Christian Religion as Energy Source*, in the “BOR” series II year XLV (1927), no. 11, p. 651-656.

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Victor Gomoiu, considered to be as important as: Blaise Pascal André Ampère, Pierre Duhem, Pierre Termier²¹.

Towards the end of the first half of the twentieth century it felt more acutely the need to demonstrate the truths of faith in a society where ideological atheism was spreading more and more. The task of compiling scientific documentation device for proving the truths of faith incumbent *Fundamental Theology* that *argues motivates and justifies* these truths, defending them. In this action there were used the most rational means of empirical science, psychological and historical and the philosophical speculation. Therein lays the justification and importance of fundamental theology that the theological literature puts an accent on. Professor Nicolae Cotos, follower of Teachers Alexiu Comoroşan and Vasile Găină edited a paper in 1939 *Fundamental Theology*, characterized as a “virtuoso of thought clear, orderly and safe”, addressing issues rose by “master skill” and resolves them “mathematical, engaging in this work a dialectic supple iron logic and little sentimentality as possible”²². Also during this period, Constantin C. Pavel will highlight the “human tragedy in contemporary culture” highlighting the enslaving character of the technique and the remarkable gap between focus on body at the expense of the soul. Theologian Constantin C. Pavel will make a brief indictment of contemporary culture exposing the exacerbation of materialism and idolatry unable to give man a meaning and a correct view on his life. All the cultural creations are doomed to extinction unless they are based on theandric awareness that protects them from atomization and immanent closure²³. Written during the war, the paper – having a brochure size - relies on man’s awakening in the new troubling context for Europe and beyond.

“Since drowsiness, stiff and indifference seized the today man’s fate, only tragic desperation by a strong shaking can pull him out. In this report the infernal war of today can be the salvation for the corrupted and suffering humanity. Violence that strikes

²¹ Emilian Vasilescu, *Christian Apologist, Thoughts*, Bucharest, 1942.

²² Dr. Grigorie T. Marcu’s review – Prof. Univ. Dr. Nicolae Cotos, *Fundamental Theology*, Czernowitz, *Bukovina voice*, 1938 in the *Theological Review*, XXIX year (1939), no. 7-8, p. 336-337.

²³ Constantin C. Pavel, *Human Tragedy in the Modern Culture*, Printing House of Religious Books, Bucharest, 1941, 70 p.

him will make him break the idols he worshiped and pushes him to seek salvation in the worshipping of the true God”²⁴.

Unfortunately neither war nor suffering managed to stop the “triumphant” march of man to autonomy, establishing it in Romania with greater evidence, when entering into the sphere of influence of Communist Russia. In the years following World War II the Orthodox theologians did not ceased to affirm the actuality of Christian thought at a time when humanity searched for a new paradigm, a new guidance to guard it against the relativism of the concepts that generated the two wars. In this context priest Nicolae Terchilă, professor at the Theological Academy in Sibiu reflected on two major issues: a) the need for human reason to orientate to transcendent and its revival by the energies of divine grace. b) Christ as the beginning and end of all things and the foundation of any thinking and concepts of life²⁵. Thus, Christ-centrism of the thinking and Christian life is affirmed in relation to philosophy and science, which can overcome the ambiguities of autonomous thinking of ontology, cosmology, anthropology²⁶.

After the Second World War, when atheism increasingly caught contour and Romania, Emilian Vasilescu, talks about the relationship between Christian spiritualism and new mechanistic science of the Enlightenment science that imposed a mechanistic mentality “casting out God soul and freedom in the world”. For Emilian Vasilescu “the new scientific discoveries completely demolished this view, replacing it with another one, closer to Christian spiritualism.” He was convinced that mechanistic mentality that caused the two world wars will be gradually replaced by new scientific mentality and by the new “cultural age”, its characteristics and religious, moral, social and cultural consequences being presented in his book. The theologian from Sibiu presents the changes that occurred in modern science and the paradigm shift from Ptolemaic conception of the world to the Copernican one, from geocentrism to heliocentrism, and also the prestige gained by the scientist who takes on a special aura, and the process of un-spiritualization of the world. But the failure of science to unravel the mysteries of life and creation was quick to appear, contradictions and insufficiencies of science being reported by a number

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

²⁵ Rev. Dr. Nicolae Terchilă, *The Actuality of Christian Thought*, “RT”, year XXXVII (1947), no. 7-10, p. 343-355, p. 344.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 352-354.

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of thinkers, some of them Romanian such as: Alexander Mironescu from Bucharest Faculty of Sciences who published *The Limits of Scientific Knowledge*, Anton Dumitriu from the Faculty of Philosophy in Bucharest, Arthur Eddington who writes *The Mysterious Universe*, Alexis Carrel with his *Man – the Unknown Being*, Du Bois-Raymond, Helmholtz, Kirchhoff, Ernest Mach, Henri Poincaré, Pierre Duhem, Edouard Le Roy, and the philosophers Charles Renouvier, Emile Boutroux, Wilian James, Henri Bergson, Emile Meyerson, etc.

Modern science alienated man from God, without being able to answer the great questions of existence, and deepening itself in more mysteries in the midst of its discoveries. Emilian Vasilescu shows that there has been a reversal of scientific understanding of the world by renouncing at the idea of God, soul and freedom, thus presenting the practical consequences of such a vision.

“No wonder then that, based on mechanical principles on world and life, Ernest Haeckel succeeded to describe, in touching detail, how life arose on the ocean floor who knows how many million years ago (...). And no wonder also that psychology based on such principles came to explore spiritual life from the bottom up, from its material bases and its physic-chemical determinations, as a paradoxically but without a bit of irony so-called “psychology without a soul” should do. Finally, no wonder one could explain religiosity as a sublimation of erotic repression and seek the origin of artistic creations in the animal depths of man. For putting psychology on biological grounds and biology on physicochemical grounds, could only be fully consistent with scientist and materialist mentality of previous centuries. And to turn moral into a “moral physics” and sociology in “physics” or even “social mechanics” could only be the procedures of a mentality based on inorganic, the phenomena of inanimate world, where strict determinism reigns”²⁷.

²⁷ Deacon Dr. Emilian Vasilescu, *New Science and Christian spiritualism*, “RT”, year XXXVI (1946), no. 7-8, p. 357-379, here p. 366-367. In 1936 he launched severe criticism of French sociological school headed by E. Durkheim and L. Lévy-Bruhl (Ibidem, *Sociological Interpretation of Religion and Morality. Sociological French School*, Cugetarea Printing House, Bucharest, 1936).

Characteristics of the “new quantum science” are presented compared to the mechanistic one, that brings epochal changes in the understanding the concepts of time and space. He shows that the world is not eternal, nor infinite, and matter does not remain constant in the universe, but it destroys itself, the ultimate essence of the universe being of spiritual nature, the universe beginning to resemble a vast thought and not a large car, and indeterminism winning before mechanistic determinism of modernity. Matter is no longer considered as rigid and inert, but as something dynamic, even spiritual. In support of his vision he brings theories launched by A. Einstein, M. Planck, H. Heisenberg, Niels Bohr²⁸. Walking on the footsteps of Father Dumitru Stăniloae Emilian Vasilescu will also be able to intuit the spiritual dimension of Christian apologetics. Such an intuition was helped by the Palamite theology highlighted by the priest Dumitru Stăniloae but also the gradual rediscovery of the Fathers writings and of Philokalia. We must point out that in the struggles of the Second World War, the priest professor Ilarion V. Felea will write *The Religion of Culture* (1944), a reference book in exposing the limits of autonomous science and in affirming the role that Christianity plays in the personal and universal culture.

2. The person of Jesus Christ in apologetic debate - the contribution of the theologian Ioan Mihălcescu

The offensive of atheism and scientific materialism installed in Enlightenment and worryingly prolonged by the positivist and evolutionary theories of the nineteenth century put the Jesus' existence in the center of debate, the center of Revelation and consequently human and the world existence. Professor Ioan Mihălcescu provides an apologetic outline with extended influence in the Romanian Orthodox theology of the twentieth century in terms of the Christian faith central event, namely Jesus Christ's Resurrection. This event has been questioned since the first centuries of Christianity, the doubt being reborn in the modern age under the tutelage of rationalism and negativist criticism. A first apologetic attitude is encountered in 1901 when Ioan Mihălcescu answered some objections of modern and contemporary critics, especially those formulated by David F.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 367-378.

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Strauss, one of the biggest critics of the “Jesus’ life” and by Holsten who considered St. Paul’s vision as a natural psychological fact²⁹.

To meet the challenges and criticisms of various Western theologians and philosophers regarding the central event of Christ’s Resurrection, in 1910 Professor Mihălcescu resumed the offensive against those who denied the Resurrection. He believes it is necessary to demonstrate that Christ died and then to prove He is risen, bringing the Gospel testimony in support of his argument. Following the western model he will build a rigorous response to various rationalist situations born in Protestant theology and developed in the philosophy of time. Thus using the topic of subjective and objective vision, he will combat the *deceit hypothesis*³⁰ proclaimed by the Protestant German theologian Reimarus who claims that the apostles stole the body of Christ, and also the *apparent death hypothesis*³¹, formulated by the Protestant exegete Gottob Paul. Through the arguments, Ioan Mihălcescu wishes to emphasize that besides faith, the reason has its role in the expression of Christian fundamental truths. He proves the superiority of Jesus Christ and Christianity compared to other religions or founders of religion as Moses Zaratustra, Buddha, and Confucius³².

Ioan Mihălcescu will respond not only the attacks of Western philosophy and science on the Person of Christ, but also the attacks based on the reason and positivism exacerbation, and also the various objections that “the Jews” brought and brings against the miracles performed by Christ³³. *The miracles* of Christ were considered central arguments as-

²⁹ Idem, *Resurrection of Christ. An Apologetic Attempt against Several Objections of Modern and Contemporary Critics*, “BOR”, year XXV (1901), no. 2, p. 167-192.

³⁰ Idem, *Wonder of the Lord Resurrection* in “BOR”, year XXXIV (1910), no. 1, p. 78-88.

³¹ Idem, *Wonder of the Lord Resurrection* in “BOR”, year XXXIV (1910), no. 2, p. 173-186, “B.O.R”, year XXXIV (1910), no. 4, p. 456-463, “BOR”, year XXXIV (1910), no. 5, p. 586-594. See also Idem, *The Biblical Testimonies of the Resurrection*, the “BOR”, year XL (1922), no. 7, p. 500-509.

³² Idem, *Savior Jesus Christ and the Other Founders of Religions*, “BOR”, year XLIII (1925), no. 2, p. 82-90.

³³ Idem, *Jewish Objections against the Savior’s Miracles*, Transylvania Printing House, Joseph I. Şreier, Pitesti, 1906, 18 p.; See also Idem *The Report of Christianity and Judaism*, the “BOR”, year XLIII (1925), no. 3, p. 137-141. Equally to defend the Jewish monotheism to the objections of E. Renan, Eduard Meyer, Wellhausen, Delitzsch, Winkler, Alfre. Ieremias, Schrader, Jensen (Ibid., *Jewish Religion in Light of the His-*

serting the superiority of Christianity over other religions, and strong arguments in affirming the supernatural character of Christianity, so the issues concerning them were intensely debated. The issue of *miracles* was discussed from medical perspective too, Professor Ioan Mihălcescu showing that hypnotism and suggestion are not part of the contents of miracles performed by Christ, as some claim³⁴.

The humanists, rationalists and lately the positivists formulated some contestations regarding the person and the existence of Christ. Professor Mihălcescu resumed the apology on the person of Christ in a series of studies published in 1922 that presents a history of research on the “life of Jesus” from the fifteenth century humanism represented by Lawrence of Valla, to Ernest Renan, his analysis stopping mainly on the thinking of Reimarus, David. F. Strauss and Franz C. Baur³⁵. The Romanian theologian’s investigations continue by analyzing the thinking and attitudes of some of those who denied the existence of Jesus. They include Bruno Bauer, A. Kalthoff, Albert Schweitzer, I.M. Robertson and Whittaker³⁶. In a different article³⁷ on the same subject Professor Mihălcescu exposed the critical theories on the existence of Jesus formulated by P. Jansen, professor of Semitic philology at the University of Marburg, B. Smith, professor of mathematics at Tulane University and Arthur Drews, a professor of philosophy at the Polytechnic School in Karlsruhe. In 1923, he continued with thorough studies³⁸ on the existence of Jesus fighting against the theories of Kalthoff, Robertson, Jansen, Smith and Drews - the rationalistic school of the Dutch theologians. He shows that the Pauline letters were written by St. Paul and the Gospels are not some later writings, and also that Christianity without Christ is not possible, bringing in support

tory of Religion, “BOR”, year XXXIX (1915), no. 6, p. 598-618).

³⁴ Idem, *Saviour’s Miracles in Front of Medical Science*, “BOR”, year XL (1922), no. 12, p. 898-910.

³⁵ Idem, *History of Research on “Life of Jesus”* in “BOR”, year XL (1922), no. 1, p. 49-63.

³⁶ Idem, *The First Contesters of the Existence of Jesus*, the “ROC”, year XL (1922), no. 2, p. 117-127.

³⁷ Idem, *Other Contesters of the Existence of Jesus* in “BOR”, year XLI (1923), No. 3, p. 196-206. In 1925 he will make a critic on P.L. Couchoud’s work on Jesus’ life (Ibid., *A New Book about the Life of the Savior (Le Mystere de Jesus par P.L. Couchoud)* in “BOR”, year XLIII (1925), no. 8, p. 466 -474).

³⁸ Idem, *Christianity without Christ?* in “B.O.R”, year XLI (1923), no. 4, p. 279-290, *Is Possible Christianity without Christ?* “B.O.R”, year XLI (1923), no. 5, p. 365-375.

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of faith some Judeo-Christian testimonies and concluding his apology with J.J. Rousseau's words from the pedagogical novel *Emile*³⁹. Professor Ioan Mihălcescu's attitude should become a model reaction for the Romanian Orthodox theologians in the twenty-first century, who face the same virulent contestations at the divine-human person of Christ, in a globalizing and intoxicating environment. More than the persons mentioned above, the theologians of the twenty-first century need to rediscover the spiritual, profoundly patristic and ecclesiastical dimension of apology.

3. Religion-Philosophy-Science in apologetics vision of Ioan Mihălcescu

If in 1898 Ioan Mihălcescu highlights some of Socrates' meditations on Divinity and Providence⁴⁰, in 1902, he deepens the philosophical and religious approaches from an apologetic perspective by analyzing the relationship between theology and metaphysics⁴¹ that is the heart of any philosophy. He is a true advocate for the establishment of a *scientific apologetics* in Orthodox theology showing the conflictual relationship and the ignorance - with few exceptions - between the Protestant theology and science of his time on the one hand, and on the other hand the continuing conflict between the Roman Catholic theology and the science. We can notice the confessional context that Professor Mihălcescu wrote these studies and the construction of an Orthodox symbolistic based on the affirmation of Orthodoxy apologetics. Though intended to be an apologetic study, we see that this work is related and combined with symbolic vision that will mark Orthodox theology not only in the first half of the twentieth century, but I dare say, by the end of the twentieth century, although - as I said - there have been positive changes in the content of the theology, mutations that are put into service of renewal and discarding of this purely symbolic and confessional vision.

“Our Orthodox Church is not harnessed to the Reformers chariot like the Protestant or enslaved neither to the Kantian philosophy,

³⁹ Idem, *Reliable Christian Testimonies on the Existence of Our Saviour*, the “ROC”, year XLI (1923), no. 7, p. 506-514.

⁴⁰ Idem, *From Socrates Meditations on Divine Providence*, in “Theologian”, year II (1898), no. 15, p. 2.

⁴¹ Idem, *Relationship between Theology and Metaphysics*, in “BOR”, year XXVI (1902), no. 4, p. 401-420.

nor to the Aquinate carriage with infallible coachman like the Roman Catholic. In this regard she held the middle line between one and the other, borrowing when she needed the good parts from everyone, only taking care not to disfigure the beauty and harmony original Christian doctrine by certain additives”⁴².

We note that Ioan Mihălcescu recognizes the Church and Orthodox theology relation with the two confessions and the borrowing of good parts from them, without relating to the patristic tradition as theological and apologetic inspiration source. Tradition becomes more and more an arid pattern, a museum where we extract texts from to argue scholastic influence thesis. We keep it intact in a static way, without having recourse to its alive and supported spirit. Hence, we notice the unilateral, rational and scientific character of Orthodox apologetics during this period.

First the Romanian theologian states the need of a relationship between theology and metaphysics - “both must go hand in hand” - arguing that while many religious truths need no metaphysics, yet when religious arguments are doubled by the rational ones, especially those that require *wisdom*, that is which want faith to be dressed in the logical vestments of the mind, then the force of the religious concepts and arguments is greater. He answers the interrogation on the conflict between theology and metaphysics, between theology and science. This is an answer taken over in its essence by most of the Romanian Orthodox theologians of the twentieth century to clear the theology-science report.

“The so called conflicts between faith and science have their cause in the ignorance regarding the issue - either only on one side or the other or both at the same time - in the breach of natural boundaries that separate one from the other and in the intransigence of the opponents. An actual conflict does not exist as there are no real collision liabilities in Moral. There is not any religious issue that cannot successfully be supported in front of the research and progress outcome of the positive science. It is true that sometimes it seems that religious truths lose some of their entirety in fellowship with the scientific ones. But what is lost when is simply the outward and temporal form that is the

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 420.

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material clothes that will rot and that the imperfect and narrow human mind dressed the eternal and imperishable truths in the past according to science and trend”⁴³.

The same harmony report is stated in terms of theology and philosophy⁴⁴.

Professor Mihălcescu noticed the virulent offensive of positivism and its influence on human modeling and the world of those times and responded by advocating for scientific apologetics that is theology should not give up the dates and results of metaphysics.

“Only in this way we can satisfactory ensure the religious truths against the deterrent current of skepticism and disbelief of dogma, and it is the only way scientific apologetics can stand. Theology is not allowed to give up Apologetics, if it wants to maintain its due place in the intellectual movement and advancement of knowledge in the present time”⁴⁵.

For Ioan Mihălcescu the causes of his time unbelief are identified in philosophy, in the wrong direction that science took through practical materialism, and in the lack of conscience of those called to defend and preach faith in God⁴⁶.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p 418. Regarding the religion-science report, Ioan Mihălcescu will make a processing of E. Dennert’s work and at the end there will be displayed some conclusions on this report (see *Religion and Science*, “BOR”, year XXXIII (1909), no. 11, p. 1273-1281, “BOR”, year XXXIII (1909), no. 12, p. 1382 to 1396, “BOR”, year XXXIV (1910), no. 1, p. 67-75. The same vision is developed in terms of religion- culture report, “religion is the engine of culture, it makes it grow, and flourish” - culture is the result of man’s spiritual activity (*Ibid.*, *Religion and Culture*, “BOR” year XXXIX (1915), no. 4, p. 389-404, p. 390). He highlights the role of Christianity in philosophy, science, art, social and moral life (*Ibid.*, *Christianity and Culture*, “BOR”, year XL (1922), no. 9, p. 668-678).

⁴⁴ *Idem*, *Theology and Philosophy*, The Seminary of Cernica-Ilfov Printing House, Bucharest, 1936, p. 31.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 419. He militates for a “fusion” of religion with science “in a superior synthesis that may no longer have any of the old and new claims of primacy and dominance of one to another” (*Ibid.*, *Knowing God from Inanimate Nature Study*, in “BOR”, year XXXIII (1909), no. 10, p. 1168).

⁴⁶ *Idem*, *The Causes of Contemporary Unbelief and the Means to Combat It*, Printing House of Religious Books, Bucharest, 1915, p. 31. He takes a stand against the fiction of Hans Vaihinger philosophy - professor at the University of Halle - showing that the relativism of this philosophical system has negative consequences both in philosophy and in moral life, in science and religion that is not a fiction but real life (*Ibid.*, on a new philosophical system, “BOR”, year XL (1922), no. 10, p. 725-733).

He recognizes and briefly exposes the progress of the science at the beginning the twentieth century and how it changed the live, mentality, and the world as a whole. The author emphasizes the revolutionary discovery of the *atom* on which an entire energy theory is based, which hopes to replace the positivist and materialist theory that exhausted man's spiritual vision on the world and his existence in the nineteenth century. In the discoveries of science he sees not only human intervention, but also the discovery of God's greatness through creation and the main argument against materialism that excluded intervention and presence of God in creation and history. The ambivalence of science is recognized and affirmed by the Romanian theologian, who stresses that Orthodox theology and theologians do not despise science⁴⁷. His arguments opposed the theories professed by some scientists as Ludwig Büchner - who believes that, as far as science progresses, religion and the gods will regress and disappear - Karl Vogt - who believes that the Creator should be given out the door - Friederich Nietzsche - who declared the death of God - Prosper Mérimée - stating that at the question: "Is there God?" the answer is: "God forbid! God's only excuse is that He does not exist". He also mentions Ernst Hackel - the materialistic monism supporter who considers the spiritual and personal God to be "a gaseous vertebrate animals" and Eduard von Hartmann's for whom Hackel's opinion become true gospel, and he was the true Messiah. But before them, Christianity was attacked and denied by Ludwig Feuerbach and David Friedrich Strauss in Germany and Ernest Renan in France⁴⁸.

Ioan Mihălcescu opposes them the attitude of a number of scientists who were not in conflict with religion, keeping their research area in its own research, just as religion will have to do the same. In fact the conflict between theology and science has not occurred between Orthodox theology and science, but between Western science and Western theology influenced by scholastic. This exceeded its powers and entered abusively in the scientific research area with claims of science queen and the reaction of some scientists was to deny the essential aspects of religion that were not in their area of research. Moreover, he shows that although Scripture does not seek to provide a scientific statement about the world, however its

⁴⁷ Prof. Ioan Mihălcescu, *Knowing God from Inanimate Nature Study*, in "BOR", year XXXIII (1909), no. 8, p. 930-938, p. 934.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 936-937.

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content can exist in harmony with what science says, particularly through conception of Kant and Laplace⁴⁹.

Ioan Mihălcescu although makes the difference between some scientists favorable to the relationship of science and theology - Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, Lavoicier, Liebig, Chevreul, Wurtz, Ampère, Robert Mayer, William Tompson, Linné, Cuvier, Karl von Baer, Claude Bernard, Pasteur - and some scientists positioned against any relationship between theology and science, denying God's existence and authenticity of revelation, yet he fails to recognize the origins and foundations of the conflict in the Western theology influenced by scholastic. As a result, the conflict between theology and science in the West is transferred in Romanian Orthodox theology too, with its specific and methods without a critical reception based on the tradition of the Church and, on the theology and method of the Fathers. Thus, the Orthodox theology will use the arguments both of some scientists⁵⁰ and of some Western scholars or theologians in their fight against those who denied the existence of God - F. Bettex, R. Lehmann, H. Poincaré, W Ostwald, C. Flammarion, T. Waitz, I. Reinke, KA Kneller, Ch H. Vosen and others - and less the arguments of the Fathers and the spiritual strength of their testimony in the context of primary age of Christianity. However, Ioan Mihălcescu will quote the Christian apologist Minucius Felix - *Octavius* - stressing that Christian apologists of the early centuries used nature to prove the existence of God and divine providence in the world to the skeptics⁵¹.

⁴⁹ Idem, *Queries and Answers. Beginning of the World according the Bible and the Science*, in "BOR", year XLIII (1925), no. 5, p. 303-305.

⁵⁰ Idem, *Testimonies of Modern Geologists and Paleontologists in Favor of Religion*, "Orthodox Journal", year I (1912), no. 1-2, p. 22-30; *Religiosity of Modern Geologists and Paleontologists in Great Britain, France and Switzerland*, the "Orthodox Journal", year I (1912-1913) no. 3-4, p. 105-115. In contrast to these testimonies he will publish testimonies about the end of those who denied religion - Nietzsche, Voltaire, La Mettrie, H. Heine, Lord Chesterfield, Friedrich the Great - and fought the essential aspects of Christianity among its supernatural character (*How Nonbelievers Live and End* in "Orthodox Journal", year I (1913), no. 7-8, p. 218-225.

⁵¹ Idem, *Knowing God from Inanimate Nature Study* in "BOR", year XXXIII (1909), no. 10, p. 1156-1168, p. 1166. See also Idem, *Testimonials about the Presence and Intervention of God in Nature and in History* "BOR", year. XXXIV (1910), no. 10, p. 1042-1048, "BOR", year XXXIV (1910), no. 11, p. 1177-1187. In the context of disputes about the origin of the world initiated by evolutionism and modern positivism, Mihălcescu will present a comparative study on peoples pagan cosmogonies, the

Those who denied the existence of God and the authenticity of Revelation or projected Him in reductionist theories were exponents of Enlightenment and of materialism who claimed there is nothing besides matter. Ioan Mihălcescu resorted to the law of causality to show that matter is not the cause the world, but God. Either matter or motion is not eternal but had a beginning and will have an end. His arguments are in line with scientific discoveries of the time and the positioning of Western theology to materialism and positivism. In 1909, the Romanian theologian says: "Instead of notions like matter and motion, a few years ago the fundamental disciplines of natural sciences, physics and chemistry introduced the concept of "energy" that seems to last, for better explaining phenomena that could not fully explain by the notion of material (composed of ever moving atoms). But the notion of energy is just as abstract as of matter and even more, and just as impossible to define as the movement. Mechanical materialism will collapse completely and hopelessly be able to pick up sometime if the energy hypothesis will be accepted permanently in science and philosophy. The concept of energy, as the notion of movement concluded the existence of God in the same way, which is not more than one form of energy. As the movement has beginning and end and requires an intelligent cause outside it, to have produced the first motion and to be given the first impulse, so in general the energy will end once and so has beginning and should have a producing cause that can only be God⁵².

4. Religion, Morality and Arts in Ioan Mihălcescu's apologetic vision

Among Ioan Mihălcescu's first apologetics studies is the critique on Epicurus' morals⁵³. After a systematic critique of the doctrine of Epicurus showing his shortcomings and relativism of moral, he concludes by stressing the superiority of Christianity to ancient philosophy, and the importance of divine revelation. Since early Ioan Mihălcescu - degree in Theology

cosmogony of the Bible and of modern science (*The Cosmogonies of Civilized Nations from Antiquity, the Biblical Cosmogony and the Modern Scientific Cosmogony*, Transylvania Printing House, Iosif I. Şreier, Piteşti, 1907, p. 160).

⁵² Idem, *Knowing God from Inanimate Nature Study* in "BOR", year XXXIII (1909), no. 9, p. 999-1015, p. 1012.

⁵³ Idem, *Some Notes on the Life of Epicurus. Brief Exposure and Critique of His Moral*, "BOR", year XXV (1901), p. 508-527

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and Doctor of Philosophy - deals with the relationship between Religion and Morality, making an interesting incursion in polytheism on this topic, with a distinction between internal or subjective religion (religiosity) and external or objective religion, between feelings of worship and piety and prayer, worship, sacrifice, confessions of faith, dogma. Similarly, he states that subjective or internal religion is only one, and the external or objective religion is presented in different forms, the first form being the object of philosophy or psychology of religion, and the second as the object of history of religions, but theology embraces them both⁵⁴. Ioan Mihălcescu examines this report starting with the religions of primitive peoples - where religion is a weaker link with morality - continuing with the Semites, Egyptians religion, Indo-Germanic religion and Brahmanism and basing on the works of Ed Zeller, Otto Pfliederer, Waitz, A. Réville, G. Klemm, Ad. Bastian, I.H.A. Ebrard, Le Page Renouf, Dümichen, Chantepie de la Saussaye. He also continues to illustrate the relationship between religion and morality in Buddhism, the religion of the Greeks, the Roman religion, the religion of the peoples of Iran and the Persians, the Chinese religion inspired by the works of Wuttke, Oldenberg, Max Müller, Welker, Leopold Schmidt, O. Pfliederer, Mommsen, Fustel de Coulanges. Regarding monotheism, Ioan Mihălcescu, using some of the sources mentioned above and the Old Testament Scriptures, emphasizes the superiority of monotheistic religions from polytheistic, as God in these religions is not only the highest legislator of the world, but He is the ultimate cause of everything, *causa causarum*. Here he analyzes the Jewish religion, which has the basis of morality in one holy God. The notion of sanctity comprises the absolute perfection of divine being on the one hand, and God's relationship with the world and with man, on the other hand. His will is the highest authority and man's holiness must be obedient to this will⁵⁵. This principle stated in the Old Testament monotheism was completed in Christianity, by writing its law in the heart, not outside on tablets of stone⁵⁶.

Analyzes the relationship between religion and morality are focused on *love* as biblical theme which is seen as a principle of the relationship between God, man and the world. Based on this report, Ioan Mihălcescu

⁵⁴ Idem, *The Relation between Religion and Morality*, "BOR", year XXVII (1903), no. 9, p. 1006-1029, p. 1006-1007.

⁵⁵ Idem, *The Relation between Religion and Morality*, "BOR", year XXVII (1903), no. 10, p. 1169-1186, p. 1183.

⁵⁶ Idem, *The Relation between Religion and Morality*, "BOR", year XXVII (1903), no. 11 p. 1408-1421, p. 1409.

makes an incursion in philosophy and theology, from Socrates, Pythagoras, the Stoics, Plato, Aristotle, Neo-Platonic, Cicero and Marcus Aurelius to the Church Fathers and Eastern and Western theologians, who - in his opinion - agree on the reciprocal relationship between religion and morality: Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Tatian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory the Wonderworker in the East and, Thomas Aquinas, German mystics Meister Eckhart, Tauler, Suso, Ruysbroek, Thomas de Chempe in the West, with their unilateral tendencies to outbid piety at the expense of morality and Duns Scotus with his school to outbid morality at the expense of piety⁵⁷. The Romanian theologian investigations are developed in terms of religion, morality and on Western theology and philosophy of the seventeenth century - nineteenth century. He illustrates this relationship the modern autonomous philosophy begins with, by Descartes' work, the cartesian philosophy and the substantialist pantheism of Malebranche, where morality is completely absorbed by the influence of mystical piety, the philosophy empirical of Thomas Hobbes and of the deist Herbert of Cherbury whose principles are more clearly formulated by Tindal. There are mentioned Hume, John Locke, Shaftesbury, Adam Smith, Bentham, Jeremias, Herbert Spencer, Leslie Stephen, Helvetius, Voltaire, J.J. Rousseau, La Mettrie, Holbach, De Bonald, Joseph de Maistre, Lamennais, Bautain Graty, Maret, Jules Simon, Paul Janet, Renan, Auguste Comte, Guyau, Alfred Fouillée, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Christian Wolff, Lessing, Herder, Kant, all these names marking the relationship between religion and morality in the evolution of modern European thought. In identifying the different positions of these philosophers or theologians, Ioan Mihălcescu appealed to the work of Chr. E. Luthardt, O. Pfeleiderer, Theobald Ziegler, Max Heinze, I. Müller, G. Lechler, U. Heinze, F. Ravaisson, and Karl C. E. Schmid⁵⁸. The latest investigations on this subject have as protagonists Fichte, Herbart, Beneke, Lotze, Friedr. Alb. Lange, Fries, Pierson, Ritschl, Hermann, Lipsius, Kattan, Kierkegaard, Schelling, Eschenmayer, K. Daub, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Eduard von Hartmann, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Wundt, Harald Höffding, Lev Tolstoi and others, the Romanian theologian bringing up to date the analyzed issue⁵⁹.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1421.

⁵⁸ Idem, *The Relation between Religion and Morality*, "BOR", year XXVIII (1904), no. 1, p. 17-32.

⁵⁹ Idem, *The Relation between Religion and Morality*, "BOR", year XXVIII (1904), no. 2, p. 169-182.

Ioan Irineu Mihălcescu - Orthodox Apologetics Coordinates...

Why Professor Ioan Mihălcescu addresses the relationship between religion and art is all a matter of morality and a confusion on the importance of art to the detriment of religion and religious living, perpetuated in that age. Many people of his time believed that art can replace religion and Professor Mihălcescu shows that religion is more than art, exposing the relationship between the two.

“Religious individualism that haunts contemporary society drives away many people of the Church and push them to quench their religious thirst of their soul of in tasting art, visiting theaters and art museums, listening to concerts, reading beautiful books, dancing and contemplating the natural beauties, making them act as supporters of the idea that art can take the place of religion”⁶⁰.

Tendency to replace religion with art penetrated people’s minds through modern philosophy of Strauss, Schopenhauer, Schiller, Nietzsche, Wagner, in opposition to the attitude of the Calvinists, the Protestant sects and Hartmann who did not admit to put art in the service of religion and the relationship religion – art.

In explaining this report first our theologian notes the points where religion and art meet, then the points where they differ, and in the end what is position of one to the other. In his view, from the beginning religion and art are inseparable, they differing only on a higher level of development; art has always been in relation to religion; the idea of divine revelation is common to both religion and art, so who really loves art loves also religion, and vice versa. Religion and art - considered in terms of soul - ultimately reduces to feeling⁶¹.

Regarding the differences Professor Mihălcescu shows that religion operates in the transcendent world with an absolute objective reality, while art is illusionist and operates with something imaginary and not objective. If art addresses only the emotional part of the soul, religion wants to influence the human will as well and to determine a category of facts. A religion that does not influence the moral life and is not manifested by a specific cult is sick mysticism. Not the art in itself determines the will to act but the religious and moral background hidden in it – this is the response of our theologian to those who objected that artwork determines a behavior

⁶⁰ Idem, *The Relation between Religion and Morality*, “BOR”, year XXXIV (1910), nr. 6, p. 639-652, p. 640.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 642-647.

too and affects human in a good way. If art is looking for satisfaction in the contemplation of nature, religion is not content with that, but it seeks the reasons of satisfaction above nature, therefore religion provides a permanent and profound contentment and satisfaction. If religion is in relation to a conception of the world is not art, the aesthetic conceptions about the world being the work of artists, not of art itself⁶².

Conclusions

The work of priest professor and later hierarch Ioan Irineu Mihălcescu reveals a remarkable theologian for his time, not only in terms of dogmatic and symbolic studies or history of religions studies, but also apologetic studies. Ioan Irineu Mihălcescu was not only a dogmatist, but also an apologist, a pioneer in dogmatics and apologetics. First of all, he was an Orthodox theologian who responded to the various objections to Christianity, Orthodoxy and the Person of Jesus Christ, in the context of his epoch and with the “weapons” of the time in which he lived, objections released from the sphere of philosophy and illuminist and positivist science or from Western confessions embedded with philosophy. Our theologian’s analysis is not dissociate from the Orthodox theology vision in this regard, theology which was influenced by Western Roman Catholic and Protestant theology, while leading a fierce battle for a rational-argumentative demolition of various scientific concepts and theories declared to be hostile to Christianity. The presentation of the relationship between religion, philosophy, science and religion, and morality and art was a true leitmotif of interwar apologetic approaches. However, in terms of Orthodoxy, our theologians’ apologetic attitudes were not fed by the Eastern patristic model, but by the arguments of the conflict the Western theology started to modernity. Yet, we notice that our theologians were aware of the influence different theories hostile to Christianity could exercise over the masses mentality, which entered into a kind of relativism, indifferentism and frenzy after the exploitation and grabbing of the matter at the expense of the soul. Although with some specific gaps in defending the truth of Orthodoxy, the theologian Ioan Irineu Mihălcescu’s thought remains a reference one for the development of the Romanian Orthodox apologetics thinking of the twentieth century.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 648-652.

Michael Welker¹

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Zusammenfassung

Von ihren dogmatischen Grundlagen her und von den tatsächlich gelebten Formen kirchlichen Lebens aus sollten die christlichen Kirchen also mit Gelassenheit ihren inneren Pluralismus und den Pluralismus der Ökumene wertschätzen. Wir sollten diesen ökumenischen Pluralismus vor der Verwechslung mit bloßem Individualismus bewahren und nachdrücklich gegen den Verdacht verteidigen, er züchte Chaos und Relativismus. Der strukturierte Pluralismus bietet eine anspruchsvolle Verbindung von Ordnung und Freiheit. Wir sollten darin ein hohes Gut erkennen, das verteidigt und gepflegt werden muss – das zu pflegen und zu verteidigen sich lohnt und das zu verteidigen und zu pflegen wir beauftragt sind.

Stichwörter

Ökumene, Pluralismus, Relativismus, Einstellungen, Meinungen, Länder und Kulturen

In den westlichen Gesellschaften begegnen uns heute zwei strukturell grundverschiedene Konzepte von Pluralismus. Dies führt zu vielen Verwirrungen. In Wolfgang Hubers Worten: Wir leben in einer Situation „ungeklärter Pluralität“.² Ich empfehle, diese beiden Konzepte mit der Rede von „Pluralität“ einerseits und von „strukturiertem Pluralismus“ oder „organismischem Pluralismus“ andererseits zu unterscheiden.

Das erste Konzept, das der Pluralität, setzt, ob gewollt oder nicht, Pluralismus gleich mit einem propagierten und praktizierten radikalen Individualismus und mit Relativismus. In seinen durchdachten Formen vertritt es einen radikalen Perspektivismus, eine Relativität aller Wahrheitsansprüche, Moralen und Weltanschauungen. Friedrich Nietzsche

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² S. den Beitrag in diesem Band.

kann als Prophet dieser Sicht der Wirklichkeit angesehen werden. In den populären und weniger konsequent durchdachten Formen begegnet uns dieses Konzept von Pluralismus z. B. in der Rede von einer „zunehmenden Pluralisierung unserer Gesellschaft“ oder von einer stetig zunehmenden „Pluralität“, wobei diffuse Vorstellungen von einer evolutionär ständig gesteigerten Individualisierung der Lebensformen im Hintergrund stehen. Ich nenne diese Sicht des Pluralismus auch „weichen Postmodernismus“.

Der weiche Postmodernismus ist nicht in der Lage, die politischen, rechtlichen, wissenschaftlichen und religiösen Verhältnisse in unseren spätmodernen Gesellschaften zu erfassen. Ebenso wenig kann er Gesellschaften, Länder und Kulturen übergreifende pluralistische Organisationsformen verstehen. So muss die Ökumene notgedrungen negativ besetzt werden, wenn sie mit Pluralismus im Sinne dieser bloßen Pluralität in Verbindung gebracht wird. Eine unübersehbare und unübersichtliche stetig gesteigerte Mannigfaltigkeit von religiösen Einstellungen, Meinungen und Lebensformen kann zwar von leichtsinnigen Geistern begrüßt und gefeiert werden. Kirchlich und wissenschaftlich Verantwortung Tragende aber werden eine diffuse religiöse Pluralität bestenfalls seufzend tolerieren. Als allgemeine Form propagiert, kann sie jedoch nur Verwirrungs- und Zersetzungsprozesse generieren. Wenn dies der Geist und die Organisationsform der Ökumene ist, dann sollte man sich davor in Acht nehmen.

Es ist interessant zu beobachten, dass sowohl konservative als auch liberale Geister den weichen Postmodernismus der Pluralität zu schätzen scheinen, obwohl sie ihn beklagen. Im Blick auf den weichen Postmodernismus können konservative Geister vor dem scheinbaren Chaos unserer gegenwärtigen kulturellen, politischen und religiösen Situation warnen und stratifizierte, klar zentrierte und hierarchisierte Formen der Organisation und des Zusammenlebens empfehlen. Liberale Geister können angesichts der unübersichtlichen Pluralität eine Vielzahl von Wertsystemen anbieten, mit denen sie dann ein Minimum von Rationalität oder ein Minimum von Ordnung gewährleisten sehen, um die Pluralität zu integrieren und übermäßigen Individualisierungsschüben entgegenzuwirken.

Beide Sichtweisen auf den weichen Postmodernismus unterschätzen die großen Errungenschaften von Ordnung und Freiheit, die ein strukturierter oder organismischer Pluralismus mit sich bringt. Sowohl in spätmodernen

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demokratischen Gesellschaften als auch in unseren weltweit vorbildlichen Wissenschaftssystemen und eben auch in der mehr oder weniger organisierten Ökumene liegen solche strukturiert pluralistischen Formen vor. Es handelt sich um multihierarchische Formen, die alles andere als chaotisch sind und die aus langen religiösen, kulturellen, politischen und wissenschaftlichen Entwicklungsprozessen hervorgegangen sind.

Pluralistische Gesellschaften entwickeln eine komplexe Struktur, in der weder die Politik noch das Recht noch die Religion noch die Wirtschaft noch eine andere grundlegende und unverzichtbare Organisationsform der Gesellschaft sich zu der Supermacht aufschwingen kann, die alle anderen Organisationsformen und Lebenssphären dominiert. Eine komplexe Gewaltenteilung prägt pluralistische Gesellschaften, und die Pflege dieser Gewaltenteilung und der differenzierten Zusammenarbeit der verschiedenen Organisationsformen ist für sie charakteristisch. Der Respekt vor den verschiedenen Rationalitäten, vor den verschiedenen Werthierarchien und das Bemühen um eine polyphone Förderung des gemeinsamen Guten ist charakteristisch für pluralistische Konstellationen. Eine Balance der Macht muss immer neu gesucht, eine Sensibilität dafür, dass ständig Deformationen der Machtbalancen drohen, muss wachgehalten werden. In den zwanziger und dreißiger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts haben in Deutschland Politik, Teile der Wirtschaft und das Militär einen aufkommenden Pluralismus dieser strukturierten Art gründlich zerstört. Gegenwärtig fürchten wir im Westen, dass Markt, Medien und Technologie ihre Rationalitäten und Organisationsformen den übrigen Bereichen der Gesellschaft so stark aufprägen, dass sie gesunde pluralistische Lebensformen deformieren oder sogar zerstören.

Die verschiedenen unverzichtbaren Organisationsformen gesellschaftlichen Lebens – manche Soziologen sprechen von sozialen Systemen – folgen unterschiedlichen Wertehierarchien. Die Politik sucht Loyalität. Das Recht fragt nach Gerechtigkeit. Die Wissenschaft dient der Wahrheitssuche. Die Familie orientiert sich an der Liebe. Die Medien suchen Resonanz. Der Markt zielt auf Maximierung der Profite. Pluralistische Gesellschaften pflegen die Überzeugung, dass es nicht wünschenswert und nicht gut ist, die verschiedenen Hierarchien der Werte in eine einzige Hierarchie zu integrieren. Alle Spitzenwerte sind unverzichtbar für das gemeinsame Leben und sollten so respektiert werden und sich wechselseitig respektieren.

Neben den großen Organisationsformen oder sozialen Systemen und ihrer multisystemischen und multihierarchischen Ordnung entwickeln pluralistische Gesellschaften eine Vielzahl von Zusammenschlüssen und Assoziationen, die wir Zivilgesellschaft nennen. Diese Assoziationen erwachsen aus Interessen und Anliegen, die einige oder viele Bürgerinnen und Bürger teilen und befördert sehen wollen. Die Assoziationen der Zivilgesellschaft wollen das Gefüge der Organisationen (wie Politik, Recht, Wissenschaft, Medien, und Markt) beeinflussen und verändern. Eine Vielzahl von Interessengruppen, Parteien, Lobbys, Bewegungen und Initiativen will das gemeinsame Leben der Gesellschaft stärken, indem sie die Machtbalance zwischen den großen Organisationen oder sozialen Systemen beeinflussen. So wollen, um nur ein paar Beispiele zu nennen, einige Interessengruppen den Zusammenhang von Religion und Politik stärken, andere arbeiten für deren klare Trennung. Einige Assoziationen suchen eine stärkere Symbiose von Wirtschaft und Wissenschaft, andere sehen die Freiheit der Forschung gefährdet und warnen vor einer Ökonomisierung der Universitäten und der Bildungssysteme. Eine bessere politische und rechtliche Kontrolle der Märkte wird hier gefordert, dort wird noch immer die Autonomie des freien Marktes gepriesen und seine prinzipielle Kraft der erfolgreichen Selbststeuerung zum größeren gemeinsamen Wohl behauptet. Diese wenigen Beispiele machen deutlich, dass die Regelung des Machtkreislaufs in pluralistischen Gesellschaften keine einfache und bequeme Angelegenheit ist, dass vielmehr immer wieder neu und aus vielen Perspektiven heraus um die optimale Balance der gesellschaftlichen Kräfte und die optimale Förderung des gemeinsamen Wohls gerungen und gekämpft werden muss.

Analoges gilt auch für die Wissenschaft. Nicht länger kann sich eine einzelne Disziplin als die Königin der Wissenschaften bezeichnen. Die Philosophie hat schon längst alle Ansprüche in dieser Hinsicht verloren. Neuere Versuche, eine szientistische Ideologie auszurufen und den Alleinanspruch der Naturwissenschaften auf Wahrheitserkenntnis anzumelden, wie sie etwa Richard Dawkins vertritt, gewinnen zwar hier und da populistische Zustimmung und auch mediale Verstärkung, haben aber keine Chance in seriösen akademischen Kreisen. Auch in der Wissenschaft bemühen wir uns um ein gut balanciertes pluralistisches Gefüge, in dem gemeinsame Standards von wahrheitssuchenden Gemeinschaften entwickelt und gepflegt werden, aber doch verschiedene Me-

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thoden und Rationalitätstypen Anerkennung finden. In Einzelfällen mögen die Grenzen des Wissenschaftlichen strittig sein. Gerade die Theologie mit ihrer doppelten Bindung an Wissenschaft und Kirche sieht sich immer wieder dazu herausgefordert, die Grenzen der Wissenschaft zu prüfen und neu zu bestimmen. Dabei ist der bewusste Umgang mit den eigenen pluralistischen Traditionen und Strukturen in Theologie und Kirche äußerst hilfreich.

In vielfältiger Weise ist der strukturierte Pluralismus in der Geschichte des Christentums und in den Ordnungen der christlichen Kirchen implementiert. Schon die Textur des biblischen Kanons weist ein pluralistisches Gefüge auf. Eine wohlmotivierte und strukturierte Mehrperspektivität auf zentrale Ereignisse der Geschichte Israels und auf das Leben und Wirken Jesu Christi charakterisiert den biblischen Kanon. Diese Mehrperspektivität dient der Wahrheitssuche und der Ausrichtung auf die Offenbarung Gottes, die in einzelnen Zeugnissen nicht angemessen und vollständig erfasst werden kann. Sie respektiert die Macht des göttlichen Geistes, die sich in der Gebrochenheit und der Polyphonie der menschlichen Zeugnisse immer neu im Selbsterweis der Wahrheit zur Geltung bringt. Der biblische Kanon bietet nicht eine diffuse Pluralität religiöser Meinungen und Ansichten. Er ist grenzsensibel. Die christlichen Kirchen zeigen neben einer großen, sie verbindenden Wahrheitsgewissheit im Blick auf die Mehrzahl der kanonischen Überlieferungen tatsächlich nur leichte Unsicherheiten und Differenzen hinsichtlich der Beurteilung einiger deuterokanonischer Texte. Diese Grenzsensibilität und die damit verbundene Tendenz zur Schließung des Kanons ist für den jüdischen, den christlichen und den konfuzianischen Kanon charakteristisch. Die griechischen und römischen Kanones und die der Literaturkritiker und Kulturkritiker sind demgegenüber nur durch Pluralität charakterisiert. Sie beziehen sich auf eine Sammlung, ein Ensemble von Klassikern, deren Resonanz zunehmen oder schwinden kann, die unterschiedliche Halbwertzeiten haben.

Aber nicht nur die biblischen Überlieferungen, sondern auch die Positionen der apostolischen Väter stehen in einem pluralistischen Formen-zusammenhang, der uns noch viele Forschungs- und Erkenntnisaufgaben bietet. Nicht ein einzelnes biblisches Buch, nicht eine einzelne Stimme eines Kirchenvaters dominiert und integriert alle anderen Stimmen. Ganz entsprechend hat nicht eine einzelne christlichen Konfession

den alleinigen Zugang zur göttlichen Wahrheit. Auch die Familie der christlichen Konfessionen zeigt einen strukturiert pluralistischen Formenzusammenhang. Dies gilt bis hin zu den Liturgien, wie Gregor Etzelmüller eindrucksvoll gezeigt hat. Die biblischen Orientierungen verbinden die Liturgien der großen Konfessionen. Die Konzentrationen auf die Tempeltheologie, die Abendmahlsparadosis, die Pneumatologie und Ekklesiologie der Apostelgeschichte unterscheiden sie.

Das heißt nicht, dass wir nicht individuell oder in einzelnen Gemeinden und Gruppierungen und Disziplinen bestimmte liturgische Formen, bestimmte biblische Bücher bevorzugen können, dass wir nicht bestimmte Positionen einzelner Kirchenväter, einzelner Reformatoren oder anderer profilierter Geister an die Spitze unserer Wertschätzung stellen können. Aber es ist charakteristisch für strukturiert pluralistische Zusammenhänge, dass wir andere Privilegierungen respektieren und in den Dialog, unter Umständen auch in die Auseinandersetzung mit ihnen eintreten, um Gottes Offenbarung und Gottes Vorhaben mit seiner Schöpfung besser zu verstehen.

Die christlichen Kirchen haben also aufgrund der biblischen und dogmatischen Verfassung ihrer normativen Texte und Grundlagen gar nicht die Freiheit, ein gestörtes Verhältnis zu pluralistischen Formen menschlichen Lebens zu entwickeln. Damit behaupte ich nicht, dass die christlichen Kirchen und Theologien vorbildliche Förderer pluralistischer Formen des Denkens und der Organisation gewesen sind. Im Gegenteil, eine weitverbreitete Vorliebe für einfache monohierarchische Strukturen und Ordnungsformen auf der einen Seite und eine Begeisterung für diffuse Pluralität auf der anderen Seite sind heute weit verbreitet. Dennoch müssen wir feststellen, dass die christlichen Kirchen aufgrund ihrer anspruchsvollen normativen und befreienden Grundlegung eine 2000 - jährige Geschichte der Auseinandersetzung sowohl mit vielen Formen der Tyrannei als auch mit vielen Formen des Chaos orientiert durchlebt haben. Die bindende und befreiende Kraft, die letztlich zur pluralistisch-ökumenischen Ausprägung der Christenheit führt, ist in letzter Instanz aber nicht in ihren Texten und Traditionen gegründet, sondern in den zentralen Inhalten des christlichen Glaubens, ja in seinem göttlichen Grund und Gegenüber.

Die Christen glauben, dass der lebendige Gott nicht nur ein Gottesgedanke ist, auch wenn alle Welt immer wieder gern von Gott als „dem letzten Referenzpunkt“, dem einfachen „Woher unserer schlechthinnigen

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Abhängigkeit“ spricht. Christen glauben zwar an den einen Gott, sie rechnen sich zu den Monotheisten. Aber sie bekennen sich zu dem in sich differenzierten Gott, zu dem dreieinigen Gott, zum Schöpfer, der sich in Jesus Christus selbst offenbart hat und uns Anteil gibt an den göttlichen Kräften und in dem wir durch die Kraft des Heiligen Geistes befreit und erhoben werden. Der Glaube an den differenzierten Gott ist eine große Herausforderung für viele andere Religionen und für viele Typen des gesunden Menschenverstandes sowie für philosophische Theorien, die gern einen möglichst einfachen Gottesgedanken entwickeln wollen.

Der Reichtum und die Komplexität Gottes im göttlichen Wirken werden noch offensichtlicher, wenn wir uns spezifischen dogmatischen Themen zuwenden: der Schöpfungslehre, der Christologie und der Pneumatologie, der Lehre vom Heiligen Geist. Die biblischen Schöpfungsberichte bezeugen nicht einen tyrannischen Gott, der alles hervorbringt, der alles kontrolliert und den Geschöpfen keine Freiheit lässt. Sie bezeugen vielmehr einen Gott, der kosmische, biologische, kulturelle und religiöse Geschöpfe und Kräfte freisetzt und ihnen eine große schöpferische Macht einräumt. Die Gestirne sollen die Welt erhellen und über die zeitlichen Ordnungen herrschen. Die Himmel sollen kosmische Machtbereiche konstituieren und Chaos abwehren, die Erde soll Geschöpfe hervorbringen, und die Menschen sollen über die Erde herrschen und das Bild Gottes gegenüber den Mitgeschöpfen repräsentieren. Wir werden also durch den Schöpfungsbericht mit verschiedenen Lebensformen, verschiedenen Gesetzen und einem pluralistischen Zusammenspiel der Schöpfungsordnungen konfrontiert.

In der Christologie und in der Pneumatologie ist das pluralistisch geordnete Wirken Gottes noch offensichtlicher. Nach den alttestamentlichen Traditionen bringt der Messias, auf dem Gottes Geist ruht, Gerechtigkeit, Barmherzigkeit – den Schutz der Schwachen – und Gotteserkenntnis nicht nur den Juden, sondern auch den Heiden (Jes 11, 42, 61). Diese Offenbarung lässt die Heiden nicht zu Juden und Juden nicht zu Heiden werden. Der Messias bringt die Gotteserkenntnis in die verschiedenen Teile der Welt, sogar zu den entferntesten Inseln. Die verschiedenen Völker erkennen aus ihren eigenen Traditionen kommend, dass der Gott Israels auch ihr Gott ist. Sie unterscheiden den wahren Gott von den Götzen und sie fragen nach der Gotteserkenntnis, die einhergeht mit der Suche nach Gerechtigkeit, Erbarmen und Wahrheit.

Die biblischen Traditionen des Alten und des Neuen Testaments stellen uns die Figur der Ausgießung des Geistes vor Augen. Diese Figur wirkt auf viele Menschen merkwürdig und befremdlich. Sie konfrontiert uns mit einer äußerst machtvollen geistlichen Form. Wie der Regen auf eine ganze Landschaft herunkommt und alle Kreaturen erfrischt und aufleben lässt, so bringt der vom Himmel ausgegossene Geist sehr fruchtbare freiheitliche Konstellationen und Lebensformen hervor. Besonders eindrucksvoll und lehrreich ist die Botschaft des Propheten Joel, die auch das Zeugnis von der pfingstlichen Geistausgießung ausführlich zitiert. Joel 3,1f heißt es: *„Danach aber wird es geschehen, dass ich meinen Geist ausgieße über alles Fleisch. Eure Söhne und Töchter werden Propheten sein, eure Alten werden Träume haben, und eure jungen Männer haben Visionen. Auch über Knechte und Mägde werde ich meinen Geist ausgießen in jenen Tagen.“* Das Zeugnis von der pfingstlichen Geistausgießung Apg 2 betont, dass die Ausgießung des Heiligen Geistes, vom Propheten verheißen, nun stattgefunden hat, und es verbindet diese Geistausgießung mit der Erbauung des nachösterlichen Leibes Christi.

Der Heilige Geist wird nicht nur auf die Männer ausgegossen, sondern auch auf die Frauen. Er überkommt nicht nur die Alten, sondern auch die Jungen. Er befähigt und erhebt nicht nur die Wohlhabenden und die Einflussreichen, sondern auch die unterprivilegierten und marginalisierten Menschen. Menschen aus den verschiedensten Ländern, Sprachen und Traditionen werden vom göttlichen Geist überkommen und in eine differenzierte Gemeinschaft gebracht, die von Gottes großen Taten Zeugnis gibt und das nachösterliche Leben des erhöhten Jesus Christus leibhaftig trägt. Eindrücklich beschreibt Paulus den organischen Zusammenhang des Leibes Christi und den strukturierten Pluralismus des Zusammenwirkens seiner Glieder. 1Kor 12,7ff heißt es:

„Jedem aber wird die Offenbarung des Geistes geschenkt, damit sie anderen nützt. Dem einen wird vom Geist die Gabe geschenkt, Weisheit mitzuteilen, dem anderen durch den gleichen Geist die Gabe, Erkenntnis zu vermitteln, dem dritten im gleichen Geist Glaubenskraft, einem anderen die Gabe, Krankheiten zu heilen, einem anderen Wunderkräfte, einem anderen prophetisches Reden, einem anderen die Fähigkeit, die Geister zu unterscheiden ... Das alles bewirkt ein und derselbe Geist; einem jeden teilt er seine besondere Gabe zu, wie er will. Denn wie der Leib eine

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Einheit ist, doch viele Glieder hat, alle Glieder des Leibes aber, obgleich es viele sind, einen einzigen Leib bilden: so ist es auch mit Christus. ... Wenn der ganze Leib nur Auge wäre, wo bliebe dann das Gehör? Wenn er nur Gehör wäre, wo bliebe dann der Geruchssinn? Nun aber hat Gott jedes einzelne Glied so in den Leib eingefügt, wie es seiner Absicht entsprach.“

Die Ausgießung des Geistes besagt, dass prophetische Erkenntnisse und normative Ansprüche im Zusammenspiel der Zeugnisse von Männern und Frauen, Alten und Jungen, mächtigen und ohnmächtigen Menschen wirksam werden. Dies führt zur Gestaltung und zur Transformation gemeinschaftlichen menschlichen Lebens. Dabei werden ganz offensichtlich schöpferische Differenzen gepflegt und destruktive Differenzen eingedämmt; es wird eine Entwicklung freigesetzt, die Gerechtigkeit sucht und gegen Ungerechtigkeit streitet, die nach Wahrheit strebt und sich mit Verzerrungen und Verstellungen von Wahrheit auseinandersetzt.

Doch nicht nur die Ausgießung des Geistes, sondern auch die Konstitution der christlichen Kirche als Leib Christi zeigt eine pluralismusförmige Struktur. Mit den verschiedenen Gliedern, die gemeinsam für das gemeinsame Gute wirken, sind nicht nur einzelne menschliche Individuen gemeint, sondern auch Menschengruppen und Gemeinden, kirchliche und konfessionelle Verbindungen. Der Leib Christi entwickelt also pluralistische Formen auf vielen Ebenen. Er entwickelt sich vor allem in der Form von Gemeinden und organisierten Zusammenschlüssen von Gemeinden. Die verschiedenen Gemeinden mit ihren unterschiedlichen Glaubensprofilen und Lebensformen sind verbunden durch verschiedene Formen kirchlicher Leitung, verschiedene Formen der Erziehung und Bildung, verschiedene Formen der Liturgie und des sozialen und diakonischen Lebens. Auch hier sehen wir ein Zusammenspiel vielfältiger Zusammenschlüsse und Assoziationen mit einem begrenzten Spektrum organisierter und institutionalisierter Formen.

Damit steht uns auch im genuin kirchlichen Leben ein strukturierter pluralistischer Formzusammenhang vor Augen, analog dem, den wir im Blick auf spätmoderne pluralistische Gesellschaften beschrieben haben. Von ihren dogmatischen Grundlagen her und von den tatsächlich gelebten Formen kirchlichen Lebens aus sollten die christlichen Kirchen also mit Gelassenheit ihren inneren Pluralismus und den Pluralismus der Ökumene wertschätzen. Wir sollten diesen ökumenischen Pluralismus vor der Ver-

wechslung mit bloßem Individualismus bewahren und nachdrücklich gegen den Verdacht verteidigen, er züchte Chaos und Relativismus. Der strukturierte Pluralismus bietet eine anspruchsvolle Verbindung von Ordnung und Freiheit. Wir sollten darin ein hohes Gut erkennen, das verteidigt und gepflegt werden muss – das zu pflegen und zu verteidigen sich lohnt und das zu verteidigen und zu pflegen wir beauftragt sind.

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**Η μεταβολή των θρησκειών στο
θεολογικό περιβάλλον και οι τυπολογίες
στην θεολογία των θρησκειών. Κριτική
θεώρηση των θέσεων των
Alan Race & Paul Hedges στο έργο
«*Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*»**

**The alteration of religions in the theologi-
cal environment and the typologies in the
theology of religions. Critical overview of
the positions of Alan Race & Paul Hedges
in «*Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*»**

Abstract

In “Christian Approaches to Other Faith”, Alan Race, is trying to focus on the alterations of religion in an attempt to present the factors that create interfaith dialogue. At the same time, Paul Hedges, makes a summary of the typologies used by the Theology of Religions, in an effort to find common points for Religions’ conversion. Today, the Theology of Religions faces the challenges of diversity of religions. At the same time, in front of a generalized and undefined in many respects religious composition, it is absolutely necessary, two things to be determined. Firstly, whether a scholar can remain objective and unaffected by his own religious beliefs, maintaining the methodological and typological formalities. Secondly, how effective can a

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religious truth be, if it is the result of a stressful process combining opposites, even if these opposites converge in some points.

The Theology of Religions at this point of change and having its typologies and methods formed, before the next step it is required to give full and sufficient answers to these questions, otherwise the problems that will occur, will create wider chasms than those, as a subject of theology, is attempting to bridge.

Keywords

Theology of Religions, Alan Race & Paul Hedges, "Christian Approaches to Other Faith"

Εισαγωγή

Σύμφωνα με το έργο *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*², οι χριστιανικές προσεγγίσεις σε άλλες θρησκείες, αποτελούν πλέον πραγματικότητα, που διαμορφώνει ή επιχειρεί να διαμορφώσει μια νέα πρακτική στο περιβάλλον της Πίστης. Στο σχετικό έργο των Alan Race και Paul Hedges, εντοπίζεται ένα σημαντικό σύνολο θεολόγων, που επιχειρούν να προσεγγίσουν εξ' επόμεως Θεολογίας Θρησκειών, το περιεχόμενο άλλων θρησκειών μέσα από τη χριστιανική οπτική. Εκτός από τους Alan Race και Paul Hedges, διακρίνεται στο εκδοθέν έργο η παρουσία συγγραφέων με ισχυρό θεολογικό εκτόπισμα στο επιστημονικό γίγνεσθαι. Οι Daniel Strange, David Cheetham, Perry Schmidt-Leukel, Jeannine Hill, Fletcher, Ronald H. Miller, Martin Bauschke, K.P.Aleaz, Elizabeth Harris, John Parry, Pan-chin Lai, Garry W. Trompf και J. Gordon Melton, προβαίνουν σε προσεγγίσεις που προκαλούν και θετικά και αρνητικά τη θεολογική σκέψη.

Στο έργο *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*, μέσα από την προσέγγιση θεωρητικών και μεθοδολογικών θεμάτων αναδεικνύονται οι αλλαγές που συντελούνται στις θρησκείες, μέσα από τους παράγοντες διαμόρφωσης του διαθρησκειακού διαλόγου (σελ., 4-16). Παράλληλα, παρέχεται ένας έντονος προβληματισμός με την τυπολογία που χρησιμοποιούν οι θρησκείες, κατά τρόπο συνοπτικό αλλά και διαλεκτικό (σελ., 17-35). Με δεδομένες τις κλασικές προσεγγίσεις του χριστιανισμού προς τις άλλες θρησκείες, παρουσιάζονται οι θεωρίες, αρχικά της αποκλειστικότητας (exclusivism)

² Alan Race & Paul Hedges, *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*, SCM-Canterbury Press, London, 2008, όπου και οι σχετικές παραπομπές παρενθετικά εντός του κειμένου.

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ή exclusivismus), με βασική αρχή την υπεροχή της χριστιανικής θρησκείας έναντι κάθε άλλης (σελ., 36-65). Ακολούθως, μελετάται η θεωρία της εμπειρευτικότητας (inclusivismus ή inclusivismus), ως προβολή της πίστης και της ειλικρίνειας που ενυπάρχει σε κάθε θρησκεία και η οποία δύναται να συνδιαλέγεται με τον χριστιανισμό στον βαθμό που συμπίπτει (σελ., 63-84). Τέλος, η ενασχόληση καταγίνεται με τη θεωρία του πλουραλισμού (plouralismus ή plouralismus), σε μια προσπάθεια εξεύρεσης απαντήσεων για την εκτίμηση της θρησκευτικής πολυμορφίας μέσα από τη χριστιανική θρησκευτική πίστη και τον θεολογικό τρόπο σκέψης (σελ., 85-111).

Στην πορεία του έργου, μελετούνται και άλλες μορφές προσέγγισης των Θρησκειών, πέρα από τις κλασικές θεωρήσεις. Προβάλλεται έτσι, η ιδιαιτερότητα (particularity), μέσα από ειδικά παραδοσιακές, αλλά και μεταμοντέρνες προοπτικές του θεολογικού λόγου, ως μορφή προσέγγισης της θρησκευτικής ετερότητας (σελ., 112-135). Ακολούθως, παρουσιάζεται ο φεμινισμός (feminism), ως θρησκευτική θεώρηση, σε μια προσπάθεια παρουσίασης του συγκρητισμού, της συμβίωσης και της συνέργειας σε ένα κοινό περιβάλλον (σελ., 136-154). Τέλος, γίνεται αναφορά στο διαθρησκειακό διάλογο (interfaith dialogue), με στόχο την κατάδειξη της ευθύνης που προκύπτει στις θρησκείες, στη βάση των πολλαπλών δεδομένων ανάμεσα στη θρησκευτική ετερότητα και τη θρησκευτική ταυτότητα (σελ., 155-175).

Η ενασχόληση με τα θέματα αυτά προάγει, ανεξάρτητα με το πεδίο συμφωνίας ή διαφωνίας κάθε μελετητή, στη διαμόρφωση συμπερασμάτων περί της κάθε θρησκείας σε σχέση προς τον Χριστιανισμό. Έτσι, διαμορφώνονται απαντήσεις στα ερωτηματικά που προκύπτουν σε θέματα προσέγγισης θρησκειών πέραν της χριστιανικής πίστης (σελ., 176).

Το πρώτο περιβάλλον εξαγωγής απαντήσεων, είναι οι θρησκείες που εδράζονται στην αβρααμική παράδοση. Ως πρώτος θρησκευτικός χώρος προσεγγίζεται ο Ιουδαϊσμός σε μια προσπάθεια ανάδειξης της σύγκρουσης ανάμεσα σε αδέρφια, όπως αυτή έχει διαμορφωθεί (σελ., 176-190). Στην πορεία προάγεται ένα πέρασμα στο Ισλάμ, που επιχειρεί να δείξει τον Ιησού και τον Μωάμεθ ως αδέρφια (σελ., 191-211).

Το δεύτερο περιβάλλον εξαγωγής απαντήσεων, είναι οι θρησκείες που εδράζονται στην Ινδική παράδοση. Η προσέγγιση απαντήσεων μέσω του Ινδουισμού, οδηγεί σε τοποθετήσεις που δηλώνουν την ισχυρή διαφοροποίηση των θρησκειών στο σύγχρονο κοινωνικό γίγνεσθαι (σελ., 212-233). Παράλληλα, μέσω του Βουδισμού επιχειρούνται απαντήσεις

που σχετίζονται με το ανθρώπινο πνεύμα και τον τρόπο λειτουργίας του ανθρώπου ως οντότητας (σελ., 234-254). Τέλος, μέσα από τον Σιχισμό, προτείνονται απαντήσεις που σχετίζονται με το πέρασμα των θρησκειών από το περιβάλλον του ανταγωνισμού στο περιβάλλον της συνεργασίας (σελ., 255-269).

Το τρίτο περιβάλλον εξαγωγής απαντήσεων, είναι οι θρησκείες που εδράζονται στην Κινεζική παράδοση. Μέσα από το σύνολο των πολλαπλών θρησκειών της κινεζικής παράδοσης, παράγονται διαπραγματευτικές προσεγγίσεις της κουλτούρας αυτού του θρησκευτικού χώρου και παράλληλα επιχειρείται η αναζήτηση της θρησκευτικής ταυτότητας των θρησκευμάτων, που κινούνται μέσα σε αυτό το περιβάλλον θρησκευτικής παράδοσης (σελ., 270-289).

Το τέταρτο περιβάλλον εξαγωγής απαντήσεων, είναι αυτό που εκτείνεται πέραν των παραδοσιακά εδραιωμένων θρησκευτικών δομών. Έτσι αρχικά, προσεγγίζονται οι θρησκείες των Ιθαγενών, όχι μόνο μέσα από μια ιστορική ανασκόπηση, αλλά και υπό το πρίσμα των μελλοντικά επερχομένων αμφισβητήσεων (σελ., 290-307). Στην πορεία, παρουσιάζονται προσεγγίσεις, από νέες μορφές θρησκευτικών κινήσεων σε ένα διάλογο πέρα από στερεότυπα και ταμπέλες (σελ., 308-324).

Στο έργο *Christian Approaches to Other Faith*, δύσκολα μπορεί να γίνει αντιληπτό το περιεχόμενο των κεφαλαίων και των θέσεων που αναπτύσσονται, αν δεν υπάρξει απόλυτα σαφής κατανόηση δύο βασικών στοιχείων.

Πρώτον, της μεταβολής που έχει επέλθει και προεκτείνεται στο γίγνεσθαι της Θεολογίας των Θρησκειών. Αυτό διότι, μόνο έτσι μπορούν να οριστούν οι συντελεστές που διαμορφώνουν το περίγραμμα του διαλόγου και της προσέγγισης του όποιου θρησκευτικά έτερου στοιχείου. Ο Alan Race, εξ' αρχής ορίζοντας το περιβάλλον και το βάθος αυτής της μεταβολής, αναδεικνύει την αναγκαιότητα κατανόησης κάθε διαφορετικού θρησκευτικού στοιχείου, ως βασικής προϋπόθεσης κάθε διαλόγου ή διαλεκτικής στάσης έναντι των Θρησκειών.

Το δεύτερο βασικό στοιχείο είναι η κατανόηση της χρησιμοποιούμενης τυπολογίας στην Θεολογία των Θρησκειών, οι οποίες κρίνονται απαραίτητες σε κάθε μορφή διαλόγου ανάμεσα στις θρησκείες. Ο Paul Hedges, σε αυτή τη σκέψη κινούμενος, ουσιαστικά προσφέρει μια μεθοδολογική τακτοποίηση στο γνωστικό αντικείμενο της Θεολογίας

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των Θρησκειών και στο συγκεκριμένο έργο, ώστε να διασφαλίζεται η δυνατότητα επιστημονικής συνεννόησης και κατανόησης επί των θεμάτων που αναλύονται.

Οι Alan Race και Paul Hedges, μέσα από τις θέσεις τους στο *Christian Approaches to Other Faith*, οριοθετούν σθεναρά και τους συντελεστές διαμόρφωσης διαλόγου και τους συντελεστές τυπολογικών προβληματισμών στη Θεολογία των Θρησκειών. Έτσι, η ανάπτυξη της σκέψης τους, είναι πεδίο μελέτης για κάθε επιστήμονα που επιχειρεί να ενσκήψει στην διερεύνηση της σχέσεως των Θρησκειών και των κοινών ή μη χώρων που αυτές συναντιούνται ή αποκλίνουν.

1. Η Θεολογία των Θρησκειών σε μεταβολή: Συντελεστές διαμόρφωσης του διαλόγου³.

Το σημερινό πλαίσιο

Το 1972 ο Smith ανοίγοντας νέους δρόμους στην Θεολογία των Θρησκειών, πρότεινε πως οποιαδήποτε πνευματική κατάθεση της Χριστιανικής πίστης επιχειρείται, πρέπει να περιλαμβάνει την εξυπηρέτηση των σκοπών των ανθρώπων, ανεξάρτητα από τους θρησκευτικούς τρόπους του δόγματος που ανήκουν.

Το ερώτημα που τίθεται σήμερα είναι, αν αυτή η πρόταση του Smith παραμένει μακρινή φιλοδοξία ή αν ο άνθρωπος βρίσκεται κοντά σε αυτό τον στόχο. Επιπρόσθετα, αν στον αντίκτυπο της Χριστιανικής Θεολογίας τίθεται, κατά το δυνατόν, η διάθεση αυτή στην αντίληψη της θρησκευτικής διάστασης της ανθρώπινης ύπαρξης, τότε προαπαιτείται σαφέστατα η διευκρίνιση της διάστασης του θρησκευτικού πλουραλισμού.

Το σχήμα αυτής της Θεολογίας δεν είναι ξεκάθαρο. Ο πλουραλισμός σήμερα λειτουργεί ως υπαρκτική ανησυχία. Η λύση στο πρόβλημα που προκύπτει είναι η κατανόηση της θέσης πως κάθε χριστιανική κατάθεση παραμένει ελλειμματική, αν δεν κατανοηθεί ο αντίκτυπος του θρησκευτικού πλουραλισμού.

Ο Race με δεδομένους αυτούς τους προβληματισμούς, χαρακτηρίζει τον Smith ως «προφητικό» (σελ., 4).

³ Ο ακριβής τίτλος στο πρωτότυπο είναι: Alan Race, «Theology of Religions in Change: Factors in the Shape of a Debate».

Ο λόγος για τον οποίο πρέπει να ενδιαφερόμαστε για τις άλλες Θρησκείες

Για να προχωρήσουμε στην Θεολογία των Θρησκειών πρέπει να απαντήσουμε στο ερώτημα: «Γιατί ενδιαφερόμαστε θρησκευτικά για τους άλλους;». Ωστόσο, η απάντηση «Because they are there» κρίνεται ανεπαρκής, διότι οδηγεί είτε σε ανταγωνισμό, είτε σε συγκρητισμό προς τον χριστιανικό σκοπό. Ο Χριστιανισμός ενδιαφέρεται για τους θρησκευτικά άλλους και καταφεύγει στη Θεολογία των Θρησκειών, διότι αυτό αποτελεί όχι μόνο μία μεταστροφική προοπτική σε άλλους θρησκευτικούς τρόπους, αλλά λειτουργεί και απελευθερωτικά για τον ίδιο τον Χριστιανισμό (σελ., 5).

Ο Race σε αυτή την βάση κινούμενος, προτείνει τρεις λόγους για το ενδιαφέρον του Χριστιανισμού προς τις άλλες θρησκείες:

α) Πρώτος λόγος είναι το Αποστολικό κίνητρο. Είναι το αρχαιότερο των κινήτρων και αποδεικνύει ότι η καταδίκη των άλλων Θρησκειών υποβαθμίζει την αποστολική στρατηγική.

Το κίνητρο αυτό προϋποθέτει την προσαρμογή του Χριστιανισμού στην κάθε τοπική κουλτούρα. Π.χ. ο Αυγουστίνος του Canterbury στάλθηκε το 596 από τον Πάπα Γρηγόριο τον Μέγα στην Αγγλία με σκοπό τη μεταστροφή των Άγγλων. Έτσι, προσάρμοσε το Χριστιανισμό στα δεδομένα των Άγγλων και των δοξασιών που είχαν στην κουλτούρα τους. Το ίδιο και οι Ιουδαίοι το 16^ο αιώνα στην Κίνα. Υιοθέτησαν την κουλτούρα και τα ενδύματα των Βουδιστών για να καταφέρουν το στόχο τους και μάλιστα με την συναίνεση της αυτοκρατορικής αυλής.

Σήμερα η Θεολογία των Θρησκειών καλείται σε μια ίδια πρακτική για διάλογο στην βάση της αποστολικής δραστηριότητας. Αφετηρία αυτής αφετηρίας είναι ο διαθρησκειακός διάλογος. Το συμπέρασμα είναι πως, ίσως σήμερα το ενδιαφέρον για τις άλλες θρησκείες οδηγεί κατ' ευθείαν σε διάλογο, με ανατροπή της θέσης ότι ο Θεός βρίσκεται μόνο στην Εκκλησία.

β) Ο δεύτερος λόγος είναι το ενδιαφέρον προς τις άλλες θρησκευτικές παραδόσεις, δεδομένο που είναι έντονα αισθητό στον 21^ο αιώνα.

Συχνά οι θρησκευτικές αντιπαλότητες, η βία και οι ακρότητες έχουν τις ρίζες τους στις Θρησκείες, που κατηγορούνται ως υπεύθυνες για τα δεινά του κόσμου. (π.χ. Το τρομοκρατικό κτύπημα στις ΗΠΑ το Σεπτέμβριο του

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2001). Τα εξτρεμιστικά κινήματα εδρεύουν σε θρησκείες και αυτές έχουν απόλυτη ευθύνη, διότι πολλές από αυτές μετά από «κείμενα τρόμου» υποθάλλουν τέτοιες ενέργειες.

Στις περιπτώσεις αυτές η θέση του Hans Küng, ότι δεν μπορεί να υπάρξει ειρήνη χωρίς ειρήνη μεταξύ των Θρησκειών, είναι απόλυτα ορθή και ο Küng αποδεικνύεται απόλυτα αξιόπιστος και αληθής.

Η Θεολογία των Θρησκειών μπορεί να συμβάλει στην ειρήνη και στην δικαιοσύνη, εξαλείφοντας απειλές και ανταγωνισμούς που ζητούν η μία Θρησκεία να εξοντώσει την άλλη και μάλιστα υπό το πρόσχημα (της όποιας) Θείας εντολής. Παράλληλα, η Θεολογία των Θρησκειών δύναται να διαμορφώσει μέσα από το χριστιανικό ενδιαφέρον έναν ειρηνικό κόσμο μέσα από μία κοινή ηθική πρακτική (σελ., 6).

γ) Ο τρίτος λόγος είναι το θεολογικό ενδιαφέρον. Το ενδιαφέρον προκαλείται:

1) Από τη μαρτυρία της Βίβλου ότι, ο Θεός υπάρχει και σε άλλους πολιτισμούς και θρησκείες.

2) Από την ίδια τη δημιουργικότητα του Θεού (φύση, συνείδηση, ηθική), η οποία είναι ζωντανή και σε άλλες θρησκευτικές μορφές.

3) Από τη φιλοσοφική παρατήρηση ότι, η «γλώσσα» για το Θεό είναι περιορισμένη και ενεργείται από τον άνθρωπο.

4) Από την προσδοκία ότι, ο Θεός είναι «περισσότερος» στην παγκοσμιότητα ανεξάρτητα από παραδόσεις.

5) Από την πρακτική ότι, όλες οι Θρησκείες έχουν κοινά σημεία (π.χ. λατρεία, ιερείς κ.τ.λ.).

Καρδιά της Θεολογίας των Θρησκειών, είναι η προβληματική του ινδού Samantha, ότι η βούληση του Θεού εντοπίζεται σε όλες τις Θρησκείες. Στην σκέψη μάλιστα του Samantha, δηλώνεται η πεποίθηση πως δεν μπορεί παρά να ισχύει παρά μόνο αυτό: Η θέληση του Θεού υπάρχει σε κάθε θρησκευτικό σχήμα. Η εδραίωση δε, αυτής της λογικής πηγάζει από το δεδομένο ότι οι Θρησκείες διαμορφώνονται από τα σχήματα των πολιτισμών.

Συνέπεια αυτών είναι, ότι παράγεται η υποχρέωση σεβασμού κάθε θρησκευτικής έκφρασης και στη βάση της αποστολικότητας, οφείλουμε να είμαστε ανοιχτοί στη γνώμη των άλλων Θρησκειών. Αυτό είναι άλλωστε και το έργο της Θεολογίας των Θρησκειών (σελ., 7).

Πηγές του χριστιανικού προβληματισμού

Είναι σημαντικό να υπάρχει ξεκάθαρη μεθοδολογία, ώστε να προσδιορίζεται επαρκώς ο αντίκτυπος του Χριστιανισμού στο θρησκευτικό πλουραλισμό. Κάθε νέα εμπειρία που προκύπτει πρέπει να αξιολογείται από την θέση του Χριστιανισμού και να παράγεται ο σχετικός εντοπισμός για το αν ευσταθεί ερμηνευτικά, βιβλικά και δογματικά. Πρέπει, σε κάθε περίπτωση, να λειτουργείται η σχετική μελέτη για το αν η χριστιανική αλήθεια είναι συνεχής στην ιστορία ή επαυξάνεται σε κάθε γενιά. Κάποιοι λειτουργούν με αφαιρετική μεθοδολογία και σε παλιές προβλέψεις δίνουν λύση. Άλλοι επανεξετάζουν και βρίσκουν απλά τη σχέση του παρόντος με τις παλιές αλήθειες. Έτσι, οι συγγραφείς της Κ.Δ. βρίσκουν την πλήρωση της Ιουδαϊκής προσδοκίας στον Ιησού, αλλά ο Ιησούς στην συνέχεια προτείνεται και σε άλλους λαούς (σελ., 7).

Η απάντηση αυτής της μεθοδολογίας δίνεται στην Εβραίους 1,1-2, που για πολλούς αποτελεί το πλαίσιο της Χριστιανικής Θεολογίας των Θρησκειών. Αυτή η επεξηγηματική μεθοδολογία είναι η ενδεικνυόμενη⁴.

Αντίθετα, η επαναδιαπραγματευτική μεθοδολογία, μέσω της κριτικής ιστορικής ανάγκης, συνδέει τον Ιουδαϊσμό με κάθε εφαρμογή θεολογικού σχήματος και καθιστά μια ιστορική προσωπικότητα ως δημιουργό του κόσμου. Σε κάθε περίπτωση η γνώση των μεθοδολογικών σχημάτων είναι αναγκαία πρόθεση της Θεολογία των Θρησκειών (σελ., 8).

Τρεις τρόποι με τους οποίους η θεολογική μελέτη αντανakλά ενδιαφέρον στο θρησκευτικό πλουραλισμό

Το ερώτημα που τίθεται για τον Χριστιανισμό είναι σε ποιο βαθμό μπορεί να φτάσει ο αντίκτυπος του στα δεδομένα των άλλων θρησκευτικών εμπειριών και πεποιθήσεων. Οι πιθανές απαντήσεις είναι τρεις:

α) Η Χριστιανική Θεολογία των Θρησκειών θα μπορούσε να καταδικαστεί στην δογματική της διδασκαλία, όταν αυτή αγνοεί το

⁴ Εβρ, 1, 1-3: «Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι ὁ Θεὸς λαλήσας τοῖς πατράσιν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις, ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ, ὃν ἔθηκε κληρονόμον πάντων, δι' οὗ καὶ τοὺς αἰῶνας ἐποίησεν· ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, δι' ἑαυτοῦ καθαρισμόν ποιησάμενος τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς.»

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θρησκευτικό πλουραλισμό και αυτό διότι, δεν μπορούμε να παραβλέψουμε την αξία των άλλων θρησκειών (σελ., 9).

β) Η Χριστιανική σκέψη δεν μπορεί να έχει το απόλυτο μέτρο της προσαρμογής στην αλήθεια, υπό την σκέψη ότι κάθε κίνηση μεμονωμένη, αποτελεί μειοψηφία στον κόσμο και άρα δεν είναι απόλυτη αλήθεια. Το συμπέρασμα είναι ότι, το χριστιανικό όραμα δεν μπορεί να είναι αναγκαστικό ή το μοναδικό «μοντέλο», όπως δεν μπορεί να είναι καμία θρησκεία μόνη της (σελ., 10).

γ) Η τρίτη μορφή ενδιαφέροντος στη Θεολογία των Θρησκειών από τον Χριστιανισμό προς τις άλλες θρησκείες σχετίζεται προς τον διάλογο. Η παράθεση απόψεων, η αναγνώριση των διαφορών, η τυχόν εγκυρότητα και αυθεντικότητα κάθε θρησκείας είναι σημεία διαλόγου ακόμα και αν καταλήγουν σε διαφορές, και αυτό διότι η αμοιβαία κριτική είναι παραγωγική και γόνιμη (σελ., 10-11).

Η δομή των θέσεων του Alan Race στο έργο Christian Approaches to Other Faiths

A' Μέρος:

1. Αποδέχεται την εγκυρότητα της αναζήτησης για το πώς η χριστιανική πίστη ερμηνεύει το θρησκευτικό πλουραλισμό.

2. Περιγράφει την τυπολογική εξήγηση των κλασικών προσεγγίσεων των θεωριών α) αποκλειστικότητας, β) εμπειρευτικότητας, γ) πλουραλισμού.

3. Προσεγγίζει τη μεθοδολογία του διαθρησκειακού διαλόγου-αντιλόγου.

4. Στο τέλος του α' μέρους, τίθεται η θεματολογία της συζήτησης της φύσης και του αντίκτυπου του διαθρησκειακού διαλόγου. Το τμήμα αυτό λειτουργεί ως γέφυρα για το β' μέρος.

B' Μέρος

1. Ερευνά χριστιανικές απαντήσεις σε ατομικές θρησκείες (individual religions).

2. Κάνει κριτική στη θεολογική στρατηγική των άλλων θρησκειών και στην «Ιουδαϊκή θέση».

3. Διερευνά τους συσχετισμούς που προκύπτουν μεταξύ των θρησκειών στη βάση του ενδιαφέροντος των Νέων Θρησκευτικών Κινήσεων που προσελκύουν τον Δυτικό κόσμο (σελ. 11-13).

Η Θεολογία των Θρησκειών ως μέση οδός (Via Media)

Με αφορμή το μυθιστόρημα του Yann Martel «*Life of Pi*»,⁵ προβάλλεται η ένταση μεταξύ των επίσημων φρουρών της θρησκευτικής παράδοσης και του ενδιαφέροντος ενός ανθρώπου για άλλες θρησκευτικές εμπειρίες. Ενώ υπάρχει η διάχυτη θέση, ότι κάποιος δεν μπορεί να είναι και Μουσουλμάνος και Βουδιστής και Ινδουιστής και Χριστιανός, αντιπαραβάλλεται η χριστιανική Θεολογία των Θρησκειών που πρέπει να καθορίσει την ισορροπία μεταξύ της παγκοσμιοποίησης της θρησκευτικής αλήθειας και της μοναδικότητας-διαφορετικότητας κάθε θρησκείας.

Η πρόκληση που αντιμετωπίζει ο χριστιανισμός σήμερα είναι να βοηθήσει μέσω της Θεολογίας των Θρησκειών να εκλείψουν αρχικά οι κάθε μορφής θρησκευτικές εντάσεις και να προχωρήσουν οι θρησκείες σε μία μορφή γόνιμης συνεργασίας κοινής αναζήτηση της αλήθειας (σελ., 13-14).

2. Ένας προβληματισμός στις Τυπολογίες: Επιχειρώντας μια γρήγορη παρουσίαση⁶.

Εισαγωγικά

Το 1983 ο Alan Race στο έργο του *Christians and Religious Pluralism*⁷, εισαγάγει την ποιά γνωστή τυπολογία στην Θεολογία των Θρησκειών. Θέτει μια τρίπτυχη τυπολογία α) αποκλειστικότητας, β) εμπεριεκτικότητας και γ) πλουραλισμού, σύμφωνα με τις οποίες οι χριστιανικές θέσεις-απαντήσεις μπορούν να εφαρμοστούν σε άλλες θρησκείες. Στην τυπολογία αυτή, έγιναν τροποποιήσεις ή προσθήκες.

Η άποψη του Hedges είναι ότι (σελ., 17):

1. Η τυπολογία αυτή είναι η πιο χρήσιμη και η πιο γνωστή.
2. Τα περισσότερα βιβλία ή απορρίπτουν αυτήν την τυπολογία ή παράγουν νέα σχήματα ως κάτι διαφορετικό, είτε τη χρησιμοποιούν ως θέση αλλάζοντας ονόματα ή κατηγορίες. Σε κάθε περίπτωση η τυπολογία αυτή αποτελεί τη βάση.

⁵ Yann Martel, *Life of Pi*, Canongate, 2003.

⁶ Ο ακριβής τίτλος στο πρωτότυπο είναι: Paul Hedges, *A Reflection on Typologies: Negotiating a Fast-Moving Discussion*.

⁷ Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions*, (enlarged), SCM Press, London, ²1993.

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3. Η τυπολογία αυτή απαιτεί συστηματική προσοχή.

Ειδικότερα εμβαθύνοντας ο Hedges αναλύει ότι:

Η αποκλειστικότητα είναι σύστημα που αποκλείει τους μη Χριστιανούς. Αν κάποιος δηλ., δεν ομολογεί πίστη στον Χριστό Ιησού και στην Εκκλησία, δεν σώζεται. Στην αποκλειστική θεώρηση ο Θεός αποκαλύπτεται μόνο μέσω ενός (Ιησού) και μόνο μέσω μιας παράδοσης (της Χριστιανικής).

Η εμπεριεκτική θεώρηση αναφέρεται σε αυτούς που επιθυμούν να συμπεριλάβουν πιστούς από άλλες Θρησκευτικές παραδόσεις με γνώμονα σωστικές βαθμίδες. Συνεπώς η υπακοή στον ηθικό νόμο και στους κανόνες, που ως φυσικό νόμο ο Θεός θέτει, οδηγούν σε σωστική κατεύθυνση.

Ο πλουραλισμός υποστηρίζει ότι καμία Θρησκεία-παράδοση δεν έχει ως μονοπώλιο την αποκάλυψη ή την σωτηρία. Προτείνει έτσι τη θέση, ότι κάθε Θρησκεία γνωρίζει το Θεό μερικώς και άρα η αλήθεια εντοπίζεται σε κάθε διαφορετική εμπειρία (σελ., 18).

Κριτικές των σχημάτων τυπολογίας στον Hedges

Ο Perry Leukel θεωρεί ότι η τυπολογία αυτή αποτελεί λογική αναγκαιότητα. Παραθέτοντας οκτώ τυπολογικές μεθόδους κρίνει ότι ο Race έχει τη λογικότερη προσέγγιση.

Για τις τυπολογικές μεθόδους τίθενται δύο ενστάσεις.

1. Η εστίαση στη σωστική αξία των άλλων θρησκειών γίνεται με λάθος τρόπο, διότι το διαρκές ζητούμενο είναι το ποιός σώζεται ενώ πρωταρχικά πρέπει να μας προκαλεί ο εντοπισμός και η ανησυχία για τη θρησκευτική διαφορετικότητα.

Ωστόσο αυτή η τυπολογική προσέγγιση είναι περιγραφική και λεπτομερής γι' αυτό και οι περισσότερες θρησκείες ξεφεύγουν από την εστίαση αυτή.

2. Η τυπολογία-όπως ισχυρίζεται και ο Tilley-πρέπει να προβάλλει το ζήτημα της αναγνώρισης του άλλου ως «άλλου» και δεν πρέπει να επιχειρεί την αναγνώριση του όποιου «άλλου» ως μια εξωτερική αντανάκλαση (σελ., 18-19).

Οι τυπολογίες πολλές φορές εμπλέκονται. Ο Heim δηλώνει πως ακολουθεί την εμπεριεκτική θεώρηση, αλλά προχωρεί σε ένα σύνολο

γενικότητας. Ο Leuker προσωποποιεί τον πλουραλισμό, κ.τ.λ. Προτεινόμενη λύση από τον Hedges είναι η προσέγγιση μέσα από την συνισταμένη εμπειρευτικότητας και αποκλειστικότητας. Θεωρεί ότι ο πλουραλισμός είναι μορφή αποκλειστικότητας, εφόσον οι θεωρίες στοχεύουν στο ίδιο σωτηριολογικό τέλος. Άρα, οι ισχυρισμοί κάθε Θρησκείας ότι πρεσβεύουν την αλήθεια, οριοθετείται εκ των υστέρων από έναν πλουραλιστικό ερμηνευτικό σκελετό. Εξάλλου το κάθε μονοπάτι που προσφέρει κάθε Θρησκεία είναι αποκλειστικό (σελ., 19-20).

Ο Joseph Augustine Di Noia θεωρεί ότι η εμπειρευτικότητα δεν είναι λογική προσέγγιση των άλλων θρησκείων, εφόσον κάθε Θρησκεία επιζητά το στόχο της σωτηρίας, αλλά σε διαμορφωμένο πεδίο θρησκευτικής διαφορετικότητας (σελ., 20). Η σωτηρία κάθε Θρησκείας έχει διαφορετικότητα στο φάσμα της σύλληψης της, γι' αυτό και κάθε κοινή συστηματοποίηση είναι αποτυχημένη. Θα μπορούσε να υπάρχει κάποιο αποτέλεσμα με την απαλοιφή της έννοιας της Θρησκείας, ωστόσο τα όρια δεν είναι στοιχείο που αίρεται εύκολα, ως αποτέλεσμα και άλλων παραγόντων π.χ. πολιτισμού.

Κάθε τυπολογία στοχεύει στην απλοποίηση, όμως αυτό δεν είναι εύκολο λόγω της ποικιλίας των δεδομένων. Παράλληλα, αν και οι κατηγορίες δεν συνδέονται, πολλοί μελετητές βρίσκονται σε περισσότερες από μία τυπολογικές προσεγγίσεις. Η αποκλειστική θεωρία, είναι φορτισμένη με την μοναδικότητα από κάποιες συγκεκριμένες σωστικές αξίες. Η εμπειρευτική θεωρία, ισοδυναμεί με ευρύτητα ευπρόσδεκτων αντιλήψεων διατηρώντας ουδέτερα σχήματα. Ωστόσο, ο όρος πολλές φορές παρουσιάζει διαφορετική φύση τόσο στο χαρακτήρα, όσο και στην προσέγγιση των άλλων θρησκείων (σελ., 22).

Κατ' αυτόν τον τρόπο ο Barth θεωρείται και αποκλειστικός και εμπειρευτικός. Ο Newbiggin δηλώνει εμπειρευτικός και αποκλειστικός. Αρχή και στόχος της τυπολογίας δεν είναι να συγχέει, αλλά μεθοδολογικά να αποκωδικοποιεί.

Συμπέρασμα είναι πως, ο τρόπος σκέψης κάποιων ανθρώπων διαπερνά την τυπολογία (σελ., 21-22).

Άλλες τυπολογίες στον Hedges

Ο Hedges στο έργο *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*, κάνει αναφορά και σε άλλα τυπολογικά σχήματα, επιδιώκοντας την παρουσίαση

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των μεθοδολογικών τρόπων προσέγγισης που εντοπίζονται στη Θεολογία των Θρησκειών. Σύμφωνα με την παρουσίαση που επιχειρεί αναδεικνύονται οι εξής τυπολογίες:

α) Η τυπολογία του Schmidt-Leucker: Βασίζεται στην τυπολογία του Race. Κινείται στο σχήμα Αθεϊσμός-αποκλειστικότητα- εμπειρευτικότητα-πλουραλισμός (σελ., 23).

β) Η τυπολογία του Karkkainen: Βασίζεται στην τρίπτυχη τυπολογία με τους όρους: εκκλησιοκεντρικό – χριστοκεντρικό - θεοκεντρικό και περιγράφει αντίστοιχα (σελ., 24):

- 1) Αυτούς που είναι μέλη της Εκκλησίας,
- 2) αυτούς που βασίζονται στο Χριστό,
- 3) αυτούς που βασίζονται στην θεότητα και άρα καθιστούν ισχυρή κάθε θρησκεία.

γ) Η τυπολογία του Knitter: Βασίζεται σε μοντέλα (σελ., 24-25):

- 1) Μοντέλο Αντικατάστασης = αποκλειστικότητα
- 2) Μοντέλο Αμοιβαιότητας = πλουραλισμός
- 3) Μοντέλο Εκπλήρωσης = εμπειρευτικότητα.
- 4) Μοντέλο Αποδοχής = προέκταση της κλασικής τυπολογίας

δ) Η τυπολογία του Thomas: Προτείνει το διαχωρισμό των θρησκειών σε τύπους. Ξεχωρίζει επτά τύπους θρησκευτικής συμπεριφοράς και εντοπίζει δέκα σχήματα στα οποία ταξινομεί με διαφορετική προσέγγιση.

Οι συμπεριφορές που διαπιστώνει είναι (σελ., 25):

1. Αληθινή ανακρίβεια (ο χριστιανισμός είναι αληθινός και οι θρησκείες λάθος).

2. Σχετικότητα (κάθε θρησκεία είναι έκφραση του εαυτού της)

3. Ουσία (όλες οι θρησκείες έχουν κάποιο πυρήνα εμπειρίας)

4. Ανάπτυξη-Εκπλήρωση (οι άλλες θρησκείες είναι κύριες σε σχέση με τις χριστιανικές αλήθειες)

5. Ιστορική αλήθεια (ίδια θέση με την προηγούμενη, αλλά με την προσθήκη ενός σχεδίου αναπτυξιακής σωτηρίας)

6. Αποκάλυψη-Αμαρτία (ο Θεός ως φυσική αποκάλυψη στην δημιουργία)

7. Νέες αναχωρήσεις (έχει δύο όψεις): α)χριστιανική πίστη και διάλογος β) κοσμικότητα με την έννοια πως ο Χριστιανισμός είναι αντίθετος προς τον κόσμο. Παράλληλα δέχεται πως αυτό ελευθερώνει τον άνθρωπο.

Η πρόταση Συγκριτικής Θεολογίας

Η Συγκριτική Θεολογία προτείνει, πως πρέπει να δεσμευτούμε με άλλες θρησκείες πριν σχετιστούμε με αυτές.⁸ Ωστόσο έτσι ακυρώνεται κάθε τυπολογία ανούσια και παράγεται τυπολογία ουσίας καθόσον:

1. Περιγράφονται προσεγγίσεις που έχουν γίνει.
2. Εντοπίζεται η αλληλεξάρτηση των Θρησκειών.
3. Σχολιάζονται οι εμπειρίες.
4. Παράγεται διάλογος.
5. Συνδυάζεται θεωρία και πράξη.

Συμπέρασμα: Αποφεύγεται το λάθος να γίνεται πρώτα η εννοιολόγηση και μετά η συνάντηση των θρησκειών (σελ., 25-26).

Η κατανόηση της τυπολογίας

Η τυπολογία του Race – κατά τον Hedges- είναι η ορθότερη και πρέπει να προεκταθεί. Αυτό, διότι μέσα από τον έσω-θρησκευτικό διάλογο, μπορεί να παραχθεί συνάντηση των θρησκειών μέσα από περιγραφικές, εφευρετικές, και ποικιλόμορφες συμπεριφορές και όχι μέσα από καθοδηγητικές, κανονιστικές και κλειστές στάσεις (σελ., 26-27).

Ο όρος απορρέει από την ιδιαίτερη φύση κάθε θρησκείας. Ως θεωρία προσεγγίζει την εμπειρική θεώρηση, αλλά με μία και μόνη διαφορά. Ενώ η εμπειρική προσέγγιση τείνει να βλέπει λάθος στις άλλες θρησκείες, η θεώρηση που διαφαίνεται στον Race και προβάλλει ο Hedges, βλέπει «ιδιαιτερότητα» (σελ., 26-27).

Η ιδιαιτερότητα ως θεωρία δεν αποτελεί ακόμα στην τυπολογία μια κατηγορία. Αν γίνει κατηγορία προκύπτει το πρόβλημα ότι ενδεχομένως να μην είναι ορατές οι διακρίσεις μεταξύ των θρησκειών (σελ., 27-29).

Υπάρχουν πολλοί τρόποι κατηγοριοποίησης στην προσέγγιση της Θεολογίας των Θρησκειών. Η τρίπτυχη κατηγοριοποίηση αποκλειστικότητας-εμπειρικτικότητας-πλουραλισμού είναι η ασφαλέστερη. Ο Hedges ωστόσο, παρά την ανασφάλεια του μη εντοπισμού των στοιχείων που διακρίνουν τις θρησκείες, εμμένει και προτείνει ως κατηγορία και την ιδιαιτερότητα (σελ., 30).

⁸ Η Συγκριτική θεολογία προτείνεται από τους Barnes, Fredericks, Clooney.

Επίλογος

Οι νέοι δρόμοι της θεολογικής σκέψης, προκαλούν τη Θεολογία να εισέλθει σε νέα περιβάλλοντα. Η αντιμετώπιση των μελών της κάθε θρησκείας ως εικόνων Θεού εξ απόψεως χριστιανικής πίστης, καθώς και η αντίληψη ότι πρόκειται για αδελφούς, αποτελεί για τη Θεολογία έδαφος μελέτης των θρησκευτικών περιβαλλόντων που ανήκουν, ακόμα και αν τα περιβάλλοντα αυτά αποκλίνουν από τις αρχές της χριστιανικής πίστης. Επιπρόσθετα, ανεξάρτητα από τις όποιες εξωτερικές σχηματοποιήσεις και σαφώς ανεξάρτητα από τον τρόπο που αυτές εκφράζονται, η αλήθεια είναι ότι ο άνθρωπος ταλαιπωρείται πάντα από τα ίδια προβλήματα και επιχειρεί τις ίδιες υπερβάσεις. Είναι βέβαιο πως υπάρχει διαφοροποίηση στον τρόπο που επιδιώκεται η όποιας μορφής υπέρβαση, αλλά είναι ομοίως βέβαιο, πως ανεξάρτητα από τις σχηματικές δεσμεύσεις της κάθε θρησκείας, βασικός στόχος της θρησκευτικής παράδοσης είναι η απελευθέρωση του ανθρώπου από κάθε μορφή ανελευθερίας. Στόχος του ανθρώπου είναι να παραμένει ελεύθερος από τη φθορά και το θάνατο. Ο θάνατος και η φθορά, ως δεσμώτες της ανθρώπινης ελευθερίας, είναι στοιχεία που ταλανίζουν κάθε ανθρώπινη παρουσία. Κάθε θρησκευτικό σχήμα στην ουσία του, αυτή την υπέρβαση επιχειρεί. Είτε άμεσα, είτε έμμεσα, οι θρησκευτικές ομάδες επιχειρούν την κοινή υπέρβαση αυτών των προβλημάτων με την όποια προσωπική ή ατομική προέκταση.

Μέχρι σήμερα εμφανώς, και κάποιες φορές με πολύ έντονο τρόπο, οι θρησκείες μη έχοντας κατανοήσει ότι υπάρχουν κοινά προβλήματα στους ανθρώπους, ανεξάρτητα από τα πιστεύω τους, περιέπεσαν σε σφάλματα. Υπήρξαν και υπάρχουν συγκρούσεις ανάμεσα στα μέλη διαφορετικών θρησκευτικών πεποιθήσεων που είναι ορατά στο σύγχρονο κοινωνικό γίνεσθαι. Το ακόμα χειρότερο είναι, πως τα ίδια φαινόμενα σύγκρουσης εντοπίζονται ακόμα και ανάμεσα σε μέλη της ίδιας θρησκευτικής ομάδας. Έτσι για παράδειγμα, με τον ίδιο τρόπο που αντιμετωπίζεται μια σύγκρουση ανάμεσα σε Μουσουλμάνους και Χριστιανούς, εκφράζεται και η σύγκρουση ανάμεσα σε οπαδούς της αποκλειστικής θεώρησης (exclusivismus) με απόλυτα φονταμενταλιστικές ενέργειες, προς οπαδούς της ίδιας θρησκευτικής ομάδας που έχουν πλουραλιστικό τρόπο θεώρησης με φιλελεύθερη διάθεση (plouralismus).

Η αναγνώριση του θρησκευτικά «άλλου», αποτελεί μια ασφαλή μέθοδο για να ατονήσουν προβλήματα αυτής της μορφής, ανεξάρτητα

από αυτή καθ' αυτή τη θρησκευτική συνείδηση του ανθρώπου. Με δεδομένο ότι, κάθε άνθρωπος είναι αξία αυτοτελή, οντότητα χωριστή και προσωπικότητα σεβαστή, πρέπει να υπάρχει επιδίωξη του σεβασμού στην όποια θρησκευτική επιλογή του κάθε ανθρώπου. Το γεγονός ενός ουσιαστικού και επιδιωκόμενου σεβασμού, στην θρησκευτική πεποίθηση των επιλογών ενός θρησκευόμενου διαφορετικά ανθρώπου, δεν νοηματοδοτεί σαφώς και την αποδοχή των πεποιθήσεών του. Αυτή είναι ή πρέπει να είναι, η προοπτική της Θεολογίας των Θρησκειών, με την λογική πως μέσα από αυτή την μεσότητα οφείλει να ισορροπεί παραγωγικά αντίρροπες θρησκευτικές δυνάμεις.

Στο όλο αυτό εγχείρημα, η χρήση μεθοδολογικών και τυπολογικών σχημάτων παρουσιάζει δύο όψεις. Η πρώτη κωδικοποιεί και παρουσιάζει σχήματα θρησκευτικών αντιλήψεων, με προσέγγιση από μελετητές που δεν ανήκουν θρησκευτικά στο εξεταζόμενο θρησκευτικό περιβάλλον. Η δεύτερη εναρμονίζει και συνθέτει τα κοινά σημεία (σημεία επαφής), που εντοπίζονται ανάμεσα σε δύο ή και περισσότερα θρησκευτικά σχήματα.

Το ερώτημα που προκύπτει στην πρώτη περίπτωση είναι το αν και κατά πόσον ανεπηρέαστος και αντικειμενικός μπορεί να παραμένει ο μελετητής, από τις δικές του θρησκευτικές πεποιθήσεις, όσο και αν εμμένει σωστά στην εφαρμογή των μεθοδολογικών και τυπολογικών διατυπώσεων. Στην δεύτερη περίπτωση, αναφύεται το ερώτημα πόσο ουσιαστική είναι μια αλήθεια αν ενδεχομένως προκύπτει από μια αγχωτική διαδικασία σύνθεσης των αντιθέτων, έστω και αν τα αντίθετα σε κάποια σημεία συγκλίνουν.

Η Θεολογία των Θρησκειών σε αυτή την φάση μεταβολής που βρίσκεται και έχοντας σχηματοποιήσει πλέον τυπολογίες και μεθόδους, οφείλει πριν από το επόμενο βήμα να δώσει απάντηση πλήρη και επαρκή σε αυτά τα ερωτήματα, διαφορετικά τα προβλήματα που θα παρουσιαστούν θα δημιουργήσουν μεγαλύτερα χάσματα από αυτά που επιχειρεί, ως γνωστικό αντικείμενο της Θεολογίας, να γεφυρώσει.

Cristian Prilipceanu¹

The Lord's Resurrection Prophesized in the Psalms 67(68).2-4 and Ps. 118(117).24 The Patristic Reading of Psalm 67(68).2-4 and Ps. 118(117).24

Abstract

Orthodox Christianity draws on two sources, the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition, the prayer of the Church interweaving thus Scripture and Patristic writings. The present article deals with four psalmic verses that bear a special relevance for both Jewish and Christian spirituality. Ps. 68(67).2-4 and Ps. 118(117).24 are read in the Orthodox Church during the Easter Week underlining the joy to have died to sin during Lent and being spiritually resurrected with Christ. For the ancient Jew the lifting of the Ark, its following through the desert and its stop were the visual enactments of the Divine order to set or lift camp, being equated with the presence of YHWH in the middle of the community. In the Orthodox Patristic tradition the verses describing these actions symbolize the Resurrection and the displacement from Christ's presence of the sinners. The complete joy of the Devil's defeat is actuated on the day of the Resurrection and, through extension, in every liturgical day.

Keywords

The lifting of the Ark, the Resurrection, the melting of the wax, the displacement of sinners; relation between verbs קָם, הָיָה and ἀνίσταμαι.

I. Introduction

Orthodox Christianity draws on two sources, the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition, the prayer of the Church interweaving thus Scripture and

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Patristic writings. The present article deals with four psalmic verses that bear a special relevance for both Jewish and Christian spirituality. Ps. 68(67).2-4 and Ps. 118(117).24 are read in the Orthodox Church during the Easter Week underlining the joy to have died to sin during Lent and being spiritually resurrected with Christ. For the ancient Jew the lifting of the Ark, its following through the desert and its stop were the visual enactments of the divine order to set or lift camp, being equated with the presence of YHWH in the middle of the community. In the Orthodox Church the verses describing these actions symbolize the Resurrection and the displacement from Christ's presence of the sinners.

The complete joy of the Devil's defeat is actuated on the day of the Resurrection and, through extension, in every liturgical day. The analysis will evince that the Holy Tradition, the interpretation in Christian key of these OT fragments, is in no way anachronistic but follows the ancient text closely, arguing in favor of the Orthodox reliance on it.

Called the titan of the psalms, Ps. 68 (67).2-4² is held to be the most difficult passage in the book of Psalms, an apex of poetical thought and composition for F. Delitzsch.³ According to St. Athanasius' *Life of Saint Anthony* the psalm was used by the anachorite as a prayer against temptation: "For his acquaintances used often to come expecting to find him dead, and would hear him singing, «Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered, let them also that hate Him flee before His face. As smoke vanisheth, let them vanish; as wax melteth before the face of fire, so let the sinners perish from the face of God»"⁴, a cathartic nuance that survived in Orthodox Christianity as part of the Patristic interpretation of the psalm.

At a glance, what we perceive is an idealized and synthesized historical victory. The poem celebrates an aspect of Jewish history which it

² The psalm and OT books follow the numbering and Hebrew text of K. Elliger et W. Rudolph, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Quae antea cooperantibus A. Alt, O. Eißfeldt, P. Kahle ediderat R. Kittel, Editio Funditus Renovata adjuvantibus H. Bardtke, ..., cooperantibus H.P. Rüger et J. Ziegler ediderunt K. Elliger et W. Rudolph, Textum Masoreticum curavit H.P. Rüger, Masoram Elaboravit G.E. Weil, Editio quinta emendata opera A. Schenker, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997. The verses that are not preceded by the Hebrew text are adapted from the Douay Rheims 1899 American Edition (DRA Bible).

³ Gianfranco Ravasi, *Il libro dei Salmi*, Volume II (51-100), Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 1981, 362 p.

⁴ *The Life of Anthony* 13, Athanasius: *Select Works and Letters*, Volume IV of Nicene and post-nicene Fathers, Series II, Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, editors, p. 200.

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presents as important as the crossing of the Red Sea: God's guiding of the chosen people, the defeat of their enemies and their settlement in the Holy Land. While the epopee of the exodus ends with the crossing of Jordan (Joshua 2.5), Psalm 68 lengthens that joy to the building of the Temple, a perspective which corroborates that of the Chronicles where the people could not rest until God had entered into His Temple.

Various solutions have been proposed for its origin: Battenwieser claimed that the psalm can be placed during the Judges, Mowinckel opted for the time of Saul, while Eerdmans believes that it should be attributed to David. Albright saw in its composition a catalogue of thirty "beginnings" of as many songs composed with symbolic motifs from Canaan and Sumer on which Yahwist theology drew. H. Schmidt considered the psalm a collection of independent mini-songs used for the processional liturgy in which YHWH was enthroned during the new year celebration. Caquot and Schildenberger argued in favor of the monarchic period, connecting the poem to Isaiah and Ezekiel's times (the end of the eighth century).⁵

The other verse that we will focus on is part of the liturgical Psalm 118(117).²⁴ The fragment celebrates either the joy of the return from exile

⁵ Ravasi, *Il libro*, 365. S. Mowinckel claims that the work was initially a north-Israelian cultic song subsequently adapted to the Jerusalemite liturgy. The subject is YHWH's overcoming of the forces of evil, thus a cyclic, cosmological and mythical celebration (which some interpret as of Baalic origin). The frame of the psalm is that of the, feast of light' (Ps. 118.27) during which YHWH was enthroned as king (Ps. 24, 118, 132). The interpretation is also followed by H. Schmidt. The, theme of light' was already a common point with the Christian Easter when, all was filled with light, the sky, earth and those below' cf. The Canon of Resurrection, Third Hymn, in: *Slujba învierii, Tâl-cuire și text*, Editura Mitropoliei Moldovei și Bucovinei, [s.a.], p. 36.

For J. Gray the psalm is part of the liturgy that was celebrated on Tabor in memory of Deborah (Judg. 4-5). The Canaanite new year celebration held in honor of Baal in the north becomes, in the south, the similar celebration of YHWH on Sinai. The powers of chaos, the ocean and the monstrous snake are defeated and the autumn rains begin. A. Caquot, A. Weiser, Monloubou and Vlaardingerbroek subscribe to the above thesis. Kraus, nevertheless, believes that the psalm is a collection of random sentences taken from different poems while for W.F. Albright the, song' is a catalogue of lyric poems from early Hebrew. In this last view the psalm gathers previous themes like Miriam's song (Ex. 15.21), the rider thrown in the sea (Ex. 15.1), the moments related to the Ark's movement (Num. 10.35), the song of the well (Num. 21.17-8), etc. Despite such an irregular character is not, nevertheless, an argument for a heterogenous mixture. Marvin E. Tate, *Word Biblical Commentary, Psalms 51-100*, Volume 20, Word Books Publisher, Dallas, Texas, p. 171.

in 515 B.C.E., the reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem or the victory of Judah Maccabee (164 B.C.E.). The context could also be related to one of the celebrations described in Lev. 23 or Deut. 16, the Psalm reproducing the voice of a person recognized by the community (perhaps Nehemiah) that, with the help of God, overcame a great danger. A mythical character of the passage was also taken into consideration, relating it to the spring celebration of YHWH's conquest of chaos, Mowinkel referring to a new year's beginning when hymns were sang to YHWH the warrior. Although the creative activity is not mentioned a connection has also been made with the Feast of Tents.

Psalm 68 is a song that was used in the liturgical cult of the Second Temple. The exegetical analysis underlines the presence of an archaic vocabulary (שָׁרָף vv. 18 and 25 means sanctuary) and Albright believes that half of the once-mentioned words can be explained only if taken into account the Ugaritic literature. Commentators focusing on Ugaritic literature have found numerous parallels between the way Psalms express YHWH's manifestations and those of Baal, El or Mot, which led them to assume a possible influence on the biblical writers. Regarding the verse under focus we have the image of Baal raising his voice and inducing panic in the other gods: „The foes of Baal seize the forests, those who hate Hadd the ridges the mountain”.⁶

According to Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer, the subject of the Psalm is the Revelation on Sinai which influenced the entire world, a cataclysmic event, second in importance after Genesis. Through it Israel became the Chosen People but the love of YHWH brought about the hate of pagan peoples. The Talmud (Shabbos 89b) shows that Sinai got its name because it is the source of the peoples' hatred against Jews.⁷ In the Jewish cult the Psalm is used in the Festival of the Weeks and at the end of the Feast of Harvest.⁸

⁶ UT, 51: VII:35-37 in Mitchell Dahood, S.J., *The Anchor Bible, Psalms II 51-100*, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, [s.a.], p. 134.

⁷ Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Tehillim / A new translation with a commentary anthologized from talmudic, midrashic and rabbinic source*, Translation by Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer in collaboration with Rabbi Nosson Scherman, Volume 3, Published by Mesorah Publications, ltd, Brooklyn, New York, 1979, p. 823.

⁸ C.H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David, Psalm LVIII to CX*, Volume two, Hendrickson Publishers, 1993, p. 150. Crusaders adopted the song as a battle hymn cf. *Lodi tehilim*, Traduzione dei salmi dall'ebraico di Livio Tescaroli, Edizione Dehoniane, Roma, p. 165.

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In the Christian Orthodox cult verses 2-4 are cited during the Resurrection Liturgy and throughout the Easter Week at vespers, matins and liturgy, after the blessing. The first line, after the manner of cultic reading and the numbering of the Bible in Romanian translation, is cast as "God rises, His enemies fleeing and running from His Face those who hate Him."⁹

The Ps. 118 (117) was recited while the fourth cup of wine was filled during the Jewish Pascha, a gesture with eschatological implications (verses 25-6). Parts of this composition are attested in Qumranic scrolls and the New Testament: v. 6 – Heb. 13.5-6; v. 18 – 2Cor. 6; vv. 22-23 – Mt. 21.42; 23.39; Mk. 11.9-10; Lk. 19.38¹⁰. These verses of the psalms could, thus, be read in a historical, eschatological or messianic key.¹¹

II. The Lifting of the Ark – Prefiguration of the Lord's Resurrection

After the triple reading of the troparion of the Holy Easter during Resurrection Sunday the bishop or priest, holding in his right hand the censer and in the left one a lighted candle, circles the altar table that symbolizes the Lord's tomb and His heavenly Throne, citing the four verses that we will now analyze. The first three are from the beginning of Ps. 68 with the fourth being verse 24 of Ps. 118.

To begin with Ps. 68.2:

יָקוּם אֱלֹהִים יִפְרֹצוּ אוֹיְבָיו וַיָּנוּסוּ מִשְׁנֵאָיו מִפְּנָיו:

"Elohim (God) rises up and his enemies are scattered. Those who hate Him run from His face."¹²

The second verse of the Psalm is based on an official text of the ancient liturgical poem which describes the wandering of the Ark through the desert before its intervention as a shield in the holy wars cf. Num.10.35-6. Other interpreters take into account the Ark's relocation as shown in 2Sam

⁹ Slujba învierii, 27, 81. The same text can be found in the Bulgarian and Russian Churches.

¹⁰ Ravasi, *Il libro*, p. 411-413.

¹¹ Mario Cimosà, *Perché, Signore, mi nascondi il tuo volto?*, *Commento esegetico-spirituale dei salmi*, (Salmi 51-100), Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 2004, p. 129.

¹² Translations following the Hebrew text are my own.

6.¹³ Meanwhile the horn was blown and the Te-Deum was sung.¹⁴ Through the words quoted in Numbers Moses was confirming YHWH's decision to continue the wandering or to set camp in a certain place. God was present in a symbolic manner within the camp through the Ark that contained the Tables of the Law, the vessel with manna and Aaron's cane.¹⁵ The Ark represented the very place where YHWH made His will known to the people and where Moses of subsequent leaders invoked the divine mercy.

These motifs interweaved into the hymns' body, here the call having a theophanic, ritual and contemporary character: during the ritual act the revelation of YHWH was expected and the sight of His both *frightful* and *liberating* Face. The sacred apparition was a source of hope for the righteous and one of fear for their enemies. The ancient formulation speaks of those who hated God and were subjected to His destructive actions, the image of the defeat of evil being developed accurately in the third verse.¹⁶

Most translators opted for a rendition of the fragment in Present Tense form but the word קָם is a *iusiv*, a short form of Imperfect qal (translated into biblical Hebrew through Simple Future Tense, Simple Present, Imperfect or Subjunctive) and expresses usually an impersonal order, a desire or an interdiction. Here, up until the fourth verse, it is the author's will that is expressed. The verb can be translated, according to the Hebrew Imperfect, through Future Tense: "God will rise and His enemies will be scattered." or through a Present declaration: "God is rising" or "May God rise". Another possible reading is "When God rises His enemies are scattered and those who hate Him flee His presence."¹⁷ The possible Future

¹³ Charles Augustus Briggs, D.D., D. Litt., and Emilie Grace Briggs, B.D., *A critical and exegetical commentary on The Book of Psalms*, Vol. II, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 38 George Street, [s.a.], p. 96-97, 105; Christiana Reemts, *Psalms 68 (67)*, in EuA (Erbe und auftrag), 81, 2005, p. 40-42.

¹⁴ Others took into consideration its moving as in 2Sam 6. On this see Charles Augustus Briggs, D.D., D. Litt., and Emilie Grace Briggs, B.D., *A critical*, p. 96-97, 105.

¹⁵ Aaron Rothkoff, *Tabernacle*, in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 15, Sm – On, Keter Publishing House Jerusalem Ltd., Keterpress Enterprises, Fourth printing, Jerusalem, 1978, p. 682-683. The three objects stand for, in Christian tradition, the Holy Scripture, the Holy Eucharist and the Holy Cross sitting on the Holy Altar and symbolizing the Presence of God.

¹⁶ Ravasi, *Il libro*, p. 376.

¹⁷ Spurgeon, *The Treasury*, p. 162. Others scholars maintain that here is an Imperfect qal not a *iusiv*. On this see Dahood, *The Anchor*, p. 134. The verbal root קָם translates as, to get up, to sire, to stand up', meanings close to these can be found often: Ex.

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Tense translation is not, nevertheless, the fragment's only connection with a prophetic reading.

For the practicing Jew the matter of the Resurrection was not one of often concern. Nevertheless, we encounter the motif in the lives of Elijah and Elisha as well as Isa. 26.19, Dan. 12.2, Ezek. 37. In the apocryphal literature it appears in the Books of the Maccabees (2Mac. 7.9.14, 12.44).¹⁸ A contrary opinion is held by Daniel Boyarin and Seymour Siegel who believe that the idea of resurrection was present in Jewish thought from the earliest times, quoting as proof Deut. 32.39, 1Sam. 2.6, 1Kings 17.17, etc. The concept was, they argue, fundamental concept for the Jewish thinkers from the Rabbinic and medieval periods.¹⁹

The biblical passages dealing with the idea of the soul's return to the body draw on the various meanings of the verb חָיָה (to be). In 1Kings 17.22 חָיָה is qal Imperfect, with the meaning of "to live" (Jer. 21.9, 38.2), "to have life" (Gen.31.31, 2Kings 14.17), "to stay alive" (Gen. 20.7, Isa. 55.3), "to sustain life" (Deut. 8.3, Lev. 18.5), "to return to life from an illness" (2Kings 13.21 where the miraculous resurrection of a dead man is enabled through his touching on the relics of Elisha, Job 14.14, Isa. 26.14-19). A commonly used meaning is that of the soul's return from Sheol (2Kings 8.5, Isa. 26.19, Ezek. 37.3,5,6,9,10,14) while in Isa. 26.19, Job 19.25, Dan. 12.2, Ps. 68.2) through different forms of the verb קָוָה

In the aforementioned places it is described the rising of God and the dismissal of enemies and the joy of the righteous caused by the divine intervention.²⁰

10.23 where a standing up is indicated, Deut. 19.11 where there is an idea of hostility behind, Prov. 28.12.28 underlines one's strengthening in power, Judg. 5.7.7 sends to the coming of leaders, prophets or kings in a given context, Isa. 2.19-21 about a standing up from the throne with a judicial purpose. The word bears also the connotation of resistance (against one) in Jos. 7.13-3, Am. 7.2-5 or 'confirmation' cf. Ruth 4.7, 'establishment' in Ps. 119.28. For all its meanings see Francis Brown, D.D., D. Litt., *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, Hendrickson Publisher, Massachusetts, 2007, p. 877-879.

¹⁸ See Robert Martin-Achard, *Resurrection*, in David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Volume 5, First Edition, Doubleday, New York, 1992, p. 683-684.

¹⁹ Daniel Boyarin, Seymour Siegel, *Resurrection*, in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 14, Sm – On, Keter Publishing House Jerusalem Ltd., Keterpress Enterprises, Fourth printing, Jerusalem, 1978, p. 97-103.

²⁰ Brown, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew*, p. 311, 877-879.

Solomon Mandelkern associates the verb קם with these meanings: *surgere, assurgere, surgere hostiliter contra aliquem, resurgere; oriri, existare*²¹, the main meaning being that of ‘rising’ (against someone), rising, getting up (standing), to exist. It must be underlined that Hebrew does not have a verb for ‘resurrect’, that is why reading the aforementioned text as “God is resurrecting” might seem forced. Nevertheless, where the verb קם was translated as ἀνίστημι ²², that in a modern language was interpreted as ‘to resurrect’, this was not made following the Masoretic text but rather the LXX which quoted Ps. 68.2 thus $\text{ἀναστήτω ὁ θεός καὶ διασκορπισθήτωσαν οἱ ἐχθροὶ αὐτοῦ}$ God is rising and His enemies are scattered.”²³

Concurrently we must be aware that when the LXX was being translated Christianity was not a matter. If the Church Fathers have used the text of the LXX in the translation and understanding of Ps. 68.2-4 they absorbed its meaning as prophetic and they indicated it as referring to Christ, our Lord.

Their reading of the fragment as referring to a resurrection is thus consistent with the meanings of the term in Greek and, if one accepts the Boyarin-Siegel thesis, even with connotations already present in the Jewish culture.

Biblical criticism maintains that Jewish resurrection theology was influenced by Parsism but in the cultic rendition of “God is rising” through

²¹ Solomon Mandelkern, *Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae*, Altera pars, Akademische Druck- U. Velagsanstalt, Graz, 1955, p. 1020-1022. The idea of coming back to life is in the OT expressed through the verb חַיָּה , and not קם , cf. David J.A. Clines (Editor), *The dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, Volume II, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1995, p. 511-540; David J.A. Clines (Editor), *The dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, Volume VII, Sheffield Phoenix Press, Sheffield, 2010, p. 223-224.

²² For the meanings of the verb in ancient literature see Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1966, p. 144; G.W.H. Lampe, D.D., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, At the Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1961, p. 145-146. According to them Ps. 68.2 can be translated also as ‘Is rising/May God Rise’ which argues for the LXX translation during or close to the writing of 2Maccabees which for the idea of resurrection uses the ἀνίστημι .

²³ Holy Eftimios Zigaben speaks of two ways to translate the ἀνίστημι : „Et licet verbum, exsurgat, imperativi sit modi (ut ex Graeca lectione aperte dignoscitur), sensum optantis habet hoc in loco”, cf. Euthymii Zigabeni, *Comentarius in Psalmos Davidis*, in col. Patrologia Graecae, J.P. Migne (ed.), Vol. 128, col. 659.

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“God is resurrected” owes to Patristic thinking and interpretation.²⁴ A suitable interpretation would be that of anthropomorphism which refers to God in human-like terms like “waking up”²⁵.

In the context of the New Testament, the life-giving death of Christ after the three days burial (according to biblical archaeology and Patristic interpretation) is followed by His Resurrection. Through “God is resurrected” we have the Church’s declaration of faith that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity, after being ‘in the grave with the body, in hell with the soul like a God, in heaven with the thief and on the throne with the Father and Spirit’²⁶ He resurrected with the body early Sunday morning, His soul never having died. The biblical form in its adaptable reading is well synthesized by St. Ephtimios Zigaben who comments that although formulated as a command, the fragment is also to be perceived as a prayer ‘meaning ‘Oh, if God would rise’²⁷. Many of the Fathers when commenting Ps. 68(67) use the term ἀνίστημι relating through it the text to the Resurrection of the Lord. Among the Greek Fathers St. Theodoret

²⁴ A. Oepke who wrote the ἀνίστημι voice in the NT *Lexicon* of Kittel mentions that the idea of an eschatological resurrection of the dead was born under the influence of Zoroastrianism, as does the Jewish Encyclopedia. As well attested the Saduchees and Samaritans rejected the idea of a general resurrection (cf. Mk. 12.18; Acts 23.8; Josephus *Bell.* 2.165; *Ant.* 18.16). Eliseo ben Abuiā claimed that there will be no resurrection (j. Hag. 77b 4), contracticted nevertheless by Shemoné Esré 2. In T. Ber. 7,5 in a song for the buried the idea is again present. Josephus and Philo do not understand the term avna, stasij as resurrection but as coming back from the dead cf. A. OEPKE, ἀνίστημι, în Gerhard Kittel, *Grande Lessico del Nuovo Testamento*, Vol. I, Traduttori Giovanni Torti, Ugo Argenti, Paideia, Brescia, 1965, p. 992-994.

²⁵ Spurgeon, *The treasury*, 136.

²⁶ *Liturghier*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1995, p. 143.

²⁷ ST. Ephtimios, ST. Nikodemos Hagiorite, *Psaltirea în tâlcuirile Sfinților Părinți*, Volumul I, Transliterare, diortosire, revizuire după ediția grecească și note de Ștefan Voronca, Editura Egumenița, (s.a.), p. 748.

In this interpretation the translation is as follows: „God to rise and His enemy to be scattered”. Thus Fathers have thus understood the meaning of the verb קָם, which is translated in the LXX (*Septuaginta* 4/1, Colegiul Noua Europă, Polirom, București, Iași, 2006, p. 178) in the same manner. In Romanian the translation of IPS Bartolomeu Anania reads Ps. 68(67),2 as: „God is resurrected, His enemies scattered” cf. *Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură*, Ediție jubiliară a Sfântului Sinod, Tipărită cu binecuvântarea și prefața Prea Fericitului Părinte Teoctist Patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, Ed. IBMBOR, București, 2001.

of Cyrillus²⁸, St. Athanasius²⁹, and Eusebius of Caesarea³⁰ while in the Latin West St. Jerome and St. Augustine. This latter Father writes about the Resurrection as a past event, identifying Christ Resurrected as the risen one and the Jewish people as the enemies that, following their hostility towards Him, were scattered and now hate and fear, running from His face.³¹

St. Jerome describes the interpretative reading of Ps. 68(67) thus: „This psalm is understood in a particular as well as a general fashion. In particular it applies to the Lord since He resurrects and scatters His own enemies, meaning the devil and his army, or the Jews.”³²

Psalms 68(67) begins *ex abrupto* announcing that God *is rising* which, anthropomorphically speaking, indicates a place of rest that could be a ‘heavenly abode’. It is unknown whether this will be abandoned, if it was itinerant or if it was the final residence as the end of the poem indicates. What was certain is that God *was rising*. ‘The rising’ could have been generic (Isa. 14.22; 28.21; 31.2; 33.10; Jer. 2.27), combative (Ps. 3.8; 7.7; 10.12; 12.6; 35.2; 44.27; 74.22) or judicatory (Ps. 82.8; 102.14; 132.8; 2Chron. 6.41). The presence of enemies and rivals places here the verb a belligerent context³³. God’s mercy is seen in His patience which nevertheless implies the ‘rising’ out of sleep cf. Ps. 44.25. There the verb ‘to rise’ is used in the manner of Ps. 78 as ‘waking up’. The meandrous

²⁸ Theodoretus Cyrenensis Episcopi, *Interpretatio in Psalmos*, in col. Patrologia Graecae, J.P. Migne (ed.), Vol. 80, col. 1375-1376.

²⁹ Athanasii, *Expositiones in Psalmos*, in col. Patrologia Graecae, J.P. Migne (ed.), Vol. 27, col. 293-294.

³⁰ Eusebii Pamphili, *Comentaria in Psalmos*, in col. Patrologia Graecae, J.P. Migne (ed.), Vol. 23, col. 677-680.

³¹ „*Jam factum est: exsurrexit Christus qui est suorum omnia Deus benedictus in saecula, et disperse sunt inimici eius per omnes gentes, Iudaei; in eo ipso loco ubi inimicitias exercuerunt, debelati, atque inde per cuncta dispersi: et nunc oderunt, sed metuunt; et in ipso metu faciunt quod sequitur: Et fugiant qui oderunt eum, a facie eius;*” Sant’Agostino, *Esposizioni sui Salmi*, II, Testo latino dall’edizione maurina ripresa sostanzialmente dal corpus christianorum Traduzione, revisione e note illustrative a cura di Vincenzo Tarulli, Città nuova editrice, Roma, 1970, p. 560-561.

³² „*Et specialiter de ipso Domino, ut resurgat a mortuis, et disperdat inimicos suos, hoc est, diabolum et exercitum ejus, aut Judaeos;*” Sancti Eusebii Hieronymii, *Breviarium in Psalmos*, in col. Patrologiae Latinae, J.P. Migne (ed.), Vol. 26, col. 1073.

³³ L. Alonso Schökel – Cecilia Camiti, *I Salmi*, Edizione italiana a cura di Antonio Nepi, Volume primo, Borla, Roma, 1992, p. 997.

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marching through the desert described in Numbers appears as a ritual procession of priestly influence. The presence of God indicated by the word פָּנִים (the face/countenance) brings the liberating light to His people.³⁴

Jewish wisdom sees in the 'enemies of God' all the peoples that try to destroy Israel³⁵, while the Patristic tradition refers it to the demons that were ruling humanity. The rise (waking up) of God is His beginning of the salvation of the gentiles: „*Inimici autem Dei, proprie daemones sunt, veluti rebelles, ac Deo adversantes*”³⁶. Regarding this 'rising' St. Athanasius writes: „*Exurgat Deus, et dissipentur inimi ejus. Dei ad judicandos impuros daemones motus significatur. Nam ejus adventu a tyrannide qua homines opprimebant expulsi sunt*”³⁷, relating it to a movement that is double.

St. Ephthimios Zigaben understands His 'face' as the Incarnated Christ that was the beginning of the demons' defeat.³⁸ The methods through which Christ chastises humanity can be disease, the sword, slavery, etc., but against the demons He use His very divinity.

III. The Presence of God – Source of Misery for Sinners and of Joy for the Righteous

The first symbol of the third verse is that of smoke:

כִּהְנִדָּף עֲשָׁן הַנִּדָּף כִּהֵמַס דּוֹנֵג מִפְּנֵי־אֵשׁ יֵאבְדוּ יְרֻשָׁיִם מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים:

‘As smoke is scattered/scatters, so he will be scattered, as the wax melts before the fire, so will sinners/murderers vanish before the face of Elohim (God).’ (Ps. 68.3).

The phrasing is also present in Ps. 37.20 (cf. 1.4; 102.4; Isa. 29.5; 41.2; 51.6). Hosea 13.3 was writing to idolaters that they will be ‘as the smoke out of the chimney’. כִּי הֵן גִּיחֵהוּ is a mixt form that combines the consonants

³⁴ G.J. Boterweck e Helmer Ringreen, *Grande Lessico dell'Antico Testamento*, A cura di Heinz 'Josef Fabry e Helmer Ringreen, Vol. VII, Paideia Editrice, Brescia, 2007, p. 202-206.

³⁵ Feuer, *Tehillim*, p. 823.

³⁶ Zigabeni, *Comentarius*, col. 659.

³⁷ S.P.N. Athanasii, *Expositiones in Psalmos*, in col. Patrologia Graecae, J.P. Migne (ed.), Vol. 27, col. 294.

³⁸ „Let them run from God's presence and face, that outlook (face) that was able to support the flesh”, Zigabeni, *Comentarius*, col. 659.

of the Infinitive nifal כִּהָרַג with the vocals of the Infinitive qal כִּהָרַג, both forms having the preposition כִּ, with the root הָרַג. Most critics read it as nifal, with a passive nuance, but translate it as ‘is vanished, vanished’ rather than ‘was vanished’. In the part that we translated as ‘let them vanish’ the verb is an Imperfect qal, second person, masculine, singular or a third person, feminine, singular, with the letter nun unassimilated (parallel examples can be found in Ps. 1.4 and Job 12.13).³⁹ The rising smoke was identified with the proud man shook by its very sin, the evil man that is a danger to others or with philosophical skepticism.⁴⁰

In Christian tradition the dispersion of the smoke is associated with the devil’s rejection through the Divine Presence:

„Videns divinus David impietatem, quae inter homines ver-
sabatur, et daemonis imperium, edoctus autem a sancto Spiritu
adventum Dei et Salvatoris nostri, petitionem affert, rogans, ut
quam celerrime veniat.”⁴¹ We find the same theological key in
St. Ephtimios: „Quemadmodum deficit fumus spirante vento,
ita etiam hi daemones deficiant, impulsu nimirum ac dissipati a
sancto Spiritu.”⁴²

The second symbol is that of wax which can be found in the theophany from Ps. 97.5 ‘The mountains melted like wax, at the presence of the Lord: at the presence of the Lord of all the earth.’ and in Micah 1.4 ‘And the mountains shall be melted under him: and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as waters that run down a steep place.’ Fire is an element of Divinity (cf. Isa. 33.14, Ps. 50.2, Dan. 7) that purifies the righteous from their remaining sins (Isaiah’s vision) and burns the sinners. The enemies of YHWH are identified through the word רָשָׁע, which indicated originally the enemies of Israel, those who hate God and sinners. The term had a nationalist connotation, opposing צַדִּיק, the ‘just’. The word רָשָׁע does not refer to any sinners but it points rather to murderers, referring to those who cause death (Pharaoh, the rulers of Babylon and the Chaldeans).⁴³

Regarding this reading St. Theodoret of Cyrrhus mentions that the LXX calls them sinners but all other interpreters call them outlaws (cruel,

³⁹ Tate, *Word*, p. 162.

⁴⁰ Spurgeon, *The treasury*, p. 136.

⁴¹ Theodoret, *Interpretatio*, col. 1375.

⁴² Zigabeni, *Comentarius*, col. 659.

⁴³ Brown, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew*, p. 957.

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unmerciful) after the Jewish and Syriac examples.⁴⁴ In the post-exilic literature the accent fell on the moral issues, the pair *outlaw-just* became a symbol of the generic dichotomy between good and evil.⁴⁵

The psalmist does not use the metaphor of the wax consumed by fire but speaks of the wax melting before the face of the fire. The same optimistic idea is held by St. Jerome in his commentary: „As the wax melts but does not lose its own nature, becoming rather a little soft, so these are not lost but they abandon their toughness and return thus to repent and are saved.”⁴⁶ The optimistic view is a mark of the Father's thinking his willingness to read the toughest biblical expressions as a calling to repentance.⁴⁷

The ‘enemy’ from the previous verse represents a continuous physical threat and, in consequence, must be destroyed as the wind spreads the smoke. makes, nevertheless, reference to an enemy that took evil to heart but that, if he wants, can change. Here sends thus to the wax that although melting is still present as matter and can take a new form. The image of the cloud that led the Jews through the desert, which cast away the dangers and protected is here alluded to by the psalmist.⁴⁸

The parallel between smoke, wax and sinners is interpreted by St. Gregory of Nyssa (as quoted by St. Ephtimios Zigaben) thus: „As the smoke vanishes in the air and no sign of his nature remains, so wax placed in fire is no more (melts), thus is someone will receive the Godly gift and help the vices that rule within him disappear. Because darkness cannot suffer the manifestation of light, neither disease can stay when health comes, the vices cannot work when.”⁴⁹ The presence of Christ the Lord was associated with a devastating fire that rejects the demons, indicating that the word רָשָׁעִים was read as referring to both evil humans and demons:

⁴⁴ Theodoret, *Interpretatio*, col. 1375. „Quos enim peccatores Septuaginta dixerunt, impios nominarunt omnes alii interpretes, et Hebraicum exemplar, et Syrus.”

⁴⁵ Ravasi, *Il libro*, 376; Schökel – Carniti, *I salmi*, p. 996-997.

⁴⁶ „Sicut cera solvitur, et non perdit naturam suam, sed mollescit: sic et isti non pereant, sed deponant malitiam suam, et sic convertantur ad poenitentiam, et salventur”; Hieronymii, *Breviarium*, col. 1073.

⁴⁷ Origene- Gerolamo, *74 Omelie Sul Libro Dei Salmi*, Introduzione, traduzione e note di Giovanni Coppa, Edizioni Paoline, Milano, 1993, 145, N. 3.

⁴⁸ Feuer, *Tehillim*, 825-826.

⁴⁹ ST. Ephtimios, ST. Nikodemos Hagiorite, *Psaltirea*, p. 749.

„Quemadmodum, inquit, aspectu ignis cera liquescit, ita daemones a conspectu Christi qui ignis est consumens ... Eosdem etiam daemones Propheta peccatores appellat, quia et primi omnium in Deum peccarunt, et quia peccatorum inventore smerito dici possunt et magistri” (Deut. 4.24; Evr. 12.29).⁵⁰

In the Christian orthodox cult the first three verses of this prayer, maintained their exorcistic nature and are also found at the end of the ‘Ritual to be made in the house or place disturbed by spells’ and in ‘The prayer of the Holy Cross’ which ends the evening prayers of the believer.⁵¹ In the same key St. Jerome points that “when we are chastied and in critical circumstances we say ‘Rise, why do you sleep, Oh God!, and help us!’, in the same manner the apostles called the Lord Who wa sleeping by saying: ‘Lord, save us, we perish’.⁵² Here thus the Patristic interpretation follows closely the original connotations, adding only Christ as the agent of godly action.

IV. The Day of the Resurrection – the Day of Joy

As the Ark represented for David a moment of joy (2Sam. 6.14), for sinners, through antithesis, it represents a sign of fear and reprobation.

וְצַדִּיקִים יִשְׂמְחוּ גְעֻלָּצוּ לְפָנַי אֱלֹהִים וְיִשְׂשׂוּ בְּשִׂמְחָה:

‘But the just to be joyful, to be glad before the face of Elohim (God), let them be glad with joy’ (Ps.67.4).

All three verbs of the sentence, according to the classic way of translation of the Hebrew Imperfect, should be translated with the Future. The repetitive character of the verse is meant to indicate the intensity of the bliss: „*Verba autem Exsultent, delectentur, et laetentur, idem significant: conjuncta tamen summam gaudii indicant intensionem*”⁵³.

⁵⁰ Zigabeni, *Comentarius*, col. 659.

⁵¹ *Aghiasmatar*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2002, p. 410; *Carte de rugăciuni*, Doxologia, Iași, 2009, p. 57.

⁵² „Generaliter autem, quando in tribulatione sumus et angustia, et dicimus: Exsurge, ut quid dormitas, Domine? Exsurge et adjuva nos (Psal. XIII, 26). Quomodo et apostoli in navicula excitant Dominum dormientem, dicentes: Magister, salva nos, perimus (Mat. VIII, 25)”; Hieronymii, *Breviarium*, col. 1073.

⁵³ Zigabeni, *Comentarius*, col. 659.

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Jewish mysticism sees in the fourth verse a reference to fire as purifying and punishing agent, the Talmud writing that in the future the sun will destroy the sinners while cleansing the just. The joy deriving from mundane pleasures is passing but that caused by God is never-ending. In a Christian interpretative key the subject is the joy coming from belief in the dead and resurrected Christ, the three verses and, through extrapolation, the entire psalm, referring also to His Second Coming because the moments when the Ark was inside the Temple, when the enemies of the Jews were defeated and the kings of Judea were joyful have an eschatological nuance to them. The 'rising' for which the psalmist is praying refers to the coming of the 'messianic peace' and the conversion of the gentiles cf. lines 22, 29-31.⁵⁴

The last verse that we will comment is Ps.118 (117).24:

זֶה-הַיּוֹם עָשָׂה יְהוָה נִגִּילָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה בּוֹ:

„This is the day that the Lord made for us to be glad and rejoice in it.”

The verb עָשָׂה „he made” is here used with absolute value, the meaning being that of ‘to intervene, to act’. It is not a cyclic day (Sir. 33.7-9) but a historical day in which the community enjoys God.⁵⁵ Jewish spirituality points that the Jews did not know to whom the word בוֹ refers. Built with the preposition בַּ and the suffix for masculine, third person, י, the word is also found in The Song of Songs 1.14 where Solomon indicates toward God as its destinatary: נִגִּילָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה בְךָ. As noticeable, the two phrases are identical with the exception of the last word which in the latter case is a masculine suffix for the second person, singular and which has the numerical value of twenty-two (the exact number of the Hebrew letters). The suffix could refer to both the *salvation* and the *word* given by God.⁵⁶ The eschatological time presupposed here was prophesized by Malachi 3.21, Amos 5.18 and Nehemiah 9.13-18; 12.27-28.⁵⁷

In the Jewish cult the psalm is spoken at prayers on Friday and Saturday afternoon and on the eve and afternoon of feasts.⁵⁸ The verse above refers

⁵⁴ Spurgeon, *The treasury*, p. 152.

⁵⁵ Schökel - Carniti, *I Salmi*, p. 583.

⁵⁶ Umberto Neri, *Alleluia, Interpretazioni ebraiche dell'Hallel di Pasqua*, (Salmi 113-118), Città Nuova Editrice, 1981, Roma, p. 207-208.

⁵⁷ Ravasi, *Il libro*, p. 417, 429.

⁵⁸ Tescaroli, *Lodi*, p. 251.

to the 'eighth day' (Num. 29.35) when a solemn gathering ending in the Feast of the Tents took place. During this Feast Israel sacrificed as follows: thirteen animals in the first day, number from which they subtract one for every subsequent day until, on the last day, seven would be killed. The total would amount to seventy animals corresponding the seventy nations descending from Noah. Through this ritual Israel was fulfilling its sacerdotal function on behalf of the world's nations. The eighth day remained for the chosen people a day 'of intimate rest with God', one cattle for the entire nation being now sacrificed.⁵⁹

St. John Chrysostom, St. Athanasius and St. Theodoret of Cyrillus when commenting the verse have in mind the Resurrection day. St. Athanasius thus writes:

„Haec dies quam fecit Dominus, etc. Ecquaenam dies fuerit nisi resurrectionis Domini? Quae haec dies, nisi ea quae gentibus omnibus salutaris est, qua lapis ille rejectus factus est in caput anguli? Significatur autem dies resurrectionis Salvatoris nostri, quae ipsi cognominis est, scilicet Dominica”⁶⁰,

arguing thus for the identification of the corner stone with Christ and reading the fragment accordingly, as indicating the day of the Resurrection.

In their interpretation of the fragment as related to the Lord's Resurrection they incorporated the messianic prophecy preceding it: '(The) stone that was thrown away by the builders became the corner (stone), this is from God, this (is/was) wonderful in our eyes' (Ps.118.22-3). For Christians the prophecy regards Jesus Christ and is quoted in the New Testament by Him (Mt. 21.42, Mk. 12.10-2), Luke (Lk. 20.17, Acts 4.11) and by St. Peter (1Pt. 2.7).⁶¹

For the Jews the 'corner stone' refers to the whole of Israel, considered fundamental for the world through the Torah (Deut. 4.44) that was revealed (Gen. 49.24). This is the stone that the kings of the world tried to destroy; Abraham preventing the construction of the Babel tower being another possible interpretation.⁶²

⁵⁹ Neri, *Alleluia*, 207-208, n. 186,188.

⁶⁰ Athanasii, *Expositiones*, col. 479.

⁶¹ ST. Ephtimos, ST. Nikodemos Hagiorite, *Psaltirea în tâlcuirile Sfinților Părinți*, Volumul II, Transliterare, diortosire, revizuire după ediția grecească și note de Ștefan Voronca, Editura Egumenița, (s.a.), p. 531; C.H Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David, Psalm LVIII to CX*, Volume two, Hendrickson Publishers, 1993, p. 110-111.

⁶² Neri, *Alleluia*, p. 202-205.

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St. Theodoret, like other Church Fathers, relates the day which the Lord had made to the first day of creation and the day of the Resurrection:

„Diem a Deo factum vocat illum, quo hic lapis post passionem a mortuis resurrexit. Statim enim post resurrectionem, sacris apostolis praecepit, ut irent, et docerent omnes gentes. Praecipue autem hunc diem a Deo factum esse dicit. Quoniam enim a principio lucem illo die fecit Deus, cum etiam Salvatoris nostri resurrectionem accepisset ...”⁶³

As the earth was first empty, dark and unorganized, so the earth before the coming of Christ had become through sin and idolatry. The first day light had not reach its purpose since Adam did not remain in it, the Day of the Resurrection being necessary. On this day the prologue of John is read and the light of that day dispels the darkness of sins as a smoke.⁶⁴

Some commentators remind the fact that *the day of happiness* was preceded by a period of fasting, time needed for the awareness of the sinful state that brought about the wrath of God. *The day of gratitude* followed, characterized by the reception of the Divine mercy.⁶⁵ Here, forcing perhaps the interpretation, Orthodoxy finds the penitential purpose of Lent, followed by the Feast of the Resurrection when is sang „The day of Resurrection, let us, peoples, be enlightened!” Regarding the day of repenting and fasting that has been identified in the Jewish cult during the Purim Feast which, after the seventh century B.C.E., was composed out of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth Adar (February-March), the first of these days was one of abstinence and fasting.⁶⁶ Historically speaking, the day of David's enthronement was the beginning of Israel's best period⁶⁷ but the prosperous state was not continuous, making the parallels with the new Sabbath generated by Messiah-Christ through His Resurrection possible.

⁶³ Theodoret, *Interpretatio*, col. 1815, 1818.

⁶⁴ St Ephantimos, St. Nikodemos Hagiorite, *Psaltirea*, Volumul II, p. 531-532.

⁶⁵ Spurgeon, *The treasury*, Volume three, p. 111.

⁶⁶ At the end of the first-century C.E., the day of Nicanor (1Mac 7.49) was on 13 Adar, and Purim on the 14th and 15th Adar, without being connected. After the seventh-century the Day of Nicanor was no longer celebrated and the 13th day became the first day of Purim; Louis Jacobs, *Purim*, in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 15, Sm – On, Keter Publishing House Jerusalem Ltd., Keterpress Enterprises, Fourth printing, Jerusalem, 1978, p. 1390-1395.

⁶⁷ Spurgeon, *The treasury*, Volume three, p. 118.

St. John Chrysostom says „*Exultemus, et laetemur in ea, quod tanta nobis bona obtigerint. Etinam ne hoc quidem est parva virtus, gaudere bonis, exsilire, gaudio affici, Dei beneficia cum voluptate suspicere*”⁶⁸, indicating the joy brought about by the Resurrection when humanity is reunited with God and can receive His gifts in freedom. St. Ephtimios Zigaben, commenting the verse, synthesizes thus the effects of the Resurrection:

„*Praedicare vult igitur Propheta hoc in libro, summa illa bona, quae in die resurrectionis Domini futura erant, et quae Christus ipse operatur est. Nam et iratum hominibus Deum conciliavit et daemonis tyrannidem dissolvit, et mortis potentiam exinanivit, eos qui vel ipsius terrae habitatione indigni erant, fecit esse dignos caelo, erroris tenebras dissolvit, fugavit peccata, plantavit virtutes, et innumerabilibus denique bonis mundum replevit.*”⁶⁹

In the Resurrection thus the worthy and unworthy are reunited with God, the former in act, the latter in potentiality.

Ps. 118(117).24 is related to John 8.56: Ἀβραὰμ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ἠγαλλιάσατο ἵνα ἴδῃ τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ἐμήν, καὶ εἶδεν καὶ ἐχάρη. ‚Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see my day: he saw it, and was glad.’ The LXX translates thus: αὕτη ἡ ἡμέρα ἦν ἐποίησεν ὁ κύριος ἀγαλλιασώμεθα καὶ εὐφρανθῶμεν ἐν αὐτῇ -- ‚This is the day that the Lord made, to rejoice and be glad in it.’ The verb ἀγαλλιάω is rare, deriving from avgallomai and avgallw. In the New Testament it appears in Mt.5.12, Lk. 1.47, 10.21, Acts. 2.26, 16.34, John 5.35, 8.56, Rev. 19.7, 1Pt. 1.6-8, 4.13. The combination between ἀγαλλομαι and ἀγαλλω appears in the New Testament only four times: Mt. 5.12, 1Pt. 4.13, John 8.56, Rev. 19.7. The combination of these verbs with ἡμέρα are also rare: John 8.56, Lk. 6.23 and the phrase ἀγαλλιάω, χαίρω, and ἡμέρα can only be found in John 8.56. These verbs that express joy are associated especially with cultic prayer, Bultmann claiming that they appear solely in the Psalms and the poetic parts of the Prophets.⁷⁰ The verbs לָחַד and חָדַד appear together 27 times, of which 12 times in the Psalms, their using with חָדַד being present only in Ps. 118.24 and Isa. 25.9.

⁶⁸ S.N.P. Joannis Chrysostomi, *Exposition in Psalmos*, in. col. Patrologiae Graecae, J.P. Migne (ed.), vol. 55, col. 337.

⁶⁹ Zigabeni, *Comentarius*, col. 1131.

⁷⁰ Andrew C. Brunson, *Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2003, p. 285-286.

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From Ps. 118.24 and John 8.56 is visible the correspondence between ,to rejoice in (it)' and ,was glad to see my day', a joy that is connected to a certain day that Abraham saw.

What day does the apostle refer to and what day did Abraham see? Among the possible answers to the latter question are: 1. The vision regarding the future, Gen. 15 being read as the moment when God had shown Abraham every future generation (a Midrash referring it to the joy that Abraham felt when seeing Akiba knowing and applying the Law). Referring to Gen 24.1 it is assumed that Abraham saw the end of this world, while the birth of Isaac to which Christ referred is also a variant. These Jewish interpretations, the only ones dealing with the subject, are subsequent to the Gospel of John but they could mirror older traditions, perhaps known by St. John. Two other hypotheses have been proposed, relating the fragment to the Feast of the Tents (Jub. 16) and Jubilees.⁷¹ St. Cyril of Alexandria in his *Commentary to the Gospel of John* relates the day that the patriarch had seen with the birth of Christ and quoting Ps. 118.24 to support his interpretation.⁷² He also refers it to the ,time of the awaited and godly judgment' and ,the death of the Lord'.⁷³

The Patristic interpretation draws thus on the eschatological nuance of the text, placing it in a context where the messianic mission was fulfilled without, nevertheless, eliminating the concept of eschatology. This partially realized eschatology that represents the chronological frame of the Fathers and in which the psalm's prophetic character refers to the Second Coming is in no way anachronistic with either the letter or the meaning of the text.

V. Conclusions

The absorption of the Jewish context, itself drawing on Ancient Near Eastern formulations and reflecting historical realities, and its adaptation to the Christic, post-Incarnation state of humanity in the Church Fathers, here reflected in the reception of the four psalmic verses is in concordance

⁷¹ Brunson, *Psalm 118*, p. 289-300.

⁷² S. Cyrilli Alexandrini, *In Joannis Evangelium*, Libros VI, in. col. Patrologiae Graecae, J.P. Migne (ed.), vol. 73, col. 931.

⁷³ „...divini et expectati iudicii tempus”; „spectasee necis Diem”; Cyrilli, *In Joannis Evangelium*, col. 934.

with the texts' initial form. Although, *pace* Boyarin and Segel, the OT concept of 'rising' might have had in particular contexts a connotation that allowed for it to be translated as 'resurrecting', the Fathers made use in their interpretations of the LXX version of the OT. The analysis of the four verses indicated that their proper translation was with the Future Tense, sustaining thus the prophetic character attributed to the in the Patristic literature, despite the use of the Present or Imperfect Tense used in the LXX version.

The reliance of Orthodoxy on the Holy Tradition along with the Holy Scripture appears thus as justified, given that the Patristic interpretation is in no way anachronistic with the original texts' meaning but seems rather to strip it to its historical and linguistic subtleties. In terms of chronology the analysis of the verses supports the reading of the Fathers, just as the imagery supports their Christic parallels. The coherence between the original and their view is, as proven by the fasting tradition preceding the feast and mirroring the Christian Lent-Easter custom, remarkable.

Ioan C. Teșu¹

Troubles or “The Daily Cross”² – “Sour Medicine”³ For the Health and the Salvation of the Soul

Abstract

Troubles, trials, sufferings, sorrows, “involuntary sufferings” - as they are often called in the spiritual literature - are part of the human condition and they all culminate with death. This condition bears the wounds of the original sin, amplified by the effects of personal sins. The man who is the slave of the “present world spirit” refuses them, being part of a world in search of satisfying his cravings and fulfilling his pleasures. He also seeks to avoid and reject them, and when they entered his life, he rebels, sometimes up to the apostasy. Whether good, bad, mild or difficult “the spiritual man” sees the present life things as real moral tests, paths to perfection and means of acquiring holiness.

For such a man, “the mystery of suffering” hides deep meanings related to God’s infinite love towards the human being that are discovered on the extent of “assuming” the troubles cross. Suffering, pain and illness are ways of liberation from the bondage of sin and passion; they are means of healing and moral improvement. They are also true “pedagogy” and divine “philosophy” that the Heavenly Father uses for man’s understanding and salvation. He who receives them and lives with hope in God’s mercy and help and the hope of reward in the next life, finds these “involuntary attempts” to be a “school of Christian virtues”, culminating in repentance,

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² Sfântul Isaac Sirul, *Cuvinte despre nevoieșă. Cuvântul V: Despre depărtarea de lume și despre toate cele ce tulbură mințea*, in *Filocalia sau culegere de scrieri din Sfînții Părinți care ne arată cum se poate omul curăți, lumina și desăvârși*, translation, introduction and notes by Prof. Dr. D. Stăniloae, EIBMBOR, București, 1981, p 42.

³ Cuviosul Paisie Aghioritul, *Cuvinte duhovnicești. IV. Viața de familie*, translated from Greek by Hieroschemamonk Ștefan Nuțescu, Lake Skete, Mount Athos, Evangelismos Press, București, 2003, p 215.

patience and hope. They are also a true “academy of holiness” and a way of union with Christ, Who is waiting at the end of his road and labours, to give the crowns of eternal happiness in His kingdom of ceaseless love.

The present study tries to highlight some of the thoughts and expressions from our Holy Father’s spirituality, not as an exercise in theological theory, but in hope of discovering some reasons and their meanings, for comfort and consolation.

Keywords

Trouble, suffering, pain, disease, patience, hope.

Health - crucial divine gift

In heaven, until the fall, the first people did not know suffering, illness and pain. Their condition was one of relative perfection that could be transformed through good exercise of freedom in full likeness with their Heavenly Father. They lived happiness of communion with God and full harmony with all creation, which served them in all things. In his famous *Mystagogie*⁴ Saint Maximus the Confessor says world was a church in extension having the sky as altar and the earth as adornment nave⁵. Inside it man was himself a “mysterious church”⁶ ministering a mysterious “cosmic liturgy” in his capacity ‘king “and” priest “of the creation.

However, this primordial state underwent a profound perversion through sin. World that Adam tried to use in order to fulfil his wishes and not for discovery and worship of its Creator was estranged from him, silently sobbing as a result of the sin. His relationship with God was altered by the loss of resemblance to his Father, for which he was created. Nevertheless man retains the image of God in the depths of his being, the updating and transformation into full likeness becoming a goal, the essential purpose of his life, which no longer can be reached than by intense spiritual efforts.

The relationship between the first people and God and the created world is not the only one that changed. Multiple splits or divisions occurred in the human being itself as a result of sin. It triggers a dull fight between body and soul, each of the two elements trying to submit another. Man

⁴ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Mistagogia. Cosmosul și sufletul, chipuri ale Bisericii*, introduction, translation, notes and two studies by Fr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, EIBMBOR, București, 2000.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

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met pleasure along with pain, a certain weakness and inclination to sin penetrating in his nature, yet not becoming binding. Thus opening a whole long procession of suffering and disease sin leads inexorably to physical and spiritual death and by their accumulation to eternal death.

Therefore man was created in a state of relative perfection, enjoying health both physically and spiritually. In that condition he had a body which was entirely consonant to his soul that was ontologically linked to God. This state of perfect health stemmed from his pure and unaltered relationship with God. If man had not yielded to the temptation to partake of material and ephemeral goods of the created world, but continued to progress, feeding from his relationship with God, this state of general perfection and health would be absolutized and eternal. Between body and soul would have been a complete harmony by their perfect cooperation, in order to complete the relationship with God. Man could be likened God through the work of virtue. The same state of perfect harmony that forever reigned between body and soul toward complete spiritualization or pneumatisation by overwhelming the former by the other would be imposed in his relation to the world. Man would have manifested his original priestly vocation in this way, being priest of all the created “very good” (Genesis 1, 31) and deserving the received dignity of their “master” and “king”. Moving forward in this relationship with the world and with him, man would have progressed in the relationship with his Father, increasing His knowledge and union.

Unfortunately, the original sin meant an existential failure, producing effects not only on his relationship with God and the world, but showing its effects on the man himself - in his two genders: male and female. They will have the experience of working by the sweat of their brow, giving birth in pain, suffering and death.

The Holy Fathers of the Orthodox spirituality unanimously consider that pain, suffering, disease and death, and their whole range of forms and manifestations, are consequences of primordial or ancestral sin. They are the result of man’s free will with which God has endowed his creatures, but he gave it a wrong use. They are also the effects of the initial bad choice.

An important observation to be made is that God did not want the fall of the first people rather enjoyed its occurrence, as He did not want man to know any of all these helplessness and suffering. But in this case too, He did not ignore man’s free will, but respected it even if the given

direction was contrary to His first redeeming reasons. The Orthodox faith teaches that God, in His omniscience, knew that man would fall into sin, but nevertheless He created man in His infinite love. God assumed the risk of man's free choice between happy eternity of heaven and the lack of communion in the gloomy hell.

But even after the fall, God did not enjoy the failure of his most beloved and having a broken but endless love, He promised man to send a Redeemer (Genesis 3, 15), in the person of His Son, the Saviour Christ, "when the set time had fully come" (Galatians 4, 4), to free mankind from the bondage of sin and spiritual death.

The whole history of the world and human life after the fall feels God's "steps" in it, in the sense of God taking care in order to watch man not to move away even more from the essential of his life – his salvation.

Full health was an original fact man was endowed with by the very act of his creation - in the sense of perfect harmony with God, with others, with the material world and with himself. Then it became a true goal, a real challenge, a gift and an ideal state that man can enjoy but also which now depends not only on himself and his actions, but also on the genetic inheritance of a family tree, on the care of the parents and the loved ones and of course, on the personal will and discernment.

Referring to the connection between sin and diseases of first people's descendants, the Orthodox theology teaches that their last reason is the original sin. Inheriting from our prothoparents the human nature, we inherit all its positive energy, capable to help the man to become perfect and firm on practicing the virtues. This means restoring it in a similar state to the original one that would lead to union with God. However, we inherit weaknesses, infirmities and death that entered into it and joined it.

In this regard, St. John Chrysostom states that "if death, the greatest evil is rooted and grounded in sin (Rom. 5:12), the more so majority of diseases⁷. This vulnerability is amplified by our personal sins, which multiply our weaknesses and diseases, bringing penalties to us by our own will.

⁷ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Omiliile la Matei. Omilia XXVII, II*, translation, introduction, indices and notes by Rev. D. Fecioru, in the collection "Părinți și scriitori bisericești", volume 23, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1994, p 345.

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So the author of evil, imperfections, weaknesses, pains and infirmities, disease and death, is not God but man, after falling in original sin, and ourselves. By the law of our descent from the first pair of humans, “human condition” is transmitted, but a fallen condition, which updates every man, from his biological birth. The holy Fathers express the reality of corruptibility that sin introduced into human nature, referring to those “garments of skin”, that is man dressed in pain, suffering, helplessness, weakness, disease and death as a result of sin. Human nature, covered by these “coats of skin” embraces two realities. On one side, it wears the characteristics of God’s beauty inside the mystery depths of the soul and in the very image of the human being. On the other hand, the sinful and passionate irrational impulses are caused and update by shame, bear the animal image⁸.

To work the good or, conversely, to commit sins or transgressions lies in our option. thus man has the possibility to restore the human nature of the first parents fallen into sin, by exalting it and leading it on top of his calling - deification, or, conversely, altering it even worse through sins and transgressions. And even if it cannot deliver or keep forever the biological health, it may surpass it by achieving and maintaining spiritual health, more important and higher, once the soul of man is immortal. Similarly, if the law does not abolish biological death, he lives forever by his actions in happiness or eternal damnation, according to their moral content.

Moreover, the Orthodox faith teaches us that death is not an implacable and sad end, a failure of existence, an ontological fiasco, but a new beginning, a birth into eternity to a new life, in which man will take the reward or punishment for acts committed during his lifetime. Mathematically, we can compare human life to a straight line, although it often follows a winding path. It is a straight line that comes from the infinite foreknowledge of God and leads to infinite eternity. The life years of each of us are a tiny segment of this line, a very small segment that even the comparison to a drop of water in an ocean is too high. But it is an important and overwhelming segment or fragment. The length and consistency, especially the direction or path to which it leads depend on how each of us understands to live this present time of life. The result is an

⁸ Preot Dr. Vasile Răducă, *Antropologia Sfântului Grigorie de Nyssa. Căderea în păcat și restaurarea omului*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1996, p 225.

eternal light and happiness, joy and communion of heaven, for those who followed God through acts of virtue, or rather cold and sad eternity and lack of love and fellowship, in the darkness of hell, for those who served evil and sin during their lifetime.

Perhaps the most convincing answer to the question “Where do infirmities, diseases and other evils leading to death come from?” is provided by Saint Gregory Palamas:

“They come from our disobedience to the divine admonition, from the transgression of God’s commandment, from the first sin committed in heaven. Diseases, infirmities, many and burdensome testing of all kinds were born by the sin. Because of this sin we dressed in the leather garb of the body, consumed by sickness and disease, and we were moved to the fickle and fleeting world and condemned to a life menaced by many evils and troubles. And disease in which sin pushed the whole human race is a full of trouble and sloping path, which leads to the death that awaits us”⁹.

Pain and suffering - effects of searching the pleasure

Saint Maximus the Confessor († 662) develops a very deep but at the same time, actual and practical teaching on the original sin and its effects on all human nature.

For the Holy Father, the first people’s sin consisted in the fact that under the influence of demonic temptation, their reason and power of discernment darkened and the feeling opened widely. This led to eating from the knowledge of good and evil tree and it made man to be similar to the evil and arrogant spirits and not to his Father’s omniscience and wisdom. St. Maximus believes that sin consisted in the fact that man did not give the deserved honour to the Creator anymore, by continually serving a cosmic liturgy and “consuming” things in an Eucharistical way that is thanking and glorifying their Giver. Noting the material utility of the created world and falling into the lure of pleasure brought by the things

⁹ Sfântul Grigorie Palama, Omilii, XXXI, PG 151, 388BC at Jean-Claude Larchet, *Tradiția ortodoxă despre viața de după moarte*, translated from French by Marinela Bojin, Sophia Press, București, 2006, p. 18-19.

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composing it, man deified the matter and started to worship it. This remark of the Holy Father seems more adequate today than ever, in our times of exacerbation of body worship and frantic search of pleasure, of bondage to matter and what is material and utility of bodily pleasure.

According to Saint Maximus the Confessor, evil is

“the ignorance of the good cause of things. This made the human mind blind and widely opened the feeling. The result was the complete alienation of man to the knowledge of God which filled him with passionate knowledge of things that fall under the senses. So man shared this without measure and only through feeling, just like dumb beasts. Finding through experience that sharing of the sensitive and seen things supports his bodily nature, man left the divine beauty designed to be his spiritual adornment. He considered the visible creation as God, and deified it because it is necessary to support the body. And he loved with all his might his own body connected by nature to the creation taken as God. And so, through exclusive care to the flesh, instead of the Creator he served the creation with all diligence”¹⁰.

The Holy Father reckons *filavtia* - the sinful love of himself, as a cause of sin, and he sees it like a carnal love that might cause pleasure to the body. According to St. Maximus the Confessor, pleasure “is born from a passion for something sensible, by means of the senses. This happens because pleasure is nothing but a form of sensation modelled in the sense organ through anything sensitive, or a work of sense due to an irrational lust”¹¹.

Tasting from pleasure made room in man’s life for pain as a result of sinful pleasure.

“God, says St. Maximus, Who built the human nature, did not create pleasure or pain (from senses), but gave mind a certain

¹⁰ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, in *Filocalia sau culegere de scrieri din Sfinții Părinți care ne arată cum se poate omul curăți, lumina și desăvârși*, translation, introduction and notes by Fr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, second edition, Harisma, București, 1994, p. 34.

¹¹ Idem, *Ambigua. Tâlcuiri ale unor locuri cu multe și adânci înțelesuri din sfinții Dionisie Areopagitul și Grigorie Teologul*, translation from Greek, introduction and notes by Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, p. 110.

amount of pleasure so it can enjoy Him in a mysterious way. Once he was created, the first man pasted this ability (which is the natural desire of God's mind), to the feeling. He saw pleasure moving contrary to nature and towards sensible things, by means of the senses. But He who cares for our salvation providentially stuck the pain in this pleasure as a means of punishment. By this He wisely put the death law in the nature of body in order to limit the insanity of mind that moves its desire towards sensitive things, contrary to nature.

Thus, because of the pleasure contrary to reason which entered the nature, the pain entered too as an antidote, congruent to the reason. This is mediated by many sufferings, among there is death. Its purpose is to remove pleasure contrary to nature, even to abolish it altogether, as to show the gift of the divine pleasure in mind. For all the pain caused by an act of pleasure which precedes it is a debt that has to be paid naturally by all who are partakers of human nature by virtue of causality. Pleasure contrary to nature is naturally followed by pain in everyone whose birth was anticipated by the law of pleasure without cause. And the pleasure of the first mistake I called without cause, because it was not the result of a preceding pain"¹².

Since the fall of the first people to the twilight of the world, man is in a continuous race between pleasure and pain. He is caught in this vicious cycle of alternation between them. Believing that he can separate one from the other, he seeks the pleasure with all his energy and flees from pain with all his power. A satisfied pleasure causes proportional pain that man seeks to soften, throwing himself into the arms of a new pleasure, more enhanced, which produces a more intense pain. Poor man! He runs from pleasure to pain and from pain to pleasure, until the exhaustion of his powers and his spiritual and eternal death. Here's how St. Maximus explains the vicious circuit:

“learning from experience that any pleasure is certainly followed by pain, man always runs towards pleasure and run away from pain. For the first he fought with all power, for the second he fought with all diligence, imagining something impossible, namely that with such skill he will be able to separate these from

¹² Idem, *Răspunsuri către Talasie...*, p. 336-337.

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each other and self bodily love will be united only with pleasure, pain remained untried from it. As one can see, he did not know under the power of passion that pleasure can never be without pain. The pleasure is mixed to the torment of pain, though it seems hidden to those who taste it, because it dominates the passion of pleasure. This is because what dominates always comes on top, covering the feeling of everything sits alongside”¹³.

Because of this crazy rush towards illusory pleasures and run way from any kind of pain,

“the countless perverse passions crept in people’s lives. Thus our lives became full of sighs, honouring the causes of its perdition and contriving and cultivating lose the occasions of its corruption due to ignorance. So the unique nature was cut in many bits and we, who are of the same nature, eat each other like the reptiles and the beasts. Looking for pleasure for the sake of self carnal love and striving to escape from pain for the same reason, we invent unimaginably sources of corrupted passions”¹⁴.

Seeking the pleasure of the senses and body, man comes to discover its reverse, the pain, which is an “antidote”¹⁵ thereof. Pain without will but as a result of sinful pleasure, and death from such pain, punish willingly pleasure¹⁶.

Pleasure and pain accompany him man to death. The latter that is the involuntary pain culminates in death, which, in turn, is the largest penalty for “willingly pleasure”¹⁷.

According to St. Maximus the Confessor, the way of transmitting the consequences of original sin is the descent from the first humans. The law that imposes them is causality, to “all who are partakers of human nature”¹⁸.

However St. Maximus does not condemn any form of pleasure, talking about “the saving pleasure” - “the pleasure of the soul for virtue”¹⁹. There is a useful sorrow or pain as well - “the pain of the body for the sake of virtue”²⁰ and there is the redeeming sorrow - for sins committed.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 32-33.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 348.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

If the pleasure of body causes sorrow of soul, every good deed or virtue includes both pain and pleasure. “The pain of the flesh lacks the sweet and smooth pain and with its reasons cleaned the pleasure of the soul delights in the spirit with all that falls under the senses”²¹.

Interpreting this spiritual teaching, Rev. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae thinks that “the pain of the body is simultaneous with joy, and with sadness in the soul. Bodily pleasure is simultaneous with sadness in the soul but also with a joy in it. The joy of soul that comes from incurring bodily pain is related to the feeling of God’s communication power, or the feeling of soul ascension to God. Such simultaneity of opposite feeling can be seen in the experienced joy of supporting a suffering for the sake of another person or in a more intense communication with him. Even body death or its waiting may be accepted with joy due to this simultaneity”²².

Human life is thus an alternation between joy and sorrow. St. John Chrysostom believes that man needs both, for, the Antiochian writer says,

“God does not leave us in a state of continuous happiness, but neither in a state of continual suffering. He gives us peace and quiet periods, for our comfort and rest, but occasionally, he send us temptations and tribulations sometimes more and sometimes less often. Of course, in some cases, he is very late to save us from evil. For what reason? That is to think of Him and to get closer to Him, to run to Him and ask Him for help. That is why He allows pain, disease, misery, hunger and other evils”²³.

Referring also to the “delay”, “silence” or “absence” of God in some troubles and sufferings, St. Theophan the Recluse believes that “if God sometimes delays to give us what we ask, is because we are still not ready to receive what we asked for. We must put ourselves in God’s hands, that He might do in us and with us His will, only to save us”²⁴.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

²² Preot Prof. Acad. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Studii de Teologie Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova, 1991, p. 178.

²³ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Problemele vieții*, translated by Cristian Spătăreanu and Daniela Filioreanu, Egumenita Press, fl, fă, p. 31.

²⁴ Sfântul Teofan Zăvorâtul, *Domnul, Cel atotbun, îngăduie ca bolile să vină asupra noastră*, în volumul *Akedia, fața duhovnicească a deprimării. Cauze și remedii*, translated from Russian by Adrian Tanasescu-Vlas, Cartea Ortodoxă Press, București, 2010, p. 150.

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Joys and sorrows characterize human life in general. God alternates joys and sorrows, mercy and “pedagogical scold”. In terms of human salvation, and in relation to the world as the sum of human lives He

“sometimes rebukes it, sometimes spares it but he does not leave only the best or only the bad on earth. As sometimes it’s night, sometimes it’s day, sometimes it’s summer, sometimes it’s winter, so in human life, sometimes it is pain, sometimes it’s joy, sometimes it’s sickness, sometimes it’s health. Let’s do not marvel when we are sick, as we should marvel when we are healthy too. Do not be upset when we suffer, for we should be upset when we are happy too. All of them happen naturally and habitually”²⁵.

The Reality and the Universality of suffering and trials

The sufferings and the infirmities, the pain and the human diseases, all culminating in death, were totally unknown to Adam, before his fall into sin. The state in which he was before the fall was one of perfection or relative perfection. He had the possibility of improvement to deification. Using the rational faculties received through creation and exercising them with mindfulness and discernment – gift of the personal freedom - would have acquired full likeness to God.

This state assumed both bodily and spiritual health, balance with the outside world and full harmony with God. Because of the fall, all these have irreparably suffered. The human reason was dark, the volition weakened and the feeling widen and pervert. From the master of all things created, man became a stranger to the world and a traveler through it (I Peter 2, 11). Living the „nostalgia of the Paradise”²⁶ and bearing deep down in his soul the “onthological longing” for his Creator and for his original condition. Inspired by the longing for the divine and by what is higher in his life and in his soul, he exclaims, like St. Augustine: “You have created us, O Lord, and my heart is restless until it rests in You”²⁷.

²⁵ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Omilii la Matei. Omilia XLIII, III*, in the cited volume, P 616.

²⁶ According to the inspired title of the work of Nichifor Crainic.

²⁷ Fericitul Augustin, *Mărturisiri*, translation and notes by Prof. Dr. Docent Nicolae Bar-

The fall into the “original” sin is the most dramatic reality of human life and the adverse effects of the fall are universal, transmitted to all people, based on their common descending from Adam and Eve.

Showing that the source of suffering is “the misuse of the free will, whereby man has the ability to climb the ladder of perfection or to fall to the stage of instinctive beastliness”²⁸ the Orthodox theology finds the reality and the universality of suffering and pain, and not just on humans, but on the whole world, for, St. Paul says, “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Romans 8, 22). As a result of the “original” sin, suffering has become “a fact of which evidence is unmistakable. Whether it is physical, psychological or social, suffering appears as a dissonant note in the symphony of life or as a shadow that darkens, by its appearance, the pleasant aspects of life.”²⁹

Since the original sin until the end of human life on earth, the suffering is a reality that cannot be denied or ignored, since each one of us will know it and we will live together with it, sooner or later, for less or for more time, thus the spiritual man understands from the early days the undeniable truth of life: “nothing is more real and more certain than pain”.³⁰

A Romanian theologian, analyzing the problem of evil in all its aspects metaphysical, moral and physical, rightly shows that “the world is full of suffering of all kinds, physical as well as moral. Man is endowed with a sensibility that vibrates at the slightest touch of his being. The sensibility is the echo of the corruptive and destructive action, which digs at the foundation of our being: this life is, according to the Scripture, “a valley of tears”. Which man can boast that never had to endure any suffering? Suffering is related to our lives in such an extent that many thinkers identified the life with the suffering. Physical evil is a reality so horrific and universal, that not only it cannot be ignored, but for most people, it is thought, though wrongly, that is the only powerful and real evil.”³¹

bu, Introduction and notes Pr. Prof. Dr. I. Rămureanu, second edition, Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române Press, București, 1994, p. 85.

²⁸ Arhim. Prof. Vasile Prescure, *Concepția budistă despre suferință în lumina învățaturii creștine*, în „Mitropolia Ardealului”, anul XXX (1985), nr. 5-6, p. 315.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

³⁰ George Remete, *Suferința omului și iubirea lui Dumnezeu. O introducere*, second edition, Reîntregirea Press, Alba Iulia, 2006, p. 11.

³¹ Prof. Dr. Constantin C. Pavel, *Problema răului la Fericitul Augustin*, Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române Press, București, 1996, p. 97.

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Given its reality and universality, the most important for human being is its settlement or its removing, physically and spiritually, by deciphering its profound meaning and by amassing useful spiritual fruits, even from the saddest and most painful existential experiences.

From such a perception, optimistic and full of hope in the help of God, when human skill and “medical art” evince their limitations and inability, the Orthodox faith urges us to exercise our conviction that “not suffering is evil, but sinning is. The sin casts us away from God, while suffering brings us closer to God and ends His wrath.”³²

Christian faith, noting the reality of human suffering and its inability to remove it completely and forever, teaches us to raise above it, to pull out of suffering the spiritual uses, seeing it not just in a humanly way a path to spiritual degradation and physical death, but the path towards eternal joy, a way to salvation, as St. John Chrysostom says, “no pain, no crown; no struggle, no reward; no stage, no honour; no grief, no rest; no winter, no summer”.³³

The suffering is not a goal itself and therefore is not to be sought and desired in any way, but avoided as much as possible. The Orthodox faith does not teach flagellation and mortification of the body, it weakening and emaciation of the ill-treatment or excessive labours. The human body is destined to become the “temple of the Holy Spirit” (I Peter 2, 5), a favourable material support for higher spiritual life.

In Orthodox spirituality, there is no preponderance of the soul over the body. Both are the two components of human composition ones health depending and leading to the others’ health. In fact, man’s salvation is not regarded only from a single perspective, but from their conjunction. Body cannot be saved without soul’s work, just as it is impossible for the soul to reach perfection without a deified body, which constantly supports the ascetic efforts.

³² Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Omilii la săracul Lazăr. Cuvântul III*, in vol. “Omilii la săracul Lazăr. Despre soartă si Providentă. Despre rugăciune. Despre vietiura după Dumnezeu”, translation from greek and notes by Preotul Profesor Dumitru Fecioru, Institutul Biblic si de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române Press, Bucuresti, 2005, p. 79.

³³ Idem, *Primele omilii despre statui. Omilia a IV-a*, in volumul „Primele patru omilii despre statui ale Sfântului Ioan Chrisostom”, translation by Stoenescu Apostol, Noua Tipografie „Profesională” Press, Dimitrie C. Ionescu, Bucuresti, 1908, p. 70, in „Lumina Sfintelor Scripturi (Antologie tematică din opera Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur)”. Trinitas Press, Iasi, 2007, p. 915.

Moreover, the Orthodox spirituality is one that has rehabilitated, contrary to erroneous tendencies, three fundamental realities of a paramount importance in the oeconomia of human being and mankind salvation: the world or the matter, considered evil and a premise of sin, in connection with those – the body is a prison for the spirit, of which it should be released as soon as possible; and the woman considered inferior and servant of man – her master. In the face of such directions and in a totally innovative and superior way, the Orthodox faith has shown that the world is not a “valley of tears”, but a ladder to the Kingdom of God, bearing divine reasons in its depths, able to lead it to the Supreme Reason – the divine Incarnated Logos, towards the mystery of the “deified matter” overwhelmed by grace. The body, considered an enemy and a prison, is presented as a friend and ally in this work of deifying and moral improvement, which participates and “suffers” the deification together with the soul. And the woman, considered subject and servant of man, was raised to the dignity of fellow, working with men in order to acquire personal salvation and the salvation of their home, “the Church from home”, excelling in her vocation of a perfect wife and an ideal mother.

In Orthodoxy, the purpose of bodily asceticism is not to weaken or destroy the body, by suppressing it, but the sublimation of all its energies. Even though the spiritual Fathers also called the body a “wicked and ungrateful friend”³⁴, they teach us how to make it a good friend, an ally in our ascetic efforts, and not an “enemy”, trying to control and discipline its natural impulses, for the devoted service of the soul.

The strong position of the Orthodox faith is that the suffering and pain should not in any way be required or wanted, but assumed, that is, lived with dignity and for salvation, when they cannot be avoided or eliminated. These are not goals for the Christian life either absolute, nor saving goals, but unwanted ways or opportunities to practice moral virtues, culminating in faith and patience, prayer and hope. Extraneous of the plan of God, suffering is not a reason for wellness, but only the occasion to practice the virtues³⁵; it does not “cause, but gives a handle for spiritual goods”.³⁶

³⁴ Sfântul Ioan Scărarul, *Scara dumnezeiescului urcuș*, in *Filocalia...*, vol. IX, p. 197.

³⁵ Jean-Claude Larchet, *Dumnezeu nu vrea suferința omului*, translation by Marinela Bojin, Sophia Press, Bucuresti, 2008, p. 146.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 154.

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Thus, the pain and the suffering should not be sought, but if possible avoided or at least delayed. The idea that the disease could be desired by God should be totally and permanently removed from the Orthodox language and conception. In His kindness, heavenly Father did not create man for disease and death, but for salvation and eternal happiness. The disease and death, as punishment for sin, are not giving by an intransigent and unmerciful Father, but they are consequences of the sin, consequences of the “first failure”. They do not have the character of a punishment, but a penitential and pedagogical one, are not the end it selves, but ways and means of obtaining salvation, i.e. the “return to the state from the beginning, back on the way to win the likeness of God and the deification “.³⁷

Once installed in our lives, we must try to remove or alleviate them, and when even this is no longer possible, we must have the “philosophy of the disease” or of the “suffering”, that is, seeking to gather as many benefits, and also to exercise ourselves in the acquire and the ministry of Christian virtues, among which an important place to be granting to is patience and hope, humility and repentance. Thus, the Christian, tried and hardened into the “furnace of troubles”, will find suffering as a blessing, and disease as the chance of salvation.

St. John Chrysostom believes that we should not grieve when we are beaten, but

“above all, we must grieve when we go all well, leading a life of sin. Always have to fear when we sin, but especially when we have no trouble. If God would punish us separately for every sin, our punishment would be easy, but when He endures long for every sin we commit, we collect greatest condemnation, if we continue in such sins. If those who are doing deeds of virtue must suffer trouble, much more must suffer the sinners”.³⁸

However, the Holy Father strongly recommends us: “Do not search for the suffering, but flee from it and avoid it”.³⁹ Therefore, suffering should never be sought, but removed.

In the same spirit, St. Theophan the Recluse, believing that afflictions are from God, urges us “to endure and to be thankful (...). But if we find

³⁷ Dominique Beaufils, *Credința ta te-a mântuit*, translation by Pr. Lect. Dr. Adrian Dinu and Asist. Dr. Claudia Dinu, Trinitas Press, Iasi, 2009, p. 94.

³⁸ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Omiliile la Matei. Omilia XIII, V*, in cited volume, p. 161.

³⁹ Idem, *Omiliile la Matei. Omilia XIV, I*, in cited volume, p. 165.

ways to remove them, and the ways are from God, it is no sin to use them to free us from distress”.⁴⁰

Therefore, being an opportunity for moral heroism, pain and suffering “are necessary as ways, but as goals, they are odious”.⁴¹ The suffering itself is not good, but it can become good by its profound moral meaning and purpose which we can give to the suffering. For this reason, “in any suffering experience it is good the submission of the one who is suffering to the will of God and for those who are looking, the compassion that the pain awakens and the merciful deeds which it provokes”.⁴²

Therefore the experience of life generally shows the reality and universality of pain, illness and sorrows, trials and human sufferings. There is no man in the present life who has not tasted, more or less, of this bitter cup of tests, who can boast, from birth to death only joy and fulfillment, as well as no human being had known, in this life, only but trouble, suffering and pain. Somewhere in life, they intertwined. Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae surprises with very much spiritual sensitivity the reality of Christian life, saying

“from the hills of joy – in the depths of affliction, this is the way that man’s spiritual life follows, but it enters a real progress in these alternations. The joys for patience are increasingly cleaner, more spiritualized, more unblemished from complacency; troubles are more firmly tolerated. Actually, joys are hushed by the certainty of troubles to come, and sorrow tolerated with the blend of serenity, with the inner laughter, like John Climacus would say, because of the safety of the joys to come. So, no matter how perverse are the external circumstances in which the life of a spiritual man is, it reaches a sort of leveling which gives it a steadfast silence. It is the strength of the spirit against the waves of the world”.⁴³

⁴⁰ Sfântul Teofan Zăvorâtul, *Boala și moartea*, translation by Adrian and Xenia Tănăsescu-Vlas, Sophia Press, Bucuresti, 2002, p. 31

⁴¹ C.S. Lewis, *Problema durerii*, translation by Vlad Russo, Humanitas Press, Bucuresti, 2006, p. 124

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁴³ Preot Profesor Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitatea Ortodoxă. Ascetica și Mistica*, Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române Press, Bucuresti, 1992, p. 142.

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What man must do, both if we talk about joys, as well as when we talk about sufferings, is to positively exploit them, to bound them to the essential purpose of his life – the salvation. Regarding the joys he must try to make them permanent, cleaning them of everything that can be sinful and passionate; and regarding the troubles he must try to overcome them through positive behaviour, which does not paralyze the will or obscures his existence, but helps him to look beyond them and beyond this life, to the future and eternal happiness.

The joy and the sorrow, the pain and relieve, the suffering and the comfort are constant, even dominant, aspects of this life. A true Christian does not seek and does not want them for themselves, because is never sure of his powers and conduct when he faces them, but once installed, he must seek to exploit and capitalize them, he must think in terms of the “philosophy of life” and of the “illness” as the Fathers say. That is, he must find out which is the cause, why the illness came in that very moment of his life sometimes the happiest time, what is the message for him and how he must behave in order to eliminate or limit their power, and when this is not possible, how he can draw, even from the most unfortunate and difficult moments of his life, events or conditions, the right conclusions, which will help him to move on.

Venerable Niceta Stethatos says that deems are “the cup of bitterness of the judgments of God”⁴⁴ and he believes that each one must drink from it according to his sins, their number and consistency. Thus,

“if the matter of sin in us can be easily healed and removed, because it consists in thoughts of love of the pleasure or the life, the cup that the Doctor gives to our souls is mixed with pity, because we are tempted by some humanly thoughts and we still suffer as humans. But if it is difficult to heal and it lies deep and it is rooted in death, consisting of thoughts of pride and greatest pride, we are given the cup of wrath in all its severity, so the disease would be thinned and consumed by the fire of sufferings that come one after another to depart the pride from our hearts, through humility which the sufferings brings. Thus, washing away our thoughts with tears in the light of humility, we will be clean by the Doctor of our souls.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Cuviosul Nichita Stithatul, *Cele 300 de capete despre făptuire, despre fire și despre cunoștință. Suta a doua*, in *Filocalia...*, vol. VI, p. 265.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Identifying the same two ways of breaking the man from the bondage of sin and passions: the patience and the hardness, Venerable Paisius the Athonite teach us that “inside the attempts it is hidden a secret: the love of God”.⁴⁶ The Venerable Father, says that “for someone who is going to the sweet Heaven must eat here much more bitterness in order to receive the passport of tests in his hand”⁴⁷ and considers that their enduring is **the highest charisma, the most important gift**, that man can receive, as he says, “the crosses of the trials are above the talents”⁴⁸ the charismas that God gives us.

Troubles are “bitter medicines”⁴⁹ that God gives man in order to heal the soul, is the “antibiotic that God gives for our heart diseases and spiritually helps us”.⁵⁰ “Gifts of God”⁵¹ – the troubles and the diseases are considered to be the “exams for the other life”⁵², “big blessings since the soul is resembled to the priceless gold and the trials and illnesses are considered to be the oven in which it is tested and cleaned by fire.”⁵³ For this reason, their behaviour and patience is considered a true “celebration” of the soul, which bring to the Christians relief and comfort.

The trials and sufferings is considered the “every day cross”⁵⁴, “God’s way”⁵⁵, which all who want to resemble to Him in virtue and want to gain salvation, must go on.

St. John Chrysostom sais that the attempts are “among the greatest blessings”⁵⁶ and the evidence of the “merciful God”⁵⁷ and that because “God is good and full of love, not only when He is good to us, but also when He punishes as”,⁵⁸ as well as a harsh tone or a punishment against

⁴⁶ Cuviosul Paisie Aghioritul, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 208

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 215

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 213

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 226

⁵⁴ Sfântul Isaac Sirul, *Cuvinte despre nevoință. Cuvântul V: Despre depărtarea de lume și despre toate cele ce tulbură mintea*, în *Filocalia...*, vol. X, p. 42.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Cuvânt la 26 octombrie, ziua Sfântului Marelui Mucenic Dimitrie*, în vol. “Predici la duminici și sărbători”, traduse și orânduite după duminicile și sărbătorile anuale ale Bisericii Ortodoxe de Episcopul de Roman”, Melchisedek, second edition, Bunavestire Press, Bacău, 1997, p. 205.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

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a disobedient child is not evidence of hatred or indifference of a loving parent, but the care and concern towards correcting his child.

Through the “oven of sufferings”⁵⁹ and the “fire of ordeals”⁶⁰ the man is released from the effects of his sins and the salvation becomes his soul. All sorrows and sufferings are not only a form of “admonishing scolding”⁶¹ of God, but opportunities for self-discovery and thus, to humble ourselves before Him and others. The “proof of sundry troubles”⁶² is a real “martyrdom” of consciousness⁶³ and for who spiritually exceeds it is considered instead of the asceticism that he was called to fulfill but has not reached it. Moreover, man has the opportunity to observe during his life and sometimes very early, that if he hadn’t willingly labored when the situation, health or youth offered him this opportunity, he will repent, because he will be later forced to endure this lack of discernment, through unwillingly asceticism, illness, suffering, and helplessness.

In an expression of a particular charm and spiritual depth Fr. Paisius the Athonite assures us that “When the body is in sufferings, the soul sanctifies. The disease makes the body – this house of ours made of earth – hurt but, thus its master, i.e. our soul, will enjoy in heavenly palace that Jesus has prepared for us”.⁶⁴ Through the humility toward which it leads, the bodily pain helps healing the spiritual illness.⁶⁵ For the person that patiently endures the disease, it becomes a real “holiday”.⁶⁶

St. John Chrysostom teaches us that through all these weaknesses, pain and helplessness “God punishes the body to make the soul wise”.⁶⁷ When these are the effects of personal sins, even if their negative consequences

⁵⁹ Idem, *Problemele vieții*, translation by Cristian Spătăreanu and Daniela Filioreanu, Eghemena Press, p. 30.

⁶⁰ Idem, *Primele patru omilii despre statui. Omilia a IV-a*, trans. by Stoescu Apostol, Noua Tipografie „Profesională” Press, Dimitrie C. Ionescu, Bucuresti, 1908, p. 72.

⁶¹ Sfinții Varsanufie și Ioan, *Scrisori duhovnicești*, in *Filocalia...*, vol. XI, p. 282.

⁶² Simeon Metafrastul, *Parafrază în 150 capete a Sfântului Simeon Metafrastul la cele 50 de Cuvinte ale Sfântului Macarie Egipteanul*, in *Filocalia...*, vol. V, p. 371.

⁶³ Sfântul Petru Damaschinul, *Învățăturile duhovnicești ale Sfântului Petru Damaschin. Cartea a doua. Cuvântul XI: Despre darul de a deosebi fapăturile sensibile după fire*, in *Filocalia...*, vol. V, p. 274

⁶⁴ Cuviosul Paisie Aghioritul, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁶⁷ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre mărginita putere a diavolului. Omilia I, 4*, in vol. „Despre nemărginita putere a diavolului. Despre căință. Despre necazuri și biruirea tristetii”, translation by Pr. Prof. Dumitru Fecioru, Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române Press, Bucuresti, 2002, p. 15

cannot be fully eliminated, they help us to acquire the health of the soul. When, however, for those who are experienced, although no one can be considered without sin, the trials received become a reward from God. But the meaning that the Orthodox spirituality gives to unimpassion is not the lack of temptations or tests. A real unimpassioned person is not the one who is not tempted, but the one who being sorely tempted, overcomes the temptations and established himself in his virtues and in the struggle against sin. Through every sorrow and trial nobly supported and thanksgiving to God, it beautifies and adorns the crown of endless happiness.

In such spiritual understanding, St. Ignatius considers the presence of trouble to be the “sign of divine election”⁶⁸ because it is not give to all to accept, receive and overcome it. The “bitter medicines”,⁶⁹ the trials and sufferings are considered by the spiritual Fathers as blessings, gifts and exams for the afterlife.⁷⁰ Man should rather reflect and to grieve not when he is in suffering, because this is a sign of “research” and “choice” from God’s call to “fight the good fight” (II Timothy 4:7) against sins and to acquire eternal joy, but when he lives in sins and transgressions, apparently without any effect, when it seems that everything is going well. This is the silence before the storm. It is the “apparently” health, which holds the spiritual death, as sin. The human being does not wake up except when his whole being is shaking, proportional to the evils committed, through a phenomenal earthquake,⁷¹ which should give him reasons to think profoundly about his present life, and especially about the future, leading to repentance or *methanoia*, i.e. the return not only of the mind and its thoughts, but profound change of his whole being.

The trials, the troubles, the sicknesses, the sufferings must be considered a warning signal that keeps our attention most often on somatic or bodily level, over the spiritual imbalances. When man realizes and fixes it, he is quickly and easily released of all these sufferings. When however he ignores these warnings and multiplies them and aggravates them, he collapses in bigger sins and thus in terrible pain and suffering.

⁶⁸ Sfântul Ignatie Briancianinov, *Cuvânt de mângâiere către mireni și monahii necăjiți*, in volumul *Akedia, fața duhovnicească a deprimării. Cauze și remedii*, translation by Adrian Tănăsescu-Vlas, Cartea Ortodoxă Press, București, 2010, p. 182.

⁶⁹ Cuviosul Paisie Aghioritul, *op. cit.*, p. 215

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁷¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos sau restaurarea omului*, second edition, Omniscope Press, Craiova, 1993, p. 95.

Lucian Farcașiu¹

Theological and Liturgical Grounds for the Threefold Immersion Baptism and its Relevance to the Church

Abstract

Baptism laid the foundation of Christian life. The whole bodily and spiritual health depends on how Christian sat foundation of Christian life. In this sense, baptism is a fundamental issue that must preoccupy us both as theology, but also in the practical side, in terms of accurately performing it, according to the directions and the tradition of the old Church. This study examines the issue of baptism by immersion from a biblical, patristic, canonical, liturgical and theological perspective highlighting the importance of this practice for the Church.

Keywords

Baptism, immersion, biblical, patristic, canonical, liturgical, theological, relevance, confession, church.

I. Introduction

The Baptism lays the foundation of the Christian life. The bodily and spiritual healthy of the Christians depends on the way in which the foundation has been laid, on the way in which the basis of his Christian life was placed. On this basis will be placed and strengthened the entire structure of the Christian's life, as "life in Christ".

This is why the subject of Baptism is a fundamental one, and it should represent a concern for us, both as theology and especially in its practical side, as regards its correct practice, according to the liturgical practice and in agreement with the Church's tradition from the very beginning.

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The present study analyzes the practice of Baptism only by immersion, the only authentic and, in the same time, able to reveal the reality of our death and resurrection with Christ, a reality in which the Sacrament makes us partakers. The study also shows the fact that the distortion of this practice, through its replacement with the sprinkling or the pouring, brings grave prejudices to the Church's confession of faith itself, because these distorted ways of practicing the Baptism can no longer reveal the reality of our death and resurrection with Christ. Because of this aspect, in the theological textbooks nowadays, the Sacrament is presented only as a mere means of acquiring the grace.

II. The terminology of the New Testament regarding the Baptism as immersion

The term Baptism is rendered in the Holy Scripture through the noun $\tau\omicron$ $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$, which means *immersion*, *submersion*. This noun comes from the verb $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\omicron$, that, in the classic Greek language, means to immerse, to submerge, to dip, to imbue, to wash away, to cleanse².

The verb $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\zeta\omega$ is used in the New Testament for the Christian Baptism (Matthew 28, 19; Mark 16, 16; Acts 2, 38, 7, 12-13, etc.), and represents the act through which a person is immersed or submerged in water³.

Also, the nouns $\tau\omicron$ $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$ and \omicron $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$ are technical terms, specially created for indicating the Christian Baptism⁴.

Therefore, the term $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$ is a new word that represents "a new reality – namely the great newness of Baptism in the Body of Christ"⁵. This term expresses the immersion in water, under the form of covering and overwhelming, and under the form of burial ("in the likeness of His death"

² *Dictionar grec-român al Noului Testament*, de Maurice Carrez și Francois Morel, traducere Gheorghe Badea, Societatea Biblică Intorconfesională din România, București, 1999, p. 56; see also A. Baily, *Dictionaire grec francais*, Editure Hachette, p. 347.

³ A. Baily, *Dictionaire grec francais*, p. 347.

⁴ P. S. Dr. Laurențiu Streza, *Tainele de inițiere creștină în Bisericile Răsăritene*, Editura Trinitas, Iași, 2002, p. 14.

⁵ Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*, London, 1961, p. 338.

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- Romans 6, 5). The Redeemer likens His death with the baptism when He says: “The baptism (βαπτισμα) that I am baptized with” (Matthew 20, 22-23; Mark 10, 38-39). Or in another place: “I have a baptism (βαπτισμα) to be baptized with” (Luke 12, 50). From all these it clearly results that “the understanding of the Christian baptism as burial-resurrection with Christ necessarily implies its practice through *immersion*.”

III. The theological and liturgical bases of the threefold baptismal immersion

1. Theological testimonies regarding the threefold baptismal immersion

- *Biblical testimonies*

All the biblical testimonies of the New Testament demonstrate the practice of the Holy Sacrament of Baptism only through immersion. All the texts of the New Testament, which refer to the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, contain the term βαπτίζω, or similar terms, derived from the verb βαπτο that, as was shown at the beginning of this study, refers to the practice of Baptism through the act of immersion (Matthew 28, 19; Acts 2, 38; 2, 41; 8, 12; 9, 18; 10, 47-48; 16, 33; 18, 8; 19, 4-5).

The most significant text of the New Testament regarding the practice of Baptism through immersion is the one in the book *Acts of Apostles*, which presents the baptism of the eunuch of Candace, the queen of Ethiopia:

“... Philip opened his mouth, and ... brought him the good tidings about Jesus. As they went down the road, they arrived to water. And the eunuch said: here is water. What stops me from being baptized? Then Philip said: If you believe with all your heart, it is possible. And he answered and said: I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. So he commanded the chariot to stand still, and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him εβαπτισεν αυτον...” (Acts 8, 35-38).

This text clearly shows the practice of Baptism through threefold immersion, as long as it is about a flowing water in which the eunuch went down and was baptized. We need to specify that the eunuch of the queen Candace who was staying in the chariot had also drinking water, for his long journey. However, the eunuch does not ask Philip to baptize him

immediately, by thinking that he could use the drinking water from the chariot, but waits until they arrive to a flowing water, about which speaks the Scriptural text, because only this flowing water made the immersion possible, namely the authentic practice of Baptism.

Also, in the Saint Apostle Paul's Epistle to Romans, there is presented the theology of Baptism, as our death and resurrection with Christ:

“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized (εβαπτιστιμεν), into Christ Jesus were baptized (εβαπτιστιμεν)? into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him into death, through Baptism (βαπτισματος), that just as Christ was raised from the dead, through the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been grafted onto Him in the likeness of His death, then we also shall be partakers in His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. If we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, who has been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the one who died, died to sin once for all; but the one who lives, lives to God. Likewise you also, consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey its lusts” (Romans 6, 3-12).

In Pauline view, the partaking in the Death and Resurrection of Christ, through Baptism, refers to the act of immersion in the baptismal font, as death with Christ, and to the act of being taken out of the baptismal font, as resurrection with Christ, from the slavery of sin and death. The act of immersion, present in the service of Baptism, is part of this view on death and Resurrection with Christ, presented by Saint Apostle Paul.

In all the texts of the New Testament regarding the Sacrament of Baptism, it can be easily observed that, when they refer to its practice by the Holy Apostles, the terms used for indicating it are derived from the verb βαπτο (βαπτίζω, εβαπτισεν, εβαπτισθη, βαπτισθηναι, εβαπτισθη, εβαπτιζοντο, εβαπτισεν, βαπτισμα, εβαπρισθησαν) which clearly refer to immersion. Therefore, we consider that all these texts justify the practice of Baptism through immersion. They justify us to affirm that,

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starting with the early period, the Church practiced the Baptism only through threefold immersion.

- *Patristic testimonies*

The patristic and post-patristic testimonies unanimously lead to the same conclusion, namely the practice of Baptism only through threefold immersion. The only work that speaks about the fact that, besides immersion – the primary rule of the Church, the Baptism can be done also through pouring is *The Didache* (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles). But here, the specification is very clear: “if there is not enough water”, and it refers to a special situation, the one when water is missing, in desert or in other droughty places⁶.

Other testimonies regarding the Baptism done through threefold immersion can be found in the following early patristic works: *Epistle of Barnabas*⁷, at Saint Justin the Martyr and the Philosopher⁸, at Tertullian, in his work *On Baptism*⁹, in the *Epistles* of Saint Cyprian, bishop of Carthage¹⁰. In the 4th century, all the patristic documents refer to the practice of Baptism only through threefold immersion. In this respect, we mention the following patristic works: the *Apostolic Constitutions*¹¹, *Euchologion of the bishop Serapion of Thmuis*¹², *Testamentum Domini*¹³, *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus of Rome¹⁴, *Mystagogical Catecheses* of Saint Cyril

⁶ *Didahia celor Doisprezece Apostoli*, în “Scrierile Părinților Apostolici”, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1995, p. 30.

⁷ *Epistola lui Barnaba*, în “Scrierile Părinților Apostolici”, p. 153.

⁸ Sfântul Iustin Martirul și Filosoful, *Apologia I*, în col. “Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești”, vol. 2 “Apologeți de limbă greacă”, trad. Pr. Olimp Căciulă, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1980, p. 66.

⁹ Tertulian, *De baptismo*, 19, în P. L., t. II, col. 98.

¹⁰ Sfântul Ciprian, *Epistola a LXX-a*, în P.L., t. IV, col. 421-422; *Epistola a LXXXIII-a* 7, în P.L., t. III, col. 1159; see also Saint Cyprien de Carthage, în vol. “Le baptême d’après les Peres de l’Eglise”, Paris, 1962, p. 70-73.

¹¹ *Scrierile Părinților Apostolici dimpreună cu Așezămintele și Canoanele Apostolice*, cartea III, 16, trad. Pr. Ioan Mihălcescu, Matei Păslaru și G. N. Nițu, Editura Facultății de Teologie Chișinău, 1928, p. 100 și 211-212.

¹² *Euchologion-ul egiptean al lui Serapion din Thmuis*, *apud* Ioan I. Ică jr., *Canonul Ortodoxiei*, Editura Deisis/Stavropoleos, 2008, p. 874-875.

¹³ *Testamentul Domnului nostru Iisus Hristos*, cartea II, 9, traducere, note și studiu introductiv pr. dr. Nicolae Achimescu, Editura Polirom, Iași, 1996, p. 169-171.

¹⁴ Ipolit, *La tradition apostolique d’après les anciennes versions*, introd., trad. et notes par Bernard Botte, col. „Sources Chretiennes”, nr. 11 bis, Paris, 1968, p. 85-87.

of Jerusalem¹⁵ and *Baptismal Homilies* of Saint John Chrysostom¹⁶. In the following centuries, the Baptism is described as way of its practicing through threefold immersion in the following works: *On the Holy Sacraments* of Saint Ambrose, bishop of Milan¹⁷, *Baptismal Homilies* of Saint Maximus of Turin¹⁸, *Catechetical Homilies* of Theodore of Mopsuestia¹⁹, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite²⁰. The description and the explanation of the Mysteries of initiation into the writings from Byzantine and neo-Greek theology presents the practice of Baptism through threefold immersion. These works are the following: *Ecclesiastical History and Mystical Contemplation* of Saint Germanus of Constantinople²¹, *On the Life in Christ* of Saint Nicholas Cabasilas²² and the work *On the Holy Sacraments* of Saint Symeon, bishop of Thessaloniki²³.

As it can be seen, the entire patristic and post-patristic literature refers to the practice of Sacrament of Baptism only through threefold immersion. All these justify us to consider that the Church's rule at all times has been and remained the same: the Baptism practiced through immersion.

¹⁵ Sfântul Chiril al Ierusalimului, *Cateheze, Cateheza a II-a mistagogică*, trad. pr. prof. Dumitru Fecioru, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2003, p. 348-349.

¹⁶ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Omilia a doua despre rolul diavolului în această lume*, în P.G., t. XLIX, col. 258; trad. rom. de Pr. Marcel Hancheș, *Omiliile baptismale ale Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur*, Editura "Oastea Domnului", Sibiu, 2003, p. 23.

¹⁷ Sfântul Ambrozie al Milanului, *Despre Sfintele Taine*, cartea a II-a, cap. 5, în *Scieiri – partea a doua*, în col. "Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești", vol. 53, trad. Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1994, p. 16-17.

¹⁸ Sfântul Maxim de Turin, *Omiliile baptismale*, II, trad. de Drd. Ioan Popa, în rev. "Studii Teologice", an XXIV (1972), nr. 1-2, p. 109.

¹⁹ Teodor de Mopsuestia, *Omiliile catehetice*, Cateheza 14, trad. de I.V. Paraschiv, în rev. "Glasul Bisericii", an XXXIII (1974), nr. 5-6, p. 479-480.

²⁰ Sfântul Dionisie Areopagitul, *Despre ierarhia bisericească*, cap. 1, 7, în *Opere complete și Scoliiile Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul*, traducere, introducere și note de Pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura Paideia, București, 1996, p. 75.

²¹ Sfântul Gherman al Constantinopolului, *Istoria bisericească și teoria mistică*, trad. rom. de Pr. Prof. Nicolae Petrescu, în rev. "Mitropolia Olteniei", an XXVI (1974), nr. 9-10, p. 826.

²² Sfântul Nicolae Cabasila, *Despre Viața în Hristos*, studiu introductiv și traducere de Pr. Prof. Dr. Teodor Bodogae, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1997, p. 57.

²³ Sfântul Simeon al Tesalonicului, *Despre Sfintele Taine*, în traducerea românească *Tratat asupra tuturor dogmelor credinței noastre ortodoxe*, trad. de Toma Teodorescu, Editura Arhiepiscopiei Sucevei și Rădăuților, 2002, p. 117.

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Also the text of the Holy Canons, concerning the baptism, refers to committing it by immersion. We recall in this respect the 50th Canon of the Holy Apostles²⁴ and the 7th Canon of the Second Ecumenical Council.²⁵

The cited texts are rigorous, both in terms of committing the Holy Baptism by triple immersion, and about the baptism of heretics that had not been baptized by triple immersion. We note that there is no place which reminds about how to commit the Baptism other way that by triple immersion.

- The liturgical testimonies

The liturgical text of the service of Baptism also mentions that it is committed only by immersion. Thus, in one of the special petition form the large litanies in Baptism service, we ask God “hat this water may be for him (her) a laver of Regeneration unto the remission of sins, and a garment of incorruption²⁶ The term “laver of Regeneration”, inevitably shows the reality of immersion. The same expression occurs in the prayer

²⁴ „If any bishop or presbyter does not perform the one initiation with three immersions, but with giving one immersion only, into the death of the Lord, let him be deposed. For the Lord said not, Baptize into my death, but, „Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” in Arhid. Prof. dr. I. Floca, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe – note și comentarii*, Sibiu, 1992, p. 34.

²⁵ Those who from heresy turn to orthodoxy, and to the portion of those who are being saved, we receive according to the following method and custom: Arians, and Macedonians, and Sabbatians, and Novatians, who call themselves Cathari or Aristori, and Quarto-decimans or Tetradites, and Apollinarians, we receive, upon their giving a written renunciation [of their errors] and anathematize every heresy which is not in accordance with the Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of God. Thereupon, they are first sealed or anointed with the holy oil upon the forehead, eyes, nostrils, mouth, and ears; and when we seal them, we say, “The Seal of the gift of the Holy Ghost.” But Eunomians, who are baptized with only one immersion, and Montanists, who are here called Phrygians, and Sabellians, who teach the identity of Father and Son, and do sundry other mischievous things, and [the partisans of] all other heresies-for there are many such here, particularly among those who come from the country of the Galatians:-all these, when they desire to turn to orthodoxy, we receive as heathen. On the first day we make them Christians; on the second, catechumens; on the third, we exorcise them by breathing thrice in their face and ears; and thus we instruct them and oblige them to spend some time in the Church, and to hear the Scriptures; and then we baptize them” in Arhidiacon prof. dr. Ioan N. Floca, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

²⁶ *Molitfelnic*, Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române Press, București, 1992, p. 31.

of consecration of the water.²⁷ And another prayer, baptism is presented as a laver of regeneration "... who now also has been well-pleased to regenerate this Your servant newly illuminated through Water and Spirit".²⁸ The terms "laver of regeneration" and "to regenerate ... through Water and Spirit" refers of course to the total immersion into the font.

The explanations in the Service Book mention the following regarding how to commit the Baptism:

"When he has anointed the whole body, the Priest baptizes him (her), holding him (her) erect, and looking to wards the East, says: The servant of God (Name) is baptized in the Name of the Father. Amen. And of the Son, Amen. And of the Holy Spirit, Amen. At each invocation the Priest immerses him (her) and raises him (her) up again."²⁹

After each immersion in the baptismal font, the people utters "Amen", indicating that "we have seen and felt once again that Christ truly died and is risen indeed, so we can die in Him from our mortal life and participate - here and now - to "the undying day".³⁰ And because we have seen as witnesses all these now we sing filled with joy the Psalm 31: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered (3). Blessed is the man whom the Lord imputes not sin, and in whose mouth there is no guile".

The Apostle of the Service of the Holy Baptism is from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Romans (6, 3-11) and shows our fellowship in the death and the resurrection of Christ, through the immersion

"Brethren, do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his".

The theology of Baptism that this text expresses describes the very reality of immersion and erect from the font.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

³⁰ A. Schmemmann, *Din apă și din duh – Studiu liturgic al botezului*, translated by Pr. Prof. Ion Buga, Symbol Press, 1992, p. 101.

2. Exceptions from immersion: pouring or sprinkling. Application condition of these exceptions.

The early Church knows a single exception from the rule of immersion in the Sacrament of Baptism. This exception is pouring or sprinkling. It can be applied only in two special cases, and only as a compromise from the rule.

Baptism can be done by sprinkling or pouring, on the one hand, for those who can not be lifted off the bed to be immersed in the baptismal font because of incurable diseases. In this case, the form of baptism by immersion can not be fulfilled and it requires pouring or sprinkling. This form of Baptism is called *clinical baptism*, and it is accepted only by a compromise from the rule of the Church, which is the immersion. But this baptism by pouring has a strictly exception character, for reasons clearly determined, in order to be committed in the described situation.

On the other hand, committing baptism by pouring or spraying can be done where it isn't enough water for committing the immersion, according to the text quoted in the Didache of the Twelve Apostles: "if you do not have fresh water baptize in other kind of water, and if you can not baptize in cold water, baptize in hot water. If you do not have enough of either, pour water on the head three times". This indication refers strictly to the situations in which baptism must be committed in the desert, where the leak of water was a real problem.

3. The significance of the immersion in the Service of Holy Baptism: Death and Resurrection with Christ.

"As the Old Church, it knew ... that in Baptism we really die and resurrect with Christ, because this is the intimate experience of the baptismal sacrament".³¹ "Immerging (entirely) in water of Baptism, the neophyte is united with Christ, dead and buried; when he comes out of the water is united with Christ, to become the conqueror of death."³²

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

A. Schmemmann, *op. cit.*, p. 99

³² D. Mollat, *Symbolismes baptismaux chez Saint Paul*, in. „Lumiere et vie”, Revue de formation et reflexion theologique, Lyon, 1956, no. 26, p. 71.

By the thrice immersion of the child into the holy water, the name of the Holy Trinity, we do nothing but “putting away of the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to the putting on of the new, which is renewed according to the Image of Him that created him (her)”³³ as it is stated by one of the prayers of the Service of Baptism. After the Great Litany prayer, the priest prays to God, saying: “... do take thy Christ in this way you will be born again through my unworthiness”.³⁴ Or, Christ puts His full image into us, through our fellowship to death and resurrection with Him in baptism. In this sense, the prayer of blessing of the water mentions: “Manifest Yourself, O Lord, in this water, and grant that he (she) that is to be baptized may be transformed therein to the putting away of the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to the putting on of the new, which is renewed according to the Image of Him that created him (her). That, being planted in the likeness of Your death through Baptism, he (she) may become a sharer of Your Resurrection”.³⁵ In Baptism Christ becomes our garment. He makes His life our life and love the very content of our lives “.”³⁶

The task of current theology is precisely to rediscover this theological dimension of the sacrament of Baptism. The Baptism is a fundamental dimension in the consciousness of the Church. This involves committing the sacrament only by thrice immersion, the only one able to discover this reality seen in the death and resurrection of our Christ, in Baptism. This actually means to restore the place and the function that Baptism had since the beginning.

We will try to develop the significance of baptism as our death and resurrection with Christ.

Through Baptism one becomes a Christian

“underwent a change similar to that of the Word made flesh. In other words, before dying to the sin, he who is baptized enters into a supernatural union with Christ, who died for him (Romans 5, 6, 8, 9) on the cross. Because the death of our Saviour is redemptive of all the sins of the Christian, who is united with the

³³ *Molitfelnic*, Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române Press, București, 1992, p. 34.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

³⁶ A. Schmemmann, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

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crucified person Himself (cf. Galatians 11, 20), shall enter into the state of sinless death and as St. Paul said, he buried together with Him.”

Thus, “the death of the One who is immortal makes this a redemptive death, a death for our salvation.”³⁷ Death becomes a natural transition from eternal death caused by sin, to another death, just like a bridge that takes us to the new life. The Easter Hymn “trampling over death by death” raises to our attention the joy specific to the Christianity, so evident in the consciousness of the old Church. The endless joy of the abolition of death, for in Christ, death is destroyed is mentioned in the words of St. Paul: “O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory?” (I Corinthians 15, 54-55). And this is expressed obviously in the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church: “Christ has risen and nobody is any longer in their graves”. Christ’s death there is no longer “death”, because it was dismantled and turned into a bridge to real life. Thus,

“Christ does not suppress or destroy the physical death, because He does not suppress this world of which physical death is only part of ... But he does infinitely much more. He removes death’s sting of sin, abolishes death as spiritual reality, fills it with Himself, with His love and His life ... He makes death a happy and bright passage - Easter - toward a fuller life, a total communion, an absolute love.”³⁸

We have the testimony of the Apostle Paul: “For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.” (Philippians 1, 21). In this text, the Apostle speaks of the new meaning of death - of death in the sense of being with Christ, of death as it becomes in our mortal world the manifestation of Christ’s victory.³⁹ This is because, for those who believe in Christ and live in Him, there is no death, because death is destroyed (I Corinthians 15, 24) and was transformed into a full resurrection together with Christ.

A patristic tradition of the Church explains precisely our immersion in baptism as the renewal through participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. Regarding this, Tertullian writes, “... we are born in water and we are saved only by indwelling in it”⁴⁰; “For our death could not

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 94-95.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 95

⁴⁰ Tertullian, *De baptismo*, I, 3.

be destroyed without the Lord's passion, no life could be returned to us without His resurrection".⁴¹ And in the Apostolic Constitutions, we find a similar testimony:

4. „Form” and „essence”. Father Alexander Schmemmann's vision

In his study dedicated to Baptism Father Alexandre Schmemman shows that “modern theology is unable to explain the relationship between baptism and Christ's death and resurrection. Nevertheless this relation is clearly stated both in the baptismal service and in Tradition. Being baptized

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death... For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection” (Romans 6, 4-5). From here it starts the emphasis on the organic connection between baptism and Easter present in the Liturgical tradition and, hence the paschal character of baptism and baptismal contents of Easter in the Old Church”⁴².

Nowadays theology is unable to explain the reality of the sacrament of baptism as death and resurrection with Christ. This is due to the fact that in the current liturgical practice, Baptism is often performed by pouring the water or sprinkling which is completely unacceptable and not by immersion as normal. This distortion of the authentic practice of committing baptism leads to the loss of the mystical and symbolic significance of Mystery theology that is being dead and risen with Christ, by the immersion and pulling out the font.

Based on this fact, in almost all modern systematic theology textbooks, the reality of our death and resurrection with Christ, by the immersion of Holy Baptism, has been replaced by two other arguments regarding the effects of baptism in the Christian life: the remission of original sin and the acquisition of grace. Thus,

“like all the other sacraments, Baptism is defined as a tool for acquiring grace, as a visible manifestation of invisible grace. Baptism is not presented in the books of systematic theology as

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, XI.

⁴² Alexandre Schmemmann, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

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being effectively and in essence the death and resurrection with Christ and not only in its external symbolism⁴³.

Father Alexander Schmemmann Professor points out that in this new situation the questions in modern systematic theology books are:

1. What does the Church tradition involve, when it says that by Baptism man is assimilated to Christ's death and resurrection?

2. What is the reason that in modern theology, this statement has lost its central character?

3. What is the relationship between Baptism in form and essence, between what is committed to liturgical, according to the Church's faith and what occurs and is accomplished through this Sacrament?

The answers to these questions are vital, because when they try to answer them, the systematic theology and our catechisms which are imbibed in textbooks, remove the vision and experience of the early church, altering irreversibly, the meaning of the work, the value of the sacraments and their place in the Church life⁴⁴.

We must clearly say from the outset that the early church saw no separation between the seen form that baptism was committed, i.e. triple immersion, and the essence of the Sacrament, i.e. our death and resurrection with Christ, which are the meaning of the immersion. In the old Church consciousness, immersion in water of the catechumen and pulling out of it, were seen as the most vivid expression of "death and resurrection with Christ" through baptism. Thus, there was no distinction between the form of baptism by immersion, and the essence of the Holy Mysteries, death and resurrection with Christ⁴⁵.

In the Sacrament of Baptism, all that is visibly committed is actually happening and we first consider act of immersion. This is the outwardly manifestation, i.e. the form and the significance of this form – the death of the person who enters the font and his resurrection with Christ. In this regard Father Schmemmann writes the following:

"The baptism is really what it is, because what it stands for - the death and resurrection - is true. It is not just the representation of an idea, but the content and the reality of the Christian faith. To believe in Christ means to be "dead, and your life is hid with

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

Christ in God". (Colossians 3, 3). This is the essential experience of the old Church, perfectly and directly manifested. At the beginning the Church did not even need to "explain" it, but rather included in this experience all the explanations and source of all theologians⁴⁶.

Baptism is the event that designates: death and return to life of a being, by assimilating the Death and Resurrection of Christ. It was the unique opportunity to really die with Christ and rise with him to new life in the form of the gift of new life that has risen from the grave⁴⁷.

In the ancient Church tradition the form of the baptism i.e. immersion "is important by its nature and its epiphanic function" because it reveals the essence of the Mystery. As an "epiphany of the essence, the form is the means to understand it and explain it"⁴⁸.

A new chapter has opened in Dogmatic Theology, when the unity of form and essence of the sacraments broke, that unity between the act of their external committing and their theological, mystical and symbolic significance⁴⁹. This breaking of the unity of form and essence of the Mysteries, which was present in the initial perception and experience of the early church, appears today in Systematic Theology textbooks as a precondition of "understanding" them, that is just formalizing the clear distinction between "form" and "essence". This change of vision brought an entirely different understanding of the sacraments in general and especially the sacrament of Baptism. According to this view, the form is not an epiphany (showing), a discovery of a hidden reality, but only an outward manifestation, with no mystical-symbolic content, since the essence does not depend on the form⁵⁰. In line with this new vision, identifying the essence of the sacrament to grace, as a means of acquiring it, has made opposition to form that has no value for the significance of the sacrament⁵¹.

When the distinction between form and essence, between Sacrament as a means of grace and the grace itself came to be accepted as natural

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

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and obvious, the essence ceased to be understood as the very fulfillment and the instrument, the practical way that the invisible is seen, found and observed⁵². In this new sacramental conception death and resurrection have no meaning. For it does not appear with certainty that Christ died in secret, because, being already dead and risen once and for all, Jesus „dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him” (Romans 6, 9). According to the modern view neither man dies in Baptism because even if the baptized person is “assimilated” to the Death and Resurrection of Christ, the real significance of baptism and its validity is to obtain grace. This, like the grace of all sacraments is undoubtedly the result of the atoning death and resurrection of Christ⁵³.

Because the reality of our death and our resurrection with Christ in the act of immersion was not understood as the single significance of act of baptism, or form to commit to, today there is a substitution of the authentic form present from the very beginning in the liturgical life of the Church. Namely the immersion of the one, who comes to receive the divine Baptism, was replaced by sprinkling or pouring form that can be performed only for baptism the seak. This exception became a practical reality quite widespread in the life of the Church, when the reality of death and our resurrection with Christ in the act of immersing and lifting catechumen from the font was misunderstood. Baptism by immersion was gradually being replaced by pouring or sprinkling. Thus what the early church accepted by economy or as permitted exception to the rule for an objective and justified reason (catechumen inability of to be got up of bed and to be immersed) usually become quite widespread today.

This practical and theological deviation, where baptism is intended only as acquiring grace and not as our death and resurrection with Christ by immersion in the baptismal font, led to the replacement of immersion by pouring or sprinkling, that no longer are able to discover the mysterious and heavenly reality. This is because, sprinkling or pouring cannot describe such a reality (immersing and lifting, descent into death and resurrection with Christ) in a visible form. Just the act of immersion and getting out the font can make us partakers of such heavenly reality.

Baptism by pouring or sprinkling, not being able to describe and discover the reality of death and our resurrection with Christ is reduced

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

to a visible form that acquires the invisible grace of the Holy Spirit. This concept began to invade much of our theology textbooks. But, as previously stated, such a limited concept, clearly prejudices the whole theological meaning of the Sacrament of Baptism as the beginning of the Christian life.

Replacing the immersion with pouring or sprinkling, is not just replacing an exterior form but affecting the secret meaning of the reality that is the incorporation of the Death and Resurrection of Christ, a reality that can be describe only by the act of immersion and raising from the font.

Conclusions

1. The Baptism lays the foundation of the Christian life. The bodily and spiritual healthy of the Christians depends on the way in which the foundation has been laid, on the way in which the basis of his Christian life was placed. On this basis will be placed and strengthened the entire structure of the Christian's life, as "life in Christ". This is why the subject of Baptism is a fundamental one, and it should represent a concern for us, both as theology and especially in its practical side, as regards its correct practice, according to the liturgical practice and in agreement with the Church's tradition from the very beginning.

2. Baptism only by immersion, the only authentic and, in the same time, able to reveal the reality of our death and resurrection with Christ, a reality in which the Sacrament makes us partakers. The distortion of this practice, through its replacement with the sprinkling or the pouring, brings grave prejudices to the Church's confession of faith itself, because these distorted ways of practicing the Baptism can no longer reveal the reality of our death and resurrection with Christ. Because of this aspect, in the theological textbooks nowadays, the Sacrament is presented only as a mere means of acquiring the grace.

3. All the biblical testimonies of the New Testament demonstrate the practice of the Holy Sacrament of Baptism only through immersion. All the texts of the New Testament, which refer to the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, contain the term βαπτίζω, or similar terms, derived from the verb βαπτο that, as was shown at the beginning of this study, refers to the practice of Baptism through the act of immersion (Matthew 28, 19; Acts 2, 38; 2, 41; 8, 12; 9, 18; 10, 47-48; 16, 33; 18, 8; 19, 4-5).

Theological and Liturgical Grounds for the Threefold Immersion...

4. The patristic and post-patristic testimonies unanimously lead to the same conclusion, namely the practice of Baptism only through threefold immersion. The only work that speaks about the fact that, besides immersion – the primary rule of the Church, the Baptism can be done also through pouring is *The Didache* (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles). But here, the specification is very clear: “if there is not enough water”, and it refers to a special situation, the one when water is missing, in desert or in other droughty places.

5. The text of the Holy Canons, concerning the baptism, refers to committing it by immersion. We recall in this respect the 50th Canon of the Holy Apostles⁵⁴ and the 7th Canon of the Second Ecumenical Council.

6. The liturgical text of the service of Baptism also mentions that it is committed only by immersion. Typicon indications, biblical readings of the ordinance of the Sacraments and prayer content is evident in the rule threefold immersion, and theological significance that goes with it, that our death and resurrection with Christ.

7. Because the reality of our death and our resurrection with Christ in the act of immersion was not understood as the single significance of act of baptism, or form to commit to, today there is a substitution of the authentic form present from the very beginning in the liturgical life of the Church. Namely the immersion of the one, who comes to receive the divine Baptism, was replaced by sprinkling or pouring form that can be performed only for baptism the seak. This exception became a practical reality quite widespread in the life of the Church, when the reality of death and our resurrection with Christ in the act of immersing and lifting catechumen from the font was misunderstood. Baptism by immersion was gradually being replaced by pouring or sprinkling. Thus what the early church accepted by economy or as permitted exception to the rule for an objective and justified reason (catechumen inability of to be got up of bed and to be immersed) usually become quite widespread today.

This practical and theological deviation, where baptism is intended only as acquiring grace and not as our death and resurrection with Christ

⁵⁴ „If any bishop or presbyter does not perform the one initiation with three immersions, but with giving one immersion only, into the death of the Lord, let him be deposed. For the Lord said not, Baptize into my death, but, „Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” in Arhid. Prof. dr. I. Floca, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe – note și comentarii*, Sibiu, 1992, p. 34.

by immersion in the baptismal font, led to the replacement of immersion by pouring or sprinkling, that no longer are able to discover the mysterious and heavenly reality. This is because, sprinkling or pouring cannot describe such a reality (immersing and lifting, descent into death and resurrection with Christ) in a visible form. Just the act of immersion and getting out the font can make us partakers of such heavenly reality.

8. The task of current theology is precisely to rediscover this theological dimension of the sacrament of Baptism. The Baptism is a fundamental dimension in the consciousness of the Church. This involves committing the sacrament only by thrice immersion, the only one able to discover this reality seen in the death and resurrection of our Christ, in Baptism. This actually means to restore the place and the function that Baptism had since the beginning.

BOOK REVIEWS

**Pr. Dr. Adrian Murg, *Soteriologia scrierilor lucanice*,
Editura Universității „Aurel Vlaicu” Arad, 2011, 326p.,
ISBN:978-973-752-579-6**

The Soteriology of the Lukan Writings is the title of the doctoral dissertation (appreciated by the commission with the grade *magna cum laude*) of Rev. Adrian Murg from the Faculty of Theology in Arad, appeared at the Publishing House of the “Aurel Vlaicu” University (Arad, 2011, 326 pages).

This work responds to a need in Romanian New Testament literature, namely the study of the theological aspect of the Lukan writings, whose central theme is salvation.

Regarding the contents of the book, to provide an overview of Lukan soteriology, this study opens with a preliminary chapter (p. 23-42), which analyzes the use of the soteriological vocabulary derived from the root of the verb “to save” and the soteriological ideas presented in the infancy Gospel (Luke, chap. 1-2).

The first part of the book (p. 43-71) is called *God the Saviour* and examines the theocentric aspect of Lukan soteriology, materialized in the divine plan of salvation, pursuing the development of this theme throughout the work of Saint Luke. The most extensive part (p. 73-229), *Jesus the Saviour*, begins with an analysis of the inaugural sermon of Jesus (Luke 4, 16-30), which is decisive for defining the person of Christ and the meaning of salvation in the Gospel. The next four chapters of this second part deal with the main directions in which Jesus’ jubilary “release” manifests: deliverance from the dominion of Satan, healing the sick, forgiveness of sins and rescue from socio-economic aggression. There follows a section linking the Gospel and the Acts, which highlights the continuity between the two “words” of St. Luke and the primary meanings of salvation in Acts. In the chapter *Jesus the Saviour in the Acts of the Apostles* the christological perspective of this book is presented - which is the divinity of Jesus - and the means by which Christ saves the world. In the third part (p. 231-

268), *Salvation as Work of the Holy Spirit and Participation in the Church Life*, are explored the pneumatological and ecclesiological dimensions of salvation. The last part (p. 269-296) is devoted to the subjective aspect of salvation, referring to what man must do to appropriate salvation. The divine initiative is analyzed first and then the human response with its four elements: listening the apostolic preaching, faith, repentance, baptism.

In order for the discussion of the theme to be better understood, at the end of each chapter the partial conclusions of the study are presented and in the end the *General Conclusions* summarize the entire contents of the work.

As noted by the scientific coordinator of this thesis, Rev. Prof. Dr. Vasile Mihoc, "Bibliography, rich and carefully selected, reflects the serious documentation of the work. In fact, this is evident throughout the work. The author offers us, among other things, the result of a serious exploration, from a critical perspective, of an extensive bibliography on the topic. To which are added, happily, his own contributions of penetration and systematisation of some important exegetical-theological issues (...). These are equally reasons why this work deserves attention both from researchers and from any reader interested in understanding salvation in Christ and His Church" (p. 16).

Having the honor to participate in the commission in front of which this doctoral thesis was defended, in referring to the contribution of this study I showed that its merit consists in the fact that it presents salvation as the central message of the Gospel as well as the way it was understood in the apostolic age, highlighting the variations in nuance and content salvation could suffer in a particular local church or in a particular historical epoch. Thus appears the particular way in which the salvation is depicted, reflecting St. Luke's own theological position and the spiritual needs of the specific community he addresses.

Another important contribution of this thesis concerns the unitary treatment of the two Lukan writings, underlining the view that they present the idea of salvation in a homogeneous organic and functional reciprocity. In this unitary discussion, the author captures the specific Lukan nuances of salvation, referring them both to the Synoptic Evangelists, the Evangelist John and Pauline epistles.

The pledge of the scientific approach of the work is given by the use of the critical exegetical methods, namely: redaction criticism or analysis, source criticism, form criticism, literary criticism and narrative criticism.

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In fact, the theme itself is of exceptional importance for theology, because salvation is the central and essential element around which the Christian teaching and life is carried out. Thus, on the foundation of the gospel teaching the edifice of moral-spiritual life rises by taking on the form of Christ in Spirit, to achieve the goal of *theosis* through a dynamic ever-ascending progress, starting in this present life and continuing in the eternal communion with God, when “He will be all in all” (I Corinthians 15, 28). In this way, the theme of salvation in the Lukan writings underlies the dogmatic theology and spirituality of our Church.

Therefore, we gladly welcome this book, recommending it to those eager to know and deepen in their Christian life the ideal of salvation in Christ and in the Church, through the work of the Holy Spirit, as evidenced in the theology of the Lukan writings.

Rev. PhD. Sorin Cosma

Daniel Lemeni, *The Tradition of Spiritual Paternity in Eastern Christian Spirituality. A Survey on Spiritual Guidance in Late Christian Antiquity*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2012, 333 p.

Mr. Daniel Lemeni's work is part of the theological-spiritual efforts of contemporary rediscovery and affirmation of the essential coordinates of Eastern spirituality, where the spiritual fatherhood occupies a special place, efforts particularly centered around Deisis Publishing House coordinated by archdeacon professor Ioan I. Ica Jr. The relevance of the topic is even greater as, in the context of globalization and rampant secularization of the world, the spiritual fatherhood enters an ample process of relativization and devaluation, either by ignorance or by attempts to replace it with specific typologies of Eastern religions and model of relations based on exteriority. In the context of today's world the identification and the design of that well-contoured tradition in Eastern Christian spirituality, constitutes an act of recovering and restoring the Romanian Orthodox theology, designed to boost not only theological studies in this direction, but the life of the Church too, in its spiritual, monastic and parochial manifestation.

The research of this book sheds light on the philosophical, and mis-tagogic developments and implications of the theme in the New Testament, throughout the 4th - 7th centuries, from a historical, spiritual and charismatic perspective. The core of the theme, based on the paternal and filial coordinates of the New Testament is represented by the dynamics of spiritual guidance in Egyptian desert tradition, in *Apophthegmata Patrum* and in Pachomian koinonia, by the spiritual coordinates of the Gaza school, the ascetic spiritual synthesis of John Climacus and by Abba as reconstructed model Cassian's tradition. Through these, the author wishes to capture the "theological and oikonomic profile of the spiritual father in Christian East" in an integrative and comprehensive form. His tools are a strong appeal to the theological or philosophical sources - for explicating

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master-disciple relation in ancient philosophy – and a convincing literature that includes fundamental work on this subject.

The appeal to essential texts - carefully and argumentative interpreted – which draw the most powerful lines of spiritual paternity, intercedes the understanding of *spiritual father* in experimental and not in theoretical terms. Thus, the spiritual father does not send just a set of theoretical knowledge to his disciple, but what he managed to incarnate in his own life and experience based on the Church tradition. In his forays into source texts, Daniel Lemeni reaches conclusions able to provide a unified and distinctive vision on fatherhood in the spirituality of the Church, above certain clichés unable to make the necessary distinctions between the spiritual father, the priest-confessor, the teacher and the wise man. Asking questions on ambiguous aspects as following: hierarchy versus charisma, charismatic authority versus ecclesiastical authority, without claiming a definitive expression, the author attempts mediation, reflected in an integrative and unified vision. This highlights the distinction between priest-confessor / Bishop who's power is based on the authority formally (*de jure*) delegated by the institution and between the spiritual father charismatic authority based on personal charisma (*de facto* authority). Based on this distinction, he advocates the idea that “through its charismatic character, the practice of Desert Fathers spiritual guidance indelibly completes the institutional character of the Church”, the two perspectives defining the “Community dimension of the Church”. Positioning in the perspective of mediating between tensioned aspects caused by pneumatic asceticism and hierarchical authority, the author pleads for the normality of human spiritualization. At the same time, the author advocates for human life as “transfigured normality” based on the experience of Christ gospel, incarnated both in the manifestation of the fourth century Elder's function and in the Apostle Paul's spiritual position who spiritually “conceived” his disciples. The position and the charismatic manifestation of the spiritual father - spiritual son relationship in Christianity fulfills the master-disciple relationship of ancient philosophy on which the author draws our attention throughout the third chapter, concluded with valuable comparative considerations on monastic asceticism and philosophical paideia.

In the Romanian theological publishing Mr. Daniel Lemeni's approach is unique, the excursus combining with questioning and especially with argumentative response to a variety of interrogations concerning the

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evolution and significance of the concept of *spiritual fatherhood*. The style is clear, being the expression of a clear and rigorous thinking; the content is rich in explanations, interpretations and relations designed to help building a comprehensive vision about the announced topic, thoroughly and lucidly perceived as “*provisional results*”. The value of the book is increased by the specific terminological hermeneutic of the theme that the author gives an obvious importance which contributes to the expression of terminological meanings, implications and the necessary distinctions.

Beyond scientific expectations of the academic, this is a book that opens to the public who is eager to deepen the understanding of the meaning of life found in Jesus Christ and incarnated in the lives of the Apostles, of the Church Fathers and Saints. Besides the inherent scientific methodology of such a work, Daniel Lemeni gives us a real opportunity to reflect on the possibility of human holiness as normality of a life transfigured in Church life and of the spiritual bond between spiritual father and disciple. The depth of this relationship which has its model in the New Testament exceeds not only the typology of master-apprentice of ancient philosophy, but also the various reductive-imitative types of modern and postmodern world. Written with theological competence the study on spiritual paternity in Eastern Christian spirituality opens the inner and experimental valences of a tradition that requires assuming and embodying in the present too.

PhD. Cristinel Ioja

Albert Vanhoye, *A Different Priest. The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Series Rhetorica Semitica, Miami, FL: Convivium Press, 2011, 450 p., ISBN: 978-1934996201

The Jesuite scholar Albert Vanhoye, appointed Cardinal by Pope Benedict XVI in 2006, is one of the most distinguished specialists in the Epistle to the Hebrews. His numerous articles and books he has published on this topic are part of the basic bibliography on Hebrews. In addition he has authored various works that cover other topics of exegesis, biblical theology and spirituality, many in French and some in Latin.

The book, appeared under the patronage of the “Society for the Study of Biblical and Semitic Rhetoric”, uses the method of “rhetorical criticism” having as a starting point the idea that biblical or Semitic rhetoric is distinct from the Greco-Roman one. The authors claims that biblical texts need to be analyzed according to the unique rhetorical rules under which they were composed. This makes this work distinct from many other New Testament studies that use the categories of Hellenistic rhetoric. At the same time, as with all rhetorical-critical approaches to texts, a central conviction is that the “text’s form and arrangement is the main gate which gives access to its meaning” (p. 3).

In the Foreword Dr. Vahoye presents some introductory ideas. The first one is the now widely-accepted view that Hebrews is a homily (“a magnificent homily”, as he puts it) and it must be studied as a speech, not as a written letter. For that reason, rhetorical criticism is an indispensable and powerful tool which the interpreter must use in order to understand what the author has accomplished. Secondly, understanding the book’s orality and use of rhetorical devices prevents interpreters from entangling in “inextricable doctrinal difficulties” that rise if the book is studied as a literary document. Also, observing that Hebrews employs “biblical rhetoric” keeps one from misconstruing features that “conflict” with Greco-Roman rhetoric. The elements that might be considered “contradictions” in a literary text are readily explained in an oral discourse. In his words,

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“The interpretation must not therefore take every statement in an absolute sense, but, on the contrary, relativize it, taking account of its situation and the aim in sight” (p. 19). He also clings closely to the distinction between Semitic and Greco-Roman rhetoric, expressing it in terms like these: “contrary to the rules of Graeco-Latin rhetoric, but in conformity with the uses of biblical rhetoric” (p. 30).

The twenty-one chapters of the book carefully examine these rhetorical elements in the text and demonstrate the uniqueness of Christian preaching shaped by Semitic rhetoric. The first chapter outlines the overall structure of the composition. The remaining twenty chapters are divided into five parts, following the thematic flow of the composition. Each chapter includes three sections: composition, biblical context, and interpretation. The composition section focuses on grammatical and structural analyses. It examines the use of various parallelisms, comparisons, and other forms of arrangement in the text and proves that the rhetorical style of the text is more Hebrew than Greek. The section of the biblical context investigates how other biblical and extra biblical texts are implicitly or explicitly related to the text to support the ideas the author intends to transmit. The interpretation section provides the reader with some theological insight into reading the text.

In Part One Vanhoye examines the Name of Christ, arguing that the rhetorical function of 1, 5-2, 18 is to underline this topic. In contrast to those who focus on the comparison between Christ and the angels, Vanhoye asserts that the true objective rhetorically is to highlight the main theme of the section, viz., the “name” of Christ. Part Two presents Christ as a trustworthy and merciful high priest (3, 1-5, 10). In Part Three the central section of Hebrews is treated, concerning Christ as the perfect high priest, in more specific terms (5, 11-10, 39). The book concludes with two sections detailing the results of Christ’s name and priesthood for the Christian life. In Part Four Vanhoye sees faith and endurance as a result (11, 1-12, 13) while Part Five contains a call for right conduct in the search for holiness and peace (12, 14-13, 18) before the concluding good wish (13, 20-21) and what Vanhoye calls the “Dispatch note” (13, 22-25).

It is impossible of course to cover the entire commentary in this review, so I will highlight certain key passages to give a sense of the types of exegetical decisions and interpretive comments that he makes.

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At 1, 6 when the author of Hebrews speaks about the introduction of the firstborn into the world, Vanhoye argues that the author is not referring to the incarnation, but to the resurrection and glorification of Christ (p. 81). Commentators are divided over whether the passage refers to Jesus' incarnation, exaltation, or second coming. In the quotation of Ps 44 LXX in 1, 8–9 he views *ho theos* as a title referring to the divinity of Christ. The phrase *ho thronos sou ho theos* does not mean "your throne is God." In its original context it was used hyperbolically of the Israelite king, but when "applied to the risen Christ, the statement loses its hyperbolic character and becomes the expression of genuine reality, for the reign of Christ is not situated on the earthly level but on the fully divine one" (p. 84).

At 3, 1 Vanhoye appeals to Malachi 2, 7 stating that the title "Apostle" is equivalent to the Greek word *aggelos*, messenger. Since the author had already demonstrated how Jesus was superior to the angels in chapter 1, he tried to avoid confusion by using an equivalent term (p. 125).

Vanhoye argues that 4, 10 is not a gnomic statement about the believer in general, but that it refers specifically to Jesus (p. 142). Vanhoye is certainly in the minority with this view, but a Christological reading of this passage is certainly consistent with other passages in Hebrews that talk about Christ's entry into heaven (6, 20; 9, 12. 24).

On 5, 2 Vanhoye makes the following interesting statement about the verb *metriopathein*: "The preacher did not want to ascribe compassion for sinners to the high priests of the Old Testament, which is nowhere found in it; he reserved that compassion for the new high priest; to the high priests of old he merely ascribed something approaching it" (p. 161).

On 5, 7 Vanhoye correctly states that *eulabeias* refers to Jesus' piety and not to Jesus' fear of death (p. 165). How was Jesus' prayer heard? Vanhoye states that "the will of God consisted in granting Jesus the most perfect reply possible to his prayer: complete and definitive victory over death, by means of death itself" (p. 166).

Vanhoye's treatment of 6, 4–6 would require more detail. He seems to suggest that the persons in view in this passage are genuine Christians, although he never explicitly states this. These persons experience a "culpable fall" but "the author does not specify the nature of this fall" (p. 189). Vanhoye seems to view this passage as a rhetorical device (p. 190), but it is not clear whether he believes that "falling away" is a real or hypothetical possibility. In light of the history of interpretation of this

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most controversial of passages, one would have expected a much fuller treatment of this passage.

At 7, 3 Vanhoye interestingly remarks that Melchizedek is not a prefiguration of the preexistent Son of God, nor the incarnate Son of God, but “is the prefiguration of the risen Christ, for the resurrection is a new creation, in which neither human father, nor human mother, nor genealogy have any part” (p. 210).

In 7, 26 the expression *kechorismenos apo ton hamartolon* has been taken either with the previous adjectives to refer to ethical separation, or with what follows to refer to spatial separation. Vanhoye takes the latter view, applying it to the glorified Christ. He explains that “In his earthly life, Christ was not ‘separated from sinners’, he accepted contact with them and even sought it out, for he had ‘not come to call the just, but sinners’” (p. 219). At 7, 27 Vanhoye makes the interesting comment that the author employs a different word for offering a sacrifice, *anapherein*, which is more appropriate in a passage describing the glorified Christ (p. 220).

In 9, 14 the expression *dia pneumatou aioniou* has been variously interpreted as a reference to: 1) Christ’s internal disposition, 2) Christ’s divine nature, or 3) the Holy Spirit. Vanhoye rejects the first two options and favors the third (p. 282–83). His view, that the expression is used as a contrast to the fire of the altar in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, has found few followers (p. 283–84).

Vanhoye argues that *diatheke* has the sense of “testament” in 9, 15–17 (p. 267). The author has exploited the multivalency of this Greek term (p. 289). Vanhoye points out that the notion of “inheritance” was prevalent in both the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants (p. 267). Christ’s death not only procured forgiveness of sins, it obtained an eternal inheritance. Vanhoye remarks, “Christ has not only saved and redeemed us, he has acquired inestimably good things for us by his death. In the perspective of the New Testament, the action of ‘saving’ and of ‘redeeming’ corresponds to the departure from Egypt, obtaining ‘the inheritance’ corresponds to the entry into ‘the land of promise’” (p. 290–91).

At 12, 14 Vanhoye takes the view that “seeing the Lord” refers to Christ, and not God (p. 387). At 12, 24 Vanhoye rejects the interpretation that sees Abel’s blood as crying out for vengeance, while Christ’s blood brings mercy. He states, “This interpretation is attractive, unfortunately, it

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does not fit the immediate context, which does not speak of mercy, but of authority and severity” (p. 395).

At 12, 25 Vanhoye takes the minority view that “he who warned on earth” refers to Moses, while “he who warns from heaven” refers to Christ (p. 396). Vanhoye even argues that the “voice” in 12, 26 refers to Christ and not God. He explains, “It is the glorified Christ that the author ascribed, at the beginning of his homily, the final upheaval of earth and the heavens: ‘like a garment you will roll them up’ (Heb 1, 12). Creator of heaven and earth as Son of God (1, 1), the glorified Christ will be the eschatological judge of ‘the universe’ (Acts 17, 31)” (p. 396).

Finally at 13, 10 Vanhoye argues that the “altar” does not refer to the Eucharistic table, but to the cross of Jesus, while the “eating” alludes to the Eucharistic table. The logic of 13, 10–12 is hard to follow, but Vanhoye explains it succinctly: “Since Jesus died in a situation that corresponds to the prohibition in Leviticus (Lev 6, 23; 16, 27), ‘those who pay worship at the tent do not have the right’ to ‘eat from this altar’, that is, they do not have the right to take part in the sacrificial meal associated with the cross, the ‘altar’ of the sacrifice of Christ. Attachment to former observances in worship is incompatible with sharing in the ‘Supper of the Lord’ (1 Cor 11, 20)” (p. 415).

In conclusion, this book is a welcome addition to the body of important work on Hebrews. Vanhoye engages in careful exegesis throughout, including important grammatical and lexical analyses of important features. His detailed analysis of the entire text as a remarkably crafted whole makes a convincing case that what we have called “The Epistle to the Hebrews” is the full text of a marvelous Christian sermon. As such, it constantly conforms to the rules of Semitic rhetoric, including various types of parallelism, inclusio, synonymy, antithesis and complementarity, and employing a concentrically symmetrical strategy. It would be hard to find a more useful example of how rhetorical criticism works in biblical exegesis.

Rev. PhD. Adrian Murg

Wolfhart Pannenberg, *What is Man? Present Anthropology in the Light of Theology*, translated from German by Ioan Milea Herald Publishing, Bucharest, 2012, 194 p

Wolfhart Pannenberg is an important contemporary theologian and one of Karl Barth's students. Being a theologian with ecumenical vocation, he founded the German Institute of Fundamental Theology and Ecumenism desiring to promote interfaith dialogue between the Lutheran and the Catholic Church. An important feature of the German theologian's work is the reason that combines very well with the life of faith.

In this book, the German theologian asks an essential question concerning the man, his plenary existence and the fact he always remains the subject of an open questioning and searching. By his questions the man starts searching the world, his definition and his meaning and he reaches to overcome nature and the world. Thus he becomes aware of the need for a partner and the innermost partner of man is God. Based on this problematization on human mission, the German theologian's paper presents the dialogue between theological anthropology and modern anthropology. In this context the dialogue between material and spiritual culture and between reason and faith is founded on man's relationship with divinity. The author stresses the importance of the world and man's relation to the world showing that through faith in God he can dispose the world and have the freedom to be in it and overcome it. In fact, we can briefly say that the fundamental issues underlying this paper are: freedom, trust, time, egocentrism, history, love and tradition. Using a discursive analysis but also based on faith, therefore with logical and theological perspectives, the author takes us on the path of a theology able to give a responsible answer to the modern man. Being in a contrasting position to the human egotism, theology leads us beyond ourselves towards our mission, trying to get us above our tendency to close ourselves within the limited personal ego. Sin closes man's connection to the world and transforms the

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relationship between human person and society in a schizoid opposition, turning man into an individual who uses the common social ordinances in an individualist way. The answer to this degradation process is the right through love, another interesting topic which the author combines well with the tendency and the theological meaning of man open to communion and mutual love. Love is the principle behind the fulfillment of God's law, and it is the basis for the profane legal community. Pannenberg says that „*law and religion are closely related, since God is the origin of both human mission unity and unity among people. Consequently the human society cannot validly justify its legal structure than by reference to God*” (p. 121). As a conclusion to this chapter, the author shows that the essence of the Church is to be a new Israeli and an example of society of love.

Furthermore we find an analysis of European culture and of the social process animated by the Christian culture. The inventive spirit of the creative imagination and the development of natural sciences and technology are rooted in the spiritual soil of Christian tradition (p. 143). The technology is based on a biblical idea and God gave man the task to master the world. Man creates civilization after civilization without ceasing through impulse, climbing step by step the ladder toward the light of the future. Therefore, the author argues for preserving tradition, showing that only the continuity of ideas and the creative facts submit us to a new level. The tradition should not become rigid or a shell to constrain the development of life otherwise life will be broken. Furthermore, the German theologian substantiates his ideas on the basis of examples from the Holy Scriptures showing that the divine promises help the Israelites lived oriented to the future. Therefore, the author emphasizes that the opposition between tradition and revolution is exceeded only by an inheritance open to the future (p. 153-154).

The last chapter of the book deals with the theme of history and is based on interrogation referring to the connection of the comprehensive history of mankind as a whole, with its character and course. It is shown that God of Israel enables the history unity, people's mission being decided by their relationship with God of Israel and with the revelation of Jesus of Nazareth. Pannenberg concludes that the mission of all people is clarified by Jesus Christ as the center of humanity. Therefore, as he noted at the beginning of the work, modern anthropology returns to its Christian foundations.

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Masterfully combining the theology with modern science, the author shows us that the Church cannot be anachronistic and has the duty to use its traditional resources and power to be in history, not as an acculturation of Christianity in the culture of the time, but on the contrary. Christianity, as it always did, absorbed and transformed traditions, but it kept them remodeled. The German theologian concludes his work saying we can faithfully forward to the future of God only with a critical attitude toward the world and our own Christian heritage. Although sometimes we find traces of Protestant theology which recalls the idea of predestination, the Orthodox reader will certainly know to avoid such formulations. Certainly actuality and pertinent interdisciplinary approach will raise interest of Romanian theologians to a deeper theological dialogue with modernity and key issues of life.

Alexandru Dan Adam

Writing requirements for the studies included in the “Teologia” review

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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;

The presentation of the resultus of the investigation

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

- quality of the results and their presentation according to the stated aim;
- quantity of results;

Interpretation of the results obtained

- relevance of interpretation according to the hypothesis, aim and objectives ;
- relation of the interpretation with the theoretical framework of the theme;
- accuracy, originality and extent of interpretation;

Suggestions

- innovative degree of suggestions;
- capacity of the suggestions to solve the identified problems;
- transferable value of the launched suggestions;

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;
- each article will be analyzed according to the requirements of the domain it belongs to, the above requirements being the reference framework;
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GENERAL INFORMATION

Contributions should be written in English, German, French or Italian. The article should not be longer than 12.000 words, including footnotes.

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.

GENERAL STRUCTURE OF A FULL ARTICLE

- Title
- Abstract
- Keywords
- Main text:
 - Introduction
 - Methods
 - Results
- Conclusion

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Authors are kindly asked to submit the final form of their article, carefully edited according to the instructions below, proofed for language, spelling and grammar. Articles with spelling and grammatical errors cannot be accepted.

Please use Normal Style, with Times New Roman, 12 point font, single line spacing, justified, first line indented at 0.8 cm. (0.32 in.). For headings use Heading 2 Style.

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FOOTNOTES

Footnotes are numbered continuously, starting with 1.

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References to books and articles have to be placed in the footnotes. Do not add a bibliography.

The last name of the author(s) should be written in SmallCaps, the title of the book, article, periodical, volume in italic.

Books:

DUMITRU STĂNILOAE, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturgia ortodoxă*, EIBMBOR, București, 20042, 109.

KIRSOOP LAKE, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1959, 233.

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DUMITRU STĂNILOAE, *La centralité du Christ dans la théologie, dans la spiritualité et dans la mission de l'Eglise*, in „Contacts”, vol XXVII, no. 92, 1975, 447.

DUMITRU POPESCU, Știința în contextul teologiei apusene și al celei răsăritene, în vol. „Știință și Teologie. Preliminarii pentru dialog”, coord. Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Popescu, Editura Eonul dogmatic, București, 2001, 11.

DAVID E. AUNE, Magic in Early Christianity, in „Aufstieg Und Niedergang Der Römischen Welt”, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 1980, 1510.

Patristic works:

IOAN GURĂ DE AUR, Omili la Facere, II, 4 în „Scrieri”, partea I-a, col. „Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești”, vol. 21, trad. Pr. D. Fecioru, EIBM-BOR, București, 1987, 43.

Ambrosius, Expositio evanghelii sec. Lucam II, 87, PL 14, 1584D-1585A.

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