

Catastrophes, decadences, dramas and crisis in the Church History

The intention of the quest editors of this issue of the theological-academic periodical “Teologia” was to offer space for research and reflection on catastrophes, decadences and crisis in the Church History. No specific perspectives or focuses were indicated. The authors enjoyed total freedom both in choosing the subjects and in understanding the notions they were invited to research on. The result of this approach was that seven authors of quite different backgrounds and confessional and church affiliations wrote on “Catastrophes, decadences and crisis in the Church History” from very different perspectives.

His Grace Bishop Nicodim Nicolăescu wrote about the “catastrophic effects” of the decree of 410/1959 issued by the communist authorities in Romania which drastically limited the monastic life of the Romanian Orthodox Church. His Grace’s article could be considered as a case study on a very delicate issue related with the history of relationships between church and state in communist Romania.

Adolf Martin Ritter proposes a paper on the catastrophes in the life and thinking of St. Basil the Great. Ritter’s paper is not only a genuine example of a solid patristic research, but also an excellent proof of the actuality of patristic writings both for theology and other issues that are not strictly theological.

The article of Guy Liagre with the very challenging title “Vivre la catastrophe” deals with some of the effects of the First World War for European churches, especially for Protestantism in Belgium. It definitely brings a significant contribution to the knowledge of the impact of the “Great War” on Belgian Protestantism. It is the hope of the editors of this journal that G. Liagre’s paper will act as an open invitation and stimulation for research on the impact of the First World War on Orthodox Churches since we commemorate this year the centenary of the first global armed confrontation.

Peter-Ben Smit proposes a paper on the “decadence of the others.” He analyses the accusations of decadence, particularly of luxury formulated by the Western Church to the Eastern Church and vice-versa, especially after the “Great Schism” and in the time around the fourth crusade. Exaggerating the decadence of the others was part of the complex arsenal of polemic between Western and Eastern churches before the beginning of the ecumenical dialogue.

Andreas Heiser chooses to write about natural catastrophes, especially about earthquakes in Antioch in Late Antiquity. He analysis both Pagan and Christian attitudes to such impressive natural catastrophes as earthquakes are, and presents their positions, with focus on the Christian one. Antique reports about earthquakes are quite different from those we hear today: there is no detailed information on the number of the victims or on material damages. While the Pagan author Ammianus Marcellinus gives no religious interpretation of the earthquakes he experienced in Antioch, St. John Chrysostom interprets the earthquakes (gr. *seísmo*) as an expression of God’s anger caused by the sins of people.

Gabriel Gârdan deals with the drama of schism among the Romanian Orthodox living in North America. Apart from the historical record of the origin and development of this drama, Gârdan’s article is certainly relevant to the actual efforts of dialogue between the two Romanian Orthodox dioceses of the Romanian-American diaspora.

Caius Cuțaru proposes a research on the theology of history developed by St. Augustine around the catastrophe of falling Rome under Alaric in 410. The theology of history developed in St. Augustine’s *De civitate Dei* is indeed a muster of theology of history dealing with a (supposedly) major catastrophe in the history of civilized world.

Daniel Buda’s paper is an attempt to present the actual economic crisis from the perspective of the role of churches as well-established and long-standing institutions in overcoming it.

It is the hope of the quest editors that this short presentation of the studies encapsulated in this periodical helps to convince potential readers of the thematic diversity approached here, as well as of the quality of these studies. They offer indeed a large diversity and a good combination between historical research and relevance for actuality.

V. Rev. Prof. Dr. Cristinel Ioja
V. Rev. Lecturer Dr. Daniel Buda

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The Catastrophic Effects of Decree 410/1959 on Monasticism in Communist Romania

Bish. Nicodim Nicolăescu

Bish. Nicodim Nicolăescu
University of Craiova
E-mail: episcop_nicodim@yahoo.com

Abstract

During the communist period, the Romanian Orthodox Church especially monasticism suffered greatly. This was mainly due to issuance of Decree 410/1959 which decimated the number of monks and nuns throughout the country. Such evil decree had catastrophic effects among monks, the front line of the battlefield with the forces of darkness – communists, atheists. Thousands of monks and nuns of various ages were abusively removed from monasteries and forced to return to civilian life and to integrate into the life they left. This decree resulted in violation of civil rights, religious, spiritual and any rules of common sense, constituting an abuse, violence and a violation of personal freedom.

Keywords

Romanian Orthodox Church, communism, monks, monasteries, Decree 410/1959

Monasticism always had a special cultural and spiritual role in society as a “catalyst” of Christian spirituality in our country. Throughout history, monasticism passed both through periods of crisis and decay and through periods of ascension, effervescence and maximum spiritual experience. When monasticism reached the heights of living in Christ, first it gave a