

Principles of Youth Training in the Faculties of Orthodox Theology from Romania

The year 2016 was declared the Anniversary Year of the Religious Education of Orthodox Christian Youth in the Romanian Patriarchate. At first glance this issue does not seem to be a scientific one, but if we look at its present complexity, depth and implications we can affirm its scientific character. If the profane sciences deal with the complex problem of immanent in particular, Theology remains centred on the mystery of God revealed to people in Christ, the incarnate Logos, without neglecting the human and cosmic structure. Even if some think Theology is ineffective among sciences, we believe that without it other sciences will lose the connection with the ensemble and all the deep levels of knowledge for good. On the other hand, Orthodox Theology does not seek to replace sciences, nor to limit or annul their epistemological approach. Using its experience and principles it tries to guide them towards new immanent transcendent connections that will help them be a part of the full knowledge of reality.

Training young people in the Faculties of Orthodox Theology involves having several principles and objectives in accordance with Church Tradition and experience. 1) The formative spiritual principle of Orthodox Theology; 2) Training young people according to Christ and Saints' example; 3) Training young people through the truth of Scriptures and of Holy Fathers; 4) Training young people through the experience of prayer in the Church; 5) Training young people through the visual culture of icons and religious art; 6) Training young people through dialogue with others.

The Theology faculties do not train youth for serving a science, but for serving humanity towards its transfiguration. Theology is not a cliché or an ideology. It is the natural component of each man's supra-rational knowledge for understanding his meaning and the purpose of world, to overcome death and to achieve endless life in Christ. Therefore, Theology does not only inform, but also forms and it is not reduced to immanent,

but rooted in the transcendent. It is not reduced to a rational science. By a paradoxical apophatically-cataphatic method theology analyzes its own endeavour and purpose to human union with God in love. The Orthodox Theology faculties keep alive the spiritual paternity combined with the institutional rigors, freedom with authority and concentration of Eastern Christian Church spiritual Tradition in the authority of the spiritual father united with the Church authority integrated into Catholicity. Unlike other areas Theology approaches man in his complexity and in the light of real union with his Creator. Therefore, training youth in Theology faculties includes and exceeds all the goals of philosophy, sociology, psychology and the humanities in general, through the holistic vision of man and participation in transcendent. Training young people through the experience of Church prayer does not only refer to the practice of prayer, but also to achieving ecclesial awareness and continuous capitalization of community ethos. Prayer is the science of inner human edification and means preserving the communion with God. Prayer is learned and experienced in the “laboratory of Resurrection” (that is Church) which is superior to any labs. In this laboratory the purpose of the experiment is not something distant, but the very healing of those who experience. Young people who entered into the ecclesial space of this lab do not experience something unrelated to their personal inner life, but just the process of their re-creation. They are their own subject in the experiment of Church prayer and of union with God through the Sacraments. The formative character of Theology, which includes the practice of virtues and the Church ascetic life, does not cancel the informative one. In the academic sense Theology has an informative dimension too. This dimension should not be understood as autonomous thinking, but also as integration in the life content of Tradition. There is not simple information transmitted, but contents of holy life that transfigure by being assumed and experienced in the ecclesiastical environment. The Orthodox Theology confesses Christ in the context of a globalized and secularised world. The world in which Orthodox Theology is called to express is an open world that moves at a dizzying pace of environments and which is disproportionately structured in a Babylon of cultures, philosophies and religious beliefs. The chance of Orthodoxy is not enclavisation, but dialogue. The responsibility for people looking or passively waiting for the manifestation of the Church in society is closely linked to the mystery of the dialogue and to the relationship me-you-us.

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The dialogue - as Orthodox Theology understands - is not abdication, but presentation of faith in front of others and by interacting with them. The model of this dialogue is Christ. His attitude and openness to those who fell in passions, to those of other nations or pagans are as many arguments for how we must assume dialogue with the world. In fact Christ who is present in the Church through the Holy Spirit maintains this dialogue with the world, for its salvation and transfiguration until the end of time.

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