

Bishop Daniel Stoenescu, *Epicleses - Thoughts, Reflections, Meditations*, Învieirea Publishing House, Vrsac, 2012, 316 p.

The recent volume, bearing Daniil Stoenescu's signature, Bishop of Dacia Felix, entitled *Epicleses - or the transformation of the thought in word, the embodiment of the word in act, the transfiguration of the image into likeness, of the tear into prayer, of the church into temple, of the earth into new sky, of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the calling, the descent and the work of the Same Holy Spirit*, printed in exceptional graphics, develops the proposed theme regarding the aspects of epiclesis, expressed in a biblical deployment (p. 7-73), dogmatic (p. 73-101), patristic (p. 101-109) Philokalia (p. 109-165), next through thoughts (p. 165-287), pastoral (p. 287-311) and literary form (p. 311-316). In fact, this list is somewhat formal, meant to indicate mainly a didactic orientation. The development of the theme overcomes a certain rigid schematism and it is presented as a spontaneous statement, without a well-determined plan, but in a symphonic embodiment, unitary and varied, harmonically combined, creative and spiritual as "the quick and powerful word of God" (Hebrew 4, 12). The Bible is presented in a patristic interpretation, crossed by the spirit, filled with wisdom, of Father Arsenie Boca.

From the many and varied ways of presenting, here is a good example:

Updating, for example, the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead, Bishop Daniil makes it a reason for our spiritual awakening, saying, "Our friend Lazarus has sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (John 11, 11). The miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus of Bethany hide any awakening or spiritual resurrection. Thus, the city of Nineveh is awakened to repentance by the preaching of Jonah; Samaria is awakened to Christ, receiving the word of God through the Holy Archdeacon Philip (Acts 8, 14) and Macedonia is revived or awakened by St. Paul (Acts 16, 9). Christ comes to the tomb of Lazarus to rise him from the dead by the

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words, “Lazarus, come forth” (John 11, 43), St. Paul comes preaching in Athens (Acts 17, 22) and our Father Arsenie of Prislop comes preaching, ministering and witnessing to the “grave” of our Romanian people to awaken Christ (p. 59).

And another convincing example:

Referring to the “times of refreshing” of which St. Peter speaks, inspired by the Holy Spirit, in his preach after healing the paralytic at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful (Acts 3, 19-20), Bishop Daniil shows that there are “times of relief, refreshing and good start” for humanity in general and for every man, especially in biblical history and in the history of the Christian Church. Such “times of refreshing” were also in ... the work of St. Paul, along with his disciples and his companions to Ephesus, Thessalonica, Corinth and Malta ... times or spiritual revival and outpouring of grace must have been strong also during the ministry and preaching of St. John Chrysostom and St. Symeon the New Theologian in Constantinople, of St. Gregory Palamas in Thessaloniki, of Saint Seraphim of Sarov in the forests of Russia, of the venerable Paisie Neamt, of St. Calinic of Cernica and our Father Arsenie Boca in the monasteries of Sâmbăta and Prislop” (p. 61).

On the other hand, present the spirit of Philokalia is present through the aphoristic expression, like the updated apophthegm of the Desert Fathers from the Patericon. Here are a few examples:

“The consciousness of the divine presence, the consciousness of our contemporaneity with Christ and the consciousness of the biggest of the of sinners forms and paints the Byzantine spiritual arch of Pantocrator in the temple of our soul, of which are hanging all chandeliers and the lights of our mind and heart” (p. 113). “As you forever fix an icon on the eastern wall, so you should nail through the golden pin of the thought the icon of the Prayer of the heart in your mind” (p. 113). “Wearied and toiling out with love and attention in mentioning the name of Jesus, you weave to the invisible, spiritual “loom”, through the shuttle of the mind, the golden thread of unceasing prayer” (p. 113). “The Christian life must endure anything, however and anywhere, to the last drop of blood sweat in Gethsemane garden. Only then the angel of the Lord will come and will strengthen you to accept the cross of Golgotha.” (p. 114). “The faith is the embers and prayer is the flame; the faith is the rock, and prayer is the water that springs from the rock ... The faith is the root and the prayer is the flower, fruit or ear ...” (p. 116). “From under the walls of Jericho collapsed

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on us, from under the house built on sand and shot down by the torrents of life ... we cry to Thee, Lord, have mercy on us” (p. 116). “Through sincere confession of sins and thoughts of the mind to God and the confessor, will be taken out of the depth of the seas of the subconscious of the soul the “scrap of sunken ships” from past storms and shipwrecks of your life. Thus your soul calms and clears” (p. 122).

In addition, very uplifting and spiritual and filled with spiritual meanings are the stichera from Akathist of the Holy Martyrs Montanus - the priest and his wife Maxima (+ 26 March 304), published for the first time and in Romanian: “Rejoice, Annunciation of martyrs, / Rejoice, praise of Moesia, / Rejoice, hope of Pannonia, / Rejoice, glory of Dacia Felix / Rejoice, crown of Singidava, / Rejoice, tear of Sava, / Rejoice, silent cry of Danube / Rejoice, foundation of Moravia, / Rejoice, sunrise over Danube’s valleys, / Rejoice, tears of joy on the face of Romania” (p. 134 -137).

Recalling the words of a wise Japanese saying: “I’m only trying to teach my students how to listen to the birds singing” the author of this volume “opened the blossom petals of a cherry tree” of these words and translates them: “I’m only trying to teach my students how to listen flowing rivers, the blowing of the wind, to contemplate the flowers blooming, to hear the stones speak, to listen to the leaves speak, to contemplate the clouds floating, to see the blinking stars, to watch the butterflies flying, to hear crickets doxology, to understand the sigh of the grass, to feel the springs weeping; and to long for the Parousia, waiting” (p. 157).

Here is expressed in a suggestive and plastic manner the meaning of the “Ideal”: “To bring a ray of sunshine in a midnight; / to rain a drop of tear on a blade of grass; / descending a cloud from heaven on a stretch of sand / light a divine fire in the flint of a heart, / to call a breeze of wind at harvest time, / to see a canopy of stars in the core of a day, / to talk to many without saying a word” (p. 157).

Further, from the “Advice” we retain some suggestions: “To connect your existence to God’s omnipresence - mentally, emotionally and morally”, “In any wind, gale or storm of life to feel the gentle and quiet breeze of the Holy Spirit”; “to find that little bit of heaven in every clod of earth”, “Urelease the weights of plumbum off the wings of your soul as a dove”, “Humble yourself down to the ground, love up to heaven, shut up to the grave and pray as you breathe”; “Believe in God, for He is, wait for Christ, for He comes; pray to Him, through the Spirit, for He hears you” (p. 158). From the chapter “Of Thoughts”, we highlight some metaphorical aspects,

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filled with vibration: "Thought is the keystone in the temple of the mind and the cathedral of the soul of which is hanging the chandeliers of words and the candelabrum of deeds", "pious thought is the flame of the life of man", "the thought of mind is a flower which has its roots in the heart", "*the fixed ideas in mind*: not all the nails in the head are made of gold, there are also rusty nails", "*the work of the mind*: continuously pass the purl of the thought through the needle of the consciousness, so you will not be wrong", "first or the "alpha" thought is the burning bush, the pillar of fire of the Holy Spirit in mind, the flame of the lit candle, the rising sun in mind or keystone of the mind" (p. 161).

In this framework encompasses the chapter entitled "Thoughts - knotted and untied" (p. 165-182), developing a diversified thematic of a high spiritual vibration, such as, for example: "contemplative thought: God's light passes through eternity, Love of God fills the heaven and earth, God's Word goes through time; the Voice of God pervades eternity. The Light is to be contemplated, love is to be experienced, the word is to be received, the voice is to be heard" (p. 165), "The sins" "the cancer cells" of the soul, which if they are unforgiven and unsolved, may cause metastases to the soul and spiritual death". (p. 167).

And for the thought to be expressive are missing any personal poetic approach, expressed in a meaningful lyrical metaphor: "from the underground gardens/ of my thoughts / I chose from the root / a sheaf of mine flowers, / As to light a stem ... " (p. 183).

To all these beautiful thoughts, and others like them, the author adds a few more "From the words of Father Arsenie Boca": "Work like you work for God, to win where others lose", "God lives in an unclouded soul", "His words caught our lives His life", "Allow to pervade also words of God through your words", "You can not preach the Kingdom of Heaven with the material burden on the wings", "If you would draw the curtain aside and you would see what's beyond, you wouldn't want to live here a moment longer" (p. 282-283).

In conclusion we will say that, going through the contents of the *Epiclesis* we particularly appreciate the success of the invocation of the fullness of the Spirit through holy thoughts, reflections and meditations inspired by the light of the Word and deepened by the experience, which is why we recommend this volume for reflection, meditation and spiritual edification and growth.

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