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# Principles of Orthodox Missiology

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## Abstract:

*The article explored on the Principles of Orthodox Missiology as reflected in our Theology, the Sacraments, liturgy spirituality and the orthodox culture.*

*The first part of the study focuses on the ontology of Christian mission, Missio Dei or Missio Trinitatis taking into account the missional work of the three persons of God, Father Son and Holy Spirit in their dynamic and kenotic openness to the humankind for salvation in and as Church, centered to Christ as His mystic body. The relation between Church and Mission is treated in the Orthodox in the sense of the interaction because the mission is a central action of the missionary Church.*

*The second part of the study treats about the relation between Christian mission and Liturgy and spirituality and the cultural aspect of the problem. We point on to the fact that the relation between doctrine and worship has been insufficiently marked out by researchers not only in the Romanian Orthodox tradition but also in other Christian traditions. The article is concentrated on the relation between dogma and worship as it was stated by St. Irenaeus Bishop of Lugdunum. In his theological view our dogma is in full concordance with the Eucharist and the Eucharist confirms back our dogma, which means that the proclamation of our faith is a liturgical act while the dogma gives content to prayer. This relation between dogma and prayer has been influenced the development of the Orthodox worship from the very beginning till now. Next part is demonstrating how the structure of the Sacraments reflects by hymns, prayers and rituals this relation. We conclude saying that the Church dogma and its prayer are so deeply intertwined that each and every one of them could be without confusion identified and assimilated to the other.*

**Keywords:** *Orthodox Church, communion, ecumenism, liturgy, mission, proselytism, sacraments, spirituality, witness*

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## Introduction

The Orthodox Church clearly distinguishes between *Mission*, in the sense of fundamental apostolic vocation of the universal Church to proclaim the Holy Gospel and *missions*, as evangelizing activities of a

confession or denomination in a non-Christian space. The latter activities were often related to the colonizing process, i.e. “cultural and political oppression” (Bria 1980: 3).

The Christian mission for the Western world is especially a title of personal glory and evokes the idea of space, territory, geography and context, hence the visible extension of the Church by the establishment of new communities in countries with “unfaithful” people; however, that necessary inner fusion between the Christian tradition and local cultural peculiarities to a real interculturalization is not always reached. For the Orthodox Church, the object of mission was

rather to hold the people to the faith in a permanent historic continuity. The Orthodox Church has tended to condemn those who have left the Church rather than to judge those who are still outside the Orthodox faith. The command to mission is based on the invocation and adoration of the name of the Lord: *Hallowed be Thy Name!* Proclamation is identified with doxological *martyria*, with leitourgia; hence the insistence on tradition and on the apostolic succession (Bria 1980: 4).

Therefore, until recently the Orthodox Church was considered to be a *non-missionary Church* in the Western world and by many Orthodox Christians, as well; furthermore, it was deemed to be a space for mission, i.e. “terra missionis”. Despite all this, it was still necessary to clarify the fact that “mission methodology was different in the Eastern world, as opposed to the Western one”; in fact, the missionary imperative of the Orthodox Church is more obvious, the preaching of the Gospel and the Eucharist are directly related, the centre of missionary work is the Liturgy and Orthodoxy “in its liturgical structure is a Missionary Church in itself” (Lemopoulos 1993: 179).

Today, the Orthodox Church is present everywhere in the world due to the local Churches canonically depending on a mother Church, e.g. Constantinople, Moscow or Bucharest (Petraru 2013: 251-282) and it pretends to be the most faithful paradigm of the Church of the Apostles and of the Church Fathers of the first Christian millennium.

The Orthodox mission means the preaching of the Gospel as a *doxological testimony* of the integral divine discourse in Liturgy and prayer (Wolterstorff 1995: 21). God is praised for the redemption of the man in the Christian tradition as Christ’s Church in the communion of grace with God as Trinity. This clarifies and explains the insistence of

Orthodox Church on Tradition and apostolic succession. The biblical text that reflects the essence of the Orthodox mission is the one from St. John the Evangelist; “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3: 16) obvious related to the Great Missionary Commandment for the evangelisation of the entire world (Matthew 28, 19-20). Not involved so much in dialogue with the intellectualist Western theology, bringing unlimited and sometimes sterile arguments of some theologians with the issues of demythologization and remythologisation of the theology or the promotion of secularism, the Orthodox Church is faithful to the realistic hermeneutics, to the spiritual practice and to the divine Liturgy. The mission of our Church is totally faithful to Christ and His Church as communion to Trinity and to the saints, even in the sense of the “new kenotic-perichoretic relational ontotheolog” (Vanhooser 2010: 139).

## **1. Ontology of Mission**

**1.1. Trinity and Mission.** By mission, in the Orthodox sense, we understand the testimony on *God the living – the Trinity* that created and redeemed the world due to the divine eternal love that calls man to God. *Trinitarian Theology* shows that God is Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the life of perfect communion of the three divine Persons, calling humanity to share divine life as redemption in the eternal Kingdom of God preached by Christ and partly accomplished in His Church in the history of humanity.

Definitely, the sense of mission is not only to pass on or spread intellectual convictions, doctrines or knowledge and moral teachings, but also to transmit the life of communion in God to the humanity redeemed by Christ. It can be said that *Missio Dei* or *Missio Trinitatis* is a “program” of the Holy Trinity for the entire creation whose sense is to be the Kingdom of God. Therefore, “the inherent internal dynamics of the structure pertaining to every human being, in particular and the universe, in general is to be kingdom of God. True life is the life in the communion of the Holy Trinity, the source of human existence, in Christ through the Holy Spirit coming from the Father and going to Him” (Bria 1986; Bel 2010: 21). The “original model of mission” is the one from the

intratrinitarian life which is original reality, the unique reality that in a simple and necessary way (Dictionnaire 1987: 35), calls us all to redemption and unites all people in and as Church. Trinitarian theology is essential for Orthodox mission because the Church confesses God-Trinity, the truth and its life. Orthodox mission must be understood in the spirit of Orthodox Theology and ecclesiology. Orthodox theology is marked by the realist understanding of divine Revelation presented in the biblical text which narrates the History of human salvation from the beginning to Christ, the Incarnate God, and the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. God as living person is always present in His creation, but from Pentecost a

new reality came into being in the world, a body more perfect than the world, the Church founded in a twofold divine economy, that means the work of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, the two persons of the Holy Trinity sent to the world. The two works lie at the foundation of the Church and are necessary for us in order to come to union with God (Lossky 1993: 187).

So, one must take into account the Gospel and the entire Bible with the realistic and typological senses of its interpretations, that is the conscience and the feeling of the actual presence of the divine transcendence, theologically of the Trinity in the eternal uncreated energies in our life through the human face of Jesus of Nazareth into the Holy Spirit. The Christian person and community experiences this spiritual communion in the history of our salvation. As A. Yannoulatos writes, beyond the spirit of the world, including our historical cultures, the Church turns to the “constants of the Gospel” (Yannoulatos 2003: 114), that is the divine-human person of our Lord Jesus Christ incarnated, transfigured on Tabor Mountain, crucified, resurrected, and the Spirit that came into our world, the creation of the Father, named as such in Jesus’ prayer.

As a matter of fact, there is a trinitarian principle of Church mission, that is a divine project for the world to become the Church, a way in our life in history to the heavenly Kingdom promised in the New Testament by Jesus Himself. It is a historical, but also a spiritual and sacramental continuation of biblical Israel in the communion of the Trinity fully revealed in the Church and sharing the divine love and life to the mankind renewed in Christ and sanctified by the Spirit. In mission, the Orthodox Church stresses the importance of the Gospel, the beautiful

flavor of patristic texts interpreting God's Revelation in human history in an intellectual way, as noted by some missiologists (Bosch 1991: 206); this is also done in a sacramental, liturgical and spiritual dimension in unity of the faith and openness to the society of the constants of our historical and contemporary Christian witnesses.

The Romanian theologian Dumitru Stăniloae stated that Trinity is "the structure of supreme love" (Stăniloae 1978 vol. I: 282), i.e. the logical consequence of the biblical, ontological "God is love" (I John, 4: 8), the eternal love between Trinitarian persons revealed in the history of redemption. In the world, the Church is, really, the spread of this love through the grace of the Holy Sacraments given to the Christian people by the sacramental hierarchy that incorporates them into the Kingdom of God for redemption and joy in the uncreated light of the Trinity. Thus, the mission of the Church is, as St. Peter (II Peter 1: 4) claims and as patristic theology understood, the ecclesial sense of the world as

participation of the faithful to the deification in the communion of the Holy Trinity, which leads to their own deification; this is known to the ones that try to be more united in Christ by the imitation of His life as *holiness* (Stăniloae 1991:13; Stăniloae in Bria 1980: 50; Yannoulatos 2003: 26),

in fact the sense of internal mission of missiology.

**1.2. Christ's Centrality.** The confession of faith "Jesus is Lord" (Romans 10: 9) or the invitation and the urge that "every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2: 11) is the foundation and the heart of theology. Therefore, sending the Son in the world, "for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3: 16) is the beginning and defines Christian mission accurately. The Word of God, the Incarnated One, Saviour of the world and the Creator is the *centre* in a double sense, ontological and dynamic; actually, this is a dynamic ontology that integrates man and the cosmos, without suppressing them, but giving them their true value and consistency in themselves in the divine order. As eternal Logos of the Father, He is the foundation and model, the sense of human existence. As human-divine person, as incarnated Logos, He is our partner in dialogue; by assuming human plenitude, He cures it, restores it, deifies it. Christ is

the Logos of all things and the Logos is the image of the Father. The world has an ontological foundation in God for all things are in relation with the Logos, “man being the face of Logos as person who thinks”, loves, has will and desire (Bria 1986: 4). Christ’s redemption has a cosmic dimension, in the sense revealed in the Bible, and Christ is the fulfillment of humanity’s expectation to be freed from its bondage of decay (Romans 8: 19-23). But as Christ’s mission took place in a world of “decay”, thus making unavoidable the passage to Resurrection, the mission of the Church

takes place in a context of the spiritual fight with evil, sin, implying conversion, paschal and baptismal passing of the world to a new creation. This is not a fight that only shows itself in people’s souls, but penetrates all social life and natural existence through pain, suffering and death (Bria 1986: 5).

Mission under the Cross, Christ’s sacrifice, cannot only remain at the dimension of calvary for Christ’s Resurrection brings light, grace and the love of God in the horizon of human and cosmic existence. So, although God is powerful, He finds the path of humbleness, kenosis in Christ in order to get closer to people, respecting their freedom in choosing Him and call them to the communion with the Self. God brings to date the kenotic Christic act through His Church. In its humbleness, the Church takes people to a graceful deifying state of communion with God in order know and love Him. The mission of the Church is, first of all, a victory on the powers of sin, selfishness, with the obvious social implications in history, not to mention cosmic nature. Above all, due to His sacrifice and the grace of the Holy Spirit, which is present and works in His Church, Christ saves us from spiritual death and eternal death; they are brought to us by sin with unfortunate ontological and cognitive consequences for man in the sense of losing the knowledge of God, the communion with Him for whom man was created from divine love by the Logos of the Father (John 1: 1-3). Yet Christ remains in a permanent state of sacrifice even after the unique Crucifixion on Golgotha, doing it for us and with all His Church, as Orthodox theology interpretes it according to Cyrillus of Alexandria (Staniloae 1978 vol. III: 107-108). We are set on the path of the Kingdom by His means, on the right side of the Father and the sacrifice of Eucharist by which we are united with Christ the real one for our own deification.

Secondly, Christian mission is not controlled by historical powers; it needs to be understood from an eschatological perspective, as well, in the Kingdom of heaven when all will be truly revealed and fulfilled. Christian mission can only be understood in the light of Christ's incarnation, it is Christocentric, in a permanent internal dynamic between Cross and Resurrection, pain and joy, hope and fulfillment. Christ's crucified love is the reason and power of the mission of his Church, of the missionary theologian engaged in mission, as Christ's witnesses in any historical context, be it in freedom, prosecution or even death. Missionary testimony is strong when fulfilled in weakness (2 Corinthians 12, 9) when Christ is with us. The purpose of the Church's mission is the anakephaleosis of the humanity and the universe in Christ, for Christ to be everything in all (I Corinthians 15: 28). Jesus Christ is the center of the new humanity, of human unity restored (I Peter 5: 1; Colossians 3: 4).

Evangelization implies the focus on Christ, Son of God the True, Who came to restore humanity and give it the possibility of deification, which was actually the primordial purpose of man's creation by God: The saving of the world, the ontological and existential meaning of man is given by Christ, who becomes the center of spiritual life of man:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Galatians 2, 20).

The good news is that God took shape as human to save us and live in us: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the **one** and only Son, who came from the Father, full of (John 1: 14)". All people want to live forever. But to have eternal life they need Christ: "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17: 3). The Church is the body of Christ and that is why we find in Christ redemption: the liturgical life of the Church and the Holy Scriptures mirror the centrality of Christ – which is essential for the preaching of His Gospel and understanding why the gates of hell cannot conquer His Church.

**1.3. The pneumatological and sacramental dimension** is essential for the mission of the Church because Christ is inseparable from the Person of the Holy Spirit and His work of life that spiritually refines man. The Holy Spirit continues, confirms and strengthens the work of Christ (John 15: 26), makes all things new and, therefore, His work is one of soteriological efficiency from an anthropological perspective in a broader cosmic sense. The Holy Spirit and its invocation in the first prayer of the Orthodox Church, “O Heavenly King...” gives man grace for its sacramental integration in the structure of the Church; it also turns the bread and wine from the Eucharist into the Body and Blood of Christ, Who is present in the Church, the new creation as in the beginning in primordial waters, thus intermediating its permanent immaculate union with Christ, its Groom. The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal power, but the living Spirit of God who is also the Spirit of communion, the one who works by the Sacraments of the Church to make the faithful people of God holy and redeem them through synergy, working together with God. The Holy Sacraments make up the Church through the new ones that are incorporated via the grace of the Spirit.

The Holy Sacraments are received by man in the local Church, his parish. The parish is, thus, the environment, the field, the horizon where the redeeming union with God is truly fulfilled when the graceful Holy Sacraments, as performed by the ordained canonical priest, are received; this is done in communion and submission with the hierarchy of the place that ensures the ecclesial unity of the people of God in the universal Church. As usual, most of our Christians occasionally take part in sacramental celebrations, the Baptism, Matrimony or funeral-related hierurgies. Some do not know the real deep mystagogic significance of sacramental acts in relation with the biblical text; they are united with Christ and, as St. Paul wrote, these earthy men are less shaken inside existentially and spiritually by the enlightened and redeeming divine work. Certainly, the sacramental dimension of the Christian condition in time implies the knowledge of divine truth of life and redemption; this involves a permanent use of the text of the Scripture, the great text of Christianity that comprises the historical revelation of God which culminates in Christ, an act of love and divine offering for the man who experiences God’s work and presence in his concrete life but particularly in



the condition of prayer, meditation and Liturgy. It is this dimension that confers heavenly atmosphere in Orthodoxy in the melodicy of hymns that reproduce the biblical Godly words of a poetic creativity inspired by the hagiographs taken by the Holy Spirit to the communion of saints. In this sense, rediscovering and becoming aware of the liturgical and sacramental work of the Church towards her sons, the Orthodox lay people, is an urgent impetuous mystagogic and missionary exigency that can only have as starting point the real and concrete fact that the sacrament, as Father Stăniloae claims

is made in the encounter in faith of the two people in the ambient of the Church full of the Holy Spirit and in the bodily touch between the two people, along with the confession through words of this faith; of the one that performs the sacrament and the other that receives it (Staniloae 1978, vol. III: 8).

Mystagogic in the sense of intense and deep experience of faith in personal and missionary interiority; of public communitarian witness of faith, visibility with an impact on the less initiated ones in the great mystery of Christianity, as St. Paul put it. However, in the sacraments, as B. Sesboüé put it, Christ has a major role as original Sacrament by the founding words and sacramental gestures (Sesboüé 2009: 31) then taken over by the Church and its sacramental hierarchy. Through the Holy Spirit, for man, it institutes the personal thought and experiated relation with God.

The sacraments of the Church institute and make permanent the relation with God, the redeeming communion and are “in carnal relation with God” (Staniloae 1978, vol. III: 38, 174) in the sense of something concrete, palpable, intensely felt as a presence, a relation, as love between two persons – in the Holy Sacraments, but especially in the Eucharist where Christ is, the Christian’s “bread of life” (John 6, 48, 51) according to St. John. Considering these aspects and the fact that the Christian Orthodox, in general, is one of liturgical and sacramental character and less biblical, in the sense that in his spiritual life, the reading of the Bible is of no primary importance, but the presence to Church and devotion to God and His saints – obviously to practitioners of faith in the sociological sense; they become a smaller segment of the ones that only declare themselves Orthodox and participate to the life of the parish – a thorough understanding of the sacramental dimension of personal existence

engaged in the horizon of Orthodox community where the Holy Sacraments are fulfilled by the priest rendering man Church and Body of Christ. All Holy Sacraments show a normal life in Christ known from the Scripture, through which we are spoken the hypostatic Word of God and whose words are repeated in the ritual of the Sacrament, thus becoming prayer. Therefore, it can be said that the Church **exists** and **makes** things happen in the sense that it fulfills the Sacraments and, in their turn, they fulfill the Church (Staniloae 1978, vol. III: 40, 52), i.e. they permanently make up the sacramental Body of Christ, the holy and heavenly people of God in the pilgrimage to the eternal citadel to God's Kingdom. What is said in the Liturgy of the Sacrament, the words have a performative value in the sense that what is said is made through the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, at the level of parish as integral Church in the local community by the reception of the Holy Sacraments, man is on the path which makes him real in relation, communion with God. Thus, the messianic prophecy, *God is with us* is fulfilled for man is son of God whom he names, adores and invokes as Father after the divine discovery towards the deification, the divine-humanisation, Christification and trinitarisation (Popovitch 1997: 247; Bourgeois, Sesboüé, Tihon 1995: 16) according to Justin Popovich's text that contains so many substantial expressions full of theological sense. Sacramentality is the way of communion between God and man, the state of man's pervasion and shining by Christ's glory, the uncreated eternal light of the Holy Spirit, the entire Holy Trinity.

**1.4. Church and Mission.** The Orthodox concept of mission depends on the understanding of the nature of the Church starting from Christ who brings the Good News, the path that necessarily takes to His Church which gives the respective Good News. By sending the Holy Spirit, Christ wanted for His work to be continued in the Church, a universal sacrament of redemption by its inherent missionary nature. For the Church, *to be* is to proclaim the Gospel of redemption unceasingly and to spread the grace of the Holy Spirit towards sanctification and deification so that we cannot speak of the Church and mission separately. Instead, we can speak of *the mission of the Church*, of its members, the clergy and the faithful, confessing and living, fulfilling the

commandments of the One that called them “out of darkness into his wonderful light” (I Peter 2: 9). The Church is the prophetic, sacerdotal and royal people of God who prefigures Christ’s plenitude and His eschatological reign by the reconciliation of everything thanks to Him. The Church needs to bring all people to her because they are all created and redeemed by God in Christ. Therefore, the Church cannot be conceived as a purely human group in history falling back on its own interests which are mundane and ephemeral. The Church would then lose its character, its divine aspect by the Trinity itself present in its theandric structure. In its missionary essence, the Church is in itself the sense of mission. Mission is an essential act of the new theandric reality, the Church, the body of Christ that has brought plenitude to the world, the cosmos ever since the Pentecost.

The Church is not a voluntary association of individuals (congregationalist ecclesiology), a “*corpus Christianorum*”, the result of a historical accident, but the reality of God’s economy to unite everything in Christ “to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.” (Ephesians 1, 10, 23). It is the mystery of our life in Christ, the *hic et nunc* visible manifestation of the presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit in our life.

The Orthodox Mission is to be interpreted as extension of the same holy Church in time and space with the people growing through centuries in their own cultural, historical area, but also with people going to new places and keeping in their mind and in their heart the Christian Tradition from home, maintaining the faithful people of God in the communion of saving grace of the one and only Church of the Apostles, of the Fathers of the one and undivided Church from the beginning until today in the dynamics of the same biblical and dogmatic faith. Evangelization includes everyone, because all people recognize the caducity of the world and miss God. However, they can become sons of God by union with Christ, keeping at the same time their personal uniqueness. Orthodoxy affirms that everything that exists in man must enter the Kingdom of God. Everything that represents man must be immortalized, deified and united forever with God. It results from here that by union with God, man does not lose his personality, in modernist sense, because my soul and my love remain mine even after the union with God.

Therefore, mission is not the proclamation of theoretical truths or ethical principles, but the assemblage of people to become members of the Christian community in a concrete visible form. To build the Body of Christ is the apostolic vocation of the Church itself by the work of the Holy Spirit. The Church under a missionary aspect fulfils the mandate and Christ's will by the work of the Holy Spirit; despite the troubles of time, it remains faithful to God and the gates of Hades will not overcome it (Matthew 16: 18). The Church is the Kingdom of God that has paradoxically come and will come (Bria 1980: 9). The Church proclaims and anticipatively updates in time and history the kingdom of God in the Holy Spirit which constitutes its essential vocation starting from the Pentecost. Apostolicity is one of the Church's fundamentals, this attribute testifying to the unceasing continuity of the ecclesial organism in unity and holiness by sacramental hierarchy that continues the apostolic work through the Holy Spirit. The sacramental act of incorporation in the Church of Christ is made with the conscience that the baptized one "builds on the foundation of the apostles and prophets", and the Church is incomplete without one of the many that Christ "won" spilling His Blood. The purpose of preaching the Gospel, mission is of establishing Eucharistic communities in every human settlement; by means of the Liturgy and the celebration of the redeeming presence of God in grace, they are summoned to witness Christ, to fulfil His commandments, to show love spiritually and materially by philanthropic acts. In Orthodox Missiology the term *Missional* is not in use but the hermeneutics shows the holistic dimension of the Church mission related to Trinity, His real and actual communion to the people of God in the redeemed history (Gelder, Zscheile 2011: 44-45; Scherer, Bevans 1992: 209).

Orthodox Mission is to be understood as an apostolic task and in the Creed from Nicaea and Constantinople; we thus confess the faith in the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church. In this sense the mission is an act of the missionary Church, not an act of human adventure. Through mission, the Church is extended and new Christian communities come into being in new places in communion with the centre sending missionaries under the blessing of the local bishop of a Church. The structure of the new Church and of the sending Church are the same in sacramental communion, worship and charity, spiritual and liturgical

unity under the guidance of the local Synod or of the bishop with his canonical ordained priests.

The Church gives plenitude to the human being that cannot achieve holiness without God. Therefore, becoming aware of the quality of Church member is a maximum requirement in the present context of Orthodox Church mission. By means of the sacramental integration in the Body of Christ, the Christian has the responsibility of witnessing to the grace received, live according to the biblical commandments, the Tradition of the Church in a theological, confessing and ecclesial existence. Therefore, according to the ecclesial principle of *sensus fidelium*, “the missionary and pastoral rehabilitation and reactivation of laymen are crucial problems for every local Church” (Bria 1989: 99), for every community, Orthodox parish in which it is absolutely necessary for Christian unity and holiness to be reflected. As people of God gathered in a certain geographical place, as parish, the local missionary Church (Rivers 2005: 38), the Church by the clergy and the faithful is assembled to update the variety of ministry and charisma perennially (Afanasiev 2008: 93) shown in Christian history according to their importance in various contexts. Thus, the entire people of God had a major role in the mission of Church in history which can be illustrated by means of significant contributions regarding the identification and veneration of national and local saints in the introduction of the living language, both spoken and written in the Church cult and sermon, in the organization of the local Church, respecting the national and cultural values. In the Romanian Orthodox Church the aspect of the missionary work is mapped by the following statistics of the priesthood learned in our Faculties of Theology.

## **2. The Dynamics of Christian Mission**

**2.1. Liturgy and Mission.** An essential principle of Orthodox missiology is *the proclamation of the Gospel by doxology and Liturgy*, a principle according to which prayer and the liturgical representation of the Gospel or Revelation have a primal role in Orthodoxy. Consequently,

the communion that confesses Christ is, at the same time, the communion that prays to Him, adores Christ as God. In history, God's adoration in the Church was the expression and guarantee of keeping the divine revelation (Bria 1986: 17).

The redeeming events in the life of Christ are expressed and represented in the Liturgy, i.e. His messianic activity and the preaching of the Good News, of the Gospel, death and Resurrection. At the same time, the Liturgy, updating the redeeming events and offering us the Eucharistic Christ anticipates the future Kingdom for the Christians. By the Eucharist, Christians are "christified", they experiate the plenitude of redemption because "the Lord is good" (Psalm 34: 4). Thus, between the Gospel and the Eucharist, in Orthodoxy, there is a strong organic connection: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them" (Matthew 28: 19-20). True life depends on the sacramental act of consuming the Eucharistic Christ, eating and drinking the Body and the Blood of Christ (John 6: 53).

Orthodox Mission is divided into Liturgy and the Sacraments, the Liturgy and the Eucharist imprinting the true rhythm of mission; first of all, *gathering* (ek-kaleo) and then *sending*, "*In peace we shall exit*". The Eucharist creates communion, gathers the Christians, unites them in Christ and between them and from this peak of adoration each one becomes an apostle of Christ for the witnessing on the sublimity of the life with Christ, in Christ. Therefore, in the Byzantium, the centre of mission was Liturgy. By its structure and the liturgical aspect, the Orthodox Church is a missionary Church (Lemopoulos 1993:179). Despite all these, given its function and ecclesial dimension, the Liturgy in the Orthodox Church cannot be reduced to ritualism, introverted life, but it accomplishes a genuine openness towards the world, the social life with communitarian problems. If Christian mission lacked the doxological, liturgical dimension, it would be mere religious ideology, a peculiar activity of human vanity and selfishness. Saint John Chrysostom acknowledges these missionary aspects:

Would you do honor to Christ's body? Neglect Him not when naked; do not while here you honor Him with silken garments, neglect Him perishing without of cold and nakedness. For He that said, this is my body, and by His word confirmed the fact, this same said, You saw me an hungered, and fed me not; and, Inasmuch as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me (St.

John Chrysostom Hom. In Matt 50).

In Orthodoxy, *the Gospel is preached in the Liturgy, in the Sacraments of the Church, in other divine services, the 7 praises of the daily liturgical cycles of saints.*

In the Orthodox cycle, the Holy Scripture is the spring and foundation of the entire liturgical and spiritual life of the Church. The Orthodox liturgical ritual is characterized by the impressive biblical phraseology, extended texts taken from the Old and New Testament at each ordinance typically established by the Church. The biblical message is liturgically brought to date in the prayer of the Church, especially in its Liturgy, when the Church performs the Eucharist; it is by Eucharist that the Church fulfils itself in communion with Jesus Christ. The Bible is alive in Liturgy, the liturgical acts vivify and give sense to the words of the Scripture interpreted and brought to date according to the requirements of Christians nowadays and since forever, all called to holiness, a state of inner grace that passes beyond words, radiates for the Christian communion overall. This state is given by the participation to “the divine nature” (II Peter 1: 4), the communion with the Holy One.

But on the other hand, the prayer itself springs from man’s purest feeling, the simple thought risen to God for praise, gratitude or demand; it bears the seal of spiritual biblical experience in a continuity of invocation and fulfillment of human hope in time and eschatological perspective. Drawing on P. Florensky, D. Stăniloae presents a structure of prayer according to the following scheme:

a. Addressing God, *God the Almighty... or Jesus Christ, our Lord ...or God, heavenly King, Comforter, true Spirit...* that express the essence of public or private prayer, i.e. the invocation of the presence of God the transcendent, the mystery of the divine Name invoked by the faithful man who feels God in his proximity, more in his heart, lives overwhelmed and transfigured by the divine presence.

b. The anamnestic aspect of prayer, i.e. the recall of the wonderful acts of God from the history of divine economy, the Revelation, the self-communication of His eternal will and love for man and his redemption. His involvement in human history for man in order to be in communion with God and the trust that make man open towards God and His work confirm the identity and continuity of divine redeeming acts for people

since the beginning of times: “Jesus Christ, Our Lord, you entered the garment of the tax collector Zacchaeus and redeemed him and his household...” or “you came to Cana in Galilee and blessed the wedding there...”.

c. The demand thanks to which the desire of the faithful or of the celebrating community comes into force is presented trustfully to God based on the fulfillment of the prayers by Him in the history of the economy of redemption, of the Church: “watch over those that pray to you and guard them from all evil” or “receive the prayer of your humble subjects and with your unseen help bless this wedding...”.

d. God’s praise in the Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, this enumeration was consecrated in the Christian tradition based on the chronology of the economy of each divine person towards humanity.

e. The doxological confirmation by the word *Amen* needs to be understood from the perspective of divine truth, of the faithfulness that God has for His people (Staniloae 2004: 87).

In the liturgical acts, the Revelation is brought to date, “God with us”, the economy of redemption in its dynamic to the kingdom of God who is efficiently present in the perspective of life and redemption in the community of His own, in the church, *axis mundi* and liturgical center of creation by the grace of the Spirit as has always been with His people.

**2.2. Spirituality and Mission.** The Orthodox Church has a liturgical, communitarian spirituality, but also a *personal dimension*, fruit of askesis and love sprung from God as love source (I John 4: 8). This is a missionary factor of an exceptional quality and utmost value, extremely important for the mission of the Church, for Christian witnessing. The Christian aim is the holiness achieved by communion with the holiness in itself, God’s being. If the Orthodox Church is the holder of an exceptional legacy of liturgical spirituality, we may rightfully assess that the evening stars on the sky of the Church are those of ascetic and mystical spirituality, the saints as inexhaustible spring of spiritual growth. The saints, martyrs, the known and unknown devout people, the hesychasts of the Orthodox Church are the ones that achieved likeness with the image of God via the holiness of their life, prayer and contemplation, love of their neighbor which effaces separation, thus creating an environment that



irradiates light, joy, communion and the view of God. The holiness of life, holiness as divine gift obtained from the spiritual fight with the attempts, the passions, the devil by the classic steps of Christian spirituality, purification, illumination and above all, *unio mystica*, the suffering of deification through grace, the essential anthropological concept of the orthodox theology is the absolute human goal. The Orthodox Church gives an authentic goal to the Christian world which is viable and experienced in the love that offers itself and transfigures; this is a difficult, yet possible goal, achievable by the grace of the Holy Spirit by the Charismatic diversity in the Christian East. This includes what we call a secularized world which refuses God because of its various ideologies. The holiness with its balance is the value nowadays imposed in the entire Christianity which unfortunately faces spiritual influences foreign to the genuine Christian spirit. This also holds true for the unchristian spaces of the Far East, the new gnosis, the occultism of the “parallel tradition” with the attempt of some forces to create “a new world”, “a new religion”, illusions of the unrooted man in the spiritual Christian tradition. As acknowledged by the Christian West that admires the ascetic-mystical, sacramental and liturgical spirituality of Orthodoxy nowadays and the Church Fathers,

perhaps the Christian East in helping man to discover himself as a religious athlete, with a corresponding spirituality that can save him from an easy and false absorption in the divine impersonal essence of Oriental mysticism which tends towards a carnal union with Christ (Colte 1973: 338-339).

Between mission and holiness, there is a deep intimate relation because the first effectively fulfills itself when the theological and missionary priest preaching Christ radiates the power and warmth of the Spirit by his personal life in Christ. Therefore, “the man who has the Holy Spirit inside him is able to understand the deep sense of Scriptures and guides others on the path of holiness and plenitude of life.” (Bernard 1986: 25). Orthodox spirituality also has a theological foundation; it is a trinitarian, Christological, pneumatological-sacramental one in the ecclesial community by the participation of the clerical man to the life of the neighbours, the improvement of spiritual life of the community whose member is in the freely and personally assumed anachoresis for more union and intelligible vision of God (Staniloae 1981, vol. III: 24-49).

Spiritual exercises, askesis are a rebirth to us in the Spirit of Christ up to the state of deification - theosis which is achieved through personal endeavor and is, at the same time, a gift of God due to the state of adoration, prayer, contemplation, meditation. Holiness is the sense of Christian life; holiness, as act of purification, illumination, mysterious union with God in grace by putting on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6: 11-18) which is God's will and work for people, the sublime gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Christian is the person "in the image of God" that received, by Baptism, via the Sacrament of Unction, the "mark of the Holy Spirit as gift" of God which is united with Christ Himself in the Eucharist, fearfully and humbly consuming His Body and Blood as bread and wine. Therefore, the Christian is a *theophorus*, a bearer of God by the divine grace inside him and a confessor of divine love for the redeemed world; this was achieved by means of Christ's sacrifice whose heavenly fruit are benefits for man in the Church. Thus, the Christian permanently needs to prove by words and facts this quality and in Christ, this valor of his in the intimacy of personal prayer, in the presence and communitarian service in the institutions of the state, of society, in general by practicing Christian values, responsibility and love. Nowadays, it is necessary to overcome a dualism which unfortunately shows in some Christians; it is the case of a pathological halving in a spiritual and moral manner by the affirmation and practice of faith individually, privately, egotistically and the lack of Christian engagement for the world, which is even more serious for the institution of the Church whose member man becomes by Baptism. The stress on the mystagogic aspect of Christian life needs to fall in parallel with the visible, concrete, public witnessing of quality, of the honor of Christian. In fact, the sense of Christian life is the acquirement of the gift of the Holy Spirit that makes man's face shine when improved by eternal divine light that shone in Christ on Tabor and that accepts people loved by God; "I am loved that so I exist" (Zizioulas 2013: 145). The spiritual experience of the missionary involves the equivalent between speech and the living of Christ in prayer.

**2.3. Culture and Mission.** *Contextualisation of the Scripture, of Christian universal in national culture and local specificity is a principle*

and one of the personal, special qualities of Orthodoxy by which it expresses itself osmotically, naturally, ontologically; certainly, this happens after a long historical experience with its positive and negative realms, the relation between national culture and Christian faith. In the perspective of present missiology, “inculturation” signifies the insertion of values in the spiritual inheritance, the cultural legacy, one’s own life conceptions. In the Christian vision nowadays, inculturation is the movement of local values and cultures by which they become “basic instruments and powerful means to present, restate and live Christianity” (Dictionary 1991: 506). From a missiological perspective, inculturation is the evangelization process by which the Christian message and life are assimilated by a culture so that they express themselves by means of the specific elements of that culture and make up a principle of inspiration, in norm and power of unification that transfigures the respective culture. Therefore, the integration of Christianity in ethnical culture (indigenisation) is the transfiguration of the richness of human culture and history of a people in existence, in its manifestation in the light of the Scripture of Christ, of eternal truth. In fact, the history of Orthodox peoples overlapped, identified with Orthodoxy itself which created and shaped the profile of a national culture. The historical vocation of Orthodoxy may be expressed as follows: “mission to serve the Church, the Church to serve the nation” (Bria 1980: 10). The Orthodox Church served the people in its whole, not only the ruling class, but also the ecclesial community sometimes even against authorities.

Moreover, as Ion Bria claimed, “the local Church is the one that creates culture in the process of reception and transmission of the Gospel via cult, ethos and spirituality. Culture is not an independent anonymous construct; every local church, every nation has its own cultural configuration” (Bria 2013: 176). A simple acknowledgement of the spiritual and cultural patrimony of an Orthodox country is suggestive in this sense. As shown by C. Nicolescu, “the Church proposed itself to the world by culture... and first rank culture” because Christ, its Lord, is an intellectual that taught the “academics” of the Temple as Logos of God (Nicolescu 2015: 286, 290).

The current configuration of the Orthodox Church is of great cultural and geographic diversity due to the national Orthodox Churches

and to an increasing “diaspora” which increasingly shows itself worldwide. On the one hand, local Orthodox Churches not only imposed themselves specific culture and personal pastoral, canonical traditions in the life of peoples they encountered in history; thus, we can now speak of a Byzantine, Slavic, Latin and Arab Orthodoxy, on the one hand and the rise of Orthodoxy in new geographical areas, in Asia, Africa and America, on the other hand which raises the problem of a transfer of authority from mother Churches to the indigenous centre.

As rev. Ion Bria claimed, Orthodoxy is

a factor of history of a people or nation. In the case of many countries from the Middle East, Central and Eastern Europe, the history of a nation cannot be understood without the history of a local Church. Orthodoxy always defended ‘the polyphonic system’ in which every local Church defends its ethnic and cultural identity, its specific mission. Being autonomous and autocephalous – having limited territory and its own synod – any local Church is a prototype within a universal community (Bria 1999: 276).

**2.4. The Orthodox Church and Ecumenism.** Finally, we cannot omit the *ecumenic* dimension of Orthodoxy which, in the ecumenic movement,

is defined as the current, historical, seen form of Universal Church undivided as in the first centuries. It preserves the dogmatic basis, the liturgical structure and canonical order that supports the unity of Universal Church (Bria 1987: 12).

Due to these essential elements, Orthodoxy “is not a confessional form of faith and spirituality reserved to a restrained group, a nation, region or culture; on the contrary, it has an ecumenic dimension” (Bria 1989: 13). The notion of ecumenism ethimologically comes from the Greek word *oikoumene*, being the medium-passive form of the verb *oikeo-ein* – *to live*. *Oikoumene* is the inhabited world, the entire earth, the people’s home. This ontologically implies the idea of unity of humanity, a unity of being, a truth that is unique for all as they are unitary in life, and received the same unique life. In a theological sense, *oikoumene* refers to the unity of creation, the humanity in God the Creator and Redeemer of all people. In classical antiquity, by *oikoumene* we understand the civilized Greek-Roman world which was united as far as its politics, administration and cultural diversity were concerned. This also holds true

for the religion of the peoples within the empire. In the Christian sense, the term ecumenical may be understood from the perspective of what is universal, catholic, a reality that characterizes all people, a truth which is for all, as the truth of Christ's Gospel. Therefore, for the first time this sense of ecumenism is found in St. Ignatius of Antioch, visionary of Christian ecumenicity who gives Christological, ecclesial and sacramental connotations to the term. Thus, "the faithful should be where the bishop is, as the universal Church is where Christ is" (Ignatie 1979: 184).

By participating in the activity of the Ecumenic Council of Churches (C.E.B.) and inter-theological dialogues, Orthodoxy makes known its legacy of spirituality and genuine Christian theologisation. The ecumenic dimension is, for Orthodoxy, the confession of the whole Christian truth, hence the possession of truth; but on the other hand, we can also speak today about a geographical universality of Orthodoxy among the inner Catholicity and universality of its message (Clement 1965: 32).

### **Conclusions**

The ecumenical dialogue has opened new possibilities of common Christian testimony and shows itself both *on the theological plan* (and this is harder due to the promotion of unlimited diversity without unit exigency; the Orthodoxy actually warned the Ecumenical Council of Churches that the purpose of this Christian organism is to restore the unit of the Church. However, there can be a distancing from Christian understanding biblically, revelationally and dogmatically founded and spiritually-liturgically lived within the canonical-sacramental borders of the Church, of essential Christian teaching: the Trinitarian God, redemption, Bible, Church and others), but especially in the plan of *practical*, social life: mutual help, the week of continuous prayer, common catechesis, etc. Currently, Orthodoxy is undergoing a crisis of the ecumenical movement due to various factors: the inter-communion with the heterodox ones, language, ordination of women, rights of sexual minorities and religious syncretism.

These situations are not compatible with the spirit of Orthodoxy that pertains to integrism groups which refuse the Christian model proposed by ecumenists that cumulate a structure ever since the first centuries; this

is present in their theological theses specific to all confessions belonging to special spiritual and cultural spaces such as the Mediterranean Basin.

Orthodoxy is characterized nowadays as it has always been, in its missionary work, by the *faith* in our Fathers, Apostles and martyrs, *hope* in our presence in this world and in every place where Providence allowed us to exist through *love* in theology and our service.

In the Orthodox sense, there is only a Church, “the ark of redemption” whose institutional and spiritual-sacramental borders coincide. The Universal Church is identical with the Orthodox one. Criticised by ecumenists as exclusivist, this conception is shared by most Orthodox theologians, although there are also voices that accept the thesis on the charismatic limits of the Church and believe there is a certain state of ecclesiality beyond Orthodoxy. Who breaks from the Church, by either wrong teaching – heresy –, or disobedience – schism – loses the communion of the Spirit. Man becomes son of God by His Church which became one in the Sacrament of Baptism. The Eucharist seals the gracious sacramental union with Christ. The foundation of this ecclesiological vision consists in the ontological unity of God who gives Himself to the Church, the one undivided in history. As Christians, we head not only to unity, but our entire existence also derives from the inseparable space between the three Persons of the Holy Trinity given to us, the people, as historical event on the day of Pentecost. Orthodoxy embraces this ecclesiological conception which is the undivided Church of the first Christian millennium that follows in history the Church of the Pentecost by its faithfulness to Christ and His teaching dogmatically formulated and experientiated in the most convincing manner and sublimely by the saints of the Church. The succession of the grace and the uninterrupted continuity of sacramental priesthood are also essential in Orthodoxy which is the expression of the communion of saints and angels led by the Holy Virgin in the mystical body of Church with the Christians in this world.

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# The “Evangelising” Orthodoxy Revisited. An Eastern Orthodox Perspective

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## **Abstract:**

*The purpose of this study is to show, by providing appropriate arguments, that evangelism is the core of the Orthodox Liturgy. The Eastern Eucharist has about 80 percent of its content biblical and evangelical text, while living in a context where being an “evangelist” equals being a member of a sectarian type of Christianity. However, Christ brings and proclaims the Gospel (Matthew 4:23, 9:35), His disciples are “evangelised” and sent (missus) to evangelise (Mark 16: 15, Acts 14: 7), Paul is evangelised in Damascus and continues to “evangelise himself” in the Arabian desert, and in turn evangelises all those whom he encounters on the journeys known as “missionary” (Acts 16: 10; 20: 24, Romans 1: 15-16, I Corinthians 9: 16 and many others). In the typical assertion, Paul never defended his own “mission”, social status or work, but the Gospel. Orthodoxy in Romania has already learned much from the “evangelists”. She must rediscover her vocation of evangelising her own faithful with humility. The paper makes a short history and exegesis of the term and its evolution, then underlines the difference between evangelism and mission of the Church, and draws attention on the vocation of the traditional Church to revisit it and make it more evident and more vivid, as well as to learn from the enthusiasm in doing so from other younger denominations at the local level. We all must be aware that Christians must speak with one voice in an Europe which is more and more secularised, driven away from her founding religious values and identity. As the Romanian Theologian Dumitru Staniloae put it: “If I am to be born again, I would do my very best to re-evangelise Europe”.*

**Keywords:** *Evangelism, Orthodox Faith, Evangelicals, Gospel, Mission, Parish, Catechesis*

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## **1. Preliminaries**

*“Again, we offer You this spiritual worship for those who have reposed in the faith: ancestors, fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, ascetics, and for every righteous spirit made perfect in faith.”*

Among the reactions that European society has had to the massive immigration of Arab populations towards Western Europe, there is one in particular, captured in a short film that went “viral” in online media, of an elderly Christian “standing his ground” to a crowd of immigrant Muslim men in a park in England and repeating to them that the true God is Jesus Christ, that this is the only truth, that He was prophesied, incarnated, resurrected and that he is the living God; the rest is a lie. (*Muslims Attacked Man of God - Speakers Corner Hyde Park London 2015*, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijmACi\\_YXC0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijmACi_YXC0), date retrieved: 02.09.2017.) Taunted, insulted and pushed by the people around, risking physical harm, he continues to read Bible excerpts and to announce the Truth. Leaving aside his denominational affiliation, it is worth noting that he does not proclaim the Gospel to people who have never heard of it. The event makes us consider evangelism as a concern of the Church that should be aimed at those who have heard of the Gospel, the members of the Church, especially those from within, the self-declared post-modernists, atheists, members or sympathisers of esoteric movements and philosophies esoteric of the Far East, even though they are baptised in the Orthodox Church, who inhabit now the European continent, nowadays multifarious in religious terms (Achimescu 2007). Europe and the Northern hemisphere, in general, although having the status of cradle of Christianity, are undergoing in an irreversible process of becoming atheistic, denying their Christian origin and moving away from Christian values, without knowing exactly where they are heading. More recent events show that religion cannot be replaced by atheism, as its promoters had hoped, but by any other form of religiosity. Historically, atheism *per se* has not proven to be viable in any society, regardless of its level of civilisation or progress.

We shall need to differentiate the term evangelism from catechism and mission (Himcinschi 2003: 24), in order to clearly distinguish their differences and complementarity, and to reassess the place and importance of evangelism as a shared Christian attitude. Mission involves at least two persons, one who sends out the missionary and the missionary who is sent. Evangelism means both to live the Gospel and to announce the Gospel; it is a mission in itself, it is a “coat” that a person wears and becomes part of their existence, identifying them and showing them as

they are, without necessarily, giving it to someone else. Everyone can “evangelise themselves”, that is, to conform to the evangelical criteria of life, in an uninterrupted progress, throughout their life. In the institutional-parish environment, it is argued that the Church carries out its “mission”, conducts catechisation programs, but does not “evangelise”. As a term in itself, “evangelism” is a delicate term, avoided in the language of the Church, because of its excessive use by neo-Protestant groups. This gave “free churches” a kind of ownership of the evangelising mission, starting with the Reformation (16<sup>th</sup> century), when Erasmus of Rotterdam defined “evangelism” as a form of Lutheran fanaticism in Dutch society. (He had a dispute with Luther himself, see Desiderius Erasmus de Rotterdam, *Diatribes seu collatio de libero arbitrio*). Therefore, evangelisation was viewed by the Roman Catholic Church as a “Protestant subversive activity” in order to draw Catholic believers to Protestantism. The Roman Catholic Church, followed by the Orthodox, adopted the term “mission” as a substitute for “evangelism,” yet it does not convey the same range of meanings. In fact, the *raison d’être* of the ecclesial community is evangelising or announcing the news of salvation to all people, in all times and places (*oikoumene*). Evangelism would therefore be typical of some Christian factions, generically called “evangelist” or respectively “Gospel Christians”.

The purpose of this study is to show, by providing appropriate arguments, that everything begins with and aims at evangelism: Christ brings and proclaims the Gospel (Matthew 4:23, 9:35) (Bel 2016: 190), His disciples are “evangelised” and sent (*missus*) to evangelise (Mark 16: 15, Acts 14: 7), Paul is evangelised in Damascus and continues to “evangelise himself” in the Arabian desert, and in turn evangelises all those whom he encounters on the journeys known as “missionary” (Acts 16: 10; 20: 24, Romans 1: 15-16, I Corinthians 9: 16 and many others). Biblical quotations were retrieved from <https://www.biblegateway.com>, NIV Bible. In the typical assertion, Paul never defended his own “mission”, social status or work, but the Gospel: “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse!” (Galatians 1: 8). John the Evangelist considers that proclaiming the Gospel is not only a worldly action, but an eternal vocation, even for the heavenly powers, in heavenly

reality: “Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people.” (Revelation 14: 6). Ultimately, evangelisation from the Eastern Orthodox perspective means the application of the Great Commandment, which is the conclusion of the Gospel According to Matthew

[Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.] (Hatfield 2011: 236).

Evangelism as the purpose, meaning and vocation of the Christian is accomplished by various means, yet chief among these is the power of God that inspires and motivates, rather than the human abilities to teach the evangelical precepts. It is no surprise that some teachers of religion consider evangelical precepts to be good given their social effectiveness. In theology and religion studies departments in Western universities, the atheism of theology students is not an impediment to their being admitted to study theology and be offered a doctoral degree in theology. The statements are made following personal discussions held in 2016 with faculty and graduates of the Department of Religious Studies, Durham University, United Kingdom.

Catechism is a tool or type of evangelism, as it seeks the acquisition of theoretical knowledge about the Gospel, the Kingdom of Heaven, and the relationship of God with the world. The verb “to catechise” (*catehein*) is used in the New Testament to mean learning or teaching the doctrine of God to the unbaptized (Acts 18: 25; Romans 2: 18; Galatians 6: 6). In contrast, *kerissein* or *evangelizein* (to proclaim) mean to announce the Kingdom of God (Hatfield 2011: 236). In early Christianity, a further biblical term was used, *didascalein*, which meant the activity of teaching the faith to the baptised by means of readings of homily on biblical texts, which catechumens did not have access to. We can thus understand catechesis as a process of teaching those who are unfamiliar with Gospel, evangelism as the proclamation of the Gospel to all people, regardless of their religious identity and exegesis as a practical training of Christian character according to the requirements of the Gospel. *Catehein*, *evangelizein* and *didascalein* would be the equivalent to the processes of

learning, applying, and teaching. It is important to note that the non-initiated could not attend the “teaching”, since the Christian teaching of others involved an initiation, a mystical note, limited access to the mysterious realities, and familiar only to the instructor.

Catechism, as the method of introducing novices to new realities, was used by Christ Himself, with the Gospel or the Good News, making the Kingdom of Heaven accessible. The Apostles and Evangelists describe in many places the teaching work of Jesus. He was commonly called the Teacher, and He would make this point Himself: “Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah.” (Matthew 23: 8-10).

Mission is the sum of activities of the Church that involve all areas of community life, by which the Church defines itself as the Body of Christ, on the one hand, and as a socio-human institution, on the other. The mission of the Church is accomplished by means of catechesis, religious education in the public sphere, liturgical services, social assistance, the building of places of worship (Bel, Preda 2011: 638-703), volunteering, counselling, community and individual support, monastic prayer and meditation and others.

### **Evangelism as ecclesial responsibility**

The Gospel is the fundamental document for the Church’s educational program targeting adults, a category that has been mostly ignored by the clergy’s actions, precisely because adults are quasi-absent from the life of the Church and see the latter as a provider of occasional religious services. Teaching the adult members of the parish would have long-lasting consequences, yet the difficulty lies in planning such teaching in the parish setting where one becomes aware that Christ is the Risen God, offered to the humankind by the Holy Spirit, i.e. the life in the Holy Spirit sent to personal men (Acts 2: 3 and 42) by the Christ risen from the dead. Still, without adult education, one cannot build a parish program, plan the future of a community, carry out far-reaching actions and evangelical vision is then missing.

From this perspective, evangelism is not merely an option in the life of the Church and of each parish, as Christ urges it in the well-known texts of Matthew 28: 19-20, Mark 16: 15, John 20: 21-23 and Luke 24:

47. The body of Christ, the Church, has different functions, with evangelism being one of them. The evangelistic “agents” are the members of the Body who put their gifts received from the Holy Spirit in the service of proclaiming salvation in the world. The source and the true “Evangelist” is the Holy Spirit, in the sense that the unseen side, the sensitivity to and the will to receive and to proclaim the gospel comes through the Holy Spirit, for it confesses the risen Christ: “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father – the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father – he will testify about me.” (John 15: 26). The “acquisition of the Holy Spirit”, which Saint Seraphim of Sarov spoke of, goes beyond inner warmth, the ineffable fragrance, the brightened face, the ineffable joy and the work of the evangelist (Oliver 2011: 73); is the reflection of the Gospel in the way Orthodoxy understands and lives: “Acquire the Holy Spirit, and thousands around you will be saved.” (Hatfield 2011: 238) Genuine evangelism must aim beyond conversion by numbers, and rather to denounce systemic evil, to eliminate the symptoms of an unjust society, eradicate poverty or oppression, grow in the knowledge and living in God in the many forms typical of diverse cultural spaces.

Evangelism should seek to change cultures and people (Bel 2016: 249), in the sense of their re-orientation, rather than to subordinate or to replace specific cultures, because Orthodoxy incorporates that which does not contradict the Gospel, it educates in the spirit of the Gospel, and infuses a specific moral sense, fostering all which is positive. It is carried out by word and deed, by example and witness, in order that men may attain the “the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). Furthermore, evangelism is not optional: Christ commanded the disciples to preach the Gospel through their teachings and liturgical life (Mark 16: 15-16), which they did at the urging of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1: 8), starting from Jerusalem to the whole world. This mandate prompted the unyielding power of Orthodox Christianity to convert, to change, and to adapt to specific ethnic and cultural situations, with a globalising message, in the best sense of the term. The divisions that appeared in the history of the missions (Petraru 2013: 350; Pierotte 2004: 35) were not caused by the content of the Gospel, far from it, but rather by the policies of the members of the Church and by theological differences also

determined by the human element. The Romanian author uses alternately the notions of “mission” and “evangelism”, favouring the term used officially by the Church. Towards the end of the paper, however, after showing that sometimes the mission was perceived as a form of “colonisation”, he concludes that the greatest obstacle to “mission” is “resistance to evangelism”. The “mission” of the Church in the Northern hemisphere, for example, has led in the last century to an alarming decrease of membership and of the importance of Christianity, while the neo-Protestant evangelisation has led to the increase of the number of Christians and the importance of Christianity in the Southern hemisphere, so that the weight of Christianity has shifted. For example, whereas in 1910 there were 82.2% Christians north of the Equator, and 17.8% in the South, by 2010 in the North there of 39.2% of Christians, while 60.8% lived in the South. The relatively high density of Christians in the Northern hemisphere relative to the population size leaves the false impression of a visible and viable Christianity in this part of the world compared to the southern hemisphere. It is also important to underline that evangelism is not primarily based on methods, techniques, statistics, quantities, which are tools typical of a “business plan” approach reflecting the mentality of the economic man; rather, it is based on enthusiasm, adaptability and creativity. Statistics and methods do improve the image to the Church as an institution, yet do not help to build a certain type of Christian life, do not trigger pastoral care, and do not increase missionary zeal.

### **Evangelism as a sanctifying act**

The purpose of life in Christ is holiness, by reference to *the* Source of holiness, not the ideal of being better than others; it is the purpose and measure of the real presence of man in the Church of Christ. Personal holiness has concrete consequences in the community where it is unfolding. The first requirement of holiness is the firm conviction that Baptism represents the person’s entrance into the love of the Holy Trinity, by the incorporation of the baptised in Jesus Christ and the sealing with the Holy Spirit, which take him out of his life of mediocrity and moral minimalism. This conviction then is much more than the increase in the membership of a Church and infinitely more than the feeling of

religiosity: it is the fundamental change of the human nature in which the seed of the eternity has been planted.

The duty of evangelism today is not and does not seek to be a response to the process of de-Christianisation / secularisation that modern man experiences and promotes in suicidal manner. Evangelism must raise questions, both in the private space and especially in the public sphere, about the meaning of eternal existence and being, and not be merely a policy of the Church-as-institution; it involves the political, cultural and social forces that accept that Christ is “the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16).

One can distinguish at least two dimensions of evangelism: a Trinitarian and an ecclesial one. The former reflects the outpouring of God’s to the world, as the Son and the Holy Spirit are sent by the Father, or the reflection of the revelation of God-Trinity, in the visible Body of Christ, i.e. the Church. In ecclesial terms, it means proclaiming Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world, that is, the belief that by Him, within the Church, healing of evil is accomplished, the Truth is revealed, and the biological life is projected into theological existence, according to divine precepts. Sanctification of life by means of Sacraments and prayers of sanctification is incomplete when the evangelical values are not proclaimed. These make the difference between a service of sanctification and a magic witchcraft ritual. In one of the Holy Unction prayers, God is asked the following for the one who is given the Holy Sacrament: “Direct their feet aright, in the way of Your Gospel.” Also in other sacraments.

### **Evangelicalism or the trivialisation of evangelism**

We will intentionally use the term “evangelicalist”. There is no equivalent in Romanian language dictionaries. In English, a distinction is made between “evangelism” and “evangelicalism”.

As a common noun (*evanghelistys*) (Lampe 1991: 559), it occurs three times in the New Testament (Acts 21: 8; Ephesians 4:11, II Timothy 4: 5), with the meaning of function or vocation, not of rank. Although he counts himself among the Apostles, Paul states that he preaches the Gospel and urges his disciple Timothy to do the work of an “evangelist,” though the latter was not an Apostle himself.



Hence, from a biblical point of view, an evangelist may be, in fact, any Christian who announces the Good News to the world, initially the news of Christ that “the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Matthew 4:17), then the good news about Christ Himself, He who saved the human race through His sacrifice and Resurrection, the foundation of the personal salvation. The word took on a negative connotation with the onset of the Reformation, which was supposed to be an authentic return to the Gospel, especially considering the “justification by faith,” (Richardson, Bowden 1996: 191) in contrast to justification by Indulgences or deeds, under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Church. Soon after, the meaning of evangelism became narrower, denoting only those who practiced a certain personal conversion, rigorous moral life, focusing on Bible study, and zeal in spreading the Christian faith. The term Evangelicalism emerged in the American discourse to define precisely this kind of religious manifestation, which in a way has compromised the authenticity of Christianity in general. In the broad sense, evangelicalism includes all charismatic movements (Anabaptism, Puritanism, Methodism, Pietism, Baptism, the great American Awakening and its subsequent waves, known as “Free Churches”). Evangelicalism denotes the fundamentalist form of Christian organisation, with millennial or apocalyptic tendencies. In the United States, they are divided into the Old Evangelicals, who emphasise personal conversion, the internalisation of moral and biblical disciplinary and the New Evangelicals, who add the need to defend faith rationally. Subsequently, evangelicals of justice and peace, youth evangelicals or charismatic evangelicals emerged, focusing on baptism from the Holy Spirit and glossolalia (speaking in tongues).

To better understand the phenomenon, it is worth recalling the American experience: in the multicultural society of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, veritable strategies of “evangelisation” were developed, the purpose of which was the “new birth” of the person intended to become a member of the congregation; the new congregant was invited to read from the Bible, participate in community activities, integrate into the common structures, participate in all weekend actions, all under the direct supervision of the pastor. Although such activities have nothing negative in themselves, some specialists have drawn attention to three worrying features of this phenomenon: the conversion is automatic, based on a drafting system

where one obeys all the rigors; the community develops a manipulative attitude, and those who are not “good” enough are admonished, warned, judged; within the community there is a sense of fear and anxiety about impending disasters caused by the moral state of the rest of society. As a result of how some have done their duty and others have responded to “evangelism”, the word “evangelist” has also acquired a negative connotation. In a pejorative sense, the “evangelist” is a soul hunter who, by means of his zeal and aggressive methods, makes traditional Christians reject him rather than receive Christ in this manner. Having a clear pietistic component, evangelisation has not yielded long-term results. It has been criticised for the lack of sensitivity in communication, the conversion by constraint, not by conviction, and the imposed social action, the formal attachment of converts to an elitist community.

There is also a positive part to the model proposed by the American evangelicals: the emphasis on the “market”, i.e. the outreach to the people outside, in contrast to the passive or non-invasive attitude of traditional Christianity; the use of the laity, which they prepare for evangelisation; the development of specific abilities in the work of evangelisation; the engagement of all members, on different levels, in common activities, so that there are no mere bystanders in these congregations (Mrennan 1987: 2).

### **The challenges of evangelism**

The mobility of the Earth’s population has led religions and cultures to develop, on the one hand, dialogue with each other, creating sometimes the premises for celebrating diversity, and other times for tensions and conflicts. A first barrier to evangelism would be religious pluralism: this is not just about other religions, but insurmountable denominational differences within Christianity. Orthodoxy itself is so polarised that, in addition to the cultural and national differences, allowed by virtue of autocephaly within each Church, there are ecumenically open Orthodox Christians, but also traditional, self-sufficient Orthodox Christians, for whom any outreach of the community borders on heresy, treason and apostasy from the right faith. Whereas the former relativise the evangelical message, the latter manipulate it using it occasionally, only when it reinforces their own opinions. We prefer not to refer to dogmatic,

canonical or disciplinary issues, but to common themes of public interest such as the “holy light” in Jerusalem, the advisability of building the National Cathedral, the importance of women in the life of the parish, and others.

The “people of God” is a biblical and theological phrase that could justify evangelism in the Orthodox Church, but it is also used by other denominations: each thinks that the expression designates not the Gospel people, but the specific of their own denomination. The action of evangelising the Orthodox “people of God” does not imply a person’s conversion or formal passage into the Orthodox Church, although this appears necessary under certain circumstances; rather, its purpose is the knowledge of the living Truth, the need to share it with others in an atmosphere of respect, especially with those who do not want to be evangelised. Coercion, used in the Church in the West of Europe, even when led by good intentions, ended up being the main charge levelled against the Church, with an explicit reference to the legacy of the Crusades and the Inquisition, which the Roman Catholic Church cannot deny and which, for ignorant or deliberate reasons, is directed against the Orthodox Church (Hatfield 2011: 237-238). “Orthodox” evangelisation was carried out by persons led by evangelical zeal, not by para-ecclesiastical organisations sponsored by the Church or by other parties. Orthodoxy honours the saints, i.e., those who confessed the Gospel to martyrdom, especially those who were killed by the Roman persecutions. The “pillars” of post-patristic “Orthodox” evangelisation are considered to be the Saints Kiril (826-869) and Methodius (815-885) among the Slavs, the Byzantine missionaries at Tsar Vladimir’s court (10<sup>th</sup> century), St. Stephen of Perm (1340-1396) and Russian missionaries from the 18<sup>th</sup> century among the pagan populations of Siberia, Korea and Japan, St. Herman of Alaska (1756-1837) – a model of evangelisation through asceticism, as well as the modern missionaries after the 1980s, from former communist camps, in Western countries.

One of the first challenges of evangelism is religious syncretism; it is argued that religion reflects certain aspects of the divine, every religion holds a greater or lesser part of the Truth, yet each must be reinforced and counterbalanced by elements of the other religions. As it appears as more of a policy rather than a concern for Truth, this approach abolishes the

unique and revealing character of Christianity, reducing it to a common religion like all the others. God's saving work cannot be reduced to an easy dialogue, it needs commitment, to be lived and communicated through love and empathy: "As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain" (II Corinthians 6: 1). The Apostle Paul favoured the phrase "together with", instead of "along with", often used by contemporary Christians, even obsessively encountered in the ecclesiastical media, yet quasi-existent in the Holy Gospel, because it does not express the communion of persons. By collaborating with God's grace, evangelism must promote the quality of the members of the Church, not primarily the conversion of non-Christians. The true fulfilment of evangelical values in the Christian's life is achieved when the person abides by the commandments and recommendations of Christ, not when he seeks to be better compared to others. Only then can there be deeper awareness of the Christian identity and can emerge a sound motivation for a life of faith.

Another aspect, often invoked in all areas of social life, which obstructs the efficiency of evangelism, is religious freedom itself, which is now the subject of the constitutions of European countries. Freedom is the key element in affirming democracy, yet it is especially the invaluable gift that God has given man at creation. By virtue of freedom, every person has the right to manifest, preserve or change their religion, as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights also asserts. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Freedom has been used not only to promote evangelical values, but also to obstruct them, as so-called "values" are proposed, foreign to both the local ethos and the precepts of the Gospel. We have in mind the efforts of the secularist organisations in Romania which, in the name of freedom, demand a ban on religious icons, religious symbols and religion in schools, preventing an overwhelming majority from exercising freedom of religion in public sphere. Also in the name of freedom, they call for the imposition of sexual minority rights, civil partnerships and

others. The secular cultural values, rooted in the life of modern man, can also be a great challenge in accepting and conforming to the Gospel, which comes into conflict with them, since it reflects the teachings of Christ that says, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me.” (John 7: 16), that is, it has a different origin from all the other teachings. In many cases, evangelical values had to be proclaimed with great care and tact, considering the consequences that a more upfront approach would have on the entire Christian community. First, there was the struggle with the “values” of pagan idolatrous religions, followed by the “values” of the Enlightenment and self-sufficient reason, then the materialist-dialectical “values” that were imposed in the socialist and communist society with the most dramatic effects for those who unmasked or refused them. In the “struggle for values” that the Gospel has faced, it seems that the “democratic values” prove to be more effective in drawing the modern man away the Gospel and directing him nowhere.

Wealth would appear to be the biggest obstacle to genuine acceptance of the Gospel, a counterbalancing value that gives stability and security to man. It has always been accompanied by passions such as thirst for power or corruption. To oppose this, the service of one’s peers with humility and honesty is proposed as a Christian ideal deeply anchored in the Gospel, though it is far from the Christians’ attitude, from simple citizen to the highest political or ecclesiastical dignitaries. In a reference work on the topic, (Hunter 2005: 1085-1087) does not include the terms “poverty” and “wealth,” but the phrases “rich people” and “poor people”, as the attributes of being rich and poor apply depending on the cultural context and geographic space. Paradoxically, this work shows that the most vulnerable category, in terms of evangelism, is that of rich people. Among the reasons behind this claim are the suspicions that the rich may have that others are after their wealth or profit, the belief that the priest must become a “family” employee, who is paid and must accept compromises, the self-sufficient and arrogant attitude that may cause many well-off persons to retreat to a closed elitist environment, one where many great personal dramas do occur, ranging from family problems, depression or alcohol or drug addiction, to social alienation (Hunter 2005: 1085-1087). In contrast to the demanding, intimidating, sometimes

oppressive attitude and the conviction that nothing can be denied to a person with money and influence, the Gospel speaks of humble service (Mark 10: 35-45), of the lack of appetite for ownership and of generous giving.

As we have anticipated, materialism lies at the heart of the consumer society. Postmodern man appreciates immediate gratification, happiness here and now, unlimited freedom, all of which culminate in greed. Cheap labour, child labour, exploitation in general, oppression and class differentiation are just a few elements in the cohort of the “gold rush” proposed by materialism. In the race for enrichment and luxury, the victims are human dignity, freedom, the family and its traditional values, but more seriously than all, the whole habitat on Earth, the living environment given by the Creator to mankind.

Whereas communism dealt with dialectical materialism, today we are talking about rapacious and destructive materialism. The Gospel proposes generosity (Matthew 25: 24-36 and Luke 10: 29-37), the most ignored virtue in modern society, where the difference between the richest and the poorest is astronomical, in the most real sense of the word. The parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus (Luke 16: 9) applies today more dramatically than in the time of Jesus, as the Gospel is used to justify the prosperity of some by exploiting others, presenting poverty as a blessing. For instance, “Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.” (Matthew 13: 12).

Morality or, more specifically, the changing paradigm of Christian morality is another challenge for effective evangelism. New techniques and practices have emerged about existence in the universe, unknown before and not dealt with by the Church Fathers, incontestable figures in the life of the Church: abortion, euthanasia, in vitro fertilisation, transhumanism and others. Technological and social utilitarianism leads to a culture of death in the name of freedom and of political correctness, in order to preserve the high standard of quality of life. The new attitude towards the family, its structure and its role, interfere negatively with evangelical demands: the family no longer represents the particular social structure, the medium where the Christian character is shaped, but a public manifestation of the desire for relationship and expressing

sexuality. The ways in which these are achieved, ranging from same-sex relationships to radical decisions to fight against conception and life, have become the topics of media, specialist studies, public debates, street actions, or theological disputes, without reference to the mystery of the person (Thatcher 1995; Hopko 2009; Sicari 2004). Secular society proposes a redefinition of the concept of family, which would trigger a conflict with the multi-secular Christian practice and belief, founded on the Gospel, namely the free and unique relationship between a man and a woman, based on mutual love, procreation being its natural outcome. Traditional Christianity has rejected homosexual unions as forms of public manifestation of sexuality, without however showing outbursts of homophobia, as wrongly speculated in media circles. The trend in Protestant or Neo-Protestant Christian denominations in developed countries to accept such tendencies, due to political correctness, raises doubt about the faithful relationship with the Church of Christ, since the norm of faith is the Gospel and the culture of the Holy Spirit as the life of the Church. The needs of the family must not become the subject of the political agenda or social policies promoted according to the interests of the political groups, rather they should be in line with the evangelical precepts, ideally proposed in the Acts of the Apostles, where the main concerns were unity, honesty, shared ownership of goods and common prayer (Acts 2: 42-47 and 4: 32-37). The Christian family is the model and tool for the elimination of individualism and egocentric tendencies that affect post-modern humanity.

### **Evangelism and the “institution” of faith**

The institutionalisation of the Church, the fragmentation of Christianity in general, the changing cultural profile of the community of faith, individualism, technologies and agnostic science, anthropocentrism and individualism, secularisation and consumerism are among the concerns of modern and post-modern society, which de-structure the evangelical message and almost eliminate it. The change in the human condition and the spiritualising of matter are the desiderata of the evangelical message. They can only be accomplished through the participation of each faithful in the spirit of social and sacramental communion. The concern for social needs, liturgical devotion without

educational contribution, the social organisation of the church community, the ideal of pastoral-missionary “achievements”, the primacy of the economic over the spiritual, the gaps between the developed and the poor areas, between the very rich and the very poor leave on a secondary level any concerns for the applied evangelical truth, not only among the faithful, but also among the clergy. In addition to a theology of liberation, in the Latin Catholic space or a theology of tribulation and hardship, in the Orthodox space, it is necessary to equip the faithful with a theology of social responsibility. Love for one’s fellow human persons means dedication to all spiritual things, as Christ recommends in the nutshell version of the “Gospel”: “As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’” (Matthew 10: 7).

Evangelism is fulfilled whenever causes “great joy for all the people” (Luke 2:10), because it is the only news that cannot lead to inter-generational dispute, does not cause tensions related to gender, class, culture or ethnicity; this news, though religious, does not coerce anyone through religion. The message of Christ implies both education for Christian identity, in the light of the cross and resurrection, and education for spirituality or openness to others by understanding and accepting their identity.

From the perspective of evangelism, globalisation is not a hazard, (Hatfield 2011: 236-237) as the latter too provides a realistic vision of life as sons of God, called to the same dignity, wherever one may be. In the beginning, the disciples’ evangelism efforts were directed at the Jews, but soon Antioch became a major centre for global Christian evangelism, from where the word was spread among the nations through the preaching of Peter and Paul. In fact, it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11: 26). The “risk” that the work of evangelism faces is to fashion, transform, remake and transfigure generations for their future life, on the earth and forever. Realities are ever-changing: therefore, fighting secularism and militant atheism are not the actual priorities, rather conformity with the Gospel. Christian faith does not have enough means to impose itself in modern society, yet it has the experience of sacrificial witness, for the Gospel remains the same as was for the victims of Roman persecution, Arab persecutions, persecutions of Enlightenment Agnosticism, communist-atheist persecutions, with their



impact felt until today. The category of middle-aged adults is particularly called upon to develop their love of evangelical teaching through which to overcome the frontiers of economic or political globalisation, to educate their own children in the spirit of the precepts of Christ. It is an education that is complementary to any school curriculum; it is done in and for faith, even when not expressed religiously, to worship God as the teacher and the One who leads the world along the Path. “The Way” is the first name given to Christianity. There are today movements seeking to revive early Christianity, including the initiative of the Cambridge Institute of Christian Orthodox Studies (IOCS) to launch a catechetical program entitled *How to run the Way* or *The Way* in 2010. Web: <http://www.iocs.cam.ac.uk/courses/an-introductory-course-to-the-orthodox-faith>, date retrieved: 2.09.2017.

### **The person - the subject of evangelism**

Evangelism cannot be carried out by easy pragmatic tools or models, as it is a constant, lifelong exercise. It has been found that the excessive emphasis on psycho-pedagogical methods and teaching strategies in religion class can diminish the content of the lessons, with a contrary outcome to what was expected: on the one hand, the teacher is assessed in terms of the compliance with methodology, while, on the other hand, the recipients of instruction are left with superficial information regarding the content of the theme. Therefore, it will bear fruit if it is not reduced to mere activism. In the case of Romania, the main purpose of religious education in public schools was, in fact, evangelism. However, the results have been far below expectations, if one considers the surveys on the impact of religious education after 1990 on Christians whose children are by now in school too.

In the public sphere, questions are raised that the relevant fora treat with unwarranted indifference: How committed are these parents to the Christian education of their children? How solid is the family institution? To what extent are values received in school genuinely present in their lives? How profound is their religious life? How much of what has been done, positive or otherwise, can be ascribed to the teacher of religious education and to the parish priest? How good is the communication between the priest, the teacher of religion and the social worker? To what

degree are they aware of the Orthodox Christian identity? How many practicing Christians have basic evangelical knowledge? In other words, there is a persisting dilemma of whether, in a largely Orthodox society, real progress has been made through compulsory religious education.

There are multiple answers, which reflect dissatisfaction on both sides. This is the reason why we insist on the necessity of evangelical instruction and its characteristics, specific to the denominational environment, as compared to religious education in schools: evangelism is primarily the attitude, of both the person and the parish, not a curricular obligation; evangelism is an invitation, as Christ himself has used the metaphor of calling or inviting to bring about many realities, including those related to the kingdom of heaven; evangelism is a vocation, manifested by Christians to those around them.

The loss of enthusiasm for proclaiming evangelical values in Orthodox communities, compared to the neo-Protestant evangelical denominations, the passive-reflexive attitude of the Orthodox Church place it, in the public's view, in the unenviable position of a "state institution", subjecting it to public criticism for "worldly preoccupations" and for its "building projects", in contrast to the neo-Protestant denominations, whose newly-built places of worship or prayer houses tend to pass unnoticed because their evangelisation work is efficient, visible and transparent.

### **The fruit of evangelism: The discipleship of Christ**

The apostles were urged by Christ after the Resurrection to make "disciples" themselves (Matthew 28: 17-20), because the disciple listens to the gospel and fulfils it more faithfully than someone who only obeys a teacher who has cognitive expectations. Paul also argues that not every teacher is a parent: apprenticeship in the Jewish tradition also involved a certain relationship of paternity. Jesus Christ condemns the Pharisees who distorted the institution of apprenticeship, began to seek only proselytes, whom they manipulated according to their own principles.

All the disciples of Christ were adults, and these adults changed the world through the Gospel. Jesus welcomed the children, but trained the adults. Fr. Constantin Necula argues that catechism for adults is a "pastoral necessity" and provides solid arguments in this respect. (Necula

2010: 213). The priest today seems to be removing the adult from the pastoral and formative activities in the parish, focusing more on children and the elderly. However, the parish is like a living organism: it moves when it is touched, sought, loved, responds to crises, but it is not proactive. The priest must understand that he evangelises persons in the parish, but the parish itself will not initiate a process of evangelism. On the other hand, he must not fall into the temptation of seeing himself as indispensable, as one who knows and does everything, but instead be the man who encourages those who have the ability to serve, be it in the areas of education, youth, jobs, finance, administration, pastoral care, etc. The more an area of parish life works better, the more it stimulates the others.

The priest must strive to discover and train disciples, first of all adults, and inspire in them three primary concerns about their social-religious role: to help them understand and live the Gospel; to help them have a prophetic voice in the community and in society; to help them share their own faith with the next generation.

School-based religious education focuses on children, but parents are left uninvolved, or just formally involved. Parent-teacher conferences are not predominantly about the cooperation between parents and teachers on the quality of teaching, on its diversification or improvement for the benefit of the children. Most parents (in rural areas) do not attend such meetings; in the city, debates are formal, confined to sparse reporting of pupils' grades and especially to administrative issues: class facilities, donations, excursions, end-of-year party, purchase of new school equipment, etc. The religious inactivity of parents is transferred to the children more effectively than the faith is transferred from children to parents, religious education becoming thus a kind of curricular curiosity; the message of the religion class becomes irrelevant or contradictory to the family's lifestyle. It is unlikely that what appears boring and unimportant for parents is important to children. Teachers of religion and priests appear naïve and triumphal when citing an isolated case in which the parent is impressed by the religious attitude of the child and reacts positively. The cruel reality shows that, after 26 years of compulsory religious education, young people of the same age do not know the basic principles of Christian life, do not practice prayer constantly, do not read the Holy Scripture, do not have Christian behaviour in their relationship

with the Church and their peers; on the contrary, they have a critical attitude towards the institution, anti-clerical and syncretistic, prefer borrowed religious elements, from the European Catholic or Protestant area, where many now reside. As a great contemporary evangeliser states,

The continual sharing of Gospel does not only refer to its range, to its expansion into the world, but also to profoundness, the profound rebuilding of each soul. The growth of the Church is achieved both by the acquisition of new members and by the deeper experience of the baptised of the mystery of faith and love. While the former determines quantitative growth, the latter can be characterized as a qualitative increase. (Anastasios 2013: 92-93)

If one also considers that the traditional family is particularly exposed to the paradigm shift resulting from the various forms of civil partnership, the increasing prevalence of divorce, even after a second marriage, the mono-parental family structure, a phenomenon that was difficult to imagine 50 years ago, it becomes apparent that only a parish-church-school co-operation can pass on transcendent and sustainable value systems in a kind of “educational ecology”. We stated above that the relationship between two people is understood in terms of the manifestation of sexuality, not considering their individual gender characteristics. It is now claimed openly that there are at least 60 ways of expressing sexuality: homosexuals, lesbians, androgynies, bi-genders, effeminate man, masculine woman, gender-variable, gender-seekers, inter-sexual, non-sexual, a-sexual, non-binary, pan-genders, trans-men, trans-women, trans-human, trans-females, trans-males, trans-feminists, trans-sexual, inter-female, inter-male, inter-human, inter-genders, inter-sexual, dual-genders, hermaphrodites, duo-spirit-genders, tri-genders, fourth-gender, xz-women, transvestite, cross-genders, zero-gender, etc.

### **Conclusions or the “evangelism” of the Orthodox parish**

Romania has been considered a Christian country, since its beginnings as a nation, thanks to the presence in the region of the Apostle Andrew; apostolic Christianity represented the religious identity of Romanians living throughout the country’s present-day territory. In the process, apostolic Christianity has made a fundamental contribution to all aspects of social life, especially in the areas of culture, education, ethnic unity, national cohesion and consciousness of Romanians everywhere. We may argue that initially evangelisation in the area of the Carpathians,

the Danube and the Black Sea was a coherent process, a fundamental social, non-institutionalised reality, which the locals were committed to and which believers and their priests experienced naturally, without particular shapes and groups; now it appears as an institutionalised activity, with different shapes and groupings, yet lacking evangelical effectiveness.

In the first millennium of Romanian Christianity, few were aware of the organisation of religious institutions (the first diocesan sees) and their role in the life of indigenous people. Over time, the vocation of church institutions, from parish priest's institution as administrator of the parish to the head of a church, seems to have shifted to the management of the people's religiosity rather than its evangelism. It is natural, therefore, to ask the question: Is there a place of evangelism in the Orthodox parish also? How long will it be able to face the market offers, even in this area of public life? Theoretically, in the academic sphere, there are references to a post-modern Romanian society where Orthodoxy stands for its outdated dimension, contrary to the model of the developed European countries, which is improper. If one considered the statistics on education, access to culture, international mobility, living standards and access to hygiene, post-modernism could apply only to a very small percentage of the Romanian population, mostly residing in the big cities. The question may take a worrying form: Are Romanians still Christians, in the genuine apostolic spirit? During a Romanian-Danish project on parish challenges today, a Danish pastor stated:

I am surprised by Romanians' religiosity, but judging by their attitudes and social values, they seem to be not 'Christian' enough. They have become known in Western Europe for endemic crime, which we see confirmed here, in their own country too!

The return to evangelical consciousness, the main component of the mission of the Church, would involve the overhaul of parish programmes and of diocesan priorities to respond to the vocation of the Church as a community of faith. First, it is necessary to set up programmes that address the real needs of the people, adapted to the cultural, social and geographical features, scheduled throughout the week, within and outside the parish, not only on Sundays and on feast days. Given the ever-changing human priorities, it is desirable that adults be encouraged more

to engage in evangelism activities: education, volunteering, social involvement, personal development and training through church programmes, etc. The 25-35 age group has the greatest evangelical potential, yet is most visibly absent in public church life. They may not be inclined to listen to long sermons, but they show initiative, react and have the potential to change much, both in their lives and in society. Because often Orthodox services are a topic of discussion, their content, vocabulary and duration could also be organised and performed in such a way as to bring added spiritual value to both the celebrant and the benefactors, with emphasis on Sundays and feast days. This does not refer to the content of religious services, which is of inestimable traditional value, but the need to decrypt them and to worship “with the fear of God, faith and love”, so that there is spiritual benefit and satisfaction on either side, for the servants and the faithful. Moreover, a link could be created between weekly parish services and the curriculum of religious classes. For example, adapting the weekly school curriculum to the texts of the Divine Liturgy of the week, or taking into consideration the services or bible meetings on the same topic. Yet this would require regular meetings and close cooperation between the parish priest and the teachers of religion.

Since modern man is predisposed to search for something new in any experience, it is argued that the quality of the sermon encourages modern Christian to attend religious services. The sermon must provide a lived spirituality, a current and realistic enhancement of the biblical text in which each believer can find their role, while catechesis should provide the training environment and the superior quality of Christian living. Irrespective of whether people communicate audibly, visually or kinaesthetically, the priest ought to be familiar with such notions and not neglect any of them. Those who learn from aural input easily accept new ideas and listen much (this is not about hearing as a physiological aptitude), visuals imagine what they receive and are sensitive to interpretations and impressed by stories. The kinaesthetic communicate by feelings and emotions. He must always keep in mind the middle way, since the authoritative domination over the audience leads to the loss of two-thirds of the faithful, while the insipid, inconsistent and unconvincing discourse can have the same results. That is why effective communication

elements are essential to each speaker, following Christ’s model as he conveyed ideas, shared stories, created images, and inspired emotions and feelings.

Last but not least, evangelism involves the rediscovery, or rather the rebuilding of the united community that shares warmth and hospitality, among its members and especially among those who seek a communion of people and prayer (what was called “love as an ecclesiological reality”) (Dinu 2008: 192), for any “strangers” who cross the threshold of the church for random reasons and who might leave as transformed persons. The principle that every conscious member of a living parish should follow is that no one should go out of the church the same as when they entered: entry into the sacred space must lead to an increase in spiritual consciousness, an increase in knowledge, in faith, in conviction, in holiness.

In Orthodoxy, there are all prerequisites for effective evangelism, and both the top representatives of the church hierarchy and the priests who preserve the parish communities recognise this. What is needed, but has not received enough attention so far, would be a long-term programme (funding would not be a challenge if there is awareness of the necessity of this activity), which will change the perception of the notion of “parish”, of the place and role of the priest in its midst, and of the place and role of lay faithful in parish life. The training of a trainer / evangelist lasts for a minimum of 2.5 years, as they participate in a structured program requiring engagement and the desire for solid training.

Evangelism of the believer is a permanent focus of the Church and can be done either by means of appropriate catechesis, through regular catechetical ‘discipline’, or by liturgical or post-liturgical sermons, in church or in a hall [...] in the so-called circles for the study of Holy Scripture or of the writings of Church Fathers. (Metallinos 2004: 116)

By linking the above statements organically, we can argue that evangelism should be carried out at four levels: religious education, liturgical life, social service, and ecological administration.

Religious education teaches or presupposes the teaching / learning of the Gospel. We shall not delve into problems related to school textbooks or the share of history, ritual, dogmatic or church art lessons in the school curriculum. Every teacher of religion must know however that

it is not the “high achievers” in the religion class that indicate the success of the teacher’s mission, but rather the love of the gospel of Christ, lived and witnessed throughout the students’ lives. It depends on the teacher largely whether today’s student will read the Gospel in 15 or 25 years’ time, or whether the former student will remember the “stories” that he listened to in the classroom. All methods can be used, but modern methods, involving new communication and reading techniques and tools, are preferred. It is a salutary fact that many “houses of celebration” have been built in Orthodox parishes, but they are not used during the week, while in those communities there are children who do not have the means to do their homework in their poor homes. The prospect of using such centres for the purpose of educating children in the parish would be a great help and a unique opportunity for the priest to “home evangelism.”

Liturgical life is the celebration of the Gospel. It is quite unnecessary to emphasise the overwhelming share of biblical texts in Orthodox services, and especially of evangelical texts in the Divine Liturgy, a true compendium of St. John’s Gospel. The Orthodox Church did not rely, in general, on refined intelligentsia; rather it emerged as a church of the masses (Anania 2011). In the Liturgy there is no difference between the rich man or the beggar, the employee and the employer, as all have the same dignity and calling.

Through the social service the Gospel is applied. Social assistance is not the aim of evangelism, but it derives from it by necessity. He who teaches others also serves him with passion. The Church is the Body of Christ, not for the poor, the needy, or the people with special needs, but for them too, inasmuch as it proclaims salvation to whole world. The philanthropic work of St. Basil the Great was motivated by the spiritual involvement of both those who donated and of their beneficiaries; he considered that suffering, illness and infirmities were the consequences of sin, hence the need to provide religious assistance first and not only medical attention. Doctors had a secondary role for the Cappadocian hierarch, because they could treat only some bodily diseases, but did not cause the sick to understand the meaning of life and suffering, did not change their life or prepare them for death. Although the pattern and inspiration was Christ, St. Basil showed that the sick, alien, poor, and



marginalised people had to be treated as Christ Himself if “they were striving for a life according to His gospel” (Muller 2012: 180).

By ecological administering or stewardship the Gospel is embodied responsibly. It can be a sensitive point today, but the good stewardship of church goods is, according to the statutes, part of the priest’s responsibility, and he is accountable for how they are used, multiplied and distributed. When ordained, the candidate assumes responsibility for “good stewardship of the Church of God”, as Paul instructed Timothy the disciple:

Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church? (1 Timothy 3: 2-5).

The Church does not exist for itself, but to continue Christ’s work of evangelism. Since Pentecost, evangelism has been the fruit of the Holy Spirit and the cause of the appearance of the Church. That is why apostolic evangelism, unlike the evangelicalist propaganda of today’s denominations, is not proselytism, but rather a call to the kingdom of God, which is far more than an institution.

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## **Patriarch Teoctist Arăpașu – a diligent and wise preacher<sup>[1]</sup>**

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### **Abstract:**

*The fifth patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church is the author of an important and substantial corpus of writings, spanning a period of five decades. It is a telling fact that the teachings bequeathed by our Saviour Jesus Christ to the Holy Apostles – and through them to their successors – were not ignored, but through the efforts of the Father Patriarch, they became a beacon on the difficult path of moral perfection followed by all those he shepherded over an extended period of time, when his every step took him not to one place but to all horizons and provinces of the Romanian territory.*

***Keywords:** Patriarch Teoctist, homilies, Patriarchal Pastoral Letters, themes, parenesis.*

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### **1. Preliminaries**

From the beginning of his tenure, Patriarch Teoctist was aware that the duty of preaching was the first task that the Savior assigned to the Holy Apostles after choosing them (Luke 9, 1-2). And the Patriarch never sought to boast a personal contribution, but rather, he only aimed to preach the Gospel alone and all that derives from these holy teachings (Arăpașu 1992: 11-12).

Everything that followed was merely the fulfillment and illustration of this programmatic confession of the faith: an impressive number of studies, homilies and speeches supporting and asserting the Gospel's message. His words came naturally, like the flow of a river; he never sought elaborate or sophisticated expressions, but was rather interested in conveying the sweetness and plainness of the genuine Romanian language, employing the phraseology of the religious books, of the homilies, of the masterworks on Orthodox spirituality. In addition to the richness and variety of themes, the literary language used, portrays Patriarch Teoctist as one of the greatest and most talented stylists. His written creation constituted, undoubtedly, one of the reasons for which he

was awarded the title of honorary member of the Romanian Academy (Necula 2006: 29).

**Volumes of sermons.** From 1986 to 2006, he published 18 volumes that were part of a comprehensive body of works entitled *Pe treptele slujirii creștine* (*Steps in the service of Christianity*) and three volumes entitled *Slujind altarul străbun* (*Serving the ancestral altar*), *Umblați neîncetat în Adevăr* (*Never cease to walk in the light of Truth*) and *Conștiința vie a slujirii preoțești* (*The living consciousness of priesthood*), which, together, include over 1,500 titles and over 7,000 pages, rendering the situation of our Church in the 57 years spent by the Patriarch in his tenure (Necula 2006: 28). These volumes comprise the Patriarchal Pastoral Letters addressed to Christians on the occasion of the great holidays, Christmas and Easter, the homilies, catecheses and meditations delivered in cathedrals and other churches, in the diocese or throughout the country or in the Orthodox community living abroad, the speeches on the occasion of religious and national celebrations, international meetings, anniversary events in his own life, as well as the messages and interviews released on various occasions.

There are, of course, the simple parentheses delivered occasionally during some liturgies where the sermon of the day would be delivered by another priest. In his interventions he would always highlight certain significant matters, but he would also offer the necessary guidance, with the authority conferred by his patriarchal position. We can observe that the parenetic genre was used much more often by the Father Patriarch than the other sermon genres used in our homiletic tradition. This evident priority can be explained by the nature of the patriarchal dignity, since the occasions on which speeches are delivered are extremely frequent for the head of a Church (Gordon 2005: 399-400).

The volume entitled *Conștiința vie a slujirii preoțești* (*The living consciousness of priesthood*) comprises 55 sermons and speeches, and the number is not arbitrary, being, in fact, an anniversary collection honoring the 55 years of patriarchal tenure of the honorable patriarch, an event that was celebrated in 2005, the year when this volume was published. Placed in chronological order as they were delivered, the speeches collected in this book cover the period 1950-2005. Most of them were occasional thematic speeches, delivered particularly at certain events in the Church's

life (generally speeches delivered at the pastoral courses for the training of priests or at the opening and closing of the meetings of certain administrative deliberative bodies of the Church, usually at the meetings of the Diocese Assembly), these allocutions capture the atmosphere created during various Church activities. Seven speeches were delivered on the occasion of the pastoral-missionary courses of the clergy, two speeches on the occasion of the ordination of priests, nineteen are addressed to priests at the meetings held on Easter and New Year Eve or on other occasions, while eighteen of the speeches included in this volume are transcriptions of official Addresses at the opening and closing of the meetings of the Diocese Assembly. Three parentheses were delivered during meetings with military priests, other three were extracted from the reports presented at the opening of some priestly conferences, while two of the sermons had been published in Church Almanacs dating from 1996-1997. The volume also comprises the speech delivered on the occasion of the inauguration of the new building hosting the Seminary “Nifon Mitropolitul” of Bucharest, an event which occurred on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2004.

**Themes.** In the speeches presented above, the Father Patriarch addressed a wide range of themes for reflection, both practical and spiritual in nature. Among the many subjects debated in the sermons of this volume, we mention *resurrection and the true life, peace, holiness* etc. Some speeches deal with certain coordinates of the *ecumenical and inter-Orthodox dialogue*, or speak about *the organization and functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church, the relations between the Church and the Army, about priesthood, the nature and role of the Church, theological education, the role of religion as a subject of study in Romanian school, love and forgiveness*. Most parentheses approach pastoral themes on the role and mission that a priest has in this world, either directly or at times by digression.

**Sources employed.** Throughout the entire discourses found in the volume under discussion, the entire homiletic material contains referrals to the Holy Scripture, thus stressing the importance the Holy Scripture had in the Church’s life as well as the spiritual attachment of the fifth patriarch of Romania to the wisdom words of the Scripture, used abundantly. In addition to verses from the Bible used in these parentheses,

the author resorts to a series of arguments put forward by his predecessors as well as to the treasure of the patristic writings, in order to strengthen his assertions or support the ideas to be expressed. Thus, by speaking on the occasion of the opening of the pastoral course on January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1953, he reiterates some of the thoughts expressed by the patriarch of those times (the worthy Justinian Marina):

we turn our thoughts back, four years ago, when, in circumstances of great enthusiasm... the first opening of the priest courses was taking place and the Blessed Patriarch, voicing the shared joy of the ancestral Church, stated: ...today God fulfills one of the old and ardent wishes of our Holy Church... giving back its right to prepare on its own the men who will serve its altars... (Arăpașu 2005: 30).

In the same address, speaking on the topic of the dignity of priesthood, a statement of Saint John Chrysostom is evoked: “What kind of man, wondered Saint John Chrysostom, is he who is the ambassador of God for the entire nation...?” (Arăpașu 2005: 32).

In another parenthesis, speaking on the subject of Resurrection, he resorts to certain explanations given by Patriarch Justinian, as well as other hierarchs:

the feast of God’s Resurrection is the celebration of life over death, as our Blessed Patriarch Justinian said: God’s Resurrection is the guarantee of our revival from the death, which we were condemned to because of our ancestral sin..., tells us the Holy Metropolitan Bishop Sebastian of Moldavia, ...Resurrection is one and the same with life and light, as the Blessed Firmilian of Oltenia explains (Arăpașu 2005: 35-42).

Elsewhere, when speaking about the Resurrection, he explains certain liturgical chants and gestures from the pascal period:

by uttering the calling *Veniți să luați lumină...* (Come and receive the light) the priest, as bearer of the torch, conveys to the Christians, the light of his own soul together with noble exhortations generated by the sacred words of the Resurrected Jesus (Arăpașu 2005: 54-58).

Here and there, in the homiletic discourse, he also uses arguments extracted from the Romanian poets and from the sources of Romanian history. For instance, in the opening address for the meeting of the Diocese Assembly held on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1983, he points out that:



the efforts made over centuries and the supreme price paid for the fulfillment of this dream, for which our fathers and forefathers died, the reunification of the Romanian people..., are the source of our strength... among the fighters for national unity there are also the sons of these lands, among whom we can also find the servants of the ancestral altar in Moldavia, a gateway for Christianity, as it was called from ancient times (Arăpașu 2005: 94).

In the same discourse, speaking about peace, he brings as arguments the ideas of some Church Fathers:

Saint Ephraim the Syrian enumerates among the evils that cause wars, disturbing peace, the concern for worldly things – namely greed and thirst for power, while Saint Isaac the Syrian asserts that peace, like the life of Christ, is not a chimera but a living and lived reality... there is a holy and righteous war, says Isidore of Pelusium, and a peace worse than any grim fight... (Arăpașu 2005: 96).

At the end of the sermon, he concludes by evoking the words of the Metropolitan Bishop Pimen of Moldavia and Suceava, uttered in 1918: “it is very difficult to speak about peace when the soul is not at peace...” (Arăpașu 2005: 101).

**The structure of the sermons** varies according to the theme or diversity of themes developed. In terms of length, some addresses are brief. For example, the parentheses: *În prima zi de Paști (On the first day of Easter)*, *Răspunzând chemării lui Hristos (Answering the call of Christ)*, *Călăuziți de Hristos (Guided by Christ)*, *O pagină nouă – clerul militar (A new page – the military clergy)*, *Din vistieria sufletului (From the treasury of the soul)*, *Supuneți totul încercării, păstrați ce e bine (Subject all to trial, preserve the good)*, *Primește acest odor (Receive this gift)*, *Biserica Dumnezeului celui viu (The Church of our Living God)*. Others more elaborate. The Parentheses: *Unitate de gând și de faptă (Unity of thought and action)*, *Bucurie dăruită ucenicilor (Joy offered to the disciples)*, *Înnoire și sfințenie (Renewal and holiness)*, *Voi care de mult trebuia să fiți învățători (You who long should have become teachers)*, *Toți avem aceeași sfântă chemare (We all share the same calling)*, *Religia în Școală (Religion in school) (I)*, *Religia în Școală (Religion in school) (II)*. Some are introduced by a *motto* extracted from the Holy Scripture (in most of the pastoral letters), but there are still some that include quotes from other sources. For example, the speech *Împlinirea misiunii de propovăduitori ai Sfintei Evanghelii (Fulfilling the mission of preachers of the Gospel)* has as *motto* a fragment from *Epistola către*

*Diognet (Letter to Diognet)*, while the one entitled *Pe același drum cu credincioșii (Traveling side by side with the faithful)* includes the assertions of Patriarch Justinian with regard to the life of the priest. In the speech on the occasion of the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Union of the Romanian Principalities, the *motto* is a phrase believed to have been uttered by Michael the Brave: “I have set to take this great burden from this country of ours so that I may create a shield for the entire Christian world” (Arăpașu 2005: 70).

The parentheses that form this volume do not include address phrases characteristic to the homiletic discourse. *The Beginning* is sometimes abrupt, other times more complex. For example, in the speech *Traveling side by side with the faithful* the introduction is elaborate:

Only little time has passed since the festivity of God’s Resurrection yet our souls still feel the sacred awe and the precious spiritual gifts that the celebration of our Savior’s victory over death brought to all those who believe, all those who seek to quench their thirst at this never ending and life-giving spring (Arăpașu 2005: 35).

Other times, the beginning is straightforward: “On the feast of the Resurrection, we relive, year after year, moments of great and sacred joy” (Arăpașu 2005: 54). In the paranesis that lends the title to the volume, the introduction is more extended:

This year too, as before, the message of the Savior’s Resurrection has gathered us once again so that we may share with each other the love and joy that rule our souls on these luminous days of Easter (Arăpașu 2005: 147).

A similar procedure is followed in the speech on the occasion of the opening of the meeting of the Diocese Assembly of the Archbishopric of Bucharest on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 1991:

It is with God’s great mercy that we find ourselves here, at the start of the year, when the rituals of our church have summoned us to reflect together on the good working of this God-protected diocese. Church life has its eternal coordinates, established by Our Savior Jesus Christ Himself and later by the Holy Apostles and by the Holy Fathers until this very day (Arăpașu 2005: 152).

When examining the purpose and role of the relations between the Church and the Army, at the beginning of the speech on this subject he briefly states the following:

We have before us, behold, the representatives of the two fundamental institutions of the Romanian nation: the Church and the Army. Without faith in

God and without this ancestral establishment of the army, the world's nations would not have been able to exist within their own borders (Arăpașu 2005: 179).

Going deeper into the actual *body* of the speeches, we can note the accuracy and coherence of the message being conveyed, the largest part of the parenetic corpus being richly depicted. For example, in the speech *Administrators of Grace*, delivered on the occasion of the ordination of a priest in the Arad Cathedral in the year 1972, the beginning is straightforward, anticipating the theme being discussed – the importance of the priest's grace: "The worthiness that the ordination confers to the one summoned and destined to receive the godly grace is a sign of being chosen by the celestial One" (Arăpașu 2005: 49). In the context of the fierce communist terror, the hierarch pointed out that the priest's dignity is conferred by the mystery of the ordination.

It does not assign to the priest other responsibilities and other competences than those referring to the redemption of the flock assigned to him at the time of the sacrament (Răducă 2006: 37). Speaking about ordination as *choice*, the worthy patriarch organizes his homiletic material by resorting to quotes from the Scripture on this kind of special sacramental choice. Abundantly illustrated with verses intended to strengthen the discourse (over 17 references to the Scripture, generally from pastoral letters), this speech also benefits from patristic arguments, harmoniously related to the theme being discussed. Thus, after the presentation of some verses meant to attest the sacramental role of the ordination, he goes on to list the characteristics that the sermons to be uttered by the newly ordained priest before the Christians will have, serving to show the future parishioners "facts and realities that have to do with the truths of faith" (Arăpașu 2005: 52-53). He highlights the role of sermon in the life of the Church by quoting the words of the greatest Christian preacher, Saint John Chrysostom: "The word is an instrument, the word is food, the word is the best means to moderate atmosphere, it is medicine, fire, sword..." (Arăpașu 2005: 52). In order to illustrate the force of the personal example of the priest's life, he highlights a fragment from the writings of Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: "you must be light yourself in order to be able to illuminate others, you must be pure yourself in order to be able to purify others", ending this pastoral speech with the

exhortation: “This word I place in your soul, beloved brother newly anointed!” (Arăpașu 2005: 53).

In the course of discussing the themes, certain personal directions are formulated in connection with the discussed subjects. For example, in the speech entitled *Chemările Învierii (Callings of the Resurrection)*, when speaking about the gospel’s call to unity (John 17, 11), he asserts the following:

This message shall come through on the occasion of the Resurrection in the entire Christian world, when we, the servants and believers of different Churches and Religions, do hereby testify as one the truth of faith of the Resurrection, namely that Christ Has Risen from the dead, on the same Sunday (Arăpașu 2005: 55).

On another occasion he explains the importance of paschal chants as follows:

The beautiful chants, the words filled with spiritual inspiration used from old times by the Christians to greet each other when gathering around the sacred altars, on the occasion of these changes, are a testimony of the fact that Resurrection and Church are indeed a reality in our spiritual life (Arăpașu 2005: 62).

When participating in historical moments of great importance in the social life (anniversary of the Union of the Principalities in 1979), he asserts the following:

When we commemorate 120 years from the Union of the Romanian Principalities, before our soul’s eyes we see the figures of those who made this historical and sacred act possible: citizens, villagers and officials led by Alexandru Ioan Cuza, the Metropolitan Bishop Calinic Miclescu, Mihail Kogălniceanu, the archimandrite and theology professor from Huși, Melchisedec Ștefănescu, the Scriban brothers... (Arăpașu 2005: 71).

With relation to the martyrs of Orthodoxy who were present in the life of the Church up to now, it is asserted that:

The Orthodox Church in general, like our ancestral Church, had a large number of martyrs during the communist period. Their names and numbers is known only by God. The succession of priests, theology professors, valuable scholars of our national culture who filled the communist prison is high... (Arăpașu 2005: 157).

*The ending* of the speeches has different connotations depending on the theme of the paranesis. Thus, on the occasion of summoning one of

the meetings of the Diocese Assembly, being aware of the responsibility the Church had towards the Society, the author shows:

today's secularized world calls for Christian moral value, which needs to be installed in the life of man, in the life of the society and for that we have the duty to meet these demands to a greater extent, especially when they come from the intellectuals that expect the Church to offer from its treasury its spiritual and traditional values, forever alive... (Arăpașu 2005: 185).

Other speeches conclude with a series of practical exhortations:

let us work the land of the Holy Church with courage and responsibility, with the kind work, with the living example, and with our deeds, for the sake of the spiritual growth of our flock and all our fellow people (Arăpașu 2005: 216).

Some parentheses end with the wishing:

I wish you all, my beloved brothers and sisters, strength and growth in the love that never falls, from which space and time were born and which wipes away any difference between us (Arăpașu 2005: 263).

At other times, feelings of joy and urges for prayer are expressed:

Your presence fills my heart with joy and I pray God to illuminate all our minds and help us in these moments that we spend together and in this Mass, in our participation in the life of these diocese... (Arăpașu 2005: 301).

**Originality.** Given that the 55 parentheses were collected in a volume dedicated to the 55 years of the Patriarch Teoctist's tenure in office, it can be strongly asserted that this is an original trait of the speeches. On the other hand, what surprises the reader from the very first reading is the accessibility of the messages conveyed on this occasion, the adjustment of the information without downplaying their importance. In short, both a reader with an extensive theological culture and the reader who lacks education in the field are able to comprehend the thoughts and concerns of the 90-year old patriarch, now having his eternal rest.

The phrases abundant in metaphors, the artistry of the combination of words in an authentic, pure Romanian language, strewn with the rich theological phrases, render the speeches of Patriarch Teoctist true and unequalled sources of theological culture. The style of these discourses is unique, bearing amazing beauty of language, where old terms, truly Romanian, appear at every step, like pearls, where the figures of speech – comparisons, epithets – and diminutives are present everywhere. It is a

successful expression in the Romanian literary language, having the archaic scent of the church language found in the Holy Liturgies, imbued with the language of the old homilies and chronicles, as clear as the waters of the mountain springs, from which neologisms are not missing but rather, they are used appropriately, moderately and with great subtlety (Necula 2006: 29).

#### **4. Conclusions**

Searching though the order of the Holy Sacraments is in fact a good opportunity to see once more the inseparable relation between the content of faith and the content of prayer, *lex credendi* and *lex orandi*. The Church Faith and its prayer are so deeply intertwined that each and every one of them could be without confusion identified and assimilated to the other. In none of the other Christian liturgical tradition one can find such a profound overlapping and intertwining of the content of faith with the content of prayers, not only in the cases of the main prayers but also for simplest and secondary prayers, not only in the in the Eucharistic Liturgy and the Holy Sacraments, but also in all the other occasional services, not only in the solemn rituals but also in the simplest and even personal liturgical gestures (ex. one crossing himself with the sign of the Cross in accordance to his/her own tradition, be it catholic or orthodox), not only in the Hymnography of the most important feast throughout the liturgical year dedicated to the Holy Mother of God, Virgin Mary or the Saints, but also in the other less important feasts and the simple Troparia as part of the Liturgy of the Hours for instance or any other liturgical orders.

Eucharistic Liturgy and Holy Sacraments orders lay out that thought their agency the Church preached and preserved intact the mystery of faith. The Eucharistic Liturgy forms and the canon laws issued throughout the Church history meant to preserve intact the church faith and prayer order, were not simply forms of ritualistic conservative attitude specific to a certain period in the Church history, but especially thoughtful and careful preservation of the Right Faith expressed fully though the very agency of these orders. During the catechumens institution period, the Baptism candidates were revealed the mysteries of the faith teaching before they would be ministered the Holy Sacraments; but once they have received the Sacraments, were given the opportunity to enter deeper

though their own experience into the same mysteries of the Faith the Sacraments themselves contain and reveal. We understand therefore, that the Holy Sacraments are veritable Church Faith thesaurus that we are to approach in faith and reverence, and meant to strengthen our personal faith.

We conclude also, based on what has been presented here so far, that due to the inseparable relation between the doctrine and its teaching and the prayer of the Church, the Holy Sacraments are presented as Confessions of Faith themselves, open to those participating in and receiving them, where to the same being granted both the sanctifying grace and the holy teaching of faith.

**Notes:**

[1] Born on February 7th, 1915 at Tocileni, Botoșani country. A novice in the Vorona (1928) and Neamț Monasteries (1931), a student at the Monastic Seminary of Cernica Monastery (1932-1940), tonsured in Bistrița (Neamț county), under the name Teoctist (1935) and ordained hiero-deacon (January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1937). In 1940 he became a student of the Faculty of Theology of Bucharest, obtaining his bachelor's degree in 1945. On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1945 he was transferred to the Diocese Center of Iasi and ordained a hieromonk (March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1945) and ordained archimandrite in 1946. He studied at the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy of Iasi (1945-1947), served as a priest (1945), and later as high ecclesiarch at the metropolitan cathedral of Iasi and exarch of the monasteries in the Iasi Archbishopric (1946-1948), then became vicar of the same Archbishopric (1948-1950). In March 1950 he was elected and ordained Patriarchal Bishop-vicar, given the title "Botoșăneanul". In this capacity, he acted as secretary to the Holy Synod, president of the Academic Theological Institution of Bucharest (1950-1954) and leader of various sectors within the Patriarchal Administration. On July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1962 he was elected and on September 16<sup>th</sup>, appointed Bishop in Arad, shepherding there for 10 years. On January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1973 he was elected Archbishop of Craiova and Metropolitan Bishop of Oltenia. On September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1977 he was appointed Archbishop of Iași and Metropolitan Bishop of Moldavia and Suceava (as of July 1980 until January 1982 being substitute for the metropolitan bishop of Ardeal). On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1986 he was elected Archbishop of Bucharest, Metropolitan Bishop of Ungrovlachia and Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, which he shepherded until his death (on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007). In addition to the volumes that comprise his pastoral letters and sermons, we mention the following works: *The Metropolitan Bishop Jacob Putneanul, a torch-carrier of Romanian Orthodoxy, of the aspirations towards national unity and assertion of Romanian culture*, Monastery of Neamț, 1978, 45 p. (and an extended issue under

the title *Metropolitan Bishop Jacob Putneanul, 1719-1778. In the service of Romanian Orthodoxy, of the aspirations for national unity and assertion of Romanian culture*, Neamț, 1978, 128 p.); *Metropolitan Bishop Dosoștei, founder of the Romanian language*, a study that was included in the work entitled *Dumnezeiasca Liturghie (The Divine Liturgy)*, Iași, 1980, p. V-XLIV (a work edited at his initiative), *Sfântul Vasile cel Mare în evlavia credincioșilor ortodocși români (Saint Basil the Great, venerated by Romanian Orthodox Christians)*, in *Romanian Orthodoxy*, EIBMBOR, Bucharest, 1992, pp. 7-19. He published the anniversary issue in 1988 of the *Biblia de la București (Bucharest Bible)* (1688) and supervised the publishing of the *Bible*, an anniversary issue of the Holy Synod (2002), compiled and annotated by the Metropolitan Bishop Bartolomeu Anania. He wrote the preface of several books and monographs of certain monasteries and churches in the Romanian Patriarchy.

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# **The Concepts of *Christian* and *Patriot* as conceived by Father N. Steinhardt. A Synthetic Approach**

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## **Abstract:**

*History has presented us on many occasions along the years examples of heroes whose purpose in life was to defend the truth. They were always ready to give their last breath to the confession of their creed, they were always willing to sacrifice thus becoming models for those around them. It is the case of father Nicolae Steinhardt, a Jew converted to Christianity as an adult. For him the concepts of Christian and patriot go hand in hand united into a complete and unique type of love.*

**Keywords:** *Christian, patriot, faith, confession, truth*

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## **Introduction**

In a time when human kind chases the so-called means of information which pretend to own the truth and in a society that states clearly the right of each individual to have an opinion, it is somewhat paradoxical that the man of our days proves to be confused most of the times if not unsettled in his decisions and actions. This being the case, we ask ourselves: do we really need everything that circulates around us and if we do where does the truth lie in all this mixture of knowledge and how powerful are we when we possess it?!

History has presented us on many occasions along the years examples of heroes whose purpose in life was to defend the truth. They were always ready to give their last breath to the confession of their creed, they were always willing to sacrifice thus becoming models for those around them. Hence, they knew what truth was and what it meant to find it, but especially, they knew that once they found it, the truth makes you completely free even when, from outside, seemed to come permanent obstacles.

It is not by accident that amongst those who enjoy this privilege of being a model for the others and especially a genuine confessor of the truth we find a personality, who is in fact quite close to our times: father N. Steinhardt. And I say “not by accident” because for this esteemed literate, true patriot and especially, authentic Orthodox, truth meant more than a way of living: it was life itself.

Steinhardt contemplates, in season and out of season, the Romanian people and acknowledges its common sense that it manifested along the years, and he arguments this faith by the fact that the Romanian

never wanted another land but his, never shed blood except to defend his modest needs, his nature (which he never believed to be perfect or superior to the others) and his territory where he never wanted that which was not his, but where he was born and lived with a very precious sense of moderation and wisdom, with a strange and very rare instinct of non-elation. From this approach in two-strokes (good-nature – bravery; wisdom – horripilation), from this contrast embodied in the antinomy *defensive heroism* the history of the Romanians draws its truly original pages (Steinhardt 2010: 494).

Hence, one may clearly observe the admiration and respect that Steinhardt has for the “wisdom” of the Romanian people. He praises out loud the poise of the Romanians which they proved along the years and that is why when referring to his origins he states:

the Romanian spirit seems to have inherited on the Latin line the love for order, and from the Thracians a sense of serenity and twinning with the nature which keeps him distant – in art – both from the sloppily sugariness and from the acid anger, a sort of equilibrium which I’d call heavenly not in a theological sense, but on the contrary in a profound human and terrestrial meaning, a sense of living the life and conceiving the world from a position of wisdom, with a subtle dose of smile and compassion... (Steinhardt 2012: 313-314).

Steinhardt always spoke of this love for the Romanian nation and he always found the power to reveal his noble feelings that lead him to happiness since:

blessed are those who were born in this Romanian paradise; those who looked at it with happy and tearfully eyes; those in whose veins flows the blood of the native fields, hills and mountains; but also those who felt it and loved it through an act of let us call it willingness, or rather of clairvoyance; those who loved it although impure, although late; blessed are those who bear it in their souls although they are far away; those who – no matter what or where or how – never

pull it out of them, where this terrestrial paradise has put its indelible print (Steinhardt 2000: 38).

Here, I think, we can find the great mystery of the unconditional love that Steinhardt had for the Romanian people. It is all paradoxical if we relate to reality. How is it possible that this land means so much for someone like him?!

And yet it is possible; it is, if you want, that joy of the communion between man and his garden, trees or the house that once were the happiness of the childhood that we mentioned before. The same incomprehensible happiness and the same love that conquers all...

His patriotism resembles the wisdom of a tree, which, attached definitively to a place on the planet, struggles to value it to its maximum, instead of denying it foolishly. N. Steinhardt loves his country in the same way he loves his nature, fate and faith (Ștefănescu 2005: 219).

In his perception, the love for his nation is lived and manifested with all its strength, to its deepest places of his being, and he does this in his own personal way, thus succeeding in showing all of us that in order to take it to the highest top, it must be necessarily shaped according to the teachings of the Christian faith.

That is why it is very important to remember the fact that for Steinhardt patriotism and the Christian faith are two feelings that require a permanent and perfect synergy. In his view, these must be tightly linked to one another, for only in this manner they will manage to give birth to a powerful character and a role model for the generations to come.

### **I. What does it mean to be an authentic Christian in Steinhardt's point of view?**

What does it really mean to be a good Christian? Many of us declare such a thing, but how many of us really know what this confession means? Is it enough the fact that in our faith we only confine to the simple act of acknowledging the religion we belong to?

It seems that father Nicolae has a different opinion. As a person who passed through many experiences of life and who converted from Judaism to Christianity only in the second half of his life, he states:

to be a Christian, it is best not to forget this reality, it is a happiness, a sweet mystery, a wonderful secret. To know that Jesus is the Son of God and of Man,

our constant companion, that we can call Him anytime, that we can pray, we can entrust ourselves to Him, we can have Him as example, we can feel that before Him we are responsible for what we do or don't do, that we can betray Him and insult Him with our bad deeds and our ugly thoughts without feeling ashamed deep inside, that we are not alone and deserted at the disposition of hazard or determinism – what greater happiness can there be in our moments of danger, disorientation, temptation and frustration or in those of peacefulness and joy?

The cold and darkness may besiege us, the evil may fight against us but they cannot defeat completely our inner springs, they cannot vandalize our soul because we bear inside us the fire of the Baptism. We are baptized with water, to be sure, but that water is Fire and Spirit, in a visible manner just like the bread and the wine from the Holy Eucharist are not bread and wine but the Body and Blood of Christ (Steinhardt 2008: 270-271).

Hence, here is the point which the mystery of Christianity reaches. The authentic Christian knows that there is not a moment in his life when he is not accompanied, since both in troubles and in joy he has Christ beside him and his life receives a meaning. The true Christian is aware of the fact that no matter how many obstacles pass him by, none of them can harm him as long as Christ resides in his heart. For this very reason, Christianity is a “sweet” mystery and it is joy.

As a matter of fact, happiness characterized the entire life of Nicolae Steinhardt, especially after receiving the Baptism, of which he states that it is not only water, but “Fire and Holy Spirit”.

However, Father Nicolae takes a step further in the understanding and living of the life in true Christian spirit, and after emphasizing the importance of this religion he states:

it is not enough for the Christian to go to church on Sundays and other feasts, to light one or more candles, to worship the icons and, eventually to genuflect once or maybe more than once. All of these are good and beautiful. But I think they are not enough. Christianity is not only prayer, cult and ritual. Christianity means free Christian living, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment. The Lord did not come on earth to establish a new religion, but to present us *a new model of life*, to call us to spiritualization and deification. Christ came down from heaven and was incarnate so that we can raise ourselves above our animal bodily condition, so that we can become gods (Steinhardt 2008: 310).

Hence, we see what is the significance of the authentic Christianity in father Steinhardt's opinion. Through the words mentioned above, he does not exclude the practices from the cult of the Church, on the

contrary, he proves them to be necessary and he considers them all special because of the distinctive ritual. But, what he wants to emphasize here is the fact that more than this, the purpose of the faithful must be to make Christianity a new way of life, through which he may rise above all the creation and remain there in his quality of crown of the creation that he had at the very beginning. By doing this, not only will he succeed to rise above his bodily condition in which he lived until then, but more important he will acknowledge the fact that the liberty received as a gift must be used for the purpose that it was offered in the first place. Only by freeing himself from the chains of the bodily senses, he will begin to answer to God's calling and only in this way he will manage to become "fellow citizen with God's people and also member of his household" (Ephesians 2: 19).

But a more important thing that we must mention is the fact that for Steinhardt, Christianity also meant *liberty* and *happiness*. As a man who was subjected to the terrors of the jails in the time of the communist regime, he managed, with the help of faith, to find the way which gave him back the hope of life and the will to fight and there is no doubt that for him that way was Christ (John 14:6). After his meeting with Christ, Steinhardt's life gained a new meaning because through the manner in which he now understood to accept sufferance he became, paradoxically, a

confessor of the joy of faith, transforming the humiliation of detention into happiness lived within, intensely, spiritually and culturally. His meeting with Christ Crucified and Resurrected put a profound print on his entire existence (Lemeni, Mihalache, Ionescu, Ioja 2014: 89).

This is probably the reason for which, although at a considerable distance in time after being freed from prison, when he was asked where does God hide so that the world doesn't see Him, doesn't call Him, doesn't recognize Him and doesn't listen to Him, he answered serenely:

He does not hide, my dear, He is here, among us, eternally present. *We* are the ones *who* hide from Him, because we don't see Him. The world is the one that doesn't see, doesn't call, doesn't listen. The kingdom of heaven is not here, nor there, it is within us. It is our duty to look for Him and to find Him. If we think that we will bump into Him in a certain place, at the corner of the street we will never find Him. Our concern, our chance is to open our eyes... open them widely (Sângeorzan 1998: 73).

And he opened his eyes and understood what the joy of meeting Christ really meant. Even there, in those completely adverse conditions, Steinhardt proved that the manifestation of the authentic Christianity cannot be stopped by any obstacle that comes from outside. In those circumstances, he saw Him, called Him and listened to Christ and in the same time felt the Kingdom of heaven inside him, thus managing to transform sufferance into happiness and prison into liberty.

As a consequence of his experience, he understood that:

“Christ is good, gentle, merciful, comforting and sweet. But He is not just that. He is the same person Who gave himself willingly to be crucified and shed His blood for us and died in terrible afflictions. Christ is good, gentle, merciful, comforting and sweet, but He is also terrible, He is the one Who didn't hesitate to offer himself to be crucified. He asks us to take our situation of Christians very seriously. You cannot play with Him. You can lie to people, you can cheat on them, deceive them or palm them off. But if we abandon Him and feel ashamed with Him, He will abandon us and feel ashamed with us at the last Judgement” (Steinhardt 2008: 198).

Hence, this is what Steinhardt thought about being a true *Christian*. In his opinion, Christianity did not mean only to speak *about* God, but developed from this state to that of speaking *with* God, and not only speaking, but more than that, feeling Him and living according to the trajectory traced by Him.

After the struggle which followed him constantly, he became, without a doubt, part of God's kindness. Also, he understood very well the fact that it is not enough just to entrust ourselves to the care of the divine providence, and that is why he only wanted to make us understand that above all it is necessary to *assume* our condition of Christians, with all that it comprises, showing at the same time that this is the only way we will be able to present ourselves worthily before the judgement throne of Jesus Christ and this is the only way we will be able to obtain a place into His eternal Kingdom.

## **II. N. Steinhardt – authentic model of Romanian patriot**

It is important to mention from the beginning the fact that although in the case of Steinhardt culture, faith and patriotism seemed to be manifesting on different ways, each of them in its most authentic way, however, they existed in an indissoluble communion from his early years, supporting and completing one another. Maybe that is why although in his youth some of these preoccupations seemed inexistent, they do not lack completely, but are present in a latent state, waiting to burst together with the finding of the truth he searched for so long.

If this was the case of the meeting with Christianity, an aspect which is very well known because of the profoundness in the act of conversion, regarding his love for our people and our country, the situation was rather similar.

He came from a family with high principles of life and he had the opportunity of forming a moral behavior, learning that amongst the most powerful feelings that a man must have, it is highly necessary to find the love for the land where you were born. For this reason, he always heard the voice of the native places and he always felt their calling, he eulogized the beauty of the landscapes and the history of the Romanian people in season and out of season, but he was especially sensitive to the troubles of the Romanian beside him, he did not neglect him and he was always ready to sacrifice for his beloved.

He always proved his characteristic *modesty*, for although he was much more Romanian than others, he used to say:

it is hard for me, and I think you understand this, to offer categoric answers regarding the appreciation of the Romanian people because the truth is that my blood is not Romanian, I take upon myself the right to speak as a Romanian, but I must be modest and reserved and not issue absolute judgements. I must keep my place (Steinhardt, Pinteau 2009: 202).

However, he never stopped acknowledging the courage of the Romanians along the years:

[...] the very existence of the Romanian people is owed to a long, diffuse and tireless heroism in time. In fact it is worthy to mention the fact that the Romanians have always put the heroic sense above the simple intelligence and handiness (Steinhardt, Pinteau 2009: 138).

And when he looks to the historical past of this country he regrets the fact that our people had to confront alone the hard times, because “he wasn’t lucky like the foreign peoples. He didn’t find friendships, except for the very vague, distant friendships of France and England, which were more theoretical” (Steinhardt, Pintea 2009: 203-204).

He always put in close relationship the love for his nation with the love for Christ and in a simple grain of wheat he saw all the divine wisdom that the Holy Scripture reveals “in the most unexpected places” (Sângeorzan 1998: 46). Of course, he felt this relationship, not as intense as in the second half of his life, even from childhood, when the images of the native places imprinted so deep into his memory that they followed him throughout his entire existence.

Patriotism is by far one of the most powerful experiences that someone can have inside his soul. It arises in our souls that incomparable feeling of endless love that we offer to our nation and to its secular traditions, it helps us maintain the true values that define us as nation amongst other nations, but especially it makes us jump out of joy and emotion each time when, over the years, we hear the names of the parents that gave us birth, or we remember the places where we have lived the most beautiful years, those of our childhood.

Being a convinced patriot for all his life, Steinhardt respected completely each of the aspects we mentioned above. He loved dearly the traditions of the Romanian people and not only did he maintain alive the fundamental values of this nation but he also promoted them within the country and abroad. But most of all Nicolae never forgot the precious memories of his birth places and he always evoked them with love:

every man has a *toby of childhood*. (Trug which ponders in the years of the beginning the original sin). Mine was there, in the common Pantelimon, between Capra and Fundeni – and in the endless yard of a timber factory, maybe the cleanest industry, penetrated by the smell of cut wood and sawdust. (After the rain, the boards and impregnated blocks spread a pungent odour)” (Steinhardt 2005: 56).

He spoke of these places on other occasions as well but with the same love and admiration:

At the beginning there was Pantelimon, a suburban village of Bucharest, where my father was chief-engineer of a timber factory. I was drawn and charmed by the bells of the nearby church Capra as soon as I was able to distinguish their



individuality from the mixture of noises that surrounded me. [...] Besides the bells – the initial trigger of my spiritual destiny – there was also Pantelimon village itself, with his modest acacias (the trees of the ones that never push through) and the small houses, with its people reconciled with life and convinced that nothing really tragic could happen to them.

Then there was the street in the heart of the city, with elegant inhabitants and houses close together, with its patriarchal atmosphere, yards and gardens, good neighbors, decent people, most of them from the middle class or the upper class of the society, affable, helpful and not proud (maybe that is why I found it hard to conform later to the doctrine according to which they were all just a bunch of bourgeois-landlord beasts), honoring the feasts and preserving the tradition of the Christmas Tree to which they invited me and which ravished me and overwhelmed me just as much as the bells (Steinhardt, Pinteă 2009: 171-172).

Written mostly to underline the progressive side of his spiritual development, the words above receive in the mouth of the narrator besides the purpose in itself the power to create a completely different world that we, the people nowadays, could hardly believe existed. Indeed, we speak about a different era but this was the era when people succeeded utterly and completely to maintain alive the moral, social and cultural values. Hence, the native Pantelimon had its mission from the very beginning.

We might be tempted to believe that in this depiction the author contradicts himself when he refers on the one hand to the modesty of the houses and of the trees that surrounded them and on the other hand to the reconciliation that all the people there had with life. But it is only after a thorough research that we will understand that for Steinhardt this was nothing else but the proof of the fact that *for the Romanians equilibrium was an existential state*. They who were easily content with less had the belief that life has its natural course and that nothing can deviate it from the route. Maybe those people simple in existence but powerful in faith were the reason for Steinhardt to state over the years, after having visited so many foreign places, while referring to the Romanian country the fact that it is

sweet, a real blessing, a beautiful country «not only good people, but also amiable» (Eminescu); whose simple features (mercy, hospitality, the power to forgive...) are valuable in times of trouble – and it is in times of trouble that you judge people and things – more than the intelligence of the French, the initiative of the Anglo-Saxon or the handiness of the German; Christianity in all the fields,

at all the corners, in all the hearts; a heaven, I've said it a thousand times. [...] the Romanian world may pierce through the centuries in all the greatness of its charm, announcing even from here, from earth, from the rush of mundane events, the paradise whose nostalgia will never spare us (Steinhardt 2004: 75-76).

However, in antithesis with these places there was also the street in the city centre where suddenly the things received a totally different significance, but where, despite all expectations, people proved to be as open to offer their help when needed. Christians preservers of the traditions, they remained for the rest of Steinhardt's life *the symbol of kindness and of the love for the neighbors*.

### **Instead of conclusions**

Nicolae Steinhardt made a confession that united courage with the intelligence of faith. He showed that "Christ never asked us to be stupid, showing that through his Gospel Christ calls us to be kind, gentle, honest, humble and pure in spirit, but not stupid" (Steinhardt 2005: 26). And courage is the main virtue of Christianity because

Christ did not climb on the cross accidentally: the *courage* to suffer terribly was the only way through which He could show us that He truly and completely became a man; through which He could prove his truthfulness.

Neither intelligence, nor wisdom, neither the healings, nor His teaching and not even kindness or mercy would have been proof enough: only the courage before suffering and death is within His reach. The beating, the blood, the death, these are proofs that don't cheat, that cannot be rigged. Ugly? Barbaric? Tacky? Simplistic? Maybe, but categorical. And having something of the brutal vulgarity and the great effrontery of the done deed that astonishes even Satan (Steinhardt 2005: 190).

In this atmosphere,

Father Nicolae Steinhardt passed, alone, modest in comparison to Saul from Tarsus, on the way to Damascus. The Jew Nicolae Steinhardt found Christ or, better said, Christ found Nicolae Steinhardt. For him, Christ was not a person that existed somewhere distant in time and space, for him Christ was present, close, beside him. Christ was always with him and he worshiped Him with ardour, He adored Him, he loved Him. He spoke to Him, understood Him as no other Christian understood Him. Him, Steinhardt, who came to the Church of Christ in his adulthood through the Mystery of the Holy Baptism, through his own experience found out what it means not to be a Christian and to become a Christian (*N. Steinhardt în evocări*, 2012: 74-75).

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# Hedonism: Catechesis Face to Face with Consumer Society

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**Abstract:**

*The challenges related to the contemporary catechesis are the most diverse. Hedonism, which is manifested as a constant of modern society, cannot be avoided in the construction of a coherent catechetical discourse, connected to the realities of the world. Acquiring pleasures at any cost, ignoring the pain as an inevitable source of spiritual ascent, man's more or less justified quests, the excessive psychologisation of the catechetical discourse are some of the themes that this study approaches, attempting the composition of a catechetical patristically rooted philosophy. Archimandrite Sophrony or Saint Gregory Palamas are considered important landmarks in the construction of this catechetical philosophy, their teaching constituting a basis for any attempt to conform the contemporary catechetical discourse with the patristic theology. For that matter, any attempt to break from the patristic philon represents an incapacity to offer healing answers to the modern man who centers most of his life on a more or less well-defined pleasure.*

***Keywords:** Gregory Palamas, hesychasm, philosophy, reality, Triads, knowledge, sin, peace, Sophrony*

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## **1. Pleasure: an existential given or subsequent perversion?**

Pleasure, as an existential given of man, is most often perverted in the pursuit for the undefined, degrading and subjugating pleasure. Man is ordained to enjoy and sweeten from the beauty of His Creator, as well as from the beauty of creation, in an imptus of going beyond one's limits, an ecstatic one, which aims at tasting from the otherness of Beauty. God, the One beyond thought and word, attracts man to Himself, in an ecstatic union, full of the tasting of the joy of reunion. In a hymn of great beauty, in which the joy of tasting the love of God is expressed, Saint John Chrysostom says:

That even when the son that was not saved had returned, there were flutes and guitars and dances and celebrations. And the one that was supposed to call his son

to book for wasting the fortune in vain and for his elopement (into a place) so remote, has done nothing of sort, but looked at him as someone full of honour. And he did not even reproach him with words, and he did not even simply remind him of those things, but embraced him, kissed him, killed the calf, dressed him in robes and gave him gifts. We have all these examples and we should dare and not discourage ourselves. Because He does not enjoy that he is named Lord, but enjoys that He is named Father and does not enjoy to have a servant, but a son. Because He wants more (to be sons) than (to be servants). That is why He had done everything and did not spare the only Begotten Son, so that we take the adoption and to love Him not only as Lord, but also as Father. And if He obtains this from us, He takes pride in this as someone who is honoured and makes it aware to everyone, He who does not need anything of ours (Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur 2017: 11).

God, says Saint John Chrysostom, enjoys the fact that man takes the filiation and admits the paternity of the Father. The pleasure that man feels when tasting the infinite of God's knowledge is actually the God's joy that manifests itself in the case of overcoming the state of servant. Christianity does not propose servitude as a lifestyle, but proposes delectation as a means of happy and endless existence. Troubles, trials, incapacity to immediately feel joy are only stages that harden man in order to choose the incorrupt joy and the pleasure that lasts for eternity. The same Saint John Chrysostom tells us:

To run into dangers for Him, as if we are running after the greatest crowns and to not consider as hard and unbearable even poverty, illness, insult, calumny, death itself when we suffer for Him. Because if we are awake and right-minded, we shall win the greatest advantages from all these. Similar to the situation in which, if we are not awake and wise, we shall not harvest something useful not even from the opposite ones. Think! Someone mocks and struggles with you? Actually, he/she prepares you to be awake and gives you the reason to be similar to God. Because if you love the one that plots against you, you shall be similar to the One that makes the son rise and over the righteous and the sinful ones (Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur 2017: 11).

The journey of this life, filled with both good and pleasant, but also with less good and less pleasant things, actually represents a stage, of gestation, that prepares man for the "truth of things." Everything that is apparent, may be an ultimatum for the earthly life of man, may acquire, in the light of eternal sweetening, an ephemeral state. "The here" which becomes absolute, unfortunately, for most contemporary people, is only the bridge to the true reality, the one of endless joy for the glory of God:

In the first stage, the mobile of moral manifestation is the fear of punishment, in the second stage, the hope for a gratification, while in the third stage, the mobile is freedom or love. In the first stage, man acts as a servant, in the second one, as a person that is about to be repaid and in the third one, he/she moves in the spirit of freedom and without any gainful interest (Mantzaridis 2014: 192).

## **2. Hedonism: an escapeless quandry?**

Man aims, or should aim at the state of son and this longing happily satisfies all the unallayed needs for the pleasures and joys of the world. All man's search has, in essence, a basis in the search for this eternal happiness and sweetening. The three degrees of moral life that Mantzaridis reminded of are exactly the states of closeness or remoteness from the tasting of the happiness of being a son. Saint John Chrysostom highlights, in the passage written above, the importance of the awareness of the state of son, of the desire to overcome the state of a simple servant or even of hireling and aims at the wholeness of the state of son. "The nostalgia of the paradise" is not only a projection to the state prior to the fall, but an activation of the vital instinct that aims at the projection into eternity of this "nostalgia". Man feels his calling to be a son and this calling is deeply rooted in our nature. There is no representative of the human nature who does not relate, existentially, to this latency:

As a matter of fact, is this not life itself? Never is a man bad for everyone, he always makes someone happy, so that as, if you are not content with looking only at one point of view, you shall eventually realise the utility of each being. The ones that believe in one God tell themselves that, if their God does not strike the bad people, it means that He takes care of the course of His creation as a whole and that is why He cannot descent for specific cases (Zola 1975: 122).

The latency of the state of son is the ontological given of nature. Man is free to activate this latency or not and that is why any definitive judgment on the nature and finality of the course of each man is improper and even more, improbable. The utility of each being, about whom Zola is talking, is also the key to understanding hedonism as a non-constituent state of this course towards the potency of filiation:

Life continues its creation, disperses after its own laws, disinterested in hypotheses, always going forward in the accomplishing of its infinite toil. With the risk of creating monsters, life must still create, because, contrary to the sick and the mad that it can create, it does not labour to create, certainly with the hope

that some day the healthy and wise shall come. Life, the life that runs into a permanent flow, which continues and starts afresh, towards the unknown perfection! The life in which we swim, the life with its infinite and opposite streams, always moving and great, as an endless sea (Zola 1975: 319).

This flow of repetitive development of life bears in itself the seal of the longing for perfection. The nostalgia for paradise bears in itself the continuous reporting to this given of filiation. However, “nostalgia” is not only a simple memory or projection, but becomes a state of impartion, even in this life, of the ineffable relish. What does consumer society do when facing these facts? It proposes surrogate solutions for the satisfaction of this longing for adoption. It proposes solutions inadequate for the size of man’s search, a search that repeats itself with each individual materialization of the endless flow of life. Each man bears in himself this longing, which cannot be fooled with finite solutions, which shall most often be dissatisfactory. Not being satiated by this surrogate food, man feels the unfulfillment in front of his own existence:

The love of money is and is called the root of all sins. Because it has caused hate, thefts, envies, falling out, enmities, strifes, keeping in mind of the evil, unmercifulness and murders (Sfântul Ioan Scărarul 2002: 245).

Taking attention away from the “truth of things” and the focus on the surrogate offered by the consumer society places the man searching for satisfactory realities on the orbit of momentary solutions. The excessive concern for the financial stability, described at length by Saint John Climacus in a chapter in *Philokalia* out of which we have taken the fragment above, is exactly the sign for this waste of solutions unsustainable from an existential point of view. The gathering of more or less necessary goods, the dedication of life and of the carrier to a hedonistic-consumerist living direction, the incapacity to feel that “the truth of things” does not stop to the material, are only a few aspects in the drama which the annexation to the paradigms of consumer society may stir in the “searching” process of man.

### **3. Rediscovering the taste**

Fleeing away from the world does not mean only isolation in spaces lacking material challenge, but it represents the emotional separation from the world’s desire, seen as an inner space of the sinful attachment to the



material universe. We live in the world, we obey the world's coordinates, we cannot ignore the materiality that develops around us, but at the same time we unite our mind and heart to the universe above matter, to the world in which we manifest the work of grace. The rightful understanding of this positioning may safeguard contemporary man against many dilemmas of choosing. Tasting and seeing this reality above understanding represents the stale of our living. "Taste and see that the Lord is good", one of the chironics ordained for the Godlike Liturgi urges us. On the other hand, we cannot exclusively speak about an emotional detachment:

It is sometimes said that the New Testament indicates only the necessity of an emotional detachment from the world (cf. 1 Corinthians 7, 29-31). Capitulation means above all an inner attitude: disinterest for worldly things. But Saint Apostle Paul recognizes that the emotional contact itself with the worldly realities may endanger the inner options: the married person is «divided» (1 Corinthians 7, 33-34); the rich ones oppose the temptation of gathering goods (Špidlik 2000: 129).

Emotional alienation, as well as physical alienation and the avoidance of occasions that can give birth to occasions of annexation to the matter are preferred themes for the majority of the Fathers. The obstacles that can restrain the development and becoming of hedonism as a "natural" lifestyle represent all that the life of asceticism proposes the man in search of "the absolute".

In his motherland/The snow of being stands for the word./ His soul is in a search/in a silent, secular search for all eternity./And until the last of the borders./ He searches for the water out of which the rainbow is drunk. He searches for the water, out of which the rainbow drinks beauty and nothingness (Blaga 1997: 144).

The man's soul is in an eternal search for this absolute. This search is impacted by the temptation of materiality and mostly, by the temptation of putting materiality on the list of living priorities. Thus, man impacts the paradox of tasting from the "nothingness". Although it seems that it lacks theological consistency, the concept of "nothingness" has deep roots in Orthodox theology. Any existence that does not feed and drink from the deep fountain of godlike existence, misses its own development. Any surrogate that does not aim for the true existence trifles with "the nothingness", with the lack of concrete existence. The mask that the

modern man often put on is an eloquent and sufficient example for this tasting from the “nothingness”. The weak existence, unconnected to the fountain of life, proposes lifestyle alternatives that are not in the space of real existence and implicitly, of existence:

Depravity that renders fruit, deep inside, the prime grandeur, gives me, as well as you, the stigma of its barrenness... (Mallarmé 1988: 51).

The angst of the dependency on the nothingness destroyer of meaning should be the mobile that determines the one chained by this nothingness to detach from it and to search for the true existential completion that cannot be associated with sin. Man effectively tastes out of nothingness when he bears away from the fountain of true existence:

Fluent is the nature of wealth. It runs near the ones that have faster than the torrent. It runs from one to the other [...] Today, this estate belongs to one, tomorrow to another and shortly after, to another. Searching for houses in the city. How many times they have not changed their owners since they were built! They have worn the name of one owner, then the name of another. And gold always runs into the hands of the one that has it, moves to another and from that one to another. You can rather hold water in your hands than to keep fortune time and again (Sfântul Vasile cel Mare 2000: 240).

The incapacity to ascend to existential completion pushes man to the flow lacking the consistency of the immanence. And although time worn experience certifies that this flow is permanent and does not truly feed the need for completion, contemporary man does not accept to give up this waste of energy. The greatness of the glory of God cannot be contained even by the man that bears a living in line with this greatness. All the more, the drifting into nothingness throws man further way from the understanding of this greatness:

Our path to knowing God goes not through books, but through the faith in Christ's word; this faith descends our mind into a heart covered by the flame of the love for Christ. We descend into this fathomless ocean that is the heart of man. Know the diligence of this descent: it is conditioned by the burden of misery. There, deep inside, the hand of God gently embraces us and rises us to the heavens. For that matter, the ascension into heaven is also possible only if it finds the energy of the pain of love (Arhimandritul Sofronie 2015: 85).

Hedonism blurs this descent to the heart of finding oneself. The mind enslaved by the sweetness of sin does not find the path to the union with oneself and the discovery of the hidden place of the inner man. The

continuous projection to the object producing pleasure occupies the mind's entire activity and thus, the hesychast solution of the descent of the mind into the heart does not appear as a solution worthy to be taken into consideration. What matters is the discovery of the easiest path to reaching pleasure. The renewal of the mind in the process of finding the heart and, implicitly, of this "deep" about which Archimandrite Sophrony speaks about, is not possible when the "blurring of pleasure" reaches the mind in its entirety. The heart of man is "a fathomless ocean", to which one reaches through much diligence and through a tension of the being that does not leave room for useless waste. The reality of things, on which the reality of ontology is based on, is darkened by Hedonism is not compatible with the bearing of pain redeeming from the shadow of sins. The process of the freeing from the race for pleasure is somewhat similar to the one of freeing, through culture, from the anchorage into the dull mundane:

Culture was an asset because it was an activity that pulled one away from the mediocrity of life and from the empire of trash. In the ignorant environment of our society, to handle culture is the equivalent of a religious conversation, possibly spreading the same resorts. To want to cultivate oneself seemed to the apterous as aberrant as the healthy thought of retrieving to the monastery (Patapievic 2006: 53).

The race for the fulfilment of the pleasure tends to become a constant in the current society's attitude, a constant that is brought to the rank of normality. The mediocrity of life, the almighty trash are constants that cannot be denied. The percentage of culture enthusiasts is well below the ones that are satisfied with a consumption of creations that are so-called cultural, but which are ultimately nothing else but pale shadows of a deep culture. As the bearing of culture is not an easy undertaking, but entails a certain effort, similarly, bearing the renewal of the mind entails a rejection of what can be called "trash", "surrogate", "mediocrity".

#### **4. Activist religiosity vs. the secret discovery of unsaid realities**

He flame of Christ's love, that Archimandrite Sophrony reminds of, does not stand to be fed with the humid twigs of a religiosity detached from ontology, with ritualistic manifestations that do not restrict the race for pleasure, but are satisfied with a certain fulfilment of "the ritualistic religiosity". To be ignorant, to not be interested in the cultivation of the

cultural sense, to abandon the profound search and to embrace the chaotic pursuit of pleasure are the symptoms of existence in superficiality. The Neovarlaamism present in the new paradigms of existence does nothing else but to justify pleasure, using forms deviated from ecclesiology. The concept of “personal development”, ever more present in the ecclesiastic space and that is obviously a form of neovarlaamism, proposes “the pleasure of the discovery” of certain limits of existence that are more and more suitable for the “created area” of existence. He offers a certain pleasure, that of the immediate confrontation of progress items. The centrality of the “I” in all actions, which often acquires missionary valencies, causes a state of satisfaction, quantifiable following the fulfilment of specific items. The path of neptical commitment to the life of Church is not one that offers immediate satisfactions. The long process of release from passions and the embrace of virtue cannot be quantified and presented as a visible progress, and thus, in line with the items of personal development, it may not bring immediate pleasure. The Neovarlaamism of the theories of personal development, bringer of immediate pleasure and unfortunately, promoted by some contemporary monks, is strictly amended, from a prophetic point of view, by the Fathers:

Satan starts to mix its venom in the monk’s drink, starting from a spiritual compassion and love and from a well-founded intimacy; it does so that this often ends in celebrations and lewdness hurtful for the soul, in guilty improper things (Filotei Sinaitul 2009: 95).

The pleasure of activism, about which we shall speak in another study, is extremely deceiving, and does not leave room o harsh criticism, taking into consideration the missionary aspect and appearance. When it is also present in the life of the monks, the risks to not understand the danger of its instillation is even more undistinguishable. The change of paradigms and the favouring of various paths of personal development at the expense of the path trodden by the neptical theology represents a risk that, once become reality, it can be stopped with difficulty. He worldly methods for personal development, affiliated in the monastery space as an alternative or completion in the neptical theology, does nothing else but to repeat the history of the dispute between Saint Gregory Palamas and the

adversaries of hesychasm, adversaries that cannot fully trust the path of hesychia, patristically confirmed.

The natural consequence of the guarding of the God's commandments is our extreme lessening, meaning depletion; without the sincere recognition that we are truly the creation of hell in our fall, we can never reach absolute repentance; through an absolute repentance we pull us out of the embrace of the death of the selfish «individuum» and we are led to the contemplation of the Godlike universalism of Christ Who «has loved us until the end of times». When we hate ourselves for the evil that lies into us, then limitless dimensions of love that was commanded open to us; outside Christ, we shall never embrace the entire world into the flame of life creator of the grace that descends from above (Arhimandritul Sofronie 2015: 143).

The search for pleasure in the “otherness” of the true existence, that can be assimilated with the neovarlaamism of personal development forms, does nothing else but to block man in the tight space of quantifiable evidences and shall take away the freedom granted by the taste of the uncreated grace. The illusion of solving the problems and of progressing into the hedonist taste of the result is supported by faithlessness and rejection, more or less aware, of the reality that only the vivid and unmediated encounter can produce in the soul the true joy. The words of Saint Gregory Palamas are profoundly eloquent in this regard:

Thus, we shall make our farewells to all of this and to watch in songs, in prayers and requests to the Doer, our God and Lord, to persevere in these, to give all our time to these, to ascend, through these, the heart and mind to the fathomless eminence of the godlike greatness, to fix our eyes to the beauty of the son of glory, to let our inner person be enlightened and the outside person through participations and the impartations that come from there, to surrender to this ineffable glory, through contemplations and visions, as much as possible, and to fill with the godlike and great joy, so that we do not be condemned in together with the vain school by occupying ourselves with the harmful and useless (Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμάς 1988: 1.23).

No worldly pleasure can replace the joy of tasting the godlike glory, uncreated, that brings and accomplishes the vivid and unmediated encounter that we mentioned above. The distance from “all worldly concern”, that is often perceived as “worldly pleasure”, although, fundamentally, worldly pleasure is nothing else but the fountain of sometimes unpredictable worries, is the only path that frees man from the mask of pseudo-reality. The only reality, often replaced by various

pseudo-realities, is nothing else than the joy arisen from the assignment of existence into the “hands” of the Providence who sweetens us with ineffable visions and contemplations. The simulacrum of human, momentary joys, unfortunately displays this only reality, marked by the joy of the impartation of the true existence. Saint Gregory Palamas, addressing to the monks, is very definite regarding the surrender of illusion. Thus, he is very definite with the illusion of knowledge in the meshes off which Varlaam had fallen:

Could someone ask himself: how did he fall into such an abyss? He has fallen because he has meticulously searched with the reason and the natural philosophy above reason and nature, refusing to listen to the things said by the Fathers, namely, that is impossible to be interpreted with the reason the type of prophetic vision, only him who has learned it by experience knows it defined; if often no reason can describe the things or the ones that arise on the nature, even more it shall not be able to do so for the works of the Spirit. And it is visible that this thing is often confessed by the saints following Christ (Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμάς 1988: 3.3).

What else is deceit, if nothing else than a feeding with the illusion of a joy lacking ontology? Even the knowledge lacking the experience of a concrete reality is still a joy lacking ontology. The empty knowledge, for the sake of knowledge, implies a massive waste of energy, waste that is not connected to the configuration of the true needs of the concrete man. Saint Symeon the New Theologian focuses on the importance of the non-display of this reality and the tasting from the excess of experience, as in an absolute undertaking to taste from the true life:

Therefore, reaching this stage, God instils in him and everything that he desires is done, or rather, even more than what he desires. Because God is all that is good, He makes the soul in which He dwells full of all the good related to the comprehension of our nature, because God is abyssal and beyond all bearing from all the created nature. [...] Therefore, the God that dwells in him, teaches such a person about the future and the present, not through words, but through the things itself, through experience and reality (Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog 1999: 181).

Experience, as important in the patristical discourse, is the key that opens the gate of the understanding of philokalic and hesychast living. Not the activism exclusively oriented towards the realities of the current world is the one that open to man the mystery, but the action of the spiritual work.

God reveals Himself to man as a final limit of his existence, but as a limit that does nothing else but introduce into the true existence. God is the last frontier, in the sense of exceeding the created world, and this final frontier is not one that can be reached through the undertakings of the search for pseudo-realities. The presence of God in man challenges to knowledge, knowledge that can bring the joy of existence, and this joy, this existential hedonism is possible only through the experience of true reality, which is the together living with God. The non-embrace of God is actually a potency and capitalization of our capacity for comprehension. But this capacity for comprehension cannot be assimilated to the demiurgic thirst that Cioran is talking about:

There is in man a demiurgic thirst, that he satisfies either through a spiritual excess and an inner vision, or through the active integration into historical making. The accelerated rhythm and the wide wind of the great cultures satisfy a demiurgic thirst. In truth, they constitute totalities with a cosmic nature, so much so that their size exceeds the humane (Cioran 2017: 29)

The demirugic thirst that Cioran reminds of, and that he considers to be the mobile that develops a real and dynamic culture, cannot be mistaken for the thirst for the existential hedonism that we reminded of above, and that is in fact a pre-taste of the knowledge freed by the contingent and the false confidence of finding the truth. Cioran, blinded somehow by the greatness of western cultures, does not take into consideration the fact the greatness of a culture is not founded on its contingent, but on its capacity to align to the reality *itself*, that we call *Being per excellence*:

Faith, the ability to believe, is not in a direct connection with the measure of man's education. But we see that in our times, when education has spread, faith has declined; however, that should be the opposite: the more comprehensive the knowledge of man is, the more he should become aware of the great wisdom of the creation of the world (Arhimandritul Sofronie 2014: 126).

Not the blind activism discovers the *culture of the Spirit*, but the entering into the mysterious universe of faith.

### **5. The mystery of Christian life: between pleasure and pain**

Contemporary catechesis cannot dispense of the fact that modern man need to be spoken to about pain. The overbid and satiation of the discourse about pleasure forces to a re-assessment of the place of pain in a society that promotes pleasure as a unique ideal in life. The modern discourse that focuses on the *new man, the man free of risks, insured*, is opposed the harsh reality off pain, of the cosmic drama that often in an unseen manner embraces man, leading him to the implacable destiny that is death and the dissolution of the imaginary universe of pleasure. The exclusive focus on the role of diminishing the evil in society diminishes the conscience of the need to fight the “forces of darkness”, about which the Gospel warns in the gravest manner. By adopting the solution of a Marxist race, the Church may risk exactly the relevance of the discourse that has in its centre thee preaching about passion as the only means that leads to the experience of the true reality. It is over-spoken about this unity, about the well-being, about the necessity of a configuration of a terrestrial climate favourable for the Church’s activity, but it is often forgotten that the imaginary reconstruction of the lost paradise cannot be possible by starting with mundane restorations. The discoursed focused exclusively on the idea of the *efficiency* of the method and the coherent *structuring* of the decisional factors forgets that the role of the Church is not reduced to the one of a social, cultural or economic bond. Without denying these aspects, the contemporary catechesis has the obligation to rediscover patristic sources and to interrogate in what manner the appeal to these sources, for hundreds of years, has made possible the access of many persons inspired by God into the tasting of the Kingdom. Why has this tasting for hundreds of years, as an essential action for the preaching about the Church, been possible with established means (asceticism, enlightenment, perfection, deification) and from a certain point, the contemporary catechetical discourse feels the need for a concept renewal and for a stripping of the safe robe of the only path preached by the Fathers? The discourse about death cannot be euphemised. Contemporary catechesis does not have the role or the right to present to the world a *cool* Church, in which the spirit of the same world may develop freely so long as it does not exceed the structures of a small-minded moralism marginally inspired by the vast flow of Traditiona. The Church is not nor



should it be *cool*, encouraging a cheerfulness born out of concepts without bases. Cheerfulness and well-being are born at the end of the fight, at the end of the ascension on the ladder of virtues, where the fighter is encountered by the One that is eternal joy. This joy is also present during the fight, but is not in the nature of things for the fight to be replaced by the elation of joy. Life and Mystery of the Church are strongly connected to the ascetic effort and not to a psychological joy imprinted only by the well-being created by various concepts that remain at the stage of *logos* unexperienced from an ascetic point of view (among these being the concept of unity, overbid):

The Holy Sacraments are also connected to the ascetic life. Following the teaching of the Saint Fathers, the godlike grace receives various names, depending on what it grants man. If it cleans him of sins, it is called cleaning grace and energy, if it enlightens him, it is called enlightening energy and if it inspires him spiritually, it is called spiritually inspiring grace (Ierotheos 2016: 227).

The stadiality of the ascetic fight does not leave room for a superficial joy, entirely detached from the idea of a serious commitment of this fight. We propose an analysis of the essential text of Father Archimandrite Sophrony Saharov, which from my point of view, could constitute one of the most important bases of contemporary Orthodox catechesis:

Prior to being able to serve, and more importantly, in the capacity of mentor or guide, the man himself must go through the hell of repentance, to overcome the time-worn enmity of man with God, to receive from Him the blessing through the vision of the Uncreated Light, to strengthen himself in a love with dedication to Our Father, to bear with patience His permanent presence, of His Judgment in each step of daily life (Arhimandritul Sofronie 2014: 61)

The bearing of pain is, thus, not a proof of spiritual smallness. Judgment, the perspective of hell, the reality of death are coordinates that do not leave room for the installation of a ontologically unfounded cheerfulness (and that may often be an open gate to harsh sins). The hell of repentance about which Father Sophrony speaks is the hell of the full awareness of the ontological risk that existence itself entails. Triumphalism and activism stop at the conclusion of the insufficiencies repaired within the strict structure of the created world, proposing, as I have reminded above, the illusion of a terrestrial paradise. It is essentially

what all the ideologies of Neoprottestant formations do: transforming the transcendental into a quantifiable immanence, escribed to the concrete data of efficiency. The capacity to serve, preach, inform and theologically train is however, given only by the bearing of personal hell, of the deepening into the hell of repentance that reveal true joy. *The hopeful cry* about which the Fathers speak is the key for the understanding of the absurdity of the activist undertaking in a Church that existentially bears the Fathers' entire philosophy practised. Father Sophrony also states:

The blessed despair that Lord has given me emanated in me a prayer that did not give me time to stop enough time on one thing; this wonderful despair threw me into an indescribable abyss, where all troubles were gathered (Arhimandritul Sofronie 2014: 65).

The love for thy neighbour, manifested either through prayer, or through the act of charity, must not fail in an advertised activism, considered to be the final norm of Christian living. The bearing of personal pain, but also of the neighbour's pain, is done in the privacy of the heart and of the cleaning of sins. The real help that we can give to our neighbour is his and our awakening from the predictability of the escribed fact and the ascension to another level of understanding of the relation, in which spiritual coordinates gain other dimensions: not visibility, but the privacy is what makes philanthropy to be authentically transfiguring.

These things are also valid in the case of catechesis: the informal is potentiated by the *background* of the initiation in private. However, this initiation entails effort, renunciation, crucifixion of the mind in front of the Fathers' theology. The introduction in Church of contemporary philosophies that focus exclusively on personal development, as well as on the capacity of emotional intelligence and cognitive intelligence to set up the universe of existence, is highly dangerous. These theories offer a certain psychological comfort through the fact that it offers control tools of spiritual movements, but they are dangerous, firstly because they alienate from the Fathers' philosophy that did not set high value on personal development outside the awareness of the relation with God and of the bearing of the ascetic path of pain, detachment from the convenience of sin:

The essential truth in which it deciphers the living of the Fathers of the wilderness is the positioning of the concrete human being face to face with God. This is the

main reason for the rejection of the world, for total alienation, for retirement into wilderness. The existential key per excellence is the purification of my relationship with God, positioning into an unmediated connection with the Doer, who is the source and meaning of life per excellence. There is no other explanation for the retirement of man from the world and their installation into wilderness. If the world and the ones in it hinder or even make impossible the achievement of a continuous, consistent and to the full dialogue with God, then there is only one path, the rejection of the world and positioning into a space in which the ones in the world are not to be found or are to be found in an extremely low dosage, so that they do not endanger the achievement of the purpose (Coman 2016: 99).

Things are also valid for *conceptual wilderness*. I propose this term because it very eloquently expresses the crisis that the catechesis and contemporary preaching may reach if we do not very carefully take into consideration all the warnings that we find in the patristical theology.

We run away from the philosophy of the world not because it is bad in itself, but because it proposes a convenience of thinking that alienates us from the patristically ascetic philon. Any attempt to determine the self-awareness in a hedonistic manner, it pushes the Christian outside Tradition. This is very subtly promoted by the new guidelines in modern psychology, guidelines that offer the feeling of a balance and of a programmed intellectual and emotional construction, but which, from a realistic-theological perspective, throws man into the small-minded structures of worldly solutions. These structures cannot offer a real detachment from the pleasure-pain circle, but circumscribe man to the fatalities of his own limits, in an unsuccessful attempt to construct the *new man*. The interference that such theories may create in the attempt of clean positioning in front of God is highly alarming. Excessive psychologisation of Christian life creates psychological limits that will be very difficult to overcome, especially when a clear analysis of the I in its most private coordinates is necessary.

Not any fear is good and redeeming [...]. The hurtful fear is that which puts into our soul the fright of death, that which makes us surrender in front of high rank persons. How could the one that fears this to react against sin until death in times of martyrdom and to pay what he owes to God, Who died for us and then rose? The one that fears the demons also has hurtful fear in him. Shortly, such a fear appears to be a passion that is an offspring of faithlessness. No man who believes that he has next to him an almighty help fears the ones that try to affect him (Sfântul Vasile cel Mare 2000: 144).

The words of Saint Basil the Great may be successfully applied to this tendency for excessive psychologisation, which actually represents the lack of faith in God's help. Man tries to build a universe by himself, in which the unforeseen fluctuations of spiritual dynamics may be deconstructed in case they do not correspond or interfere with the safety of the edifice. The fear of the pain that the unforeseen may hide is masked by this edifice in which psychology tends to take the place of the encounter with real problems and their solving within the structures of pneumatologic healing. Psychological insurance would not be condemned if it would minimally add to the dynamics of Christian living. However, unfortunately, the dynamics of Christian living is reduced to a set of predictable reactions that can be improved and this reduction does not have any connection with the vivid reality of authentic spiritual healing. Man is insured against the unforeseen, in hedonistic movements, but does not have the courage to face reality in its most genuine aspects. In essence, it is a replacement of the possibility of seeing the uncreated light with the possibility of seeing a created, encouraging light, but limited to the structures of the created world:

The world of the mind, the world of abstract ideas is in itself similar to the light, but it is still the natural light of the mind, the sphere of reason similar to the light; it is the condition of abstract intellectual contemplations, that is accessible to man through his nature and not a godlike impartation above nature. God is not the world of ideas. God is a concrete, real, personal being. God is truly a vivid God. Who has known through primary experience of the states mentioned, hearing about the vision of the Tabor Light, may understand its vision as being the vision of uncreated light. However, who has known both shall know the distinction between the uncreated Godlike Light and the natural light of the mind (Arhimandritul Sofronie 2014: 149).

The risk of confusing the light of the true vision of God with the natural light of the mind is high, especially due to the fact that the latter may wear deceiving aspects. This deceit that the natural light of the mind induces coincides exactly with the man's need to ensure a stability of life, at any cost. Psychologisation offers the feeling of this stability, induces the feeling of security and causes that well-being which results from the conscience of a balance of existence, but it does not offer the true healing:

Because the ones that have seen this light, have not seen God, because God is light. The ones that have not received this light, have not yet received the grace,

because by receiving the grace, we receive the godlike light and God. The ones that have not received Him yet, they ones that have not partaken from the Light, are to be found under the yoke of the Law, in the realm of shadows and faces, are still children of servants (Lossky 1995: 134).

The state of servitude that excessive psychologisation entails and refers to - for it addresses created structures and realities, with created tools, offering applicable to created structures-, makes the feeling of stability, of security and of balance be a feeling that is limited to the role of psychological state, that cannot offer thee guarantee of a real security. The hesychast Saints, when they speak about the vision of the uncreated light, have into consideration exactly this aspect: tasting the godlike life is the only path that offers solid guarantees against the vicissitudes of any type that could threaten the stability of life:

It is one thing to follow hackled feelings, and it is another thing to heal our heart, making it bearer of the godlike love, in line with the evangelical commandment. It is one thing to remain in the borders of scientific, objectifying knowledge of the phenomena of creation, and it is something immensely higher, to know the One Who has been before the the matter of this world. It is one thing to wear a body torn by the passions of this world, and it is something different to make it a place for the Spirit of God (Arhimandritul Sofronie 2014: 183).

## **Conclusions**

The contemporary catechetical discourse must courageously approach the issue of hedonism, proposing patristic solutions. The temptation of excessive psychologisation and the offering of solutions that can be adapted only to the emotional or psychological level, without effects in the setting of authentic, spiritual healing, is a solution that can harm, on the long term, the life of the Church itself. Hedonism, the pursuit of pleasure, the mistaking of the true existence with similar surrogates are realities that we cannot deny and that, paradoxically, find their answer in patristic theology.

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# The Effects of the Abuse upon Women

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## **Abstract:**

*This paper presents the effects of violence and the costs that a society has to pay to eliminate them. Initially, violence “an imported theme” introduced by foreign researchers and politicians became a research subject for the Romanian sociologists as well. Subsequently, based on the results obtained we may establish the types of necessary services to ameliorate the effects of this phenomenon. The number of cases brought into discussion at first was significant, which determined us to conclude that violence is an ample phenomenon which requires high costs for setting up appropriate services.*

**Keywords:** *domestic violence, victims, shelters, discrimination, child in difficult*

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## **Preliminaries**

Domestic violence, at first an “imported” subject, became an interesting theme due to the researches carried on by professionals, administrators and politicians within the country and abroad.

The subject of domestic violence entered relatively recent in the sphere of social sciences, after the 60’s-70’s, and an internal development of the concepts and theories was not possible, but the theme of “domestic violence” spread more and more. The cause was determined by the inheritance of several social representations, of the system of values in which the individual did not count, in which he was not taken into consideration under the aspect of his problems and needs. In the communist society man was a carefree individual, but the frustrations that existed on a social level penetrated into the private life, determining crisis and violence. The victim who could not complain at her job, became an aggressor in the private space. Thus, adultery, battery, rape of the partner meant for the great majority an insignificant violence, belonging to the personal space.

After 1990, there were some timid attempts to approach this subject regarding woman's statute within society, underlining the less favorable attitudes towards equality between the sexes. On the one hand, this created the premises for the equality of women and men in the Romanian society, and on the other hand, there were impediments in creating jobs in which women were decision factors, on the labor market. The audacity to have a place to work required sacrifice from each woman, through a double amount of work at home and at her job, a reason to consolidate inequity ("a woman cannot cope with the requirements of a chief position", one situation being maternity and the other her activity in the domestic space). The discrimination of woman has been perpetuated to the day under different form, such as the manner of protection and education of the child which is attributed to the mother, who is called at school, if the situation of the child is difficult; she has to take the child to the doctor, she has to accompany him to playground, she has to take him into trips when he is little etc. and she is the one to be blamed when she does not succeed to exercise her role, when dysfunctions occur within the family or other aspects of the domestic violence (Ana Munteanu, Marciana Popescu and Smaranda Popa 2001: 45).

The fact that the phenomenon of domestic violence existed from ancient times, its intensity nowadays is determined by the fact that it stays within a private space, behind closed doors of this reprehensible acts, and by the necessity for the specialists' intervention, to underline the determinant factors in order to prevent and erase the negative effects upon woman, children and society.

Although the subject was initially "imported", it comes into the attention of the specialists, politicians and the public after 1995-2000, when we noted the first preoccupations imposed by the foreign researchers, who came to Romania with the intention of creating support services for victims and to initiate a politic of promoting women based on studies with a social impact.

International organization such as UNICEF, PNUD, USAID, Medicins du Monde brought important contributions into Romania by participating to the change of mentality, through the cultivation of a correct attitude of the society, through the stimulation of the researches that had to be done by Romanian specialists, through an approach of the



field and initiation of the appropriate actions by non-governmental organizations.

Initially, the appearance of these organizations required the development of several services, formation of specialists in this field, accessing rehabilitation funds for women and men not only for prevention, developing support network and refuges, the audience corresponding to the extension of the phenomenon.

*The initial services required:*

- Services to announce the cases:
- Police services;
- forensic offices;
- emergency telephone lines;
- emergency medical services, ER;
- Intervention services:
- hospitals;
- courthouses:
- Counseling services (in situations of crisis or judicial situations):
- services of assistance for the victims of domestic violence (emergency shelters);
- Prevention services:
- church;
- school;
- mass-media.

The theoretical frame for the approach of the phenomenon required a clear emphasizing in the past years within the social space of the determinant factors, the manner of prevention and perpetuation of the violent inter-generation pattern with the eradication of the negative effects. A democratic society, with a high level of development, wishes to provide welfare for all its individuals, equally regardless of gender, with an exploitation of the resources of all the active individuals. To this respect, Sjoberg mentioned (1994, in Ana Munteanu, Marciana Popescu; Smaranda Popa, 2001: 28) that the stage of development of a society depends on achieving gender equality thus providing the advancement of things and the general welfare. Woman cannot be considered less “human” than man. The research in this field disclosed, as

we have already shown, the causes or the determinant factors which enhance the appearance of the phenomenon in society:

- Gender inequality within family and society;
- The long transition with its negative effects;
- Poverty;
- The lack of laws nationwide or the fact that the national and international laws were not respected;
- Complete absence or a reduced number of services both for the victim and for the aggressor.

In the family:

- Presence of psychological illnesses in the aggressor or the victim;
- Traumatic experiences during childhood, both for the aggressor and for the victim:

- Alcoholism;
- Previous record of the aggressor;
- Social isolation;
- Presence or absence of children in the family.

Manifestation:

- The circumstantial context of the manifestation, “the group of equals”, entourage;
- Violent forms of manifestation (directed towards the wife, towards the wife and child, towards the wife and personal goods, towards the wife with destruction of the goods from the house).
- Various profiles of the victim and aggressor.

The consequences may be:

- Social-human costs (effects upon health, upon the children, upon the family, upon society);
- Economical costs (sick-leave, repeated hospitalizations, placing the children into foster care, trial expenses, restriction order, destruction of goods);
- Costs for prevention programs.

The theoretical approach of domestic violence starts from the formation of explanatory theories regarding domestic violence, which try to underline the causes for the appearance of such behaviours, although Gelles and Straus (1979: 78) considered domestic violence “a special

case” which does not need its own theoretical support to be explained. Thus, the theories that exist regarding aggression, such as the theory of aggression-frustration (Berkowitz, 1962; Dollard and co. 1939; Milles 1941), the theory of individual attitude (Kaplan, 1972), the functional theory (Coser 1967) or the theory of violent cultures (Wolfgang and Ferracuti 1967), have not been applied directly in the study of domestic violence. The only model applied in the case of domestic violence is the theory of social education (Bandura co. 1961).

### **Sociological theories**

The sociological perspectives suggest that even the manner in which the individuals’ lives are organized within the family contributes to the appearance of violence, if it does not care for certain aspects such as intimacy, discrepancies of age, sex, activity, interests, role inflexibility and the rigidity if boundaries in the familiarly system (Ellen Janosik 1954: 78).

Another cause can also be rape in society which contaminates the mass-media, providing models that are projected within the family and also the violence within the family leads to a violent society. The corrosion of the traditional values and the imposition of new values, as well as the lack of positive models can contribute to behavioral changes.

The violent model within the family is transmitted from one generation to the other through the internalization of violence during childhood, according to the theory of learned helplessness by Walker (1979: 40).

The stress of daily life and the inconsistency of statute, of role are factors that enhance violence.

The explanatory theories developed according to three directions:

- theories which explain the abuse against children;
- theories which explain the abuse against wife/husband;
- theories which explain violence in general.

The economic and social model encourage the foundation of new theories:

- the theory of resources (Goode, 1971);
- the theory of general systems (Straus, 1972);
- the theory of exchange (Gelles, 1983);

- the ecological perspective (Garbarino, 1977);
- patriarchy (Dobas and Dobash, 1979);
- the social-biological model (Gelles, 1987);
- the economical explanation (Gelles, 1987);
- the social-cultural explanation (Gelles, 1987).

### **Psychological theories**

Here we may include the theories of feminine masochism, as Freud mentions (1959), which implies a self-destructive behavior, as a result of solving the Oedipal conflict. The theories of the traumatic relationship (Dutton and Painti, conf. Radulescu 2001: 80), imply the internalization of violent behaviors from important persons in women's lives (father, brother etc.). The theory of frustration determined by the aggressiveness which occurs generated by factors that intercede with achieving certain goals.

### **Feminist theories**

In the context of the society based on a patriarchal form of organization there is a consolidation of the woman's subordination before man.

A contradictory attitude appears in the fact that society in its whole is not patriarchal, but matriarchal (Less 1979: 50), where woman imposes the moral values in the family and becomes dominant in the life of the child. The child brought up in a matriarchal environment interacts with his mother through a relationship of dependency, and these needs are also transferred to man in a marriage. Hostility, inhibited during childhood can be exteriorized during marriage (Less 1979: 50-51).

Maria Roy (1977: 75) considers that violence perpetuates violence. A violent society encourages violence when it is tolerated.

Martin (1977: 78) states that men abuse their wives because nobody stops them. "Marriage is an institution in which women are caught playing the role of victims". They are taught, from birth, that marriage and maternity represent their accomplishment and in order to achieve these goals, women must be feminine, and when they assert themselves they are sanctioned for their audacity, and if they are passive, they also

generate discontent for their incompetence. According to Martin (1977: 50), women are never in a position of victory.

One may formulate some myths about the violence upon women, crystallized in this manner, but which are not always real.

Straus and Gelles (1988: 20) maintained the following myths:

- abusers are strangers and the victims are innocent;
- the family is non-violent;
- alcohol and drugs are the real cause of violence in the family;
- children who were abused grow up and become abusers in their turn;
- battered women accept violence;
- violence and love are not incompatible.

The researchers we mentioned above suggested that myths should be abandoned because they only distort reality. The portrait of the abuser and the victim are sketched to apply treatment, recovery plans, to offer certain services.

Elbow (1977) presented the following typology of men who abuse women:

- the type of the controller – is the one who uses his partner as an object, which he controls;
- the type of the protector is the type of man who mixes his love with hate. He feels powerful when his partners depends on him;
- the type that wants to be approved is the man with complexes who wants to consolidate his image;
- the possessive type or that of the incorporator is the man who makes no distinction between him and his partner. He perceives his partner as his own extension.

Saunders (1973: 48) included three more subtypes to this portrait of the abuser:

- the one who abuses only within the family;
- the one who abuses in general inside and outside the family;
- the shy abuser.

Our own researches, based on qualitative analysis, on a number of 600 subjects, regarding the effects of violence upon women, emphasized the manner in which both the family and the woman's participation to society is affected.

The *stress-response syndrome* appears in battered women and consists of a paralyzing terror, with depression, anxiety, guilt and shame, similar to the effect of brainwashing (Janosik 1994: 63).

My husband played cards and kept losing money; when he came home and I asked him for the money it was as if I was asking for his soul, he beat both me and my older son. I always ate in the parks with my children, because we ran away from home and waited for the light to turn off to enter into our home. I spent so many nights outside...he even attacked me with a knife and broke my nose. When my parents saw me they told me to move out. He didn't even care about the children. And the children in their turn didn't want to hear about him...  
[female, b. 1961, textile worker]

We may mention the fact that violence was significant in frequency and with a high level of intensity, which lead to the ending of marriage. The toxic effect upon the child is a favoring factor to which we may add the lack of a place to stay "I couldn't get into the house".

*Passivity and negation* is determined by the fact that many women don't seek help because they fear the husband's revenge or the possible sanctions that some of the responsible factors may impose as a consequence of the abuse.

I got back with him because he convinced me he was a changed person... So I got back to him, I knew he was very stressed because of his work so I tried to do my best. But one day, all of a sudden, the dinner wasn't OK, or it wasn't ready... In the kitchen he threw a kettle then punched me in the eye. I bled a lot and I was taken to hospital with many of my face bones fractured and fearing I will lose sight in one eye. At the hospital they asked me if I had been in a car crash. When they found out my husband did that, they called the police who wanted to know if I want to press charges. I knew that if I did, he will have to pay a fine, or he'll be sent behind bars, he'll lose his job, and this meant less money for children, for food. If he were arrested or if he had to pay anything, he was going to kill me when he got out, so I decided to get a divorce.

Repercussions, possible as a consequence of the aggression, such as the negative labeling of the village, "vox populi" in the case of prison, the material difficulties generated by the loss of the job, these are factors that may influence the preservation or the ending "ex abrupto" (as a self-

preservation instinct, as a consequence of the aggressiveness of violence) of the marriage, “I will be killed”.

*Alcohol/drug abuse* in the case of battered women is, as presented by Iolanda Mitrofan (Mitrofan 1996: 32), a way to escape the inhuman reality. The researches emphasized the use of alcohol, injectable drug, excessive smoking or medicine abuse as a form of resistance against violence. Alcohol abuse determined in some cases suicide attempts or even the death of the partner, women being imprisoned.

I took two pills to calm down because I was also furious and I used to shout when I got angry...but when I take pills I'm calmer and I don't shake that much, because I was shaking continuously and I was afraid not to hit him in the head and kill him, cause you lose your head when you're angry... [female, b. 1968, textile worker]

I smoke a lot, two packets of cigarettes a day...I didn't use to smoke, but now I'm so irritated when I see him coming home drunk, and I know that the fights and beatings are about to start... [female, b. 1970 worker]

“I don't drink much” was the statement of a woman so I can't be labeled as a “drunk”, I'm a woman who uses, because he also drinks alcohol and he's violent, so I'm not like him, but I have the courage to define well my identity, which he doesn't like. It is a rationalization of the use of alcohol through a projection of guilt upon him. She does not acknowledge the use of alcohol as a factor that encourages violence, but as a motif of resistance.

The *suicidal tendency* is the way through which a woman tries to interrupt the course of abnormal violence. To this respect, “the subjective perception of reality” from the classic literature or “fiction” documenting, as American researchers mention, as a way to accumulate information, brings into the space of the sociological research the case of Ana from the novel *Ion* by Liviu Rebreanu (1983: 25). Suicide or the attempt to abdicate from a marriage that can't be bearable anymore is a failure of the conjugal relationship, a negative labeling of the community, of the family and of the husband. In Ana's case, Savista “the crippled of the village”, a news monger of negative information, brings the news that “Ion continues to live with Florica”, which is a favoring factor along with the recent suicide of “Avrum Dumitru” (associated favoring factors).

Domestic life requires economic and social costs, represented by sick-leaves, by execution of sentences, by the destruction of private or

public goods and long-term costs implied in transmitting the violence pattern between generations and the costs of prevention programs or those for the foundation of services.

I didn't have money to obtain a forensic certificate and to file for divorce. You need money for the doctor, for the lawyer, I don't have a job, where was I supposed to take the money from to do all these, so I kept on being battered.  
[female, b. 1961, worker]

The physical trauma affects the health of the woman and especially the capacity to reproduce. Frequent abuse to which women are subjected during domestic violence are the cause of illnesses and the decrease of immunity.

*The death of the partner and the death of the victim* may determine the interruption of violence. This effect of the domestic violence is the worst and it is an alarm signal for the entire society. Repeated abuse may trigger in the victims violent responses, defense mechanism which transforms the victim into aggressor (Gabriela Carmen Mândrilă Lăzăreanu 2003: 38). Eloquent examples of violent situations appear in the classic literature, in the novels *Ciuleandra* by L. Rebreanu, *Neranțula* by Panait Istrati, *Tănase Scatiu* by Duiliu Zamfirescu etc.

### Conclusions

In conclusion, some of the effects mentioned may constitute cooperation-survival strategies, developed by women, through their own efforts (aptitudes, resources), psycho-emotional strategies used to avoid or prevent violence (the imminence of future attacks) and self-destructive strategies, self-destructive behavior, as a consequence of the abuse (alcohol, drugs, over-nutrition) manifested through addiction.

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# Symbols across Cultures: Serpent in East and West

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**Abstract:**

*The serpent is a religious symbol with numerous and varied meanings. This article is broadly approaching the symbolism of the serpent in two distant geographical and religious areas (East and West), referring especially at different meanings of the serpent in few selected sources. According to the Bible and Judeo-Christian tradition, the serpent is the symbol of the principle of evil. In Hinduism and Buddhism are present both negative and positive meanings of the serpent. In the context of globalization, the circulation of this symbol from East to West can generate misunderstandings.*

**Keywords:** *serpent, Bible, Hinduism, Buddhism, nāga, globalization*

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Since prehistoric times, the serpent is a religious symbol with numerous and varied meanings: because it periodically sheds its skin it was associated with death and rebirth and with sun worship; the fact that it is earthbound made it a chthonic deity, enemy of the sun-god; its poisonous bite associated it with death, but also with the gods of healing; its resemblance to a phallus made it object of fertility rites; it took part in cosmogony, as a good force or as a personification of Satan; it is a symbol of good fortune or of death; it knows the world mysteries and it is a symbol of sapience and prudence (Hall 1996: 43; Lurker 2005: 8457; Cirlot 1971: 285).

As Manfred Lurker notes (2005: 8456), snakes'

enigmatic and ambivalent nature has led human beings to contradictory assessments of them: on the one hand, they are thought of as evil and as a cause of death; on the other, they are believed to embody beneficial and even divine powers. As a result, in some religions they may be both accursed and worshiped.

The Aborigines of Australia, the Sumerians and Akkadians, the Egyptians, the devotees of Asklepios, Etruscans and Romans, the Celts,

the Hindus and many others worshipped or still worship the serpent as a beneficent or as a godly symbol. On the contrary, in today's Judaism, Christianity and Islam "the symbol of the serpent devolved until it became a synonym for Satan" (Charlesworth 2010).

Hereinafter is broadly approached the symbolism of the serpent in two distant geographical (East and West) and religious (Judaism and Christianity vs. Hinduism and Buddhism) areas, referring especially at the presence and different meanings of the serpent in few selected sources.

### **1. The bad and the good serpent: the Judeo-Christian symbolism of the serpent**

The Hebrew generic term for snake is *naḥash*. According to *Encyclopaedia Judaica*,

both in the Bible and generally in rabbinical literature it is mentioned with ignominy as harmful. It already appears at the dawn of history in the Bible as the enemy of man, enticing Eve (Feliks 2007: 695-696)

and it will appear at the end of history as "the great dragon [...] called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world" and who will be finally cast out (Rev 12: 9). Between Genesis and Revelation, both in the Old and in the New Testament, serpent is generally portrayed – with some exceptions – in the same key: evil, poisonous, horrid etc.

The most notorious biblical text referring to the serpent is chapter 3 of Genesis. On *prima facie* in Genesis it is the origin of evil. It is not one of God's creations because it is not mentioned in Genesis 1-2 and because it is too evil. Satan is the serpent who tempts Eve by tricking her and it is responsible for sin and all the subsequent evils in the world (see Ps 58: 4–5; Pr 23: 31-32; Am 5: 19; 9: 3). It lies, opposing to God Who speaks the truth. The serpent begins the process that results in the humans' loss of innocence, happiness, and life. Starting from the text of Genesis 3, the diatribe might continue (see further Charlesworth 2010; Lurker 2005: 8458).

It is not our purpose here to analyse how the biblical serpent reached to be the "no. 1 public enemy", but we are only mentioning that this interpretation of Genesis 3 might contain some misconceptions. *Naḥash* is a "beast of the field"; it transformed into serpent after God

cursed it. The woman has not yet been named “Eve” and *naḥash* does not tempt, but asks woman a question (Charlesworth 2010).

This negative perception extended over the entire Holy Bible. Albeit there are few positive references to the serpent, the serpent as a symbol or guise of evil reaches to dominate and also in both the Old and in the New Testaments various types of serpents serve as labels for those who do evil (Ps 139: 4; Is 27: 1; 34: 14–15; 59: 5; Mt 3: 7; 23: 33; Mk 16: 18; Lk 3: 7; 10: 19; Acts 28: 3; Rom 3: 13; 1Cor 10: 9; 2Cor 11: 3; Jam 3: 7-8, etc.) (Charlesworth 2010).

As mentioned before, there are some positive mentions of the serpent in the Bible. The first one is from Numbers 21: 6-9:

So the Lord sent venomous serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the children of Israel died. Then the people came to Moses, and were saying: «We sinned, for we spoke against the Lord and against you; therefore, pray to the Lord, and let Him take away the serpent from us». So Moses prayed for the people. Then the Lord said to Moses, «Make a serpent for yourself and put it on a signal pole; and it shall be, if a serpent should bite someone, when the one bitten looks at it, he shall live». So Moses made a copper serpent [...].

The name of this beneficent copper serpent was Nehushtan (*naḥash* = serpentine shape; *nehoshet* = copper) and it seems that the people of Israel conserved it in the Temple court of Jerusalem until the reign of Hezekiah, who “broke in pieces the bronze serpent Moses had made, because up to those days, the sons of Israel had burned incense to it. They called it Nehushtan.” (4Kg 18: 4). Probably it was considered to have the power of curing sickness and associated with fertility. Anyway, its presence was illegitimate according to Deuteronomy (Sperling 2007: 64).

At John 3: 14-15 we read: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” This is a clear reference to the Numbers 21: 6-9 and the use of the image of the serpent in this context means that in the time of Jesus the serpent symbolism in the Judaic world was not entirely negative. As James H. Charlesworth mentions, “The possibility that the Fourth Evangelist is drawing some analogy between the serpent and Jesus is unthinkable if the serpent symbolizes evil” (Charlesworth 2010).

Another example of the positive use of the serpent is at Matthew: “Behold, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as

serpents and harmless as doves” (10: 16). Here it is brought forth the serpent as a symbol of wisdom. Jesus is not pointing to a deceptive serpent, “but to the shrewdly alert serpent” (Charlesworth 2010). In the note at this text, the Orthodox Study Bible mentions: “Jesus instructs the disciples to be wise as serpents so that they might not be unnecessarily wounded and that they might take all advantage in the spread of the gospel.” (*Orthodox Study Bible* 2008: 1285). Although Jesus’ words can be interpreted in different ways, association with the “evil” serpent is quite problematic in this context (as it is in the text of John). Somehow, the answer can be found in the practice of the Church. Representations of the serpents on the croziers of Orthodox Christian Bishops symbolize the prudence in guiding the faithful (Lurker 2005: 8457), thus keeping “alive” a secondary but important symbolism of the serpent as wisdom.

James H. Charlesworth considers that “The disparaging symbolic meaning of the serpent that begins to appear in the fifth century in some Christian regions is read back into the Genesis story, recasting and misrepresenting one of the main characters. This penchant not only fails to let the images be seen, it is also tantamount to refashioning them.” (Charlesworth 2010). This assertion is quite debatable. For example, the association of serpent with Satan, deception and the fall of man is not a 5<sup>th</sup> century Christian construct, but it was explicitly mentioned by Apostle Paul: “But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (1Cor 11: 3), as part of the Christian adoption of the Old Testament (see Evans 2003: 59). The fade into the background of the serpent as symbol of wisdom – also recognised as such even by Jesus –, might be a legitimate Christian reaction to the gnostic interpretations of the role of the serpent in the fall of man.

Anyway, the serpent is represented in the scene of the fall in Roman catacomb painting, in 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D., much earlier than the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The scene of the Fall of Man is the most popular in which the serpent is present, in both Eastern and Western iconography. Other representations of the serpent are at the foot of the cross in the icon of Crucifixion, under the foot of Virgin Mary (see Gn 3: 15), in the chalice of St John the Evangelist, in the hands of St Spyridon, in a loaf of bread of St Benedict,

these last three in icons of the miracles performed by these saints (Hall 1996: 46; Hall 1974: 285).

## 2. The Hindu and Buddhist *nāgas*

In contrast to Judeo-Christian symbolism of the serpent, in the two great religions of the East, Hinduism and Buddhism, serpent's ambivalent character is more apparent.

It seems that in India the pre-Arian population from the Indus Valley worshipped the snake (Sk. *nāga* and *yakṣa*). Initially it was unknown to the Arians, but it became part of the Vedic mythology as *devas* (low-level gods). The first mention of the serpent in Arian sacred literature is Vṛitra, the snake (dragon) who kept the waters of the world captive and who ultimately was killed by Indra who:

[...] slew the dragon lying on the mountain [...]

When, Indra, thou hadst slain the dragons' firstborn,

and overcome the charms of the enchanters [...]

Indra with his own great and deadly thunder smote into pieces Vṛitra worst of Vṛitras.

[...] He [Vṛitra], like a mad weak warrior, challenged Indra, the great impetuous many-slaying hero [...]. (*Hymns of the Rigveda* I, 32: 1-15).

According to James Hall, the myth of Indra slaying the serpent-demon “probably refers to the worship of an older, native deity overtaken by the Vedic god” (Hall 1996: 45) [1].

*Mahābhārata*, the gigantic poem that incorporates elements of varying date, mentions snake sagas from different periods. In its earlier parts, *nāgas* appear “in their original serpent character”. *Ādi-parvan*, the opening book of *Mahābhārata*, relates the myth of the origin of *nāgas*, in the context of King Janamejaya's serpent sacrifice (*Mahābhārata* 1.37). They are the sons of Kadrū, a personification of Earth, and the sage Kāśyapa (*Mahābhārata* 1.16, 54, 65). According to this mythology, the *nāgas* are mainly mordacious and venomous and may assume various forms (Vogel 1926: 48-53).

In addition, there are some exceptions. One of them relates to their venomous bite, which is lethal but sometimes it is an antidote. For example, King Nala, being possessed by the evil spirit Kali, is freed by the bite of *nāga* Karkoṭara (*Mahābhārata* 3.66).

The second one is *nāga* Śeṣha. Śeṣha detached himself from his brethren and refuged in penance. Asked by Brahmā why he is seeking refuge in the ascetic life, Śeṣha answered that he is disgusted by his brothers and “I am engaged in ascetic penances, and I will cast off this body of mine, so that I may avoid companionship with them, even in another state of life”. As appreciation for his effort, Brahmā allowed him to choose a boon and Śeṣha choose:

[...] “O divine Grandsire, this is the boon desired by me, that my heart may always delight in virtue and in blessed ascetic penances, O Lord of all!”

Brahman said, “O Śeṣha, I am exceedingly gratified with this thy self-denial and love of peace! But, at my command, let this act be done by thee for the good of my creatures! Bear thou O Śeṣha, properly and well this Earth so unsteady with her mountains and forests, her seas and towns and retreats, so that she may be steady!”

Śeṣha said, “O divine Lord of all creatures, O grantor of boons, O lord of the Earth, lord of every created thing, lord of the universe, I will, even as thou sayest, hold the Earth steady. Therefore, O lord of all creatures, place her on my head!”

Brahman said, “O best of snakes, go underneath the Earth. She will herself give thee a crevice to pass through. And, O Śeṣha, by holding the Earth, thou shalt certainly do what is prized by me very greatly.” (*Mahābhārata* 1.36)

In the mythology of Viṣṇu, Śeṣha (or Ananta) is the thousand-headed cobra on which Viṣṇu rests between each cosmic age (Hall 1996: 45). This very popular theme of Hindu plastic art represents Viṣṇu

reclining on the couch formed by the windings of the *nāga* whose polycephalous hood forms a canopy over the god’s head. Usually the goddess Śrī is seen kneeling at the feet of her lord. The presence of Brahmā on the lotus and of the two demons seems to indicate that the subject which the Indian artists intended to portray in these sculptures is not so much Viṣṇu’s sleep as Viṣṇu’s awaking signalized by the birth of the creative force embodied in Brahmā, in other words, the Creation of the Universe. (Vogel 1926: 193)

According to J. Vogel (1926: 192), the idea of the world serpent belongs “to a primitive sphere of thought”, similar to Midgardsormr of Norse mythology.

The third one is Vāsuki, who figures second in *Mahābhārata* and in the *Puraṇas*, although he acts as the sovereign ruler of the serpent tribe in the *Ādi-parvan*. While Śeṣha is connected with Viṣṇu’s mythology, Vāsuki is associated with Śiva, the serpent-king who is slung round



Śiva's neck (Vogel 1926: 199, 202). Consequently, it is associated with lingam and appears in Naṭarāja image. But this association extends to other deities, too, like Brahmā, Sūrya, Sakti Devi, Kālī (Crooke 1920: 415).

*Mahābhārata* and the Puranic literature mention extensive lists of *nāgas*. In *Ādi-parvan* are enumerated by name seventy-eight *nāgas* (1. 35), underlining that these are only the principal ones and that it is impossible to name them all. The same Great Epic mentions sixty-eight names (*Mahābhārata*, 5. 103). Twenty-nine names are enlisted in *Sabhā-parvan*. Other lists appear in the Purānas. Many of their names indicate colours, qualities, animals, plants and vegetables. In these lists, Śesha (Ananta) figures first, as the sovereign of *nāgas*. In *Bhagavadgītā* (10, 28-29) he is mentioned side by side with Vāsuki, as the first among the snakes. Śesha is associated with the third reincarnation of Vishnu. In the iconography, Śesha supports one of the feet of the boar (Vogel 1926: 190-195).

It seems that the cult of the serpent survived at a local level, related with springs, ponds and generally water. The *nāgas* reside in *caitya* (a tree, a stone altar, a pool or stream etc.), from where they dispense nature's gifts (Bloss 1973: 37). According to Hindu legends, *nāgas* and *nāginis* rule the earth's waters and residing in sacred pools, being represented in relief sculptures since the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D., as half human, half snake, with a cobra hood or canopy. The sculptures placed in the water-tanks or sacred pools in North India illustrate the *nāgas* with the right hand raised as if ready to strike and the left one holding a cup, the symbol of growth and fertility. The female *yakṣis* are portrayed as voluptuous maidens, the large breasts and hips being an important fertility motif in India (Hall 1996: 45; Bloss 1973: 37-40; Bloss 2005: 6394).

The *nāgas* are "territorial deities". Each of them guards a larger or smaller area, controlling prosperity and destruction. This attribute links them with the king, the orderer of the existence in his kingdom. If the king righteously orders his own life and the ones of his subjects then gods will respond by offering to his territory the correct amount of rain, wealth and safety. For this reason, in ancient India *caitya* was a place of royal ordination, suggesting that "the king's authority was guaranteed or enhanced" by these deities (Bloss 1973: 38-39; Bloss 2005: 6394).

Buddhism absorbed these deities into its own pantheon. As Lowell Bloss suggests,

The portrayal of *nāgas* and *yakṣas* in the Theravada canon and in the Buddhist myths and rituals of Southeast Asia suggests the incorporation of the symbolism of kingship into the figure of the Buddha and the taming of the powers of nature through the Buddha's *dharma* (Bloss 2005: 6394).

However, the Buddhist *nāgas* are a little bit different from the Hindu ones. In the same key of emphasizing the fact that the ancient gods were inferior to Buddha, “the dreaded serpent-demons are generally represented as devout worshipers of the Buddha”, as J. Vogel mentions. Initially fierce and rebellious, under the influence of the great Sage of the Śākya they abandon their savage habits and forsake the doing of harm, because “Neither gods nor men nor animals can resist the holy influence of the Blessed One: thus the *nāgas* too, who in reality combine the nature of these three classes of beings, are won by his word” (Vogel 1926: 93).

*Tripitaka* mentions three snake-stories. The first one refers to two spitting flames snakes which fight Buddha. Here snakes have no human quality, neither a name nor the power of speech (Vogel 1926: 93; Irons 2008: 279).

The second one refers to the most representative Buddhist *nāga*, Muchilinda. This *nāga* king sheltered Buddha for seven days by enveloping Buddha's body seven times with his coils and spreading his hood over Master's head, for

[...] no cold touch the Blessed One, may no heat touch the Blessed One, may no gnats, flies or creeping things, no wind or heat come near the Blessed One (Vogel 1926: 93; Bloss 2005: 6394).

As Lowell Bloss notes,

From the folk point of view, the popular Muchilinda legend reinforces the message of the myths of conversion, asserting the Buddha's superiority over the *nāga* who guards and worships him. As such, the Buddha is seen as a divine orderer or king of a certain region. Especially in the many areas where the *nāga* and the king are linked, the Buddha sitting upon the coils of the *nāga* might easily have been recognized as receiving royal authorization from the folk deity. This was not the temporary authorization received by the human king, but an authorization to control the powers of the inferior *nāga* and, thereby, to guide all the forces and peoples of an entire region (Bloss 1973: 50)

This representation was introduced in Buddhist iconography, with Buddha enthroned on a convoluted snake under a canopy of seven or nine cobras' heads. Although it derives from the Vishṇu iconography, a later legend explained it through a visit that Buddha made to the palace of the snake-king (Hall 1996: 45).

The third story contained in *Vinaya-piṭaka* narrates about the *nāga* who assumed human shape and ordained as a monk. However, Buddha himself expelled him from the monastery when he ferrets out. The idea is that the snake-birth is a consequence of bad karma (Vogel 1926: 94).

As J. Vogel notices,

In none of them the *nāga* is a being dwelling in the waters of the earth or endowed with special power over the waters of the sky. It is certainly curious that the great *Nāga Muchilinda*, instead of withholding the showers of rain which threatened the Buddha with discomfort, has to sit up for a whole week and to use his body as an umbrella. (Vogel 1926: 94)

This observation is very interesting considering that the legends preserved in the writings of the Chinese pilgrims in India mention *nāgas* as water-sprites who dwell in rivers, lakes etc. and control the atmospheric changes. Their power did not manifest through their poisonous bite, but through their power to raise hail-storms, cause floods etc. (Vogel 1926: 94).

### **3. The perils of out-of-context serpent symbolism**

As a first conclusion, it seems that there are important differences between West and East concerning the symbolism of the serpent. In Hinduism and Buddhism the ambivalent symbolism of the serpent is more pregnant than in Judaism and Christianity, where the snake is almost exclusively the symbol of evil.

Secondly, Hindu and Buddhist representations of the serpent relates it with its positive mythology (*Śeṣha*, *Muchilinda*), while in the Christian iconography the snake is represented almost exclusively as a symbol of Satan (in the Fall of Man or at the foot of the cross or of Virgin Mary) or of poison (Catholic representations of St John and St Benedict).

Related to these, a third conclusion can be drawn. In the contemporary globalizing context, together with people, goods and information circulate religious representations, too. It is no more a

curiosity to find even in the Romanian handicraft or New Age shops statuettes of Vishnu resting on Ananta, Nāga Buddha or Śiva Nataraja. All these representations brought out of their religious and cultural context have the capacity to form an erroneous perspective over eastern religions. To be more specific, for the western ignorant fundamentalist milieu, all representations are “read” through the cultural and religious lens. In this context, representations of the serpent are representations of Satan in different postures. Consequently, Vishnu rests on a serpent, than he is Satan’s work. Muchilinda is protecting Buddha because Shakyamuni is doing devil’s work. Etc. The consequences are not hard to guess. To mention only two of them, on the one hand, the Hindus, Buddhists etc. are servants of Satan and on the other this confirms and nourishes the already intolerant attitude towards the non-Christian religions.

**Notes:**

[1] The term *nāga* also names a serpent-worshipping race in ancient India. Referring to C.F. Oldham’s *The Sun and the Serpent* (London, 1905), W. Crooke, in his article “Serpent-worship (Indian)” in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, mentions that “the Asuras and the Sarpas, ‘serpents’, of the Rigveda, the Asuras and Nāgas of the Mahābhārata and Manu, and the Asuras, or demons, of Brāhmanical tradition all represent hostile tribes, who opposed the Aryan invaders, and that the Asuras were Dravidians” (Crooke 1920: 414).

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# Moses life rewritten in New Testament and in Sucevita monastery picture

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## **Abstract:**

*The prophet Moses represents for Christians a religious leader, his life been rewritten in New Testament from Luke's writing and St. Paul epistles. From Stephen's archdeacon apology it's a life's Moses known periodization, detailed later and better by Hebrews Epistle. 2 Corinthians epistle reveal antithetically the face of the seer from Sinai with the glory of Christians which are called to see the reality of heaven kingdom. His face became an inspirational source from Christian arts.*

*The mortuary chamber of Sucevita monastery, in the 40 pictures scenes reveal the life cycle of Moses, give a moralizing and Christian sense, using Holy Bible's information and apocryphal writings. Inside the church, which is surrounded by a fortified site, we find many biblical and extra-biblical scenes painted in the miniature style of the books, employing the 16th and 17th century decoration style of biblical manuscripts. The religious leader of Israel helped by God, become the prototype of Christian theocrat from XVIth century. In this manner, the picture becomes didactical source through viewing, biblical and liturgical catechesis, but also testimony of deceased founder's good name.*

**Keywords:** *Moses, Prophet, people, Luke's writing, Sucevita monastery*

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## **1. Preliminaries**

Moses was a man of universal vocation, if we consider what course the overwhelming influence on the world has yet divine law with permanent destination given by him. Moses knew, in a sublime way, to bring to the service of his own people all the good spiritual accumulations of the school of time.

By Moses, Israel as a nation, was formed and organized in the most happy of time, receiving holy law, which will then inspire countless Christian peoples.

Moses is the dominant personality in the first part of the history of biblical people, specifically from its exit from Egyptian bondage and the entry into the Promised Land, the instruction given through Moses put his imprint on almost all books of the Old Testament.

The merit of Moses is not only to have formed Israel as a people of the 12 descendant tribes of the twelve sons of Jacob, but first of all is to share this faith with one God. He did it as a prophet of God, because in this capacity he also discovered the true name of God. The Old Testament portrays him as an entirely different person “a heroic leader of the people and a man of God who brought Israel into a special relationship with God” (Semen 1996: 26).

## 2. Moses Life in Luke’s writing

### a. In Gospel of Luke

The historical event of the Savior's Transfiguration is reported in the synoptic gospels (Mt. 17: 1-9, Mk. 9: 1-9 and Lk. 9: 28-37), on the right side of Jesus being the prophet Moses (Lk. 9: 30.33). The mode of re-knowledge of the prophet-legislator is not indicated to us. Christian art presents him holding the tables of the law, with his illuminated face. The Orthodox Iconography insists on the participatory aspect, the light that surrounds the Savior by covering altogether other modes of light.

A special place in the Gospel of Luke is the Lk. 16: 29.31 parable, where Abraham urges the ruthless brothers to “obey” Moses and the prophets. In Lk. 20: 28 we have the nomination of the Prophet Moses, who “wrote” for us (Διδάσκαλε, Μωϋσῆς ἔγραψεν ἡμῖν) about the levy marriage. Luke 20: 28 is a summary of the text Deut. 25: 5.

Here, the Sadducees question, highlights the legal prescription, of a national nature, whereby the land must not be alienated to another tribe, and the obligation of second-degree relatives to “raise” the survivors of the deceased.

The second text of chapter 20, brought as argument by the Savior that Moses is wrongly interpreted by the scribes of his time, is found at Lk. 20: 37, where it is stated: ‘But in the account of the burning bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’// Μωϋσῆς



ἐμήνυσεν ἐπὶ τῆς βάτου, ὡς λέγει, Κύριον τὸν θεὸν Ἀβραάμ καὶ τὸν θεὸν Ἰσαὰκ καὶ τὸν θεὸν Ἰακώβ, quoting Exodus 3.6. The idea is also supposed in the hermeneutical appeal to Exodus 3: 2.6 in Mk. 12: 26; Mt. 22: 32; and Acts 3: 13. The conclusion is that, as we must suppose the resurrection of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob from the dead, so this event is also possible for their children. The same formula reiterated in Acts 3: 13 emphasizes that the God of Israel glorified Jesus, who becomes the master of life, so that if the Jews deny Christ, he denies their own God (Lachs 1980-1981: 232).

#### **b. In Acts**

In the Apostle Peter's speech from Solomon's Porch, presented in Acts 3: 22-23 by the deuteronomic quotation (Dupont 1953: 317), following the apologetic method of the presentation of Christ the Risen One as Moses prophet (Deut 18:15), they prolong the prophecy also with v. 19 pointing out that 'Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.' The LXX text speaks of "the man who will not obey", (Waard 1965: 45) while the Apostles extend the area of obedience to "anyone" adding the phrase ἐξολεθρευθήσεται ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ / be completely cut off from their people".

The repetition of the word "prophet" emphasizes the quality of Jesus the Risen that is like Moses. From these verses, the Apostles believe that those who believe in Moses must obey Jesus. The identification of Jesus with the Prophet Moses predicted will be restored to Acts 7: 37.

The longest speech in Acts is that of St. Stephen, making a foray into the history of Israel, by scoring five basic elements: the relationship between God and Abraham, Abraham and the patriarchs, the story of Joseph, the promises fulfilled at time by Moses and the presence tabernacle as evidence of the relationship with God (Soards 1993:59).

Starting with Acts 7: 18, Moses' life is exposed by quotes from the Exodus, interleaved in midrash summaries. We have in Acts 7:18 a full text, without introductory formula, with a small difference, from LXX from Exodus 1: 8: 'Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt.'

The intention of St. Luke, when through St. Stephen's mouth, presents this section of the history of the people of Israel is to render the

authority of the holy books that make up the Torah, going from Genesis to Exodus (Keesmaat 1999: 46). And here comes the special interest of St. Luke to relate the history of mankind as a continuous exodus. Here we have a rhetorical way of going beyond a meaningless time for the thread of the narrative that St. Luke deliberately uses to resume the event and person's as paradigm in another speech (Standaert 1985: 323-324). This is the case of Paul's discourse in Antioch of Pisidia, when he does not read the account of Moses (made by the deacon Stephen in chapter 7), but points directly King David's time.

In St. Stephen's speech, the remembrance of Israel's history continues with the account of the killing of an Egyptian by Moses and his wandering in Midian (Boismard 1981:185).

The chapter reflects some accounts present in the Jewish Middle Ages of Hellenistic origin. Generally, the parallel made by Philo in Alexandria in *De Vita Moses* are very similar to those in the Acts of the Apostles (Kilgallen 1976:11-18). Like Philo, in Luke-Acts the killing of the Egyptian is considered a necessary description (Philo 2003 :73) to illustrate the liberation that will become the important mission of Moses, especially from 3rd chapter of Exodus book (Chirilă 2002: 72).

Midrash interpretation (France 1983: 159-161) of Acts of this murder is subjective reason - thought his action was not understood (Acts 7: 25) (Childs 1974: 33-36).

The understanding of this grand old-timer theme is that Moses, out of a national pride, has made this solution. The text quoted in Acts 7:27 accurately tracks the text of Exodus 2: 14 of the Septuagint: "But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us?'" The text in Acts demonstrates a great example of disobedience that followed the course of the history of the chosen people. The example of disobedience culminates in the removal of Jesus, the Right (v. 52), which had been foretold in Deut. 18. In Acts Moses' attitude is describes as a conciliatory one, awaiting conciliation from its co-nationals (συνήλλασσεν).

Saint Archdeacon Stephen alludes to the text of Ex. 3: 2, telling the way Moses receives the revelation of becoming the ruler of the Jewish people through the flame of the unburned bush. The mission to which he is called is the removal of Jews from Egyptian captivity.

The editorial work of St. Luke is highlighted in Acts 7: 23.30.36 and 42 where Moses lives in cycles of forty years.

The first mention of the number of forty must be related to Moses' thought of looking after his brethren (v.23). The second mention is in Acts 7:30 where the angel shows him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai in the flame of the fired bush. The next mention of the forty is related to the exodus of Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea, and wandering through the wilderness. The last mention of the forty years refers to bringing sacrifices to God while traveling through the wilderness (Unite 1985: 744).

The editorial work of St. Luke is highlighted in the text of Acts 7: 32-35 where four verses from the Exodus are interwoven. Thus, the order is Exodus 3: 6 followed by Exodus 3: 5 and Exodus 3: 7 (Melnicuic-Puică 2005: 166-172) and returning to Exodus 2: 4:

'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look.' "Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. 34 I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt.' 35 "This is the same Moses they had rejected with the words, 'Who made you ruler and judge?' He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush.'

Here, as in Acts 7: 38, there is the presence of the angel who mediates God's revelation to man. From these verses it appears that God declines his identity by naming the land of Sinai the holy ground and expressing the purpose of His revelation: 'I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free.' Moses is also sent to Egypt, his brothers not recognize him as a leader.

To make himself understood in his apology, St. Stephen concludes that God had sent Moses and redeemer and lord (Boismard 1981:189).

From Exodus 3: 6 Luke cites only the first part of the verse; Exodus 3: 5 is quoted by approximation, transforming the preposition ἐν into the preposition ἐφ.

From Exodus 3: 7 Luke replaces τῆς κραυγῆς with τοῦ στεναγμοῦ, the verbal forma of ἀκούω ranging from imperfect to past perfect tense. The verb ἐξέλθαι = exit is inserted into the Lucan account. Again, the

adverb δεῦρο appears as a divine imperative for the application of God's commandments.

In Acts 7:35 Moses is called lord and redeemer, preparing abrupt transition over the history of Israel to Jesus Christ.

Like Peter, the Apostle, St. Stephen resumes the text of Deut. 18:15 which emphasizes Moses' consciousness that God will raise another prophet like him. The ἀναστήσει verb can be translated either "raise" or by "resurrect".

Through the ἀναστήσει verb, the typological side of Moses as precursor of Christ is emphasized (Bovon 1978: 23), as well as the eschatological character of prophecy. The text of Luke in Acts 7:37 reproduces the LXX text identically, specifying the speaker (Melniciuc-Puică 2005: 158-173).

### 3. Moses in Corinthians correspondence

#### 1 Cor. 11

Typological character of the Old Testament is that events, objects, creatures and people of the Old Testament, in addition to their own meaning, foreshadows another reality superior. Typology is not an exegesis of biblical texts, but it is a theological interpretation of the facts described in the Old Testament. This interpretation is not independent of the literal sense, but these two meanings are interdependent. Type is a sign, a mask, an image (Acts 7:43), a model (Acts 7:44), is an example.

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2 They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 They all ate the same spiritual food 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 6 Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry." 8 We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. 9 We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. 10 And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. 11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. (1 Cor. 10:1-11 NIV)

The Israelites, according to 1 Cor. 10: 1-11, coming out of Egypt, all of them were full of God's loving help in their wandering way through the wilderness from Sinai to Kadesh; all were shaded by the pillar of the cloud during the day, and were illuminated by the pillar of fire during the night (Exodus 13: 21); they all went ashore through the Red Sea (Exodus 14: 22); they all ate manna from heaven (Exodus 16) and they all drank water (Exodus 17: 16, Numbers 20: 2-11) miraculously springing out of the stone.

The epithet "spiritual" can be interpreted in two ways: either in the typical sense, if one considers offering material as foreshadowing a gift next higher or supernatural meaning, that these gifts were products immediate creative force of the Holy Spirit. Both interpretations can be admitted. Passing from type to antitype Apostle shows that Christ was the guiding angel of Israel and stone spiritual from which all gotten wonderful drink. However, only two men, Joshua and Caleb were worthy to see the land of promise, only they received the promised promise (Mihoc 1976: 278). Others of their generation fell in the wilderness for their evil deeds. The practical consequence highlighted by the Apostle Paul is as follows: The Savior Jesus Christ was present in the midst of the Israelites in the wilderness, and yet they perished for their sins. Christians not to be deceived, that if they do the works of this people will not escape the fate of sad.

1 Corinthians 11:7 reminds golden calf in the wilderness (Exodus 32: 1-4), whom they worshiped with sacrifice dancing and dining sacrifice (Exodus 32: 5-6). At Setim Israelites worship the god Baal Peor with sacrifices and acts of fornication (Num. 25: 1-9). Rebellion against God is punished by venomous snakes (Num. 21: 6).

### **2 Cor. 3: 7-16**

The Pauline writings and the other New Testament epistles express the image of the Prophet Moses from an antithetic perspective, emphasizing the superiority of the following Christ as compared to the servants of the written word "on the stone" (II Corinthians 3: 3.7). The Pauline Interpretation of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, the references of 2 Timothy 3: 8 and Hebrews (3: 1-6; 11:23-30; 12:18-21)

and the one in the Jude Epistle (v.9) fructify the rabbinic and Jewish traditions about Moses' personality (Propp 1987: 375-386).

The Scriptural fragment in Exodus 24: 1-11 clearly states the superiority of the vision of hearing, the proximity relative to the divine, and the ritual of reading the words of the Book of the Covenant of the people. Looking Synoptically, Exodus 20: 18-21 where we have the people's refusal to hear Yahve, with the account of Exodus 24: 1-11, we notice the obvious superiority of the vision of hearing. Yahve can be seen directly even if only by a few elected. The divine word will be transmitted primarily through Moses' voice.

In Numbers 12: 8, Moses is the one who has the opportunity to see Yahve face to face, which shows his unique status (Childs 1974: 609). Here we see both the visual and the auditory brought together: "He speaks with his mouth to his mouth, to show and to do, and not in guesses, and he sees the face of the Lord" - but the visual is that which makes Moses relate to Yahweh in a unique way.

The Pauline argument is built around the revealing experience of Moses (Melniciuc-Puică 2014: 88) on Mount Sinai (LXX Exodus 34: 29-35):

‘When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord. 30 When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. 31 But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. 32 Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the Lord had given him on Mount Sinai. 33 When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. 34 But whenever he entered the Lord’s presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, 35 they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the Lord.’

St. Paul defend oneself by his opponents using the argument that their authority has roots in the revelation of God revealed to Moses but that it is deprived of the Spirit (Fitzmyer 1981: 636). So Paul claims that his revealing experience is completely different from that received by Moses when he received the Law, because his experience is in the Spirit. There is now the second argument outlined in 2 Corinthians 3: 14-18, which is built on the same traditional revealing experience, but with a

difference in emphasis. Here the Apostle Paul is concerned about the result of the veil coverage of Moses' face, and the consequences of the Israeli response to this veil in the eyes of the "Lord's glory" τὴν δόξαν κυρίου.

The experience of returning to God, as evidenced by the Sacred Scripture, gives Moses the example: whenever Moses turned his face to God, he lifted up his veil (Jeremias 1993: 859-861). The brightness of Moses' face blinded the Israelites, so he put a veil on his face when he came to speak to them. Paul develops the experience of the "veil" for contemporaries of the Jew, for the veil in fact prevents them from understanding the true meaning of the times when the Torah is read in the synagogue. Paul argues that the veil remains when the "old covenant" is read (ἀναγνώσει της παλαιας διαθήκης - v.14 cf Acts 13: 15, 1 Timothy 4:13) and can only be removed by Christ. St. Paul firmly maintains that the veil remains over the minds and knowledge of the Jews when Moses is read (ἀναγινώσκηαι) (Hafemann 1992: 31ff; Baker 2000: 1-15). The consensus of the commentators indicates that the Apostle Paul refers to the written form (cf. Romans 10: 5.19) of the Sinai covenant. In this context, this interpretation indicates that in Sinai Moses looked at the image of God, and that it prefigures reality in eschatological life, when all people will participate in this experience (Thrall 1994: 241).

#### **4. Moses life in Hebrews Epistle**

In two stances Moses is present in Hebrew Epistle: in Heb. 3: 5-11.17-19 and Heb. 11: 23-29.

In Heb. 3: 9-11 quoting Psalm 94: 8-12, St. Paul portrays God with respect to the attitudes of the Jewish people, who, while living God's guidance for forty years, did not become faithful to the Lord (Johnson 2006: 299). Man forgets the good offered and looks at revenge for the attempts he has received. The Jews tempted God, constantly demanding confirmation of their fidelity to them, but they did not learn that faithfulness raises faithfulness, as love demands love. When the trials, as parental pedagogy, turned against them, the Jews forgot the good received for a long time and rebelled. We learn from the apostolic fragment to evaluate the present through the perspective of history, to react today

without forgetting what we received yesterday and to be loyal to the One who was faithful to us until death.

In Heb.3: 5 Moses is named slave (θεράπων) in contrast with Christ who is son of the house (υἱὸς ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ) of God.

The second stance from Hebrew Epistle is chapter 11, when the apostolic writer underline the faithfulness of Moses, beginning with his birth unto the miraculous cross of Red Sea. The depiction in words affirm all his life under faith action:

‘By faith (Πίστει - as feminine noun in dative singular) Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.’ (v. 24) , He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt [...] By faith he kept the Passover [...] By faith the people passed through the Red Sea...’ (vv. 25-29).

The son of Jochebed and Amram, named Moses, was hid against Pharaoh rule three months. In Hebrews Epistle author view this as a faith act, under God protection. Also, the rejection of a privileged position by Moses, and chose to be part of the people of God, suffering with his people is the effect of faith. Even Exodus 2 remember the fury of Egyptians against his murder, Hebrews Epistle interpretation change this flee into a faith act, culminating with the passage through the Red Sea.

### **5. Moses Pictural cycle in Sucevita Monastery**

Since 1585 the Sucevita monastery became in Romania, from Moldavia region, a masterpiece of Orthodoxy. Metropolitan Gheorghe Movilă and his brother Jeremia Movila, build this fortress as family necropolis (Dumitrescu 2001: 231). The monastery Sucevița was adorned with two porches, with interior and exterior painting in fresco, executed by Ioan Zugravul and his brother Sofronie, after 1595. Joining elements of Byzantine and Gothic architecture, Sucevița monastery keeps the trilobate plane in Moldavian architectural line founded by Stephen the Great. The painting inside the church is compartmented in scenes similar to the miniatures from that epoch books (Cincheza-Buculei 2002: 89), and the exterior presents on the green background ample scenes from the Byzantine iconographic tradition. Between the central nave of Resurrection church and internal porch is located the mortual chamber, painted with 40 sequences from Moses life (Costea 1995: 73).



Each picture have on top an inscription, who resume and identified the hieratical fragment (Costea 2007: 33). In first inscription from tomb chamber it is written: "When King Pharaoh wanted to destroy the Israelites, he commanded all his people".

Although the inscription above the women indicates the name of Zipporah, the one on the throne has the characteristics of the Pharaoh from the images below; so we indicate the scene as a ban on helping midwives to support Jewish women. The Pharaoh's command makes a textual reference to Exodus 1:22, although it illustrates the verse in Exodus 1:15-16.

In second picture on top it read: "Here (is) the birth of Moses", alluding to Exodus 2: 1-2 or Acts 7: 20 and Hebrews 11: 23.

Third picture from tomb chamber have the inscription: "Moses babe, sitting in the basket, on the edge of the river", in resume of Exodus 2: 3-4.

On forth picture it written the inscription: "Here Moses babe found by the daughter of the pharaoh".

In fifth scene is written the inscription: "Here the child is / is entrusted to his / her nurse / mother", as resume of Exodus 2: 7-9.

In six picture scene are the inscription: "Here Pharaoh held Moses to his bosom and [he] took him by his beard, and [Pharaoh] was angry and gave his candle into his hand and put it in his mouth and it was a rumor" is an interpolation at Exodus 2: 10 (Ciobanu 2014: 5). This midrashic interpretation is attested also in Acts 7:22-23.

The last picture from first cycle of forty years of Moses life write the inscription: "When Moses became great, he went out to his brethren, and knew all his people", in resume of Exodus 2:11 and Hebrews 11:24.

Next four pictural sequences express the second period of Moses life, according Acts 7: 24-30. The inscriptions in Sucevita chamber mortuary are the following: "Moses fled ..." (Exodus 2: 15// Acts 7:29); "This is where Moses came to the land of Midian when Zipporah also took her from the priest ... found out the daughters shepherd the sheep"; "Moses was laying down the sheep of his father-in-law in the wilderness, in the mountain of God Horeb" (Exodus 3:1) and "Here the angel of God appeared to him in the bush, and said unto him, Take off the shoes of thy feet, for the place where you stand is holy" (Exodus 3:2-5//Acts 7:33).

On next 29 pictures in fresco, 7 images describe the Jewish liberation from slavery in Egypt, crossing the Red Sea. In Sucevita tomb chamber the painters have mixed the events from the journey through the wilderness, recorded in Exodus and Numbers. The inscription-title written in Slavonic language (Cozmei 2013: 58) resume biblical text about Elim springs, manna and quails from heaven, the Law of God receiving in Sinai, the bronze serpent, the tent covenant made and Joshua with Kaleb explored the Promised Land (Mouriki 1995: 532). The last four pictures of Sucevita chamber tomb resume Numbers 13-32, the end of Moses life, using also Jude Epistle information about Michael Archangel (Melniciuc-Puica 2016: 207) fight with the devil about the body of Moses (v.9).

## 6. Conclusions

Although he was raised and educated in the house of oppressors, the young Moses proved to have a special sense of justice. In fact, the desire to achieve justice for his brothers was also imposed on public attention.

The first revolt against injustice is felt in his soul when, for the first time in public, “[...] the sons of Israel saw their hard work”, the inequity of Egyptian beating an Israelite. Once upon a time, he saw two Israelites arguing, tried a reconciliation between them, but without success (Exodus 2: 11-13).

Another act of righteousness committed by Moses was fulfilled in Midian when he defended the seven daughters of the priest Jethro.

Staying in exile for 40 years seems a bit too much and gives the reader some sense of mistrust over the one who has played such an important role in liberating a nomadic people with a very sharp sense of freedom. The motivation to extend exile was not family, first of all Moses proves the qualities of a good psychologist and social analyst, and especially political. He realized that the unity of the sons of Israel was not well established.

“Under eastern Orthodox or Catholic influence, the princes and boyars of Moldavia and their families would benefit from the right to be buried in the church as a consequence of patronage” (Crăciun 2005: 161). Any slander brought against the faithful dead, such as the challenge posed by Satan against Israel’ great leader, is seen by Jude as a challenge to God’s honour. The Supreme Judge is present as the one who protects the

good name of the faithful, in life and in death (Melniciuc-Puică 2016: 210). The righteous at least continue to exist post-mortem by means of their good name.

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## **Jubilee Time for the Sacred Art Department, The Faculty of Orthodox Theology, U.A.I.C. Iasi (II)**

**Geogeta-Merișor DOMINTE  
Bogdan COJOCEA, Stelian ONICA**

*Associate Prof.PhD.  
Faculty of Orthodox Theology,  
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, ROMANIA*

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### **Abstract:**

*2017 marks 20 years since the graduation of the first generation of students from the Cultural Patrimony, set up in the Faculty of the Orthodox Theology, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași. Beside the Conservation – Restoration of Icon - Polychrome Wood, other sections were founded: Conservation – Restoration of Document-Book and Church Painting. They now function in the Sacred Art Department, which appeared later in other Romanian universities, as a polarization of the initiation brought about for over two decades in Iasi by His Eminence Daniel, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bucovina (now Patriarch Daniel of Romania) who, in 1997, set up the Ressurectio Centre, that provided jobs for young graduates. In the article below, we briefly recall some information and insert some images about The Sacred Art Department of the Faculty of Theology of "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași, further supported with fatherly dedication by His Eminence Teofan, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bucovina, also founder of remarkable educational and cultural achievements. Regarding the specificity of the activities carried out in the Sacred Art Department, those wishing to know more closely in this way are invited to descend framed them.*

**Keywords:** *orthodox tradition, heritage safeguard, iconographic achievements, two decades, Sacred Art Department*

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Tradition is one of the main sources of continuity. Without tradition, we would have no faith and no knowledge about it and the need to continue communication. The visual and patrimonial confessions of the Christian faith in the Sacred Art Department of the Faculty of Theology, U.A.I.C. Iași, are like an essential drop in the continuum flow of the spring of life that fuels our ancestral and ever present thirst of Good, Truth and Beauty.

### Iconographies



23

Fig. 23 - Saint Pious Parascheva and The Holy Ruler Steven the Great – icon by Cristina Șveț





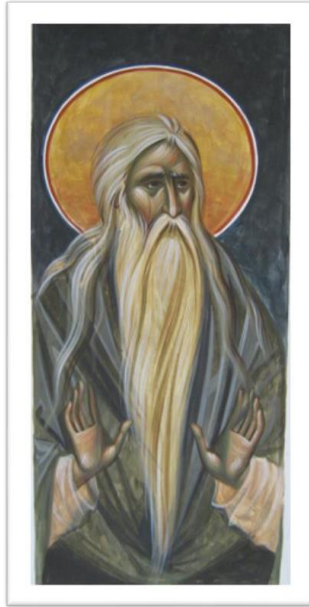
24

Fig. 24 - Saint Apostle Andrew - graduation work – icon by Răzvan Gască



25

Fig. 25 - Saint Hierarch Nicholas - graduation work – icon by Nicu Nicolaiuc



26

Fig. 26 - Saint Pious – wall painting by Constantin Mandici



27

Fig. 27 – Holy Prophet Elijah the Thesbite – icon by Daniela Salahor (Nun Hionia)



28



29

Fig. 28 - 29 - „The night of the museums” – the 16<sup>th</sup> May 2009-Workshop of iconography, with Sacred Art students and Ressurectio Center, at Union Museum, Iași.  
Participants : Alina BATALAN, Iulian BATALAN, Ana- Maria BUDU, Adina CIOBANU, Dorin MACOVEI, Cristina SOFRAGIU, Petru SOFRAGIU, Monica VASILOAIA  
Coordinators: Aurica ICHIM, Stelian ONICA, Georgeta Merișor DOMINTE

**In the Document Books Restoration Lab**

30a



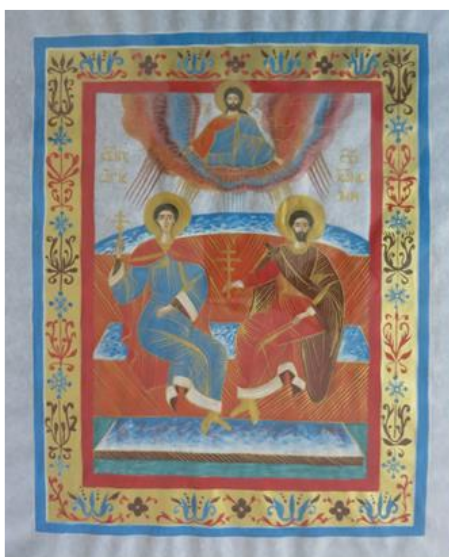
30b

Fig. 30 (a-b)- Lect. PhD. Elena Ardelean guiding stages in the conservation – restoration of paper support process

Fig. A., B., C. – MINIATURES BY THE NUNS OF THE DRAGOMIRNA MONASTERY - NUN MACRINA (SILVIA SĂUCINIȚANU), NUN TEODOSIA (DANIELA MORARU) AND NUN ANASTASIA (ȘTEFAN ANGELICA)



A.



B.



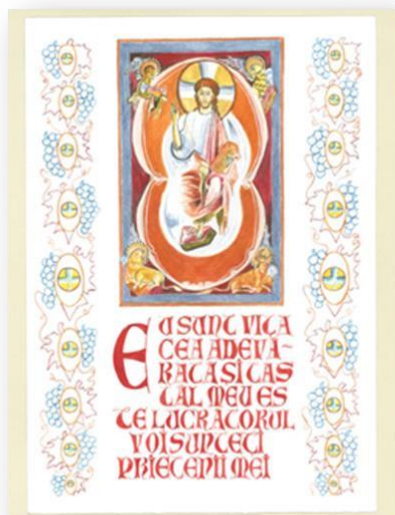


C.



31

Fig. 31 – Miniature by C. Bordei



32

Fig. 32 – Miniature by Cristian Trifan (Monk Daniel)



33

Fig. 33 – Miniature by Doruța Marcu

**Activities Adjacent to Pedagogical Practice for Visual Art Education**

Fig. 34- Visit to the Drawing Exhibition, 2013

34



Fig.35- Documentaries in Mihai Cotovanu's exhibition, October 2016

35



**Visits and Analysis, with Students from the Pedagogical Module at Exhibitions in the Art College, Iași**



36



37

Fig. 36-37- Lect.PhD. M.G. Dominte analyzing with the students different techniques, compositions and topics of visual works

### From Documentation in Regard to Different Aspects of Cultural Patrimony



38

Fig. 38 - With the students, at ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza's statue, from the center of Iași



39



40

Fig. 39-40 In The Union Museum, Iași; analyzing Moldavia's Coat of Arms, and old bells, at Three Hierarchs Church, Iași



41



42

Fig. 41- 42 – Analyzing values of cultural heritage and new icons exhibited in the Gothic Hall, Three Hierarchs Church, Iași

## From the Research Work of „St. Ap. Luke” Circle of Sacred Art

Fig.43-44

UNIVERSITATEA „ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA” DIN IASI

CERCUL DE CERCETARE ARTĂ SACRĂ „SF. EV. LUCA”

FACULTATEA DE TEOLOGIE ORTODOXĂ „DUMITRU STĂNILOAE”

Cercul de cercetare Artă Sacră „Sf. Ev. Luca”

Vă invită la întâlnirea pe tema:  
**Ansamblul pictural de la Biserica  
 Intrarea Domnului în Ierusalim - Tătărași (Iasi).**  
**Programul iconografic și prezentarea tehnicii de lucru**  
 prezintă pictorul Marius Ghinescu

Resurrectio, Mitropolia Moldovei și Bucovinei  
 Miercuri 4 martie 2015  
 Orela 16  
 Sala T24  
 Facultatea de Teologie Ortodoxă „Dumitru Stăniloae” Iași

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Cercul de cercetare Artă Sacră „Sf. Ev. Luca”

Vă invită la întâlnirea lunară pe tema:  
**Aspecte privind restaurarea  
 icoanei Maicii Domnului  
 cu Pruncul (Hodighitria)**  
 de la Biserica din Măscătești, jud. Neamț

**Invitat: Restaurator Popa Loredana**  
 Centrul de Conservare și Restaurare a Artei  
 Resurrectio  
 Mitropolia Moldovei și Bucovinei

Miercuri 28.05.2014  
 Orela 15  
 Sala T8  
 Facultatea de Teologie Ortodoxă „Dumitru Stăniloae” Iași

44

**From the Exhibitional Activity**



45(a-b)

Fig. 45(a-b) - Exhibition of Sacred Art in the Atrium Hall, Palas Mall, Iași, November 2015



Posters from the Sacred Art Exhibitions, Set Up in different Locations - Fig. 46 - 57



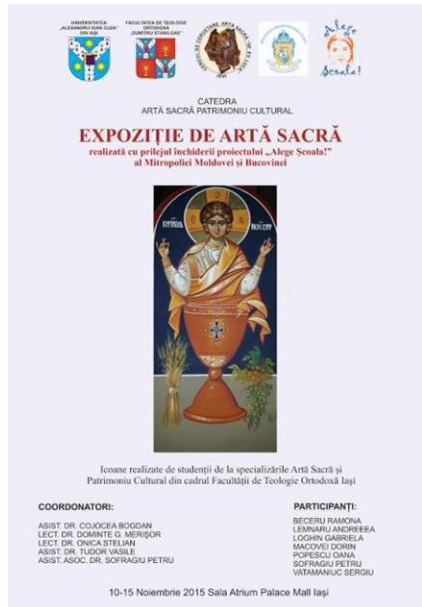
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FACULTATEA DE TEOLOGIE ORTODOXA "DUMITRU STANILAOAIE" IASI  
CATEDRA ARTA SACRA PATRIMONIUL CULTURAL  
ASOCIATIA "MIRON BARNOVSCHI"

### OMAGII ALE CREDINTEI

ED. II-II

EXPOZITIE DE PICTURA BISERICASCA, RESTAURARE ICONA SI CARTE VECHI RESTAURATA  
EXPUN STUDENTI SI ABSOLVENTI DE LA SPECIALIZAREA ARTA SACRA SI PATRIMONIUL CULTURAL

**COORDONATORI:**  
LECT. DR. ARDELEAN ELENA  
ASIST. DR. COJOCEA BOGDAN  
LECT. DR. DOMINTE G. MERISOR  
LECT. DR. MORNEAGU MINA  
LECT. DR. ONICA STELIAN  
ASIST. AS. DR. SOFRAGIU PETRU

**PARTICIPANTI:**  
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BURACIU SIMONA ELENA  
CIRPAN STRAIATE  
COSMAN ANDREI  
FLOREA ELENA  
LEMAN ANDREI  
MAGDOVI DOBINA  
MORARU DANIELA  
PANDUR ELENA  
MONTENAU MIRELA  
MONTENAU MIRELA  
SUCUTANU SILVIA  
SUCUTANU SILVIA  
STEFAN ANDELICA  
SUET CRISTINA

SALA CONSILII SI HOLUL PRINCIPAL AL FACULTATII DE TEOLOGIE ORTODOXA "DUMITRU STANILAOAIE" IASI  
OCTOMBRIE 2015 - NOIEMBRIE 2015

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CENTRUL CULTURAL MULTIFUNCTIONAL PENTRU VARSTA A III-A  
UNIVERSITATEA "AL. I. CUZA" IASI  
FACULTATEA DE TEOLOGIE ORTODOXA  
CATEDRA ARTA SACRA  
CENTRUL DE CERCETARE "FILARET SCRIBAN"  
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### CHIPURI ALE SFINTENIEI

EXPOZITIE DE ICOANE

EXPUN STUDENTI DE LA SPECIALIZAREA ARTA SACRA SI PATRIMONIUL CULTURAL  
VERNICIAJUL VA AVEA LOC VINERI 20 DECEMBRIE 2013 ORELE 15.00  
PREZINTA PROF. UNIV. DR. GHEORGHE MACARIE

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ALECTU MARILENA - AN II  
BACU IONUT - AN III  
BECERU RAMONA - MASTER II  
GABER CRISTINA - ABSOLVENTA  
LIPAN TOADER - MASTER I  
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MONTENAU MIRELA - ABSOLVENTA  
NICU ELENA - ABSOLVENTA  
PETROVICI GEORGIANA - ABSOLVENTA  
PRESICABU MARIUS GHEORGHE - AN II  
SALAHOR DANIELA MARICA IONIANA - AN II  
TINALEA NICOLETA - AN II  
VASILOAIA MONICA - ABSOLVENTA  
VATAMANTUC GEORGIE SERGIU - ABSOLVENT

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DECEMBRIE 2013-FEBRUARIE 2014  
CENTRUL CULTURAL MULTIFUNCTIONAL PENTRU VARSTA A III-A  
SALA ANA ASLAN  
STR. STRAPOPONDERII SILVISTRU NR. 28

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### ARTA SACRA - O CONTINUA MISIUNE

EDITIA A II-A

EXPOZITIE DE ICOANE, KOANE RESTAURATE SI CARTE RESTAURATA  
REALIZATE DE STUDENTII SI ABSOLVENTII DE LA SPECIALIZAREA ARTA SACRA SI ARTA SACRA IN PATRIMONIUL CULTURAL ALE FACULTATII DE TEOLOGIE ORTODOXA "DUMITRU STANILAOAIE" IASI

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05 IULIE 2016 - 20 SEPTEMBRIE 2016

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PAROHIA "SFANTUL GHEORGHE" CIMITIUL ETERNITATEA IASI

### EXPOZITIE DE ARTA SACRA

Icoane si miniaturi, realizate de studentii de la specializarea Artă Sacră și Patrimoniul Cultural din cadrul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă Iași

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GABRIELA  
HONOR CAMELIA  
MAGDOVI DOBINA  
MANDICI CONSTANTIN  
MONTENAU MIRELA  
OLARIU DANIELA  
PILARICU CORINA  
PILARICU CORINA  
RADOI POPA  
SUCUTANU SILVIA  
SUCUTANU SILVIA  
SUCUTANU SILVIA  
SUCUTANU SILVIA  
ZIVANCA IOANA

Vernisajul - Iunie 2015 la Sala Expozitie - Eternitatea Iasi

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PRIMĂRIA MUNICIPIULUI IAȘI

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CENTRUL DE CERCETARE „HILARET SCRIBAN”

CENTRUL DE CERCETARE ARTĂ SACRĂ „SF. EV. LUCA”

SPECIALIZĂRILE ARTĂ SACRĂ PATRIMONIUL CULTURAL

ASOCIAȚIA „MIRON BARNOVSCHI”

# SERI DE COLINDE

EXPOZIȚIE DE ICOANE PE LEMN, ICOANE PE STICLĂ ȘI MINIATURI REALIZATE DE STUDENȚII SPECIALIZĂRILOR ARTĂ SACRĂ ȘI PATRIMONIUL CULTURAL ALE FACULTĂȚII DE TEOLOGIE ORTODOXĂ „DUMITRU STANILAOAE” IAȘI

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LEMNARU ANDREEA  
MARTINESCU ANCUȚA  
MORARU DANIELA  
MUNTEANU MIRELA  
NICĂ ELENA  
POPA ANDREI  
SALAHOR DANIELA  
SĂCINTĂNU SILVEA  
ȘTEFAN ANGELICA  
TABARCEA MIBONA  
VĂLĂMANIUC SERGIU GEORGE  
VIERI IOANA GABRIELA  
ZAHARIA ALEXANDRU PETRONEL

HOLUL CENTRAL AL PRIMĂRIEI MUNICIPIULUI IAȘI

14 DECEMBRIE - 20 DECEMBRIE 2015



UNIVERSITATEA  
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CENTRUL DE CERCETARE  
„FILARET SCRIBAN”



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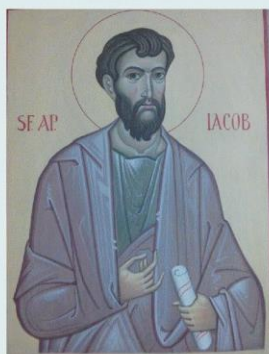
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Ediția a III-a



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SPECIALIZĂRILOR ARTĂ SACRĂ ȘI ARTĂ SACRĂ ÎN PATRIMONIUL CULTURAL  
ALE FACULTĂȚII DE TEOLOGIE ORTODOXĂ „DUMITRU STĂNILOAE” IAȘI

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GROSU (GIUSCA) OANA ALINA  
LEMNARU ANDREEA  
LIVITCHI CRISTINA  
MORARU DANIELA  
ONEA ROXANA MARIA  
SĂUCINIȚANU SILVIA

POLICLINICA  
„PROVIDENȚA” IAȘI

OCTOMBRIE 2016 - DECEMBRIE 2016

## Information about the Sacred Art Department

**UNIVERSITATEA „ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA” IASI**

**ARTĂ SACRĂ**

**FACULTATEA DE TEOLOGIE ORTODOXĂ „DUMITRU STĂNILOAE” IASI**

**ADMIȚERE**

**CONCURS DE DOSARE**  
Media se calculează astfel:  
70% - Media de la bacalaureat  
30% - Nota la disciplina Limbă și literatură română - proba scrisă - de la bacalaureat.

Departajarea candidaților cu aceiași medii se face astfel:  
1. Media generală din timpul anilor de studiu liceal/semnalarial;  
2. Media obținută la disciplina Departamentul Ortodoxă (pt. Absolvenții de seminar) sau media obținută la Limbă și literatură română pt. Absolvenții de liceu.

Discipline studiate în facultate:  
Studiul desenului și formelor, Studiul culorii și picturii, Studiul desenului, culorii pentru pictură, Studiul compoziției, Restaurare icoană, Restaurare carte, Tehnica artistică, Ictona arte, Studiul materialelor de pictură și restaurare, Elemente de etnologie și biologie pe Restaurare, Etno-patologia speciilor de miș, Muzeologie, Teoria generală a restaurării etc.

**ACTE NECESARE:**

- Cererea tip de înscriere (formular ce se pune la dispoziție candidaților la înscriere)
- Binecuvântarea Chiriarhului (Episcopului) de care aparține candidații, autentecată sau dată de domiciliul stabil al candidatului. Botezul se va adresa sectorului învățământ al (A)hli Episcopiei respective (se obține personal)
- Actul de studii în original și copie: diploma de bacalaureat, diploma universitară, diploma sau adeverință de absolvire a facultății/cursului candidatului promoția 2016.
- olimpicii vor prezenta diploma de olimpic (în original și copie).
- Fișa matricolă înăscută (în original și copie) de la liceu sau seminar, candidații care au absolvit școala de mistere/trințerie vor prezenta și fișa matricolă (în original și copie) sau de studiu.
- Certificat de naștere (copie legalizată).
- Carte de identitate (copie).
- Certificat de chibzitorie - unde este cazul (copie).
- Certificat sau adeverință de botez (original și copie).
- Recenzorare de la preotul din parohia în care are domiciliul candidatul. Preșții vor prezenta recomandare de la protopopul de care aparțin, menșur de la stărușul parohiei în care s-a botezat, ori stăruș de la curtea locală.
- Adeverință medicală tip și examen psihologic (candidații din Arhiepiscopia Iași-Ierusalim pot opta pentru adeverință numai de la cabinetul ATEST. Bld Ștefan cel Mare, nr. 42, etaj 2, cam. 14, http://www.atest.ro, mai multe informații pe: <http://teologia.iași.ro/info/admitere> / [www.iași.ro](http://www.iași.ro)).
- Fotografii color în C.I.
- Chitanță de achitare a taxei de înscriere în conformitate cu admițerea.
- Absolvenții altor facultăți vor depune la dosar adeverință de la facultatea absolvită în care să se menționeze numărul semestrelor și finanțarea de la buget și numărul semestrelor în care a beneficiat de burse (studiu sau social).

Fig.56-57 - Poster and flyer about the Sacred Art Department (artistic concept by Assist.PhD. Bogdan Cojocca)

In a context of intricate fluctuations, rapid deconstructions and changes, in social, artistic and heritage preservation meaning, the Sacred Art remains an oasis of value recovery and continuity to human, spiritual, attitudinal and materially constructive improvement, every time enriching the tradition with the productive energy intake of each generation who understands its great purpose and is devoted to it.

**Bibliography:**

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- Melniciuc-Puică, I., 2014. *Mesajul Apocalipsei rescris în imagini (Revelation's message re-written in iconography)*. Iași: Ed. Vasiliana'98.
- photos from personal documentation of the Sacred Art Department
- <http://teologie.uaic.ro/main/selectednews/452/general>

