

# **Peace, Passion and Virtue: Basic Concepts Present in the Theology of Saint Gregory Palamas and Elements for a Catechetical Philosophy**

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## **Abstract:**

*In the context of the proper understanding of the role of modern catechesis in the progress of the modern world, we cannot dispense from the analysis of the line of thinking and doing that the Holy Fathers have imposed over time. This study analyses the three fundamental concepts that are found in the sermons of Saint Gregory Palamas and which prove the close connection between the theology of the hesychast teacher and his pastoral activity. This close connection is a model for the contemporary catechetical philosophy. The reality of the current catechesis is not fundamentally different than the one which has been configuring throughout various historical periods. The form has probably evolved or regressed. The more or less emphasis on the human intervention in deciphering godlike realities has made the regress or evolution of the report to patristic theology to oscillate. I have chosen three concepts - peace, passion and virtue - because they represent the communicating bridge between the theoretical conceptualization and classification of living and the daily reality of this living. We shall not analyse them from the point of view of their moral definition, but we shall connect them to a larger framework of a patristic catechetical philosophy. It is much spoken, and has always been spoken, of the spiritual life developing within these three concepts transposed into reality, and it is very important to see the manner in which Saint Gregory Palamas manages to prove that they cannot remain only at the stage of mere theoretical display, but they are vital for an authentic Christian living, living with the purpose of revealing what we could call the non-shielded reality, lacking the distortion of the surreal, phantasm, the lack of the concrete.*

**Keywords:** *Palamas, catechetical, theology, peace, virtue*

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### 1. Peace: Sign of an Objective Reality

In the 17<sup>th</sup> Homily, Saint Gregory Palamas introduces his listeners to the understanding of the symbolism of the eighth day. The entire creation confesses about the beauty and the greatness of the Creator, and this beauty and greatness attract men in the anagogical understanding of the meaning of Creation. The eighth day, the day of perfection, is the day when the entire symbolism of the celebrations of the Old Testament are concentrated. It is the day of resurrection, the day of the renewal of Creation, an interrupted and endless day of stepping into the eternity of God. The prefigurations of this day are fulfilled in the reality of this opening to wards a new meaning. As French philosopher Michel Henry stated,

any human word makes the same thing, not offering us what it names but in a pseudo-presence, in such a manner that, as long as it exists only in this nomination and through it, the thing named does not really exist (Henry 2007: 302).

The reality of the eighth day, reality helping man detach himself from the pseudo-reality valued as existence, is the space that Saint Gregory Palamas also proposes as existential paradigm. It is not the humanly circumscribed word that can offer the genuine understanding of this objective reality. The circumscribed word can be, at the most, a bearer of meaning and an indicator of this meaning, but it cannot, on itself, referred in a real manner to the targeted object. The focus on the direction of this paradigm opens up to the faithful seeker the perspective of the real meeting with Christ, the one real bringer of peace:

Get close to Him and enter with faith in His room as in a heavenly place, which has inside it the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost. Then sit together with the One living in it, stay with Him as long as you can and speak with Him about God and about holy things, asking questions and humbly learning, asking through prayer for His help. As, if you do so, Christ will come to you too, I know it; and He shall bring **peace** inside the reflection of your soul and shall increase your faith, and He shall grant you strength, and shall seat you when the time comes, together with the chosen ones, in the kingdom of heaven (Sfântul Grigorie Palama, translated by Coresciuc 2019: 236).

Peace, a gift of the sincere meeting with Christ, is the basic concept in the hesychast living. The one “touched” by the wing of peace understand reality in a manner above understanding: speaking, based on

the strength, of holy things, asking existential questions, catching a glimpse of the answers, the capacity of humble understanding (this study does not propose to expand on this subject, which could however constitute, in the future, a serious reflection topic: to what extent the understanding of reality leads man towards humility and not towards a Lucifer exaltation? To what extent does the sacrament of the eighth day, revealing and of the sacrament of Creation not become, in the researcher's mind and intelligence, a simple devalued paradigm for the understanding of the progress of the world?) The overlap between the created and the uncreated plane of existence configures the entire field of man-God relationship, disadvantaging the screening that could intervene after a defective understanding of this type of relationship:

Christianity proceeds to a reversing of the concept of reality, as the one of action. Tearing it away from the external being as the process of objectifying which leads to it, Christianity place action in its place, where doing means making an effort, suffering, agonizing, and this until the suffering of this torment is converted into the joy of satisfaction (Henry 2007: 245).

Internal peace gives man the capacity for war and external anxiety exactly because this peace is the mark of the overlap between the created-uncreated planes. Hesychast theology does not speak of an indifferent, Nirvanic peace, but speaks about the peace founded on the safe reality of the relationship with Christ. The mixture between the created-uncreated planes is beneficial for man's development as a receiver of the uncreated energy impossible to touch only in the plane of created reality.

The objectification process, about which Michel Henry speaks, is actually the process of entering into the screening of reality, or in other words into the already screened reality, into the apparently objective manoeuvre space, but which, is actually a created space, developed, maintained and set out by surreal projections. The purely exterior existence, lacking the real peace brought by Christ, pushes man towards an existential singling out, lacking the landmarks of the genuine existence:

If God had not been the Personal Being, nor we, His image, could have penetrate in the hypostatical form of the being, even our personality would not have been more than a surface phenomenon. But in the virtue of the fact that the person in us is born in a prayer above nature, before the Face of the Living God - it is not subjected to the elements of the nature: it transcends the limits of Earth and

moves into the spheres of other dimensions. One and only, not pinpointed and not built with anything else, it is not subjected to arithmetical calculation (Sofronie 2015: 190).

Illuminating in this respect is the experience of several Fathers, who “by keeping their minds in hell” managed to not despair and to built an existence - concentrated exactly on the peace of Christ, the foundation for the success of the real existence.

In the 61<sup>st</sup> Homily, Saint Gregory Palamas offers a description of this peace brought by Christ. It has a threefold reference and it refers to the peace with God, to the peace with oneself and peace with others. The reconciliation with God offers the possibility to reconcile with oneself and with others: “Living in line with the commandments we reach peace, meaning by making peace with ourselves, with the others and with God” (Sfântul Grigorie Palama, *Omilia 61: 9*, my own translation, not published yet). Taking upon oneself and fulfilling the commandments is the edifying and fundamental action of reaching peace with God, from which peace with oneself and peace with thy neighbour naturally arises. The screened pseudo-reality vanishes and its place is taken by the objective reality of the full existence:

Thus, making peace with ourselves, subjecting our body to the spirit and choosing a living based on the consciousness and having our inner world of thoughts move with decency and in harmony (Sfântul Grigorie Palama, *Omilia 61: 9*, my own translation, not published yet).

The inner world needs this objectivity. It is not that objectification about which Michel Henry reminded us of, but it is the objectification referring to the restoration of the ontological order.

Peace is a constitutive element of this ontological order, because it is the gift of the uncreated existential plane. Man does not set order in his depth using purely human means. He uses, actually needs, an ontological need, the peace that Christ granted to those who take upon the process of adjustment and adherence to the objective, non-screened reality. The decency and harmony of the inner world of thoughts is essential and it helps the man seeking the meaning of reality to not lose himself in the wildwood of the whirling of searches lacking axiology. The same Michel Henry states for this purpose:

The human condition does not let itself be defined only by the opposition between the invisible and the visible, understood as an opposition between myself and the world and identified with it. In the bosom of the invisible an abyss is opened, a new report is being instituted, the Myself does not report to the world and the others anymore, does not report only himself in the concealment of his thoughts and actions. This concealment is subjected to the gaze of God. In this manner, by this gaze that discovers him, discovering it at the same time to God, man is connected to Him in this inner relationship now defining his reality (Henry 2005: 38).

The exteriority of reporting to another reality, lacking illusion, is the defining line of Christian living. Acquiring peace cannot be understood outside this exteriority. The contemporary catechetical philosophy does not have the right to propose other activity coordinates than the ones which directly report to the exteriority of the relationship. Inner peace is born not from the exclusive focus on oneself. This focus tears apart the duality of the relationship, enclosing man into the tight circle of the reality that he himself builds. The paradox of exteriority is that it leads man from oneself towards the exterior-God and only after he had had the experience of the otherness and of exteriority, he becomes capable to revert to himself, to re-enter himself, but this time in an endeavour enriched with the objective reality of the Other.

It is what Saint Gregory Palamas states about God, seen as an objective reality bringing the inner normality and innate. “As the entire work of His arrival is peace and it has climbed down with us on earth, leaving heavens” (Sfântul Grigorie Palama, *Omilia 61:10*, my own translation, not published yet). God is, as the hesychast teacher states taking over the words of the Scripture, “the fountain of peace.” The text from *Ephesians 2,14*, interpreted by Saint Gregory in this passage of the Homily is also clarifying for this purpose: “As He is our peace, He who has made from the two one, crashing down the middle wall of partition, dissolving through the cross enmity and sowing peace into our souls.” The exteriority of the relationship, the awareness of the otherness, are actually sure paths for understanding the work of the Embodiment, the reality of the crucifixion, the beauty of the Resurrection, moments of maximum reality, which do not leave room for pietist introversion or for an individualistically manifested exuberance.

The cross breaking down the middle wall is the “instrument” of objectification, of coming out of the tight, and more often illusive, reality,

of the tight circle and entering into parameters of the concrete reality. As the entire Old Testament is a shadow and a symbol of the New Testament, so the reality which is not potentiated to its true value, but which however, does not digress from the path of the Truth, is not yet a genuine taste of exteriority. The genuine fulfilment, the genuine impartation of peace is done only by this undertaking of the Other as a factor of ontological foundation of the existence:

Let that no one ever lack the sight of God, not fall out of the godlike glory which is sent from Him, but reuniting with everyone and getting together in one through reconciliation with each other according to God, though the one love and union we shall have in our midst, according to His sweet promise, our Lord Jesus Christ Who makes our hard living of this life easy (Sfântul Grigorie Palama, *Omilia a 61: 12*, my own translation, not published yet).

The insistence with which Saint Gregory Palamas comes back on the “peace” and on the “reconciliation” is representative for understanding the pastoral guidance that the hesychast teacher has always had during his pastorate in Thessaloniki. The historical context of the 14<sup>th</sup> century leaves us to understand that the hardships of the apparently objective realities were not amongst the most insignificant. However, the peace acquired following the experience of the relationship exteriority remains a constant in the hesychast theology of Saint Gregory.

The awareness of exteriority and of otherness leads man towards another conclusion (in which the concept of “peace” is also fundamental): that of the unity of human nature. No one can deny the fact that the entire bimillenary history of Christianity was marked by centrifugal trends and actions, which endeavoured to break this unity of nature and to cause centres of interest torn away from the exteriority of the relationship with God. The logical question emerging in such contexts of deviations is: how should one react, endeavouring to maintain peace, but also the objectivity of exteriority (abdicating from this desideratum would push us into heresy, which is actually a pseudo-reality, imaginary, which does not preserve almost nothing from the initial real)? We propose a reflection and analysis of the following text, which also belongs to Saint Gregory Palamas. It represents a concentrated image of the correct positioning of Saint Gregory before the danger of heresy (thus, before the risk of the de-objectification of reality), but also before the danger of the destruction of the unity of human nature that we mentioned above:

Quite accurate it was to not even accept any discussion [However, the discussion did take place. The confession of truth involves and obliges to the availability of dialogue! Thus, the risk of the ghettoization of the Truth emerges, which could be synonymous with “hiding the light under a bushel”], if you do not remove the annex from the Symbol of faith. Only after you shall remove the annex, then we shall seek whether the Spirit proceeds or not from the Son. [...] (Not even our forerunners did not add something to the Creed n.n.) as together with the rightful faith they also reached for a common peace, as many times they got together in assemblies and they were in consensus with the Primates of old Rome as well throughout time. We must not take into consideration at all the arrogance of the current Pope, as we do not need due to his fault or others who have come to deny those great and large in numbers [Saint Gregory Palamas recognizes the role played by the Western Christianity before the schism. The holiness and Orthodoxy of the West of the first millennium should be an impulse for the contemporary theologian dialogue. As long as a dogmatic compromise cannot be reached and it is insisted on the awareness of the “*missionary dialogue*”, I believe that no reach to the Orthodox ecclesiology is executed. Ecclesiological deformations that took place in the Roman-Catholic Church, as well as the extreme dilutions from the Protestant cults must not be an impediment in confessing the truth. This fact is very visible especially in the Orthodox parishes in the diaspora, where often, without an invasive presence, the Orthodox Church is beginning to become a more and more important landmark for Christians of other confessions, receiving in its bosom, in a marvellous manner and in rhythm not to be neglected, Heterodox Christians who have chosen to embrace the true faith. These conversions would not, however, have been possible without the presence of the Orthodox Church in less classical spaces of existence and in dialogues with the Heterodox. “The promotion of the unity of Christians” must, therefore, be understood as an open invitation from the Orthodox Church addressed to the Heterodox for the purpose of knowing the undiluted truth.] who have ended with a happy ending the holy life and in many ways martyred for God (in the Twilight n.n.) (Sfântul Grigorie Palama, translated by Chivu, 2005: 85; also see p. 173).

Peace is thus valued, without giving up the rightful confession of the Truth. The fight of Saint Gregory Palamas is one that has as purpose the centrifuging and change of reference poles, but it is a fight reaching towards the understanding and undertaking of the objective Truth (undeniable mark of objective exteriority), but also maintaining the balance in relation with the exteriority in the “created” plane of existence. In other words, the confession of Truth is always accompanied by the desire to not tear apart the unity of nature. And if the heretics are refuted and condemned, this does not happen with the purpose of an attack to

one's person, but it represents a prophylactic action both for the protection of the accurate reception of the Truth, and for maintaining peace, guarantee for the unity of nature.

Peace is thus the inner state which confirms the health of spiritual living, as it does not report to its own self, but it is the result of the awareness of otherness and the exteriority of existence.

## **2. Passion: What Type of Reality?**

Patristic theology grants a highly important place to the work of the mind. The mind is the one that could manage passionate movements, but at the same time, the mind is the one that could build delusive planes of existence. I did not randomly inserted into this study the three concepts in this order: peace, passion, virtue. The chain is logical if we take into account the steps of existence and the report of these steps to the concrete reality or the illusory reality. Peace is built on the ground of the fight with passions and in an attempt to acquire virtues, but it is, at the same time the *background* of these fights. For the Fathers, hesychia was the background on which the entire philosophy of the fight with sin was interlaced, and each victory in this fight with sin amplified the background of the hesychia. The mind working on this background of calm begins to discern the prime plane of existence, the "real" reality:

When the duplicity of the emergence offered any item a double appearance, in such a manner as one of them contained reality, the other one being nothing more than a double inconsistency and void, a criterion is mandatory if we can decide after all where the appearance is and where the reality is, and so that we could identify this decision. Due to the fact that every appearance has for itself the efficiency of its emergence, it is a phenomenological given with the same title as the other one (Henry 2007: 274).

Who can offer man the instruments necessary for this choice? Who can help him understand how much of the reality, which for him is the basis of living, is genuinely "real" and how much of it is built based on the imagination assaulted by stimuli targeting the perversion of the clear perception? The efficiency of the emergence, in the case of the world governed by passions, is a reality that cannot be contested. We live, we move, develop, interrogate in a world of uncertain values, in a world where axiology creates existential angsts. The loss of landmarks, the enclosure into a tight circle of the immediate perception, the lack of



authentic interrogations are proofs that we reach the threshold of the “real” reality with difficulty.

The fear of the non-illusory reality is a constant in the psychology of modern man:

I had learned from some young girls that it is not right to look into the mirror after midnight because you shall grow old faster. Despite my efforts during the day which did not have any other purpose than the frightening of a future old age, i do not know what strange force, above my will, pushed me to look into the mirror exactly at midnight, on purpose, when everyone was asleep in the house. I would turn on the pink nightstand lamp and sit in front of its silvery waters. I would sit transfixed, looking at myself and lurking. I waited to grow old with a perverse carnality. Then i got into bed with the terror that over the night I would grow wrinkles around the eyes, “crow’s feet”, or that my face, eyelids would fall and that I would wake up with the face of a sad clown (Popescu 2007: 151).

The text of Simona Popescu is revealing for understanding the race of the “real” reality, perceived most often as a hideous reality, compliant with the standards, fallen from the perfection imposed by the illusory reality. The fear that this reality, actually the one genuine one, could bring significant changes to the given of the human nature pushing man towards the desperate act of changing by any means his condition. The mirage of the mirror, the mirage of the mastery of the nature, the mirage of the possibility to avoid the natural order of things (which is also translated through the fear of getting old) are as many signs that modern man tries to deny the correct relation to the “real” reality.

The mind needs what the Fathers call *judgement*, the only instruments that makes realities to not be confused: illusory reality and the “real” reality. Passion builds the universe of a pseudo-reality, illusory one, and this pseudo-reality is perceived by the mind that cannot discern as the only form of reality. Hedonism, the uninterrupted race after the satisfaction of pleasure, the invented need, the desacralization of space and time, the conversion of axiology (or better said, its perversion) are signs that man invests very much emotion into the faith that the illusory, potentiated by sin, is the only reality, unique in its manifestations and originator of the feeling of bolting into the reality. The standards imposed to this pseudo-reality, standards that many times are not compliant with the normal of human nature, cause tensions, expectation, desires, passions

more and more colourful and more fallen from the ontological of man and its capacities to bear the paradoxes of existential illusions.

The mind not discerning the realities is subjected to this huge pressure of seeking a non-illusory positioning. Saint Gregory Palamas is highly firm when positioning against the illusory reality:

That is why we, revolting against this «law of sin», remove it from our body and introduce the vigilance of the mind, by which we make laws both for each power of the soul and for the organs of the body, each as it should. To the senses, we impose what and how much [Saint Gregory refers here to the object and limit of perception, which can be deceiving if not reporting to the non-illusory reality] to perceive, and the work of this law is called “restraining”. On the passionate (passional) side of the soul we insert the best manner of being, which bears the name of “love”. However, by (this law) it the rational (reasoning) side is also made better, throwing away all that prevents the judgement from aspiring and climbing toward God. And this part of the law we call “watchfulness”. The one who has cleaned his body by restraining, the one, who by godlike love has made his urge and desire a spring of virtues, the one who has presented his mind to God cleaned through prayer, that one shall acquire and see in himself the grace promised to those clean of heart. That person can say with Paul that “God, the One who said that the world shall shine light from darkness, He shone into our hearts, towards the enlightening of the consciousness of the grace of God, on the face of Christ” (Sfântul Grigorie Palama, *Triada II.1.2*, my own translation, not published yet).

The passion clouds the mind and helps in building parallel universes. The mind mastering over passions, and especially over *the passionate (passional) side of the soul* manages to restraint from the temptation of dispersion. Dispersion offers “the existential ballast” extremely harmful in the configuration of a living as close as possible to the desideratum of our nature.

The illusion of an autonomous life, torn away from the reality and the ontology of human nature can be suscitated only in the race after the illusion of the pleasure. The ghettoization of the Truth can lead to extreme attitudes that are connected exactly of the manner in which the Truth is received and connected to an objective reality. Thus, the passion of obsession and of confiscating the Truth in a biased manner tears apart the one engaged in this attitude from the Truth of the unity of human nature, nature torn apart by the centrifugal tendencies of diluting the Truth, but unitary in the entirety of its ontology. In the context of recent attitudes regarding the Crete Synod, we state that the desire to seek the

unity of Christians must be based on the Orthodox teaching of the reality of the face of God present in each representative of the human nature. Thus, we can justify, without slipping into ideologist utopias, the unifying search proposed by the controversial phrase of the Synod: “the restoration of the unity of Christians”. The phrase needs, however, an additional explanation, which could very well be found in the wording of His Eminence Anastasios Yannoulatos:

While the Christian attitude is very critical regarding other religions as organic systems and units, Christians are meant to be full of understanding, respect and love to the persons living in the atmosphere of different religions and ideologies, as the human person, even if its religious concepts and convictions are erroneous, it did not lose its godly origin. Being created “in the image of God”, each person “is our neighbour” (Yannoulatos 2003: 183).

The restoration of the unity of Christians does not entail a unity founded on giving up the thoroughness of the truth preached. However, the ontology of the person does not allow us to recognise that human nature suffers because of the tearing apart and of the lack of unity. For this purpose, the episode of the meeting between Saint Gregory Palamas and the Arabs, during his Ottoman captivity, is telling. This episode can constitute a solid argument for understanding the phrase in the Synod document, much more since the fragment in question presents the wish of the hesychast hierarch for unity, and not only an Intra-Christian unity, but a general unity, regarding the entire human nature, certainly without not even the slightest dilution of the creed of faith and without the slightest attitude of compromise regarding the revealed truth:

To this, however, Christians who happened to be there, seeing the Turks with anger, signalled me to stop my word. I, however, (Saint Gregory Palamas n.n.) trying to bring some joy, smiling to them, I told them again: “If we could agree in our words, then we would have only one teaching”. And one of them (the Turks) said: “A time shall come when we shall agree with each other”. To this I consented and I wished to them that that time shall come sooner. But why did I say so to people who are now living based on another faith than they shall have then? I consented because I remembered the words of the Apostle that in the name of Jesus Christ all knees will be bent and all tongues will confess that God is Jesus Christ into the grace of God the Father [Philippians 2, 10-11]; and this shall without fail be at the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (Sfântul Grigorie Palama, translated by Ică jr. 2009: 588-589). [Here we have another proof of the need for a clear anthropological consciousness! Saint Gregory Palamas does not refuse the dialogue exactly with the idea of *re-acquiring a lost*

*unity*. The acceptance of the dialogue involved ABSOLUTELY NO COMPROMISE from the rightful faith, but moreover, the availability to a dialogue sensitized the Ottomans more].

The passion of the truth of faith in the context of a tearing apart from the missionary consciousness may give rise to certain extremist manifestations harmful to the act of preaching itself. Saint Gregory Palamas had drastically scorned heresy, but not from a biased urge, but exactly with the idea of saving the unity of nature. Any other perspective gives rise to extremist tendencies, which do nothing more than monopolize the Truth, forgetting that the Truth itself is not circumscribed and that it is proposed to all.

### **3. Virtue: Restoration of the Lost Reality**

If peace is the *background* of hesychast living, the acquisition of virtues is the *manifestation* of this living. As I was saying, peace and hesychast calm do not represent the land for a Nirvanic dormition. Virtue is weaved with hesychia and any change to the just report between these leads to regrettable derivations. We believe that it is in this point that we hit a major challenge addressed both to the contemporary catechesis and to the philosophy sketching the frameworks of modern catechesis: understanding the stake and role of hesychia in discovering the “real” reality. Any change of focus and any re-positioning towards the theology of the Fathers may lead to pastoral disasters that cannot be quantified either very easily or immediately. Activism, the obsession of the “project”, the obsession of using levers from the created world can be destructive for the real understanding of spiritual living:

However, acquiring God in oneself, spending time with God in cleanliness, getting mixed with the complete unalloyed light, as it is possible for the human nature, is not possible if, apart from the cleanliness by virtue, we do not come out of ourselves, or rather rising above ourselves, rejecting together with the awareness of all that is sensitive, and rising above reasoning, thoughts and expertise/knowledge that come from it, becoming thus whole of the immaterial and intellectual (noeros) work of the prayer, learning of the incognizance above knowledge and filling ourselves with the beauty above brightness of the Spirit, to see in an unseen manner the privileges of the nature of the eternal age (Sfântul Grigorie Palama, *Triada I.3.42*, own translation).

The tearing away from the illusion of the world, of the illusion of the counterfeit reality is absolutely necessary for the purpose of entering and getting forward into the depth of godly mysteries. Activism pins man to the things of the created world, giving him the feeling that this level, the created one, is the only one that can determine both inner change and the change of the world in its entirety. The exaggerated focus, often met in the Orthodox catechesis as well, oriented towards means, methods, techniques, projections, scheduling can constitute a problem when one loses the deep meaning of the theology of the Fathers, theology which does not pursue efficiency at the level of the world, but the deepening into the sacramental secret of God. The acquisition of God, about which Saint Gregory Palamas speaks, should be the basis of any catechetical project: “The casting of what that is possible” represents a rise beyond the borders of the created world, a transgression of our own reality and a reporting to the exteriority of the God above understanding, exteriority which, paradoxically, reveals us the true internalness and offers us genuine instruments for understanding this hesychast internalness (which is filled with the work of grace, in a solitude not focused on oneself but, again paradoxically, on the relationship with the Other). A too much focus on the informal catechesis risks to screen quite fast the entire hesychast theology, which does not operate with the sufficiency of the mark and concept, but exceeds into the world of meanings and of realities. Cleanliness through virtue is, therefore, based on the sayings of Saint Gregory Palamas, only a layer of feeling this world of meanings. The entire life of the Church helps in the configuration of the background necessary for the discovery of the Living God. The imbalance tending to emphasize only the informal part, or the activist one, risks to steal the beauty of the freedom of discovering God in the manner in which the Fathers have. The words of Emil Cioran revealing to an extent the institutionalization that the “obsession of the project” may develop, institutionalization that can suffocate the trodden path of certain experiences detached from the “project activism”,

It is not useless to remind of the influence of these circumstances around the nowadays youth. An early ageing, a spirit of boredom towards the old forms of life, an uncertainty and a premonition of a tragic shattering, a melancholic seriousness, all these have taken the place of this naive spontaneity, of the burst towards irrationality, which characterizes the genuine youth. Quickly stating the

social problem, the individual is removed from the usual framework of life, he is thrown into the vortex and collapse. Before this, the youngsters did not even have the social problem. Nowadays, the insistence with which it is stated is an element of ageing (Cioran 1990: 41).

### Conclusions

Ageing in different forms, incapacity to observe which forms are genuinely leading towards the Fathers' experience and which are not, the desire to quantify and to project efficiency, are all the same temptations of Postmodernism, that modern catechesis has the duty to observe and to shunt. The peace of the hesychast theology, the acquisition of the godly grace, maintaining of youth in the fight against sin and passion, are elements making the contemporary person understand what is the "real" reality and help him/her in breaking away from the toils of the illusory pseudo-realities. Exteriority and otherness are planes of the discovery of the self-awareness. Self-awareness which really observes the risks of enclosing into a selfish internalness shall always open to the exteriority of the Other, the only manner of discovering the genuine internalness. The challenge regarding contemporary catechesis is thus highly interesting, and we consider that the abdication from this mission (that of attempting to give up the life-giving theology of the Fathers) can be avoided by the constant reference to the dynamism of the Patristic speaking about God.

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