

BOOK REVIEWS

Iuliu-Marius MORARIU, *Repere ale autobiografiei spirituale din spațiul ortodox în secolele XIX și XX. Ioan de Kronstadt, Siluan Athonitul și Nicolae Berdiaev*, Editura Lumen, Iași, 2019, ISBN: 978-973-166-544-3, 535 pp.

Romanian theology and cultural space have recently enjoyed the appearance of a remarkable book with a pioneering character, *Repere ale autobiografiei spirituale din spațiul ortodox în secolele XIX și XX. Ioan de Kronstadt, Siluan Athonitul și Nicolae Berdiaev* (*Landmarks of Spiritual Autobiography in the Orthodoxy in the 19th and 20th Centuries. John of Kronstadt, Silouan the Athonite and Nikolai Berdyaev*). The author is young hieromonk Maxim (Iuliu-Marius) Morariu.

Analysing the content, we can say that the work goes beyond the limits of a scholastic approach, interdisciplinarity being the dominant note. Scientific rigour blends harmoniously with the approaches of Orthodox spirituality and the spiritual life, and the investigations of a philological, historiographical, psychological, philosophical and even hermeneutic nature widen the addressability of the work. The formal organization of the paper offers a special balance to the entire content, but also an approach accessible to anyone, even the uninformed ones. The complex approach to the content of the paper provides bridges between the great Christian spiritualities, but also between Eastern spirituality and the culture, proving to have an ecumenical openness in the deepest sense of the word.

The paper takes on typologies and working models from literature, philosophy and history to investigate the main spiritual autobiographies in the Orthodox space in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The following can be identified as working methods: deductive, inductive, analytical and narrative-expository method. All these methods and typologies will render the well-deserved place of spiritual autobiographies in the space of Orthodox theology, a well-defined place, in fact, in religious literature and Catholic and Protestant theology.

The great merit of the work is to clearly differentiate the memorialistic text with all its characteristics from the autobiographical text. In this

sense, the author undertakes a historical excursion of what the spiritual autobiographical genre supposes situating its beginning in the apostolic epoch, through chapter 12 of the *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, of the Holy Apostle Paul, subjecting the text to an ample and pertinent analysis. Thus, the opinion supported by most specialists that Augustine would be the founder of this religious literary genre is dismantled. Next, the author presents the evolution of the spiritual autobiographical genre, highlighting the specifics that it had or took following certain influences, in different Christian spaces. Moreover, the author clearly traces the particularities of the spiritual autobiographical genre in the Orthodox space, giving the example of the three works from the 19th-20th centuries mentioned in the title. Placing these writings in the context of the epoch leads to a deep understanding of what they represent in defining the Orthodox spiritual autobiographical genre.

As for the three spiritual autobiographies approached by the author in the present research, they are each analysed enjoying a complex approach not only regarding their framing in the context of the era. The analysis also concerns a relation between the texts, the biographies of the authors and other works that deal with these aspects, and it points out some moments and personalities that marked their lives. In addition, in his analysis the author highlights the recurring themes of the texts, the motivation of their writing, the authors' sources of inspiration, while creating bridges with other Christian spiritualities. He highlights the similarities between the texts of the investigated authors and those of other authors of spiritual autobiographies (Augustine, Teresa of Avila, Dag Hammarskjöld, John Wesley, Paisius Velichkovsky, etc.), their influences where appropriate, or the coincidences of the message, common reasons and messages.

The work fulfils all the coordinates of a scientific research of the highest quality. The bibliographic references come to strengthen our statement and give the work an academic grade. Both from a quantitative point of view, but especially qualitatively, the bibliographic notes reveal the maturity and depth of the author and hide an impressive bibliography both from the Romanian cultural-theological space, but especially from the Western English and French. The generous bibliographic palette used by the author includes: primary patristic and liturgical sources, autobiographical works, syntheses and histories dedicated to the autobiographical from different geographical and cultural spaces, specialized dictionaries, literary and journalistic monographs, studies and articles dedicated to the approached subject, as well as Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant theological works or treatises. The selection of information from all this literature is admirable,

as well as the connection of the entire material to the obvious purpose of the work.

As for the usefulness of the scientific approach undertaken by our author, we can say that it has a double utility, both practical and scientific. The practical utility consists in offering models much closer to the profile of contemporary man, with practical solutions to existential problems and questions like those faced by the author of the autobiographical text. The scientific utility lies in the interdisciplinary approach, which leads to pastoral, moral, and mystical values, at the same time constituting a source of inspiration for the authors of literary or encomiastic texts and other similar works.

Genuine monograph dedicated to the spiritual autobiography genre in Eastern area, the work of Father Maxim Morariu offers a dense overview of the phenomenon of Orthodox spiritual autobiography during 19th and 20th centuries, the characteristics, scope and its influence, but also a bridge to other spiritualities, through the common elements found here. Romanian theology felt the need for such an approach, hence the methodological need for this work, which can be a paradigm of approach for future research and monographs.

Protosyngellos Lecturer Dr. Nicolae M. TANG

Michael F. BIRD, *Jesus the Eternal Son: Answering Adoptionist Christology*, Eerdmans Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 2017, xv + 155 pp.

Michael Bird is currently Academic Dean and Lecturer in Theology and New Testament at Ridley College (Melbourne). He has earned the reputation of being a “heavy hitter” in the area of New Testament and Jesus’ divinity studies. This recent book of his is a contribution in the latest field.

Many students of the apostolic age assert that the Savior Jesus Christ did not claim for Himself the attribute of divinity. It was only after several centuries of theological reflection that the Church would come to consider Christ as God. Thus primary Christology would see in Jesus a man of righteous life who is adopted as the son of God. In this book Michael Bird examines the texts on which this theory is based and demonstrates that