

TEOLOGIA

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The review publishes studies, translations from Holy Fathers, notes, comments and book reviews.

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Methods, Requirements and Perspectives in the Theological Research

The neo-patristic theology of the last century made a substantial contribution to overcoming the patterns of scholastic theology, by emphasising the ascetic-mystical and ecclesiastical patristic theology and its spiritual significance for the contemporary man. This reversal was done in several directions which aimed the ecclesial interpretation of Revelation and experience: 1) historical-patristic-ecclesiological, 2) mystic-Palamite-Philokalic, 3) eucharistic-liturgical-ecclesiological (Ioan I Ică jr.). The Orthodox theologians of the twenty-first century have to continue the neo-patristic synthesis that theologians of the twentieth century initiated and deepened it, but did not complete it. The big challenge of the orthodox neo-patristic theology of the XXI century is how it will manage to be understood through a paradoxical and interdisciplinary methodology. There is also a challenge to substantially contribute to overcoming the confusion and diverse reductionism of contemporary man so that it acquires not only an ecclesial and unitary-dialogic relevance, but also a social and practical one.

In the Orthodox theology, the method comes out from of the paradoxical structure of Revelation, of theology and of knowledge itself, being in correspondence to the theological, anthropological and cosmic dimension. The gnoseologic issue occupies an important place in the Orthodox theology, and it states that there is no separation between the natural and supernatural aspect of revelation, but a continuum. The same thing exists between cataphatic and apophatic, the true knowledge being achieved in the context of personal communion. This complementarity of the two dimensions of revelation – natural and supernatural, wishes to emphasise that the beings are not only rational, or only mysterious, but they are rational and mysterious at the same time. Thus, the natural and the supernatural can not be split into two successive or parallel levels. Starting from here, the

Orthodox theology pleads for a balanced and paradoxical approach, the relationship between cataphatic and apophatic being not of exclusion or cancellation, but of complementarity and mutual assumption. This synthesis between cataphatic and apophatic actually dissolves the old dilemma and separation between reason and experience, reason and mysticism, body and soul, spirit and word. It also shows that the vision of cataphatic and apophatic seen together, leads to an antinomic reality in which rationality and mystery coexist. Reason is a part of the integral knowledge while “faith” is a more comprehensive reality, including other criteria and dimensions than of the reason. The theandrim of the Orthodox theology opposes to the dichotomy between matter and spirit, form and essence, sign and reality.

The paradoxical structure of knowledge in Orthodox theology does not exclude the methods of scientific research that seeks to unravel the meaning of texts, but exceeds them. In other words, these methods are useful in discerning the historical, literary, linguistic, semantic, and pragmatic meaning of the text to study, without being sufficient in discerning the spiritual, spiritual and ecclesial meaning. Thus, in the theological research in general there are several methods such as: 1) historical-critical method comprising: textual criticism (the text reconstruction) literary criticism (identification of written sources), criticism / history of traditions (oral transmission of texts), critical / editorial history (the collection and re-draft of the text). By these methods, the text is researched especially in its diachronic and evolutionary aspect, for thus capturing its meanings. 1.1) The applicability of diachronic method aims to discover the meaning of the text and it has the following stages: 1.1.1. Textual criticism; 1.1.2. Literary criticism – it examines the text with reference to the written literary sources, 1.1.3 The history and criticism of forms and tradition – analysing the origin of the text derived from oral sources, 1.1.4. History and criticism of media outlets – it examines how the author created a unitary work. 2) Methods that complement the historical-critical area derived from modern linguistics, that take into account the synchronic aspect of text, not exclusively thou (the linguistics of the text, structuralistic methodology, semantics, pragmatics). In the methodology of theological research, there is a distinction between the synchronic and diachronic aspect, so maintaining the unity of understanding the text requires the correlation between different research methods. They must not be understood as tools with mechanical application, but as “guidance” on how to search the text and dis-

Methods, Requirements and Perspectives in the Theological Research

cover its meanings. 2.1. The applicability of synchronous analysis method has the following phases: 2.1.1 Syntactic linguistic analysis – the study of the text according to the linguistic meanings used, 2.1.2. Semantic analysis – meaning of a word, phrase and narrative analysis; 2.1.3. Pragmatic analysis – it verifies the text-reader relation, the influence of the text on the reader; 2.1.4. Analysis of textual types – the study of literary genre of the text and the historical process the text passed through until its final form. All these analysis are derived from the relation sign-sign, sign– interpreter, sign-object, taking also into account the cultural environment of written texts. (Wilhelm Egger). The allegorical method focuses on the sacramental– liturgical dimension of the Church, where the Holy Trinity are present. In this respect, this method is a genuine liturgical and contemplative mistagogic designed to discern not only the data of Revelation, but also the spiritual power of the faith in mystical communion with the One revealed (Andrew Louth). In making theology the Church might exacerbate the rational aspect as a research method and this might lead to worshipping the concepts, that is a rigid, empty, and absent theology, irrelevant to the individual and community life. While we exacerbate the mystical aspect, there is the danger of idolisation, obscurantism and pietism.

The theology has its own methodology, indispensable to any personal – comunitarian and sacramental-ecclesial deepening. This does not mean an abdication of scientific research methods, but to outrun them in the experience and knowledge of the same Truth. Thus, the rational methods of theology research should be open to make theology an experience that helps finding insight and deeper meanings of Revelation. Making theology through experience must not ignore the historical and rational methods of research, which have their light. Although there is a distinction between them, there is no separation and no confusion.

The mentioned research methods are needed to achieve a scientific, historical, linguistic and rational vision that analyses the text spiritual / mystical / allegorical and ecclesial– liturgical meaning through the Fathers of the Church apophatic-cataphatic method. This blending of apophatic and cataphatic in the theological research testifies the Truth experienced and expressed by theologians is not from the world even He is present, experienced and expressed in the world. Between the so-called “charismatic theology” and the so-called “scientific theology” there is no divorce or separation there, but a distinction and a perichoretic way to coexist, know-

ing being the same with being part of the Truth (Nikos Matsoukas). By the paradoxical method there will be a further study not only of phenomenology but of ontology too, as the objective truth is a Person or community of Persons, it is not something but Somebody.

Based on the paradoxical model of Christ's divine-human Person where the humanity was en-hypostasiated, the Orthodox theology acknowledges that this hypostatic union and how it is achieved is the absolute model of interrelations between theology and culture, faith and reason. These four attributes – undivided, inseparable, unmixed, unchanged – become the model of the paradoxical relationship between theology and culture, and between the rational and spiritual approach of theological research.

Starting from these considerations, any Manichean dualism or Nestorian separation or any Monophysitism that separates the human from the divine, taken individually – in terms of research methodology – become condemnable in light of the dogmatic formula of Chalcedon. This shows the union of divine and human in Christ as being undivided, inseparable, unmixed and unchangeable.

The interdisciplinary perspective in the theological research focuses not only on the rational-spiritual discerning of the Mystery, but also on the missionary and apologetic aspect affirming and proclaiming It in a globalised and secularised world. Considering the togetherness of holiness and genius, as an expression of the paradoxical relationship between reason and mystical experience, we might say that today's world needs a "sanctity that has genius" and that theological research needs a sanctity that has genius.

Cristinel Ioja

STUDIES AND ARTICLES

Michael Welker¹

Theologie und Recht

Zusammenfassung

Der folgende Beitrag will versuchen, historisch und systematisch grundlegende normative Zusammenhänge von Recht, Religion und humaner Moral in den abendländischen Überlieferungen und Kulturen freizulegen. Aus der Perspektive einer rechtsgeschichtlich und rechtsethisch interessierten Theologie wird ein Formenzusammenhang vor Augen gebracht, der zentrale Interdependenzen rechtlicher, religiöser und ethisch-moralischer Rationalitäten verstehen lässt. Wer diese Interdependenzen erfasst und durchdenkt, wird erkennen, dass die interdisziplinäre Zusammenarbeit und Auseinandersetzung zwischen Rechtswissenschaft und Theologie zumindest in unseren Kulturkreisen aufgrund gemeinsamer inhaltlicher und systematischer Entwicklungsgrundlagen auf Dauer unverzichtbar bleiben wird. Denn dieser Formenzusammenhang stellt geradezu ein Rückgrat unserer abendländischen Kultur dar: ein normativer Tiefenzusammenhang, der mit der mit der Rede von den „abendländischen Werten“ oft beschworen, aber kaum analytisch erfasst worden ist.

Stichwörter

Theologie, Rechtswissenschaft, Recht, humaner Moral, Menschentechte, abendländische Überlieferung

Es gibt viele interdisziplinäre Bezüge zwischen Rechtswissenschaft und Theologie. Das Staatskirchenrecht, heute auch Religionsverfassungsrecht genannt², und das Kirchenrecht erfordern unabdingbar die Zusammenar-

¹ Ph D., University of Heidelberg, maw.pnj@web.de.

² Christian Walter, Religionsverfassungsrecht. In vergleichender und internationaler Perspektive, Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen 2006; Hans Michael Heinig und Christian Walter, Staatskirchenrecht oder Religionsverfassungsrecht?: Ein begriffspolitischer Grundsatzstreit, Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen 2007.

beit beider Disziplinen.³ Der Themenkomplex der Menschenrechte, ob mit oder ohne naturrechtliche Begründungsbemühungen bearbeitet,⁴ lässt sich historisch gar nicht und systematisch nur schwer ohne Kooperation zwischen Rechtswissenschaft und Theologie erschließen. Aber auch Themenfelder wie Rechtsethik⁵, Friedenseethik⁶ oder Zivilgesellschaft und Zivilreligion⁷ können ohne Zusammenarbeit beider Fakultäten und ohne wechselseitiges Lernen kaum fruchtbar bearbeitet werden. Die Interdependenzen von Recht, Religion, Politik, Philosophie und Bildung sind in vielen Epochen der Menschheitsgeschichte evident und erfordern in ihrer historischen Rekonstruktion interdisziplinäre Zusammenarbeit. Klassiker in Rechtswissenschaft und Theologie, die sich wirkmächtig mit der jeweils anderen Disziplin befasst haben, laden zu immer neu lernender Interpretation ein. Unerschöpflich sind die Problem – und Themenfelder, in denen Juristen und Theologen sich gemeinsam in einem beide Seiten zugleich herausfordernden Erfahrungs –, Theorie – und Forschungsfeld betätigen können oder betätigen sollten.⁸

Was aber liegt diesen vielfältigen inhaltlichen Zusammenhängen und thematischen Überschneidungen zugrunde? Der folgende Beitrag will versuchen, historisch und systematisch grundlegende normative Zusammenhänge von Recht, Religion und humaner Moral in den abendländischen Überlieferungen und Kulturen freizulegen. Aus der Perspektive einer rechtsgeschichtlich und rechtsethisch interessierten Theologie wird ein For-

³ Siehe dazu das Standardwerk Gerhard Rau, Hans-Richard Reuter, Klaus Schlaich (Hg.), *Das Recht der Kirche*, Bd. I-III, Kaiser: Gütersloh 1994-1997.

⁴ Karl Peter Fritzsche, *Menschenrechte. Eine Einführung mit Dokumenten*, UTB Schöningh 2004.

⁵ Wolfgang Huber, *Gerechtigkeit und Recht. Grundlinien christlicher Rechtsethik*, Gütersloher Verlag: Gütersloh 3. Aufl. 2006.

⁶ Wolfgang Huber u. Hans-Richard Reuter, *Friedenseethik*, Stuttgart 1990.

⁷ Wolfgang Vögele, *Zivilreligion in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Kaiser: Gütersloh 1994; Robert N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial*, 2nd ed. University of Chicago Press: Chicago 1992.

⁸ Die Weite des Themenspektrums allein in der europäischen Moderne können die folgenden Veröffentlichungen markieren: Christoph Strohm, *Calvinismus und Recht: Weltanschaulich-konfessionelle Aspekte im Werk reformierter Juristen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen 2008, und der aus einem Münsteraner juristisch-theologischen Doktorandenseminar hervorgegangene Band Werner Krawietz u. Michael Welker (Hg.), *Kritik der Theorie sozialer Systeme. Auseinandersetzungen mit Luhmanns Hauptwerk*, stw 996, Suhrkamp: Frankfurt 1992; 2. Auflage 1998.

Theologie und Recht

menzusammenhang vor Augen gebracht, der zentrale Interdependenzen rechtlicher, religiöser und ethisch-moralischer Rationalitäten verstehen lässt. Wer diese Interdependenzen erfasst und durchdenkt, wird erkennen, dass die interdisziplinäre Zusammenarbeit und Auseinandersetzung zwischen Rechtswissenschaft und Theologie zumindest in unseren Kulturkreisen aufgrund gemeinsamer inhaltlicher und systematischer Entwicklungsgrundlagen auf Dauer unverzichtbar bleiben wird. Denn dieser Formenzusammenhang stellt geradezu ein Rückgrat unserer abendländischen Kultur dar: ein normativer Tiefenzusammenhang, der mit der mit der Rede von den „abendländischen Werten“ oft beschworen, aber kaum analytisch erfasst worden ist.

Ich gehe aus von über 2500 Jahre alten biblischen Erkenntnissen über die systematische Verflechtung rechtlicher, ethisch-moralischer und religiöser Erkenntnisse und kultureller Errungenschaften. Vor knapp 2000 Jahren bezeichnet Matthäus im Neuen Testament als „das Wichtigste“, als das Schwerwiegende des Gesetzes „das Recht, das Erbarmen und den Glauben, die *pistis*“ (Mt 23,23). Tatsächlich enthalten die großen Gesetzeskorpora des Tanach, der alttestamentlichen Überlieferungen, – **das Bundesbuch** (Ex 20,22-23,33), **das Deuteronomium** (Dtn 4-26; 29f) **und die priesterschriftlichen Gesetze** (Ex 25-31; Lev 1-7; 11-26 und Num 1-3)⁹ – in unterschiedlichen Proportionen und Gewichtungen drei klar zu unterscheidende Gruppen von gesetzlichen Regelungen.

Es sind dies

1. Bestimmungen zur Grundlegung und zur Pflege des Rechts in der Regelung von Konflikten zwischen gleichgestellten Menschen (*the legal code of the law*);

2. Bestimmungen, die den routinemäßigen Schutz der Schwächeren und die systematische Wahrnehmung der Interessen der Schwächeren zum Ziel haben. Ich habe vorgeschlagen, diese Bestimmungen „Erbarmensgesetze“ zu nennen (*the mercy code of the law*).¹⁰

⁹ Weitere für „das Gesetz“ des Alten Testaments relevante Texte bieten die so genannten Gesetzespsalmen wie die Psalmen 1, 9 und 119; Jesus Sirach 24, Baruch 3 und natürlich auch der Dekalog, die zwei mal belegten „Zehn Gebote“ (Ex 20,2-17 und Dtn 5,6-21).

¹⁰ Michael Welker, „Security of Expectations. Reformulating the Theology of Law and Gospel“, in: *Journal of Religion* 66 (1986), 237-260; ders., „Recht in den biblischen Überlieferungen in systematisch-theologischer Sicht“, in: H.-R. Reuter u. a. (Hg.), *Das Recht der Kirche, Bd. I*, 1997, 390-414.

3. Regelungen, die den Kult, d.h. das öffentliche und allgemein anschlussfähige Verhältnis zu Gott, betreffen (*the cultic code of the law*).

Diese drei Gruppen von Bestimmungen lassen sich nicht einfach aufeinander zurückführen und reduzieren. Zu 1.: Die Rechtsbestimmungen gehen ursprünglich von einer Gemeinschaft gleichgestellter Personen aus und regeln, wie in Konfliktsituationen die Gleichstellung wieder herzustellen ist bzw. welche Ausgleichoperationen dazu nötig sind. Zu 2.: Die Erbarmensgesetze gehen vom Zusammenleben von gleichgestellte und nicht gleichgestellten Personen aus und bestimmen, welche Formen von Selbstzurücknahmen der Stärkeren zugunsten der Schwächeren erwartbar sind. Zu 3.: Die den Kult betreffenden Bestimmungen regeln – jedenfalls vordergründig betrachtet – die öffentlich koordinierte Kontaktaufnahme der Menschen mit Gott. Trotz ihrer Unterschiedenheit stehen die drei Gruppen von Bestimmungen in vielfältigen systematischen Zusammenhängen, die die erstaunlichen normativen Bindekräfte des Gesetzes bedingen.

Im Folgenden möchte ich einige dieser komplexen Zusammenhänge und die aus ihnen resultierenden normativen Bindekräfte erschließen. Dabei beziehe ich mich auf das so genannte “Bundesbuch” (Ex 20,22-23,19).¹¹ Die dabei zu gewinnenden Erkenntnisse können auch verständlich machen, warum „das biblische Gesetz“ (und seine säkularen Derivate) über weite Strecken der Kulturgeschichte hinweg nicht einfach als lästige religiös-moralische Zumutung, sondern als Regulativ freiheitlichen menschlichen Zusammenlebens angesehen worden sind.

Das Bundesbuch enthält in seinem Mittelteil eine Sammlung von Rechtssätzen zur Regelung von Konfliktfällen, die man “archaisches Recht” genannt hat (Ex 21,12-22,19). Diese Sammlung der Rechtssätze ist nach beiden Seiten hin umgeben von “Erbarmensgesetzen”, ihr vorausgehend von einem “Sklavengesetz“ (Ex 21,1-21,11) und ihr nachfolgend von einer Sammlung gesetzlicher Regulierungen zugunsten von akut und chronisch Schwächeren wie Witwen, Waisen, Armen und Fremden (Ex 22,20-23,12). Die Erbarmensgesetze wiederum werden am Beginn und am Ende des Bundesbuches gerahmt von Gesetzen, die den Kult, den

¹¹ Ein Teil der Forscher – die Diskussion ist unentschieden – will den Umfang bis 23,33 bestimmt wissen. Auch der lange herrschende Konsens, das Bundesbuch sei der älteste unter den biblischen Gesetzeskorpora, wird inzwischen problematisiert. Für die folgenden Überlegungen sind aber die entwicklungsgeschichtlichen Datierungen nicht von Belang.

Theologie und Recht

Gottesdienst im weiteren Sinne, betreffen (Ex 20,22-21,11 und 23,13ff).¹² In drei Abschnitten stelle ich diese drei Elemente des Gesetzes kurz vor, die sich auch als rechtliche, ethisch-moralische und religiöse Elemente des Gesetzes bezeichnen lassen.

I. Archaisches Recht

Die archaischen Rechtssätze im Zentrum des Bundesbuchs (Ex 21, 12ff) gehen offensichtlich von der Unterstellung einer Gemeinschaft gleichgestellter Personen aus und regeln die Wiederherstellung der Gleichstellung nach Konfliktsituationen durch eine öffentliche Rechtsprechung „im Tor“. Sie bestehen aus einem oft relativ differenziert ausformulierten Vordersatz, der die **“Tatbestandsdefinition”**, und einem Nachsatz, der die **“Rechtsfolgebestimmung”** bietet, beide durch die **“Wenn-so”-Formulierung** verbunden. Z.B.:

– Ex 21,33: „**Wenn** jemand eine Zisterne offen lässt oder wenn jemand eine Zisterne gräbt und nicht zudeckt und ein Rind oder ein Esel hineinfällt, **so** soll der Besitzer der Zisterne Ersatz leisten...“

– Ex 21,35f: „**Wenn** jemandes Rind das Rind eines anderen stößt, so dass es eingeht, **so** soll man das lebende Rind verkaufen und den Erlös aufteilen; auch das verendete Rind soll man aufteilen.“

Einer weit verbreiteten Ansicht in der Forschung zufolge war *“der kasuistische Rechtssatz¹³... ursprünglich eine Erzählung von einem Rechtsstreit und seiner Schlichtung”*.¹⁴ Durch Abstraktionsprozesse wird die Erfahrung einer wiederholt erprobten und bewährten Schlichtung auf die Ebene des Rechtssatzes gebracht. Die mehrfache Billigung

¹² Zum Bundesbuch allgemein: Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Das Bundesbuch (Ex 20,22-23,33). Studien zu seiner Entstehung und Theologie*, de Gruyter: Berlin / New York 1990; Cornelis Houtman, *Das Bundesbuch: Ein Kommentar*. DMOA 24, Leiden: Brill, 1997.

¹³ Zur Wendung „kasuistisches Recht“ s. Albrecht Alt, *Die Ursprünge des israelitischen Rechts* (1934), in: ders., *Zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel. Eine Auswahl aus den “Kleinen Schriften”*, hg. S. Herrmann, München 1979, 203-257; s.a. Ralf Rothenbusch, *Die kasuistische Rechtssammlung im ‘Bundesbuch’ (Ex 21,2–22,18–22,16) und ihr literarischer Kontext im Licht altorientalischer Parallelen*. AOAT 259, Münster: Ugarit, 2000, 408-73.

¹⁴ Hans Jochen Boecker, *Recht und Gesetz im Alten Testament und im Alten Orient* (NSB 10), Neukirchener: Neukirchen-Vluyn ². Aufl. 1984, 132f (zit.: Boecker).

der erzielten Regelung durch eine Gemeinschaft ist wohl maßgeblich. Ferner lassen schon die frühen Rechtssätze erkennen, dass neben die Bewährung durch wiederholte öffentliche Zustimmung auch das Interesse an angemessener Kalibrierung, Konsistenz und Stimmigkeit zwischen den verschiedenen Rechtssätzen tritt. So werden z.B. Viehdiebstahl und (durch Verkauf oder Verzehr des Viehs) vertuschter Viehdiebstahl unterschieden. Sie werden – wohl auch zur Abschreckung – durch unterschiedlich hohe Ausgleichsleistungen differenziert.¹⁵ Oder es werden Mord und Totschlag unterschieden und mit unterschiedlichen Ausgleichsoperationen geahndet (vgl. Ex 21,12-14).

In diesem sog. archaischen Rechtsdenken sind mehrere leitende Rechtsideen oder Rechtsprinzipien erkennbar.¹⁶ Dies wird besonders deutlich, wenn wir von der berühmten **Talionsformel** ausgehen (Ex 21,23-25). Im Falle von besonderen Verletzungen bei körperlichen Auseinandersetzungen wird die Recht sprechende Instanz angewiesen: *“Wenn ein Schaden entsteht, so sollst du geben Leben für Leben / Auge für Auge / Zahn für Zahn / Hand für Hand / Fuß für Fuß / Brandmal für Brandmal / Wunde für Wunde / Strieme für Strieme.”* Man hat das vielzitierte *“Auge um Auge, Zahn um Zahn”* fälschlich als Ausdruck eines **Vergeltungsdenkens** verstanden, das vom verletzten subjektiven Rechtsempfinden genährt wird, dessen Verlangen nach Ausgleich prinzipiell nicht zu befriedigen ist. Das *“Auge für Auge, Zahn für Zahn”* kann also – fälschlich – als eine Rache- und Vergeltungsanweisung gelesen werden, die, so betrachtet, geradezu ein Eskalationsprogramm für Sippenfehden und Dauerkrieg darstellt. In Wahrheit aber soll demgegenüber die Talionsformel die Dynamik und Eskalation von Rache und Vergeltung gerade bremsen. Sie zielt auf eine **Begrenzung** der Schädigung, auf eine Verhinderung gerade jeder Eskalation. *“Es geht darum, den durch die Schädigung ausgelösten Blutrachemechanismus auf ein Maß zu begrenzen, das das Überleben der betroffenen Gruppen ermöglicht... Die Eskalation der Vergeltung... soll durch die Anwendung der Talion verhindert werden. Man kann die Talionsformel deshalb paraphrasierend so wiedergeben: Nur ein Leben*

¹⁵ *„Findet man das Gestohlene, sei es Rind, Esel oder Schaf, noch lebend in seinem Besitz, dann soll er doppelten Ersatz leisten.“* (Ex 22, 3) – *„Wenn einer ein Rind oder Schaf stiehlt und es schlachtet oder verkauft, soll er fünf Stück Großvieh für das Rind oder vier Stück Kleinvieh für das Schaf als Ersatz geben.“* (Ex 22, 37).

¹⁶ Ich übernehme diese Ausdrücke von Josef Esser, Grundsatz und Norm in der richterlichen Fortbildung des Privatrechts, Mohr: Tübingen 2. Aufl. 1964.

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für ein Leben, nur **ein** Auge für ein Auge, nur **einen** Zahn für einen Zahn...”¹⁷ Damit wird sie zu einem wichtigen Schritt auf dem langen Weg zu humaneren Lösungen – etwa in Form von Kompensationszahlungen.¹⁸

Doch Strategien der Konfliktbegrenzung und Konfliktbeendigung allein erreichen noch nicht die Ebene rechtlicher Regelungen. Solche Konfliktbegrenzungen könnten auch durch brutale Einschüchterungsmaßnahmen erzielt werden, die dazu nötigen, sich resigniert mit dem Unrecht abzufinden. Auch eine “beruhigte Öffentlichkeit” allein ist noch kein Maß einer gelungenen rechtlichen Regelung, da die Öffentlichkeit bekanntlich mehr oder weniger wach und sensibel auf Konfliktfälle reagieren kann und ohne genauere Kriterien „Beruhigung“ weder von niedrigen Graden der Beunruhigung noch von resignativen Unterdrückungsempfindungen zu unterscheiden ist. Schließlich ist auch die irgendwie aktive Beteiligung der Öffentlichkeit an der Konfliktregulierung für sich genommen kein Kriterium für das Vorliegen einer rechtlichen Regelung. Selbst eine nach Erinnerung analoger Fälle und nach festen Gewohnheiten einen Konfliktfall zu allgemeiner Zufriedenheit beendigende Öffentlichkeit hätte eine rechtliche Regelung noch nicht erreicht. Eine solche Regelung, die einer rechtlichen nahe zu kommen scheint, hat wohl die bisher genannten Abstraktionsleistungen erbracht. Dennoch erreicht sie das Niveau des Rechts nicht; sie bleibt auf der Ebene der Konvention.¹⁹

¹⁷ Boecker, 152f.

¹⁸ S. dazu Konrad Schmid, *The Monetization and Demonetization of the Human Body: The Case of Compensatory Payments for Bodily Injuries and Homicide in Ancient Near Eastern and Ancient Israelite Law Books*, in: Jürgen von Hagen und Michael Welker (ed.s), *Money as God-Term? The Monetization of the Market and the Impact on Religion, Politics, Law and Ethics*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2011; Otto, Eckart. “Zur Geschichte des Talions im Alten Orient und Israel.” In *Ernten, was man sät*. Festschrift Kurt Koch, hg. Dwight Roger Daniels et al., 101–30. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1991; ders., *Körperverletzungen in den Keilschriftrechten und im Alten Testament: Studien zum Rechtstransfer im Alten Orient*. AOAT 226. Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker und Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1991.

¹⁹ Dass diese Überlegungen systematisch von erheblicher Gegenwartsrelevanz sein können, zeigt die Diskussion zwischen Armin von Bogdandy und Robert Post über die mit Recht hohe oder eher problematische Bedeutung einer das Recht im Wissenschaftssystem mitgestaltenden akademischen Jurisprudenz gegenüber dem Ideal von dominanten “conversations between the (Supreme) Court and the people and their representatives“. Vgl. Armin von Bogdandy, *The past and promise of doctrinal constructivism: A strategy for responding to the challenges facing constitutional scholarship in Europe*; Robert C. Post, *Constitutional scholarship in the United States*, in: *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, Vol. 3, 2009, 364-400 und 416-423.

Das Niveau des Rechts wird erreicht, indem der (abstrakt) thematisierte Konfliktfall und dessen Folgen in einer Form erfasst werden, die auch auf andere Arten von Konfliktfällen und deren Folgen angewendet werden kann. Nicht nur Viehdiebstähle (a, b, c, d), sondern auch Korndiebstähle (a, b, c, d), ja sogar Menschendiebstähle oder Körperverletzungen werden erkennbar unter einem leitenden Gesichtspunkt betrachtet und geregelt: etwa nach dem Prinzip des **Ausgleichs**. Über den abstrahierend erfassten "Fällen" wird also – auf einer zweiten Abstraktionsebene – ein Prinzip festgehalten, das Tatbestandsbestimmungen und Rechtsfolgebestimmungen aus verschiedensten Kontexten verbindet. Die durchaus vagen regulativen Rechtsideen oder Rechtsprinzipien wirken nun ihrerseits auf die Bestimmung, Erfassung und kalibrierende Begrenzung der Rechtsfälle zurück.

In den von uns betrachteten Fällen wirkt die **Ausgleichsoperation**, die von dem kasuistischen Rechtssatz bzw. von der Talionsformel ins Auge gefasst wird, als Begrenzung stiftendes Element. Mit einer bestimmten Ausgleichsbedürftigkeit wird der Fall eingeleitet, und mit dem Vollzug des Ausgleichs wird er abgeschlossen; im Blick auf die Ausgleichsoperation wird er erfasst, bestimmt und begrenzt. Ein Ausgleich des Ausgleichs kommt nicht in Frage. Ein durch Ausgleich abgeschlossener Rechtsfall ist nicht fortsetzbar. Die ausgleichsorientierte Objektivierung und Abstraktion aber zielt in der frühen Rechtsbildung in der Regel auf eine **Wiederherstellung** der Situation vor dem Konflikt oder auf eine symmetrische Beeinträchtigung oder Elimination auf der Verursacherseite. Die frühe Rechtsbildung, wie wir sie im Alten Testament finden, reagiert auf individuelle oder auf Individuen zurechenbare Eingriffe, die die Erwartungssicherheit anderer gefährden. Die so bestimmten Konflikte will die Rechtsbildung beheben, d. h. den dem Konflikt vorangehenden Zustand wiederherstellen oder, wo dies nicht möglich ist, den Konflikt ausgleichsorientiert begrenzen.

Die vergangenen Konflikte werden also nicht – literarisch – mit der Intention der Weckung von Lust und Leiden am Individuellen und Konkreten unter Aufgebot aller narrativen Begabung und Phantasie in ihrer Vernetzung, in ihrer Eingebundenheit in mannigfache Lebensverhältnisse dargestellt, so dass sie in ihrer bedeutsamen Einmaligkeit, Unvergleichlichkeit, Unabschließbarkeit und in Genese und Folgen als abgründig und unüberschaubar eindrucklich werden. Die vergangenen Konflikte werden isoliert, als abgeschlossene, begrenzte Fälle behandelt, sie werden typisiert.

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Dies erfolgt nicht nur durch einen Abstraktionsprozess, sondern durch eine Erfassung der abstrahierend “erinnerten” Fälle unter einem Rechtsprinzip, z. B. dem des Ausgleichs. Auf dieser zweistufigen Ebene der Abstraktion und Objektivierung werden nun die gegenwärtigen konkreten und die kommenden Konflikte sozusagen „lesbar“ und rechtlich bearbeitbar gemacht.

Damit stehen wir vor der wohl beeindruckendsten Errungenschaft des frühen Rechtsdenkens: **Indem konkrete Konflikte rechtlich typisiert erfasst werden, ist ihr Anschluss und Ausgang im Großen und Ganzen bereits absehbar. Sie können – aufgrund der Abstraktion und Objektivierung des Rechts – behandelt werden wie im Prinzip vergangene Konflikte.** Konflikte werden, wenn sie rechtlich erfasst werden, als etwas **Schon-Dagewesenes** identifiziert, dessen Lösung nicht nur vertraut, sondern so gut wie bereits vollzogen ist. Sie sind entscheidbar, sie sind lösbar. Das steht schon in ihrer Erfassung, in ihrer Diagnose fest. Es handelt sich nicht um etwas von unvergleichlicher Individualität und unüberschaubarer Verflochtenheit, sondern um Ereignisse, die als Bekanntes, als Schon-Dagewesenes identifiziert werden, als eine **vergangene Gegenwart mit ihrer vergangenen Zukunft, eine Gegenwart, deren Fortsetzung absehbar, vertraut ist, deren Abschluss nun wiederholt, reproduzierbar werden kann.**

Die auf der Ebene des Rechts erfassten typisierten Fälle und Probleme sind mit dieser Erfassung bereits entscheidbar, lösbar gewordene Probleme. Dabei handelt es sich um Erfahrungs- und Entdeckungsprozesse, deren Resultate nicht einfach der „Setzung durch eine Autorität oder durch Gewohnheit“ zugerechnet werden können, so sehr immer auch Weisheit und Willkür von „Autoritäten“ und kurz- oder langlebige soziale Routinen in diese Evolution Eingang finden.

Die Rechtsentwicklung wäre ein Prozess von normativen Irrungen und Wirrungen, in denen langfristig Fortschritte und Rückschritte nicht unterschieden werden könnten, wenn es nicht auch hier letztlich um „Entdeckungen in der Natur der Dinge“ gehen würde.²⁰

²⁰ Dies war zentraler Diskussionsgegenstand eines mehrjährigen internationalen und interdisziplinären Forschungsprojekts unter dem Titel: Concepts of Law in Science, Legal Studies, and Theology, dessen Dokumentation derzeit vorbereitet wird.

II. Das Erbarmen, der Gewinn eines Regulativs für die „gerechte“ Rechtsevolution und für humanitäre Moralen

Den Rechtssatzungen des Bundesbuches ist ein sogenanntes „Sklavengesetz“ vorangestellt. Die erste und elementare Bestimmung dieses Gesetzes lautet (Ex 21, 2): *“Wenn du einen hebräischen Sklaven kaufst, soll er sechs Jahre lang dienen; im siebten Jahre aber soll er ohne Entgelt als Freigelassener ausziehen.”* Obwohl auch dieses Gesetz eine Ausgleichsoperation vorsieht, unterscheidet es sich von den anderen kasuistischen Rechtssätzen des Bundesbuchs, die in der Tatbestandsdefinition ein Delikt nennen und in der Rechtsfolgebestimmung eine Strafe.²¹

Da das Bundesbuch mit Regelungen für den Kult beginnt und endet, kann man fragen, ob das Sklavengesetz einen zweiten Rahmen um die Rechtssatzungen legt, die wir betrachtet haben. Das aber heißt, es müsste sich auch vor den abschließenden den Kult betreffenden Bestimmungen des Bundesbuchs eine Schicht von Bestimmungen finden lassen, die sich ähnlich klar von den Rechtssatzungen einerseits und von den Bestimmungen, die den Kult betreffen, andererseits abheben lassen. Tatsächlich bietet Ex 22, 20ff eine Reihe von Bestimmungen, die genau diesen Erwartungen entsprechen. Sie betreffen den Schutz des **Fremden** (Ex 22, 20 und Ex 23, 9), der **Witwen und Waisen** (Ex 22, 21ff), der **Armen** (Ex 22, 24ff; 23, 6ff und 10ff), der **Macht- und Einflusslosen** bzw. **Isolierten** (Ex 23, 1ff) und sie betreffen sogar das Verhalten gegenüber dem **Feind** bzw. Gegner (Ex 23, 4f).

Diese Bestimmungen, meistens als so genannte „apodiktische Rechtssätze“²² ausformuliert, sind einerseits klar abgrenzbar von kultischen und rechtlichen Bestimmungen, andererseits werden sie in einzelnen Fällen mit ihnen verbunden und verflochten, geradezu Mischformen darstellend. (So sollen z.B. die kultischen Regulierungen, die das Sabbatjahr und den Sabbat betreffen, ausdrücklich auch den Sklaven und den Fremden zugute kommen.) Den Erbarmensgesetzen ist gemeinsam, dass sie auf ein Engagement und auch auf Verzichtleistungen der Stärkeren zugunsten der akut oder chronisch Schwächeren abstellen. Obwohl sie in der Regel einen appellativen Charakter haben, rufen sie nicht einfach zu gelegentlichem

²¹ Vgl. Boecker, 135ff.

²² Alt, aaO., Boecker, 166ff; Moshe Weinfeld, *The Origin of the Apodictic Law*, VT 23 (1973) 63-75.

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Wohlverhalten auf. Indem das Erbarmen zum Thema des Gesetzes wird, soll es dem beliebigen, dem nur zufälligen und nur neigungsgelenkten Verhalten der Individuen und der Situationsgebundenheit entzogen werden. Auch das Erbarmen soll unter Erwartungssicherheit stehen. Das Verhalten gegenüber dem akut oder chronisch Schwächeren wird unter einen Erwartungsdruck gebracht in Richtung auf ausgeglichene Rechtsverhältnisse hin.

Die Erbarmengesetze gehen einher mit der Entdeckung neuer Gestaltungsmöglichkeiten in der Rechtsevolution. Dies wird deutlich schon in der ersten und elementaren Bestimmung des bereits genannten „Sklavengesetzes“: *„Wenn du einen hebräischen Sklaven kaufst, soll er sechs Jahre lang dienen; im siebten Jahr aber soll er ohne Entgelt als Freigelassener ausziehen“* (Ex 21, 1). Damit wird der Tatbestand der Sklavenhalterei – eine Selbstverständlichkeit in der altorientalischen Gesellschaft, unverzichtbar für ihre Wirtschafts- und Sozialordnung – vom Gesetz formal auf die Ebene zu regulierender Konflikte gebracht. Dies bedeutet, dass das Gesetz nicht nur die Bewältigung von akut und kurzfristig zu bewältigenden Rechtsfällen ins Auge fasst, sondern auch langfristige Transformationsprozesse, die Verhältnisse zwischen Ungleichgestellten in Verhältnisse zwischen Gleichgestellten umwandeln. Für die Sklavinnen und Sklaven aber bedeutet dies, dass sie qua Gesetz – nicht qua Gönnerhaltung ihrer Besitzer – als potentiell freie Menschen zu achten und entsprechend zu behandeln sind. Auch diese Konsequenz zieht das Gesetz in verschiedenen Rechtssätzen, z.B. Ex 21, 20: *„Wenn ein Mann seinen Sklaven oder seine Sklavin mit einem Stock schlägt, so dass er unter seiner Hand stirbt, so soll der Sklave unbedingt gerächt werden.“* Die Sklaven dürfen damit nicht mehr als „sprechende Werkzeuge“ angesehen werden, mit denen die Besitzer nach Belieben und nur durch ihre Ausbeutungsinteressen gebremst umgehen können.

Die systematische Verbindung von Recht und Erbarmen im Gesetz ist in zweifacher Hinsicht formgebend: Sie gibt der Rechtsevolution eine Entwicklungsrichtung vor. In ihrer Kompatibilität mit dem Schutz der Schwachen und einer entsprechenden Kontextsensibilität zeichnet sich die „gerechte“ und „humane“ Rechtsentwicklung aus. In der Verbindung des Schutzes der Schwachen mit dem Recht wird seiner vielgestaltigen Institutionalisierung der Weg bereitet, von der Ackerbrache zugunsten der Armen und Fremden über die regelmäßigen Abgaben für die Witwen und

Waisen bis hin zu modernen Einrichtungen der Sozialhilfe und Diakonie und einem staatlichen Bemühen um erwartungssichere allgemeine medizinische und pädagogische Versorgung. Die große formative Kraft dieser Verbindung von Recht und Erbarmen wurde in Deutschland geradezu plakativ daran ablesbar, dass sich der deutsche Staat nach dem Zusammenbruch von 1945 als „Rechtsstaat“ und „Sozialstaat“ innenpolitisch und international neu zu profilieren suchte.

III. Kult, Geschichte und die Ausbildung einer komplexen individuellen und sozialen Identität

Aus der Außenperspektive des Rechts zunächst betrachtet – erwirkt der Kult die Konstitution einer freien, nicht durch Not zusammengerufenen Öffentlichkeit. Diese paradigmatische Öffentlichkeit ist nach den frühesten Gesetzesüberlieferungen nur auf die nicht versklavten Männer bezogen. Innerhalb dieser Bevölkerungsgruppe aber ist sie nicht hierarchisch strukturiert.

– Ex 23, 17: *"Dreimal im Jahr soll alles, was männlich ist in dir, das Angesicht Gottes sehen."*

Nach den späteren Überlieferungen schließt die "vor Gott" festlich versammelte Öffentlichkeit auch die Frauen und Kinder, ja sogar Sklaven und Sklavinnen und die Fremden ein (vgl. Dtn 16, 11.14).

Nicht-hierarchische Konstitution von Öffentlichkeit – auf Einschluss aller Bevölkerungsgruppen hin entwickelt: Es ist m.E. müßig zu fragen, ob die Emergenz einer solchen Öffentlichkeit auf eine Rechtskultur zurückzuführen ist, die auf Egalität abzielt bzw. ob sie auf eine praktizierte Rechtspflege in der Öffentlichkeit zurückzuführen ist, – oder ob eine entsprechende kultische Öffentlichkeit jene Rechtskultur bedingt. Eine egalitäre paradigmatische Öffentlichkeit im Kult geht mit einer Egalität unterstellenden bzw. auf Egalität abstellenden Rechtsprechung einher und umgekehrt. Wie auch in anderen innergesetzlichen Konstellationen sprechen in systematischer Perspektive die Texte für Wechselzusammenhänge und Ko-Evolutionen.

Wir wissen wenig über die frühe kultische Konstitution der Öffentlichkeit. Doch die Anhaltspunkte, die die Gesetzesüberlieferungen selbst bieten, sprechen dafür, dass ein nicht nur normatives sondern auch

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geschichtliches Selbstverhältnis der Gemeinschaft vor Gott gestiftet bzw. gepflegt und erneuert wurde. Ganz ohne Zweifel hat sich die kultische Öffentlichkeit primär dem Volk, der Gemeinschaft zugerechnet, die Gott "mit hoch erhobenem Arm" aus Ägypten und der dortigen Knechtschaft herausgeführt hat. Ein sog. *motive clause* "Ihr selbst seid in Ägypten Fremde gewesen" bzw. die ausdrückliche Ergänzung "Ihr wisst doch, wie es einem Fremden zumute ist" (Ex 20, 2; Ex 23, 9; vgl. Ex 22, 20) findet sich – mit charakteristischen Variationen nicht nur im Bundesbuch, sondern in allen Gesetzeskorpora.²³

Das Selbstverhältnis und Selbstverständnis der Gemeinschaft "vor Gott" ist also durch historische Eingriffe Gottes in ihre Lebenszusammenhänge bestimmt. Diese Eingriffe bewirken geschichtliche Erfahrungen, die das Selbstverständnis der Gemeinschaft und ihre Sicht der Wirklichkeit prägen. Die Eingriffe Gottes in die menschlichen Lebenszusammenhänge werden zu Initialereignissen kultischer Kommunikation. Zugleich gehen diese mit Gott gemachten Erfahrungen über die konkreten Erlebnisse und Erlebnismöglichkeiten der kultischen Öffentlichkeit hinaus. Auch diejenigen, die persönlich nie in Ägypten waren, lassen sich als diejenigen ansprechen, die Sklaven waren in Ägypten und durch Gottes Hand befreit wurden. Sie lassen sich in Erfahrungszusammenhänge und in eine Öffentlichkeit eingliedern, die den Bereich der von ihnen sinnfällig einholbaren Erfahrungen überschreiten. Die paradigmatische Öffentlichkeit der kultischen Kommunikation legt so Zeiten übergreifende öffentliche Selbstverhältnisse und Niveaus gemeinsamer Erfahrung von Menschen fest. Das ist ein konsequenzenreicher und keineswegs harmloser Vorgang. Ebenso wie die freie Konstitution tendenziell egalitärer Öffentlichkeit steht er in Wechselzusammenhängen mit der Entwicklung von Recht und Erbarmen.

Die Bereitschaft, sich bestimmte fremde Erfahrungen und Erfahrungszusammenhänge nicht nur nach individuellem Belieben gelegentlich anzueignen, sondern unter bestimmten Bedingungen bindend zurechnen zu lassen, ist unverzichtbar für die Rechtskultur und die Erbarmensgesetzgebung. Warum aber wird die Doppelidentität „Ihr seid Fremde gewesen – nun seid ihr Freie!“ nicht befremdet oder mit Ironie abgestoßen? Warum werden die rechtlich-moralischen Zumutungen der

²³ Dtn 4,34; 5,15; 7,19; 11,7; 26,8; bzw. Lev 19,34; 26,13. Vgl. auch Dtn 5,6 und 15.

Erbarmensgesetze nicht kalt oder mit nietzscheanischer Empörung zurückgewiesen? Warum lässt sich Israel diese historisch weiträumige Identitätszurechnung und das „Leben“ in weiträumigen Zeithorizonten nicht nur widerwillig gefallen, sondern offensichtlich freudig gefallen. Warum wird „das Gesetz“ geradezu zum Träger paradigmatischer Gedächtnispflege?²⁴

Ich denke, dass es sich auch in dieser Hinsicht um eine „Entdeckung“ handelt, die von großer religiöser Relevanz und von beachtlicher Erklärungskraft ist. In jeder Momentaufnahme besehen, sind Menschen in atemberaubender Weise ungleich. Dies verändert sich, wenn wir eine Zeitdehnung vornehmen und die Kinder und Greisinnen und Greise, die Kranken und Schwachen nicht nur unter uns sondern auch in uns wahrnehmen. Eine Sensibilität für die Gefährdetheit **allen** menschlichen Lebens setzt dann ein, die die Ko-Evolution religiösen, rechtlichen und erbarmensmoralischen begünstigt, die uns im biblischen Gesetz begegnet. Mit dem „motive clause“ dehnt Israel diese Grunderfahrung natürlichen Lebens in die geschichtliche Dimension hinein aus. Es transponiert die Sensibilitäten der familialen Solidargemeinschaft in geschichtlich-sozialpolitische Dimensionen.

Die Rekonstruktion der Entwicklungsdynamiken, die im Formenzusammenhang von Kult, Recht und Erbarmen liegen, leidet allerdings unter zahlreichen Schwierigkeiten, Phänomene und Funktionen des Kults historisch und systematisch sicher zu bestimmen.²⁵ In welcher Weise wird im Kult das kulturelle Gedächtnis gepflegt und normative Erwartungssicherheit stabilisiert? Unter welchen Bedingungen wird der Kult dafür offen, nicht nur Gewissheiten und Routinen im Blick auf Geschichte und soziale Zukunft zu stabilisieren, sondern Gewissheiten in der Suche nach Wahrheit gleichermaßen zu problematisieren und zu steigern?

Die schwierige, aber unverzichtbare Aufgabe, normative Potentiale zu transformieren und zu verbessern, ohne dabei ihre Bindekräfte zu

²⁴ Über die Gesetzeskorpora im strengen Sinne hinaus wird ja auch der gesamte Pentateuch als „Gesetz“ bezeichnet.

²⁵ Dies unterstreichen die Beiträge von Jacob Taubes, Vom Kult zur Kultur. Bausteine zu einer Kritik der historischen Vernunft, Fink 1996; historisch aufschlussreich sind die Ausführungen von Patrick D. Miller, The Religion of Ancient Israel, Westminster John Knox: Louisville 2000, bes. 62ff.

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zerstören²⁶, wird durch die kreative Spannung von Recht und Erbarmen ermöglicht.

- Die systematische Orientierung des Rechts am Erbarmen nötigt zu einer beständigen Verfeinerung der Rechtskultur und tendenziell zu ihrer Universalisierung.

- Die systematische Orientierung des Erbarmens am Recht führt zu einer Entemotionalisierung und Routinisierung des Erbarmens und strebt hin auf eine "Kultur des Helfens", die eine Vielzahl sozialer und diakonischer Institutionen entwickelt.

- Die Wechselwirkung des Kults mit der Interdependenz von Recht und Erbarmen ist im kulturellen und kanonischen Gedächtnis des gerechten und barmherzigen, richtenden und rettenden Gottes und seiner Erziehungs- und Bildungsgeschichte mit den Menschen greifbar.

In den übrigen großen Gesetzeskorpora der Bibel verblasst aber die Prägekraft des Rechts. Das Gewicht des Kults und das Gewicht der erbarmungsgesetzlichen Moral nehmen zu. Das ist durchaus riskant. Religion und selbst das institutionalisierte Erbarmen können einem Ethos und einer Moral mit äußerst unerfreulichen bevormundenden, ja gönnerhaft-unterdrückerischen stände- und klassengesellschaftlichen Zügen zuarbeiten. Alle drei „Grundpfeiler“ des Gesetzes brauchen einander, können auf die jeweils anderen normativen Größen nicht verzichten. Man muss nicht erst die immer wieder aktuellen Gefahren der Durchsetzung eines "olympischen" bzw. "nietzscheanischen" Ethos vor Augen haben²⁷, um die Wohltat würdigen zu können, die im Formenzusammenhang von Kult und Erbarmen mit dem Recht liegt – in der Tat ein Rückgrat unserer Kultur.

Die Religion sieht allerdings auch das Scheitern des ganzen guten Gesetzes und die Notwendigkeit, es in allen seinen Dimensionen zu erneuern. Aber welche emergente Kraft der Erneuerung auch in den

²⁶ Vgl. zu dieser "Funktion der Religion" Jan Assmann / Bernd Janowski / Michael Welker, *Richten und Retten. Zur Aktualität der altorientalischen und biblischen Gerechtigkeitskonzeption*, in: dies. (Hg.), *Gerechtigkeit. Richten und Retten in der abendländischen Tradition und ihren altorientalischen Ursprüngen*, Fink: München 1998, 9ff.

²⁷ Vgl. dazu Wolfgang Huber, *Die tägliche Gewalt. Gegen den Ausverkauf der Menschenwürde*, Herder: Freiburg 1993, 46ff; Hermann Barth, *Die Würde des Menschen kennt keine Einschränkungen. Wider den Götzendienst am Starken und Leistungsfähigen*, in: *Brennpunkt Diakonie*, aaO., 65ff.

unterschiedlichen Traditionen ins Auge gefasst wird (der Geist Gottes²⁸, das Reich Gottes²⁹, die Liebe³⁰ und die Weisheit sind solche Kräfte): Die Interdependenzen von Religion, Recht und Moral bleiben in allen religiösen Transformationen erhalten und formgebend. Deshalb wird uns und unsere Nachwelten das Verhältnis von Theologie und Recht beschäftigen, solange Menschen in humanen Gesellschaften leben wollen.

²⁸ Vgl. Michael Welker, *Gottes Geist. Theologie des Heiligen Geistes*, Neukirchener: Neukirchen-Vluyn 4. Aufl. 2010.

²⁹ Michael Welker und Michael Wolter, „Die Unscheinbarkeit des Reiches Gottes“, in: *Reich Gottes, Marburger Jahrbuch Theologie XI*, hg. W. Härle u. R. Preul, Elwert: Marburg 1999, 103-116.

³⁰ John Polkinghorne (Hg.), *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids und SPCK: London 2001.

Sorin Cosma¹

Gratitude as a Christian Virtue and it's Involvement in the Mission of the Church

Abstract

The importance and the actuality of the theme is given by the fact that the virtue of gratitude brings harmony in the social, economical, moral and spiritual life of "homo economicus", or "the recent man", lost in the illusion of individualism and grounded by his own self-centered becoming... Gratitude is, first of all, a natural virtue and moral duty, required by the spiritual nature of the human person who bears the intentionality to communication and communion, and the aspiration to values: good, truth and beauty. As a Christian virtue, the Eucharist is the fruit of faith working in love, animated by humility and maintained by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The Virtue of the Eucharist is involved in the mission of the Church through the organic and functional connection between the Eucharistic liturgy, the deacon liturgy and the cosmic one. The study further examines the aspects of ingratitude, and how gratitude can be cultivated in the spiritual moral life.

Keywords

Gratitude, virtue, the Eucharist, deacons, ingratitude

The cultural and social actuality and the necessity of gratitude are given by the fact that the modern man is under the pressure of existential crisis, which closes the horizon of life. Namely, immersed in individualism and grounded by the illusion of his own egocentric becoming, minimizing or changing the index of religious moral values, admitting, but also mocking the traditions, the today's postmodern man, "without heaven and earth", struggles, confused, in the dark wave of searches, of the confusion and

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spiritual crisis, losing his own identity, with all the consequences of this. If this is the tragic reality of the existence of “homo economicus”, or “the recent man”, it could be discussed the question of overcoming the crisis through reconciliation between the personal, social, economic, moral and spiritual life. And this goal can be achieved only through a spiritual conversion to perennial values designed to give the human person the recovering of the human identity, all over the world, and always with himself.

In this context, this paper wants to be a plea in favor of recovery and affirmation of Christian moral values, which are so inner and so necessary for human life and society, everywhere and always.

Qualifying

Having joined in its ethno genesis the Christian sense, the wisdom of Romanian people left posterity many aphorisms, like milestones guidance of personal and community life. Many of them relate to recognition, and speak as “do not throw a stone into the fountain that gives you water”. Although the statement is prohibitive, the call shows a positive approach, meaning that to the charity ought to answer with charity. Other variants of the call to gratitude read: “Write the evil on water that flows and the goodness engrave it in stone!”, “Remember the bread and salt you eat, the one who helped you, and do not forget him ever”. Retain the same counsel plastic expressed by a Christian poet: “My sons, gratitude, don’t you shall ever forget it, / thankfully you’ll be in life, showing gratitude, / for heaven and earth desire and always ask for it / and there is no feeling in the world that should please God more” (Traian Dorz).

In addition, it is significant that on the 24th of November is celebrated in the United States as a day of gratitude. On this occasion, 50 million Americans are gathering at the family supper, from which it cannot the turkey. Now things are much cheaper in stores, and there is a general care that no poor man should remain hungry in this day.

So, we can see that the virtue of gratitude represents the open recognition of the beneficence that we were shown. It is also called “thanksgiving” or “gratitude”, and satisfies a minimum of justice right written in the social areas of human consciousness as the natural moral law; namely, respond well to the good that you were made. To respond with love, to the love that you were shown as charity or good will, which often saved you, or at least brought you out of trouble and scruffy that life had put you in, and which

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you had to overcome in order to go on. It results that between charity and gratitude, or between giver and receiver there is a *natural and necessary reciprocity*. With all this natural and natural gratitude or satisfaction imposes, there are situations of moral decline, manifested either through forgetfulness or indifference, or by bad faith, when the strongly required blessing is not followed by the deserved appreciation. These are situations or ingratitude, disapproved and condemned, because, if gratitude is approaching people, making them partakers of the communion which binds them with a sense of joy and solidarity, the indifference and ingratitude by forgetfulness, leaves a gap and even suffering in the soul of the one who, giving his affection and beneficent, does not receive the deserved love as a response for his act. This is because ingratitude harms and dissolves the hope involved in the act of charity, and if hope dies the bright horizon of life falls apart. Accordingly, nothing discourages more the blessing than ingratitude. For this reason, gratitude is *an educational goal and a trait* of people who really want to be human and want to settle in the human community the good relations who are based on love, justice, better understanding and mutual aid.

Given the importance of gratitude in people's lives, it has always been appreciated and recommended by all and ingratitude was disapproved, and malevolence, as the reward for beneficence with hatred and enmity, was condemned as a heinous act. It has been rightly noted that, "there are three kinds of ungrateful; the first is that, having an obligation to us, he avoids our society, as he would be ashamed that he is indebted to us. The second is even worse: for having an opportunity to recognize the obligation he has for us, he evade. The third is a horrible monster and more: in exchange for good that we have covered him with, he overwhelms us with all the evil that he can do to us" (Gabriel Oxenstierna Thuseron, *Pensées diverses*, 1, 28). In such a situation, the very word of God is sententious and unequivocal, showing that "Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house" (Proverbs 17, 13).

We conclude that "gratitude is not only a great virtue, but is the mother of all other virtues; because the worst thing that could be said about a man is that he is ungrateful" (Cicero). And, for not being any more ingrate in the world, gratitude must start with you". "You mind that there is ungratefulness. Ask your mind (memory) if all of those you have been indebted to found out that you have been grateful to them" (Seneca).

I. Gratitude as a natural virtue and moral duty

It is appropriate to point out that gratitude as a virtue is not and can not be addressed as a conventional skill coming from outside, as a civilized norm of conduct or policies imposed by the polis to which we belong, but as *specific inner structure of the human person, defined as a social being*. This means that by its spiritual nature, *the human person has the intentionality towards communication and communion, as well as the discernment as aspiration towards values*. It follows that the natural intentionality for communication and communion, is harmonic interwoven with the development, in the interpersonal relations, of the moral sense a priori included in the consciousness of every person.

In order to identify the meaning and the specific of gratitude in the life moral, social and spiritual it is necessary, to establish from the beginning some *general guidelines in determining the notion of virtue*.

It is well known that for the wise from ancient Greco-Roman world virtue was an ideal of ordered life, as to lead to the improvement of human nature, both physical and spiritual. The word *aretē*, which is called virtue, is the meaning of “*excellence*” within the meaning of quality of maximum value to which realization the *perfection* must always strive... Having as a slogan the desire *to live according to nature*, the ancient sages had as ideal the perfection of nature. And the fulfilling of this goal is reached by *virtue*. The cultivation of virtue starts from the *self-knowledge*, understanding by this the determining of what is *authentic*. As you know who you really are, you can really *distinguish between qualities and defects existing in its own nature*, so that the virtue is *the practice of qualities* and removing the defects, according to *principles* or rules previously established by *rational targeting* a useful purpose, useful to life. By practicing the skill you achieve good skills acquisition, aimed at perfection of nature.

In this vision, gratitude, like beneficence, friendship, courage, temperance, wisdom, ought to be cultivated in order to harmonize the spiritual life, to acquire personal *dignity*, or *honor*, as *liberalitas* (the release from the vulgar selfishness), for affirmation of what was known as the *magnanimas* (or *megalopsihia*), meaning *generosity*, which ennobles the human spirit. And to achieve this moral ideal, man as a social being, will cultivate *justice* as ordered life in interpersonal relations. For this purpose it was recommended gratitude, that to be always encouraged, came the claim for

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piety to the gods. Thus, the ancient sages forged in its honor three deities as “Graces”. These are: *Thalia*, *Aglaia* and *Euphrosyne*. And as a thinker noted, “they worship those three goddesses to gratitude as a single was not enough to honor a virtue so rare. It should be noted that poets have imagined these goddesses naked, namely, to show us that in matters of benevolence and gratitude, we must act with a sincere heart. They look young virgins to show us that to the beneficence we should keep a living memory and not let our gratitude to age, but to look for opportunities to show us our feelings for the good that we received. They were given a gentle and cheerful appearance, to show us the joy that we must feel when we recognize the obligation we owe to our benefactors. These deities were fixed to three, to show us that gratitude should be three times higher than the good that we received. They have portrayed the goddesses taking hands, to show us that kindness and gratitude should be inseparable” (G. Th. Oxenstierna, *Pensées diverses*, 1, 28).

Therefore, if gratitude represents an inner strength that is constantly practiced in order to acquire the skill to cultivate the qualities, it means that, being a *natural virtue should be promoted also as an ethical virtue, or moral duty*.

Trying to determine the *meaning that gratitude has as a virtue, we will say that it always relates to charity, as an act of reciprocity*. And if beneficence calls the good act as started from a sincere and disinterested love, gratitude is a love-response to the kindness received, sincere and disinterested expressed, like beneficence. We better understand this by distinguishing gratitude of what is known as the expression “do ut des” (“I give to you, in order for you to give to me”). This had first a strictly commercial sense, involved in the exchange of goods. The moral sense expresses it in an interesting approach when establishing the relationship between charity and reward. Being about a selfish interest, we ought to have in attention that although it may be fair, it is not always moral. Also it can be petty. And if it is petty, it means that it should be avoided, while the virtue aims and develops the quality that we ought to cultivate. We see that gratitude states as love-response addressed to the love which was addressed to us through charity, as a satisfaction, or as a fulfillment of it. If this love-response to gratitude is missing, the beneficial love is suffering because it is unfulfilled, remaining uncompensated. For this reason, *ingratitude, creating*

moral suffering, becomes a defect. And since the defect is a dysfunction, it must be corrected, because degrades life and the social relations.

Remember that gratitude is a *natural virtue*, written in the *natural moral law* (Romans 2, 14-15), and a *moral duty*, a moral imperative, that is an *ethical virtue*. With the purpose to cultivate love as the supreme moral value, appreciation, practiced first in ancient philosophical ethics has been received by the Christian Church as a virtue of great honor, in the words of the Apostle, which urges: “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things” (*Philippians* 4, 8). Or, causing the discernment: “Test all things; hold fast what is good” (*I Thessalonians* 5, 21).

As a virtue, gratitude, like beneficence, is *the fruit of love that “fulfilled the law”* (*Romans* 13, 8), and participation with love in the life of our neighbor is both charity and gratitude. This means that love is both complete and functional when we grieve and we rejoice with those who rejoice with those who weep (*Romans* 12, 15). Addressed as an expression of love and moral duty, gratitude assumes that it should be “providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (*II Corinthians* 8, 21), more precisely: “before all men” (*Romans* 12, 17, *I Thessalonians* 5, 15), motivated by reference to the saving act of Christ: “Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification, For even Christ did not please Himself...” (*Romans* 15, 1-3). Speaking of the virtue of the “*creation*” to which the Apostle indebts us, we refer it to the reciprocity of benevolence and gratitude, in that gratitude encourages it benevolence, making it dynamic towards action, while ingratitude discourages it. By making blessing to increase through appreciation, love is amplified, and thus moral life receives higher valences.

As a manifestation of love– response towards the beneficial act which was addressed to us, gratitude has a dynamic and creative opening, targeting the benefactors of our past and present, far and near, those close or less close, the parents, teachers, friends, etc. It extends its power of love also towards the community to which we belong, to whom we are grateful for the blessings and the good life that it provides us; as well as the society, in turn, must be grateful to its members for the work they submit for its

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continuous prosperity. Same, the country is indebted to recognize children that bring honor, or who have sacrificed or sacrifice of love for it.

We see that gratitude is a virtue that belongs to human nature, because the human person by nature opens to communication and communion and this is realized and fulfilled in interpersonal relationships through love. Given that gratitude is the natural virtue, and as a quality it structurally belongs to the spiritual life, it should always be practiced to perfection of nature, *thus becoming a moral duty, or ethical virtue.*

Thus, gratitude can be harnessed also in Christian morality, appreciating that it is *a datum of the soul, required to be made by the natural moral law, as to affirm the existence of the image of God in man, even if its nature bears itself the wounds of sin.* Here it's what Tertullian called "the right of nature" based on the fact that "nature is the mother of us all".² At the same time, gratitude is a Christian virtue, because, in the expressions of the same apologist, "*anima naturaliter christiana*"³, which means that the soul by its Christian nature is fulfilled through the practice and learning of the gratitude as love-response to the beneficial love that we were addressed.

II. Gratitude as a Eucharistic virtue in the life of the Church

To determine the specific meaning of gratitude as Christian virtue, we will say from the beginning that it exceeds the strict humanly sense of moral duty. It's more than to reward good with good. In terms of human we'll say, "The way you acted you shall be rewarded", but the notion of "reward", aimed more at the material or moral duty, has an area smaller than *the virtue first reported to the relationship with God.* The notion of "reward" is one of inner good-willing or appreciation for the good we received, representing the end or pay of a debt, which ended the situation of debtor. Beyond these specific legalistic relations, gratitude as a Christian virtue it primarily relates to the relationship with God, being "a huge reservoir of recognition of our dependence on God",⁴ hence the development of human interdependence, as well as the attitude towards gift of God's creation.

² *Apologeticul XXXIX*, 7, *PSB* 3, p. 93.

³ *Apologeticul XVII*, 6, *PSB* 3, p. 64.

⁴ Anca Manolache, *Virtutea recunoștinței*, în rev. *Glasul Bisericii*, nr. 2-3 / 1989, p. 53.

II.1. Determination of virtue Eucharistic

When we refer to our gratitude to God, the concepts of “reward” and “merit” are outdated, because “God may reward the man for a correct action, but man cannot render to God from whom he has everything”.⁵

Given that God gives us life, the gifts and all the assets necessary for the proper fulfillment of life, when it comes to gratitude as a Christian virtue, the notion that defines it the best is εὐχαριστία or *gratitude*, both terms including the *gratia*, as a defining and indispensable way to achieve it in Christian life. This is because “all God’s blessings, the whole world – from age to age – belong to the manifestations of grace”.⁶ Moreover, the specific Christian virtue is a special illumination of divine grace, as the Saint Maximus the Confessor says: “The powers of searching and researching of things of divine nature are embedded in people by God, by bringing it to life itself. And the discovery of divine things is shared through grace, by the power of the Blessed Spirit”.⁷

In order to determine more closely the inner sense of gratitude as a Christian virtue, we shall follow the way in which the unit of virtue was synthesized by Saint Ignatius the God Bearer (†107), a pioneer in this direction. He says that *the beginning of the Christian virtue is faith and the completion is realized by love. “When these two are united, there is God, and all the other virtues, which flow from them, lead to moral beauty”*.⁸

In this context we also include the gratitude, along with other virtues. And thus, we say that *faith generates gratitude as a form of knowledge of God’s presence in the world and our lives through His gifts*. Concretely speaking, is the recognition that “*every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning*” (James 1, 17).

Of course, the greatest gift that God gave man is the gift of life. But given the fact that sin ruins this gift, degrading it towards death, in His love God saves His gift of love, giving us the gift of the life of His Son, so that “that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3, 16). And if Christ is the gift who saves our lives, it means that

⁵ Idem, *ibidem*.

⁶ N. Glubokovski, *Întrebuințarea și aplicarea expresiei cșri\$ la părinții greci, până la Sfântul Ioan Damaschin*, trad. rom. Dimitrie Preotul, în rev. *Glasul Bisericii*, nr. 10/1956, p. 525.

⁷ *Răspuns către Talasie*, în *Filocalia*, vol. 3, Sibiu, 1948, p. 310.

⁸ *Epistola către Efeseni*, XIV, 1, *PSB*, 1, p. 162.

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our gratitude to God is a love-response to His merciful love for us. Therefore, “We love Him because He first loved us” (I John 4, 19), “sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (I John 4, 10). Thus, *our gratitude becomes the Eucharist that is thanksgiving*. And not because God would ask this, but because He is the one that we are given as a gift in our favor, according to the word of the Apostle: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is the gift of God*” (Ephesians 2, 8). We will never understand that God does not need our thanks as a reward, but as recognition on our part, that we need His blessings both now and in the future. If this recognition would miss, God’s blessing would be consumed in present time. Our gratitude makes of it a continuous present, establishing a communion of love that never dies. It’s the burning desire on our part to find us as continually beneficiaries of the gift of God, permanently updated in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, where Christ, our Savior is “*He who brings it to the Father*” as *eternal gratitude* and at the same time, He “*brings Himself for us*”, and we, *acknowledging the Giver in His gift, we Eucharistic (with thanksgiving) bring to Him our life, as a gift received from Him, towards continuous perfection, by always striving to make alive in us the life of Christ as the work of the Holy Spirit*.

Further on, referring to faith as a virtue, or the beginning of virtue and Christian life, St. Ignatius the God Bearer notes that *it is not enough its simply confession, but always ought to follow its fruitfulness*: “for a tree is known by its fruit” (Matthew 12, 33), so those who confess to belong to Christ, will show that through what they do. That now is not a mere confession of faith, but to be found to end with a strong faith”.⁹ The virtue of faith has a dynamic and creative character, from the fact that it permanently “exercise yourself toward godliness” (I Timothy 4, 6-8) *involving the divine grace*, became fruitful through work (James 2, 17-26) and fulfilling in love, gets *the halo* of “faith working through love” (Galatians 5, 6).

The ferment that animates and drives *the work of faith in love* is the consciousness of our dependence on God, *as a humble recognition that all of our lives we have from Him*: “...And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?” (I Corinthians 4, 7).

Through humility, we acknowledge that God is “the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth”, i.e., He is the Creator of life, of everything

⁹ *Idem*, XIV, 2, PSB 1, p. 162.

that exists, as well as our Father that gives us all the gifts, and takes care of our lives through His love, goodness and mercy. In other words, we recognize that “*Like as a father pitieth [his] children, [so] the Lord pitieth them that fear him.*” (Psalm 102, 13), “[That] thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth. The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works” (Psalm 103, 28-31).

Similarly, we recognize through humility that only by God’s grace we become worthy of the work of the virtue, according to the word of the Apostle: “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (I *Corinthians* 15, 10), which is why *God is the first who deserves our thanksgiving (Eucharist)*. Saint Clement of Rome, highlighting this aspect of virtue, urges that “... the one who is pure in body should not be proud, knowing that another is Who gave him the restraint. Consider, brethren, of what matter we were made, as we were and what we were when we came into the world; from what grave and darkness He brought us into His world, the One who forged and created us, *preparing His benefits for us*, before we were born, but all of which being from Him, we ought to *thank Him for all*, to Whom is glory forever and ever”.¹⁰

If, as we have seen, *ζῆρετ* expresses the idea of excellence and is the way towards the perfection of nature, *the Christian virtue intended to complete the nature by grace* is based on the *depth of the humility*, as the “crush of the heart”¹¹, which means that The deeper we dig the earth of humility, *the more bears the grace that animates the working faith*. And the greater is the love for God, the confidence in Him is more perfect and more perfect is the satisfaction or gratitude (Eucharist) for His gifts to us.

Realizing that we have God’s gifts as a “treasure in earthen vessels”, we admit that “that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us” (II *Corinthians* 4, 7), “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God” (II *Corinthians* 3, 5). Thus *the Eucharist as a virtue is defined as a synergis-*

¹⁰ *Epistola I către Corinteni*, XXXVIII, 2-4, *PSB* 1, p. 66.

¹¹ Sfântul Isaac Sirul, *Cuvinte despre nevoință*, trad. rom., Bacău, 1997, p. 343.

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tic work of our free will in cooperation with divine grace, which begins and perfects itself in the Christian life. This synergistic really, specific for Christian virtue is best illustrated by the image of our Savior, who knocks on the door asking for permission be received, so that together we experience the joy of communion given by His presence (*Revelation 3, 20*). We see that the divine grace has the initiative, but not to cancel our freedom of availability for receiving it to work together the virtue intended to complete the nature, through His work.

Approaching the virtue of gratitude as a *fruitful work of grace through humility*, in the *creative dynamism of working faith in love*, we will say that *the virtue of Eucharist is defined as being the ability to recognize our Giver, from whom we have our life and all the assets that we needed, driven by desire and the effort to multiply the talents or gifts received from Him*, to be able to legitimate as sons of our Father, who commit His work in the world as a Giver, making us, those who bear His image, *generous, like Him*, thus fulfilling our Saviour's command to "*be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful*" (*Luke 6, 36*).

Therefore, the *Christocentric* character specific for the Eucharist as a Christian virtue, defines it as a thanksgiving response to the merciful love of the Father, received by us as the sacrifice of Christ, remaining a constant of our moral and spiritual life and our conduct, meant to make always active in world the love of God shown in Christ.

For St. Paul, *the Eucharist is the leitmotif of our confidence in the loving kindness of God, shown in Christ*. Thus understood, it became normative in Christian spirituality and apostolic Church throughout time, according to the exhortation: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; (Eucharistic). and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (*Philippians 4, 5-7*).

"Contentment in all things" which the Apostle is referring to, represents the mysterious work of grace is the love of Christ, who generated His peace as the fruit of the Holy Spirit, to create availability of all "what happens to you to received it as good, knowing that nothing is without God",¹² or the confidence that "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God" (*Romans 8, 28*).

¹² *Didahia 3, 10, PSB 1, p. 27.*

In detail, the Apostle shows that the Eucharist forms under in the faith that grace fortifies in the souls of those “rooted and built up in Him” (*Colossians* 2, 7). It brings in the name of Christ: “giving thanks always for all things to God the Father *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (*Ephesians* 5, 20, *Colossians* 3, 17). And through Him, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (*Colossians* 3, 17), to fulfill the will of God: “*in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you*” (*I Thessalonians* 5, 18). Therefore, virtue of the Eucharist is a constant of life and should be grown in all circumstances and situations (*Colossians* 3, 17, *Ephesians* 5, 20, *I Thessalonians* 5, 18), because it refers to all the work we undertake: “whatever you do in word or deed” to be committed with thanksgiving (*Colossians* 3, 17). Being specific feature of the Christian piety, the virtue of Eucharist must always be cultivated through “earnestly in prayer and vigilancy”: “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it *with thanksgiving*” (*Colossians* 4, 2).

Those who follow this apostolic testament showed that nothing gives man more satisfaction and fulfillment than when he can be grateful to God. Goodness will be stronger when thanksgiving is brought to God. When it was evil, it was claimed by the same gratitude brought to God. Therefore, we must thank God when He gives us his gifts and not lose patience when He does not pour out His mercy through them, because is not possible to serve God with gratitude, if we are not thankful for all, both for testing and peaceful life. Only then can we understand that the gratitude as a Christian virtue is more than just a response to the blessings received in the past or in present. *It carries within itself the mystery of the divine providentially our full confidence in it, being realized as a total surrender to God with patience and hope.* It’s about *makroqum* (a – long-patience as the fruit of the Spirit (*Galatians* 5, 22), which is not blind, heavy and passive resignation, as the Stoics approached patience as fruit of the courage of the heart, but it is Eucharis meaning a uninterrupted, continuous content, expressed through a loving acceptance of God’s will, in recognition of His glory, as for instance Saint John Chrysostom, who brings in the end, with joy, “*Glory to God for all*”.

But we do not always realize that we can not understand God’s mysterious work in our lives. Often we only judge things in present, like the pa-

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tient who complains of the pain or the bitter medicine or about the wound that the doctor has created, without looking into the future and realize that all those are for his healing. That is why, the more is the delay fulfilling the request, the more is proper to pray more, being confident and enjoyed without any doubt in our hearts, and then we will be in peace. Not because God doesn't know what we need, or not wanting to give us His gifts, but our persistence in prayer, binds us and brings us closer to the merciful love of our Father. Only then we will understand that we always must be grateful to God for all we receive and wait in silence and tranquility everything from Him, "*with thanksgiving in everything*" (*Philippians 4, 6*), is the secret nature of sacrifice and gratitude as a Christian virtue. And through "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding" (*Philippians 4, 7*), as *the grace of the Spirit*, the whole Christian life becomes a *joyful Eucharistic* (of thanksgiving, of gratitude) given by God: "Thine from the very yours, You I bring all and for all".

For a better understanding of this spiritual reality, experienced by saints, are edifying the exhortations of Saint John Chrysostom of Constantinople to the diaconess Olympias, who was in desperate situation to lose hope, because of evil people who oppressed her soul to the unbearable: "Nothing that happens in life should trouble you... pray continually to Jesus, whom you serve, to make a sign only, and all will be clear in an instant. And if you asked Him and your pray is not fulfilled, learn that this is the way God ordained it, He did not stop the ill at first, but when evil has increased, when our enemies have left almost no evil to commit, then suddenly God transforms everything in peace and unexpected puzzles things. Yes, God can give much more and endlessly high good things, not only as much as we expect. That is why Paul said: "to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (*Ephesians 3, 20*)... St. John Chrysostom uses the case of victory of three young in the fiery furnace, to encourage his daughter disciple, saying:

and the furnace became a temple of prayer, a place of fountains and dew, of higher dignity than a royal court, and the very hairs of their head prevailed over that all devouring element which gets the better even of iron and stone, and masters every kind of substance. And a solemn song of universal praise was instituted there by these holy men inviting every kind of

created thing to join in the wondrous melody; and they uttered hymns of thanksgiving to God for that they had been bound, and also burnt, as far at least as the malice of their enemies had power; that they had been exiles from their country, captives deprived of their liberty, wandering outcasts from city and home, sojourners in a strange and barbarous land; for all this was the outpouring of a grateful heart. And when the malicious devices of their enemies were perfected and the labours of the heroes were completed, and the garland of victory was woven, and their rewards were prepared and nothing more was wanting for their renown; then at last their calamities were brought to an end, and he who caused the furnace to be kindled, and delivered them over to that great punishment, became himself the panegyrist of those holy heroes, and the herald of God's marvellous deed, and everywhere throughout the world issued letters full of reverent praise, recording what had taken place, and becoming the faithful herald of the miracles wrought by the wonder-working God. For inasmuch as he had been an enemy and adversary what he wrote was above suspicion even in the opinion of enemies.

Dost thou see the abundance of resource belonging to God? His wisdom, His extraordinary power, His loving-kindness and care? Be not therefore dismayed or troubled but continue to give thanks to God for all things, praising, and invoking Him; beseeching and supplicating; even if countless tumults and troubles come upon thee, even if tempests are stirred up before thy eyes let none of these things disturb thee. For our Master is not baffled by the difficulty, even if all things are reduced to the extremity of ruin"¹³.

Thus, those who live by the virtue of Eucharist fulfill the spiritual mission of the Church in the world, offering the example of God's presence and His providentially in people's lives, with the urging full of confidence, to overcome the existential anxiety: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, *with thanksgiving*, let your requests be made known to God" (*Philippians* 4, 6), or: "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (*I Peter* 5, 6-7), or: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring [it] to pass."

¹³ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Cuvioasa Olimpiada diaconița – O viață, o prietenie, o corespondență*, Scrisoarea VII, 2b-3a, trad. Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., Ed. Deisis, Sibiu, 1997, p. 107-108.

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(Psalm 36, 5); “Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established” (Proverbs 16, 3) etc.

II.2. The Community Character of Virtue the of Eucharistic

By the divine grace, receiving the Eucharist as a virtue of community-, knowing that grace works the charisms as gifts of the Spirit, designed to perform in the Church and the world the life of Christ. Although the Spirit made the charisms different (*Romans* 12, 6, *I Corinthians* 7, 7; *I Peter* 4, 10), *the Eucharist as a virtue fulfills it in the communion of reciprocity between giver and receiver, through the faith and the love which unites them in the same ecclesial living, becoming a Eucharistic communion.*

This shows once again that gratitude in sense of the Eucharist has *its own character and specific priority, by referring to the gifts of God, that defines it organic and functional.* It fits into the Christian virtue that life in Christ, performed the “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,*” (*Galatians* 5, 22), in the multitude of His gifts. Convincing in this respect are the words of St. Clement, which points out the reciprocity Eucharistic gifts in the apostolic Church:... to confess our whole body in Christ Jesus and each to submit its neighbor (*Romans* 12, 4-5, *I Corinthians* 12, 12-13), as was appointed in his charisma: the strong to take care of the poor and the weak to respect the strong, the rich to help the poor and the poor to thank God that he fulfilled his gaps thought the rich¹⁴.

In this context we can say that so much worth to God our merciful love, manifested in the gift of beneficence, that He himself refers to it both as beneficial and rewarding “*He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, And He will pay back what he has given*” (*Proverbs* 19, 17). Since our merciful and love are gifts from God, He wants it to be always active and dynamic, being exercised as an act of communion with Him, and at the same time of brotherhood with our fellow men, His sons. This shows that only in community, the merciful love of God its full benefits. If I offer my gift to my neighbor in need, without waiting for his gift back, because he can not offer, it's like I would be offering to God, Who will not let me harmed, but by His grace will fill all my material and spiritual needs, because He has it all... Material food given to the poor, will become spiritual food from God the Giver, Who will fulfill all.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, XXXVIII, 1-2, *PSB* 1, p. 66

In the communion of gifts, the work of the Spirit always bears Eucharist, because the joy of receiving the gifts from God is philanthropic and charitable shared with the “free will” joy of giving (II *Corinthians* 9, 7). *This freedom is specific to the work of the Spirit* (II *Corinthians* 3, 17), because He makes the faith fruitful in love (Galatians 5, 6), providing the ability to understand that “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20, 35), and to act as such, the joy that is also the “*gift of the Spirit*” (Galatians 5, 22). Thus, the freedom of giving to others is nothing else but the recognition that the gifts with which God has endowed us, is ultimately the gift of God bestowed on our life and actions. And this thankfully recognition of the Giver, through the Communion with Him in Liturgy converts the selfishness in generosity. When Zacchaeus came near Jesus with faith and love, and when Christ was “*joyfully received*” in his home (Luke 19, 6), the joy of communion with the Saviour proved to be fruitful, turning the avaricious and miserly selfishness of the publican in disinterested generosity, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold” (Luke 19:8).

This love-response (Eucharist – thanksgiving – gratitude) to the beneficent love of God shown in Christ, as a work of the Holy Spirit, generalized as *philanthropy*.

Saint Paul clearly shows that the Apostolic Church Liturgy, as public service, has two well-defined aspects (II *Corinthians* 9, 11-13). First, *Liturgy as thanksgiving prayer*, brought to God by the whole community, having in its center the *mystery of thanksgiving* (Eucharistic (a) as an actualization of the sacrifice of thanksgiving brought by the Savior at the Last Supper. Second is the *diaconal Liturgy* (II *Corinthians* 9, 12), which is also thanksgiving (Eucharistic (a) given to God by giving to the community to fulfill its needs (II *Corinthians* 9, 12), thus bringing “glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ” (II *Corinthians* 9, 13).¹⁵

The charitable work of the Church, as a deacon Liturgy, being an apostolic leave, was settled as a rule of Christian life, to fulfill the commandment of the Savior that “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20, 35). Here is the testimony of a second century document on how the Christian charity was organized and practiced as deacons Liturgy: “...

¹⁵ Pr. Prof. Ion Bria, *Eclesiologia pastorală*, în rev. *Studii Teologice*, nr. 1-4/1979, p. 316-323

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ceasing the prayers, we embrace each other with the kiss of peace. Then, to the one who presides the assembly of the brethren are brought bread and a glass of wine mixed with water, which he takes, raises all praise and glory to Father, on behalf of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and utters a long prayer of thanksgiving, in order to be accepted by Him"... After the Primate finished the Eucharist and all the people said «Amen» our servants who are called «deacons», give each of those who are present to partake of bread and wine turned in the Eucharist...¹⁶ "Those who desire, give each what he wills, and what is collected is submitted to the Primate, and he cares and helps orphans and widows, the needy from a such case, those who are in prison, on foreigners who are in transition, and in one word, it becomes the bearer of care for all those who are in need".¹⁷

So we see that the Eucharist as a Christian virtue fulfills as a mission by the grace of God that creates and develops in soul the joy of recognition and gratitude towards God's love shown in Christ, as well as the availability to act, through the work of the Holy Spirit, making partakers of our gifts those in need, to eternalize the kingdom of God in the world, to its salvation.

In this context it is necessary to show that the Eucharistic liturgy does not end in the holy place of worship, but continues as mission. This fact is evidenced by the "pulpit prayer" at the end of Holy Liturgy, when the priest says: "*In peace we go out*", meaning to go out into the world to transmit the fruits of God's kingdom that we have shared. The response of the faithful: "*In the name of God*", expresses the adherence to this commitment missionary.

So far, we conclude that the approach to the Eucharist (thanksgiving, gratitude) as a virtue is notable by the fact that *the Giver is into His gift*, establishing a reciprocal relationship with the recipient of the gift, to prove that *into Eucharistic communion no gift withers...* The gift of the Holy Spirit "which causes thanksgiving through us to God" (II *Corinthians* 9, 11) and "abundance of joy" (II *Corinthians* 8, 2) has generated enthusiasm and selfless giving to the altar, ie not only the surplus, but also the necessary (II *Corinthians* 8, 2-3), feeling even a grace (favor) in the opportunity to participate at charitable work of the Church (II *Corinthians* 8, 4), proving that "he who loves God *must* love his brother also" (I *John* 4, 21), and

¹⁶ Sfântul Justin Martirul, *Apologia I*, LXV, PSB 2, p. 70.

¹⁷ *Idem*, cap. LXVII, p. 71.

“let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth not only in word but in deed and in truth” (I *John* 3, 18, *James* 2, 14-16).

The merciful love of God became a living reality in the Church’s mission in the world, as an apostolic leave. For example, when wealthy people became witnesses of the new faith, knowing that “For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power” (I *Corinthians* 4, 20), have changed their mentality, proving to be generous in working the faith in love, always making alive in the world the presence of God the Giver. St. Paul urges Timothy to “command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, *ready to give, willing to share*” (I *Timothy* 6, 17-18). And so, making transient the goods of these life into eternal, spiritual goods, many philanthropist Christians have registered their names in the calendar of Christian holiness.

Through the unity between the Eucharistic Liturgy and diaconal Liturgy, we realize *the virtue of gratitude in the communion of gifts*, meaning that accepting Christ as a gift of God’s love, we offer Him to others with whom He identifies, to fulfill His words, as the norm of Christian life “inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (*Matthew* 25, 40). Saint John Chrysostom, also named “doctor eucharisticus” and “ambassador of the poor”, stresses our responsibility towards Christ, present among us as a Eucharistic gift and as the brother which is in the difficulties of life, saying: “do you want to worship the Body of Christ? Do not overlook Him, when He is naked. Do not worship Him only in Church, by silk clothes; meanwhile He is outside naked and trembling of cold. He who said: “This is My Body” and fulfilled this through His work, also said: “inasmuch as you didn’t do it to one of the least of these My brethren, you didn’t do it to Me”. Worship Him by giving your fortune to the poor, because God does non need golden cups, but golden harts”.¹⁸

II.3. The Ascetic and Eschatological Aspect of the Eucharistic Virtue

The identification of Christ – to Whom we owe everything for the gift of His Sacrifice He gives us – with our fellows in difficulties and needs, *develops the natural feeling of compassion in the merciful love of fraternal communion, which can give too its gift of beneficence, elevated to sac-*

¹⁸ *Omilia L, III la Evanghelia după Matei, PSB 23, p. 584.*

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rifice. An example of this is revealed by the early Christian community generosity, which is testified by a contemporary document, stating that “if one of them was needy and poor, and the others food were not plenty, then they fasten for two or three days to fulfil the need feed the poor”.¹⁸

This case of *charitable asceticism* that is specific for the Christian life excludes any form of interest because it is above all moral norms of debt. Being above the natural feeling of compassion constitutes Christ love itself. It is a form of updating Christ's sacrifice as a work of grace, started with self-denial and directed “to build the body of Christ” (*Ephesians* 4, 12). More specifically, this custom of fasting represents *the ascetic aspect of Eucharistic virtue* directed toward the life of the neighbour in need, to whom I offer the sacrifice of my life if I do not have the gift I will to give him. Fasting interpreted as a sacrifice in the name of Christ and for Christ is *holy Eucharist sacred to God*, that is an *act of worship*, as the Apostle urges us: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a *living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*” (*Romans* 12, 1). As an act of worship, fasting represents *our Eucharistic sacrifice, in response to the sacrificial love Christ give us. Therefore, fasting is also involved in Eucharistic liturgy, being the worthy way of sharing its fruits*, according to the apostolic ordinance: “Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. However, let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgement to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason, many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if, we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. Nevertheless, when we are judged, the Lord chastens us, that we may not be condemned with the world. (*I Corinthians* 11, 27-32) Taking into account the importance of ascetic aspect of the Eucharistic virtue, the Church ordained that, beside the conscience examination during the Holy Sacrament of Confession, the faithful should approach the Holy Gifts with spiritual purity, both of soul and body. Besides the canon of prayer, it recommends fasting as abstention from food and drink on limited time, and from other usual natural habits, which could lead to sin.

In other words, *the Church celebrates the receiving of Christ Who died and is risen for us, as work of the Spirit in the hope of eternal joy of com-*

munion with Him: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.” (*I Corinthians* 11, 26).

For the first time, St. Ignatius the God-Bearer called the Eucharist “*medicine of immortality and medicine not to die but to live forever with Jesus Christ*,”¹⁹ which confirms that through the Church prayer of consecration, the material elements of the Eucharist are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ and they bear the eternal life. This opens the *eschatological perspective* of those who shared the holiness of the Eucharistic gifts: “Grant that we may more perfectly partake of Thee in the unending Day of Thy Kingdom”, confirming that the kingdom of God is *already experienced, but not fulfilled*.

Regarding the Eucharist virtue in its eschatological becoming, one noticed that at the final judgement people who enjoyed the good works of others in this life would be present to give their *thanks (Eucharist)* to them. This act of gratitude (Eucharist) is part of “the reward prepared for the just ones. Therefore, the judgement is not the day of vengeance, but *the reward day* when everyone will answer for the work entrusted (*Mark* 13, 34). For some, the judgement will be an act of blessing and *thanksgiving*, for others it will be an act of separation and isolation, such as in the parable of the Saviour, where the man who did not have a wedding garment was thrown out and told: “‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?... Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness” (*Matthew* 22, 12-13).²⁰

III. The Virtue of the Eucharist and the Gift of Creation

By reporting of the Eucharist to the gift of creation we analyse and define the ecological mission of the Church in the world. The Eucharist represents our thanksgiving and gratitude to the merciful love of God Who gave us the gifts of creation. These are meant to ensure our existence and proper course of life, and it is appropriate to adopt a responsible attitude towards them. Gratitude as a virtue is defined by our Eucharist (thanksgiving), to God’s gifts, that is to be fully aware in humility, working faith and in love

¹⁹ *Epistola către Efeseni* XX, 2, *PSB* 1, p. 164.

²⁰ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion Bria, *Tratat de Teologie dogmatică și ecumenică*, București, 1999, p. 206.

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that “for in Him we live and move and have our being” (*Acts* 17, 28), and that the “Trust in the Lord forever.

For in God, the Lord, *is* everlasting strength” (*Isaiah* 26, 4). Moreover, when you realise that “by these things men live; And in all these things is the life of my spirit” (*Isaiah* 38, 16), soul’s eye turns to God with *thanksgiving*, believing that “You have also done all our works in us” (*Isaiah* 26, 12).

On the other hand, God is *present and active in His creation through His energies*, and His wisdom deigned to establish an *ontological coexistence between man and creation* from the beginning, that man is made by God as lord of creation, and his very existence depends on it. Thus, “in the first pages of Scripture we read that God blessed the earth material goods and gave them to the man” for food “. Food, that makes us directly insert the world into our bodies, that makes the reality and man one body, that turns fruits of the earth in our flesh and lives, is God’s blessing for man. It is a real relationship between man and God. Human communion with God before the fall literally linked life with eating and drinking by the full participation of the body to the blessing, and not in fragmentary ways, intellectual, ethical or religious. Ethics and religion appeared when the alive, organic and direct relationship of man and God scattered and disappeared; they strive to replace the lack of relationship through individual acts of expiation and merit. Ethics and religion are the result of man’s fall, refusal or inability to make his relationship with the world an “*Eucharist*”, an action of gratitude to God, and *his life itself to become the Eucharist*, and his food and drink that are the basis of cosmic life to be all Eucharist too.”²¹

III.1. Eucharist as Virtue in the Cosmic Liturgy

We saw that the Eucharist represents the interpersonal communication of our love from God and, by extension, communication of the merciful love of God to all creation, based on her recognition as the gift of God. Consecration of our lives, through sanctification of the gift that God offers us, makes us brothers with the creation in an Eucharistic communion of thanksgiving and gratitude to the Giver, in order to *put together the deaconal and eucharistic liturgy, with the cosmic liturgy*.

According to the patristic tradition, *the world represents the gift of God*. “The creation understood as a gift does not stop us see only the vis-

²¹ Christos Yannaras, *Libertatea moralei*, trad. Mihai Cantuniari, Ed. Anastasia, București, 2004, p. 88-89.

ible things, the significantly perceived objects, but send us the Archetype and the Subject of these things. The iconic nature of creation is reflected in the dynamic relationship between Giver and gift that particularised the dialogue of love between God and creation. The thing itself closed its own immanence, which is an object that is not understood as a gift, makes relationship between man and God opaque. Thus, the creation is no longer an icon to by God, but it becomes an idol... Only true love helps us contemplate God as transcendent reality and yet present in creation, because the Giver is present in His gift. Through the iconic perception of God and creation, Christianity exceeds idolatrous selfishness and enables the dialogue between God – the Giver and world – the gift, in a genuine love-enveloping atmosphere. Creation as a means of dialogue between God and man does not mean a gift only from God. Every present involves reciprocity. Man receives cosmos as a divine gift, but becoming aware and spiritual, he feels the need to return this gift to God, by increasing it with his efforts on the creation”²².

On the other hand, just like salvation brought to us by the Son of God refers to the restoration of the whole creation, so *the Eucharistic Sacrifice is an address and a cosmic way*. As one Father of the Church noted, “in the sacrifice we remember the heaven, earth, sea, sun, moon and all creation.”²³ At the same time, “through sanctification of the elements, the universe is transformed into a temple of God’s presence and action. Everything is put in touch with God, everything refers to Him, as the Christian becomes aware that he lives, moves and acts not in a hostile world, but in a world of God, imbued with His power and love.”²⁴

Someone noted that “the Eucharist sacramental element is not the sacrifice, but offering to God his own creation”²⁵ In addition to the commemorating character of Christ’s sacrifice and of being the spiritual food of the soul, “The Eucharist is a blessing of the material world, and of the fruits of nature and *a reference of all people to the Creator done the gratitude*

²² Lect. univ. dr. Adrian Lemeni, *Perspectiva transfigurării cosmosului în Hristos – o șansă de depășire a unei concepții consumiste despre lume*, în vol. *Cosmosul, între frumos și apocaliptic*, Alba Iulia, 2007, p. 52-53.

²³ Sfântul Chiril al Ierusalimului, *Cateheze mistagogice*, V, 6, trad. Pr. D. Fecioru, București, 2003, p. 361.

²⁴ Paul Evdokimov, *Présence de l’Esprit Saint dans la tradition orthodoxe*, Paris, 1977, p. 109.

²⁵ Ioannis Zizioulas, *Creația ca euharistie*, trad. Caliope Papacioc, Ed. Bizantină, București, 1999, p. 44.

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and reverence”²⁶. This pertinent observation makes us think to the sacrifice of Abel, seen in all its glory as a “tutor to Christ” (*Galatians* 3, 24), or “a shadow of things to come” (*Colossians* 2,17), designed to confirm that our Eucharist is a love-response of the merciful Giver, “Who built all things” (*Hebrews* 3,4). According to this “*Eucharistic cosmology*”²⁷ we can recognise *the co-work of God, man and world, in a liturgical way, while it emphasise the Eucharistic dimension of all existence, and the priestly vocation of man in relation with God's creation*. A theologian said that: “If the sap gets off the ground, if the water describes fruitful cycle in the universe, if heaven and earth kiss in the sun and rain, if the man works, sows, ploughs and reaps, if the flower startles and is full of perfume, if the wheat seed dies in the ground and rises again full of seeds, it is for food necessary to life to appear, it is finally, for man to make from the chalice of earth, a chalice offered to God. Christ freed the cosmos of pagan gods and their magic oppression on human life. His incarnation destroyed the dualism that made the body to be a tomb for the soul and the earth to be an exile. He rose with a true, transfigured body and showed himself to the Apostles in “flesh” and “bones”. *Resurrection abolished the world as a grave and discovered it as Eucharist*”²⁸. This means “the creation disfigured by sin, becomes a *liturgical space* that celebrates ongoing, by the restoration of the risen Christ in the Eucharist”. And liturgy is the Church itself in its act of *common thanksgiving*, E.I. the *cosmic liturgy* defines the state of service of the whole transfigured and reviewed universe by Christ the risen.²⁹ Thus, “Christian is a priest of creation according to his restoration in Christ. He respects the cosmos for two reasons: first, that the universe became the bearer of a divine presence, “*the sacredness of the Eucharist*”, revealing it as a temple of the living God, but also because man became the link between God and creation...Man brings to God the gifts of creation, thereby recognising that the creature does not belong to man but to God, the only absolute Master. Offered to God, the creation is free from natural limits... Precisely because we offered them, they no longer belong to death, but life...”³⁰.

²⁶ *Idem*, p. 39-40.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 36.

²⁸ Olivier Clément, *Questions sur l'homme*, Paris, 1972, pp. 159-163.

²⁹ Conf. dr. Mihaela Palade, *Podoaba exterioară a bisericilor ortodoxe, simbol al cosmosului restaurat*, în vol. *Cosmosul, între frumos și apocaliptic*, Alba Iulia, 2007, p. 424.

³⁰ Pr. prof. dr. Ilie Moldovan, *Dimensiunea euharistică a ecologiei formative...*, în vol. *Cosmosul, între frumos și apocaliptic*, Alba Iulia, 2007, p. 295.

The world is transfigured and becomes a sacrament in the Liturgy, which is essentially community celebration. St. Maximus the Confessor understood the *universe as a vast "cosmic liturgy" in which heaven and earth unite in the doxology*. Man's mission is to be the microcosm and mediator in the cosmic liturgy that is to be the *priest of creation*. This means that *human salvation can not be separated from the transfiguration of the cosmos*, as long as he is bound by his indissoluble nature to the visible world.³¹

The faithful offer the creation gifts (bread and wine) to God by the hand of the priest, and by their consecration in the Holy Eucharist, the consecration of the world is committed. "The world which flows into the liturgical space is the corruptible world, and its affirmation is performed by receiving it within the Church... The Liturgy is the "immortal remedy" just because makes the world holy, by accepting and affirming it and by denying its corruption, and it offers the world to its Creator as an authentic creature: "Thine own of Thine own we offer unto Thee, on behalf of all and for all."³² Therefore, "through the Eucharistic act, the man perceives the world as a gift brought to God."³³

Harmonising the whole creation, the Divine Liturgy is foretaste of "eschatological fullness of God's kingdom. In the Divine Liturgy, Saviour Christ and His Church live the life and light of the eighth day beforehand. The whole cosmos is involved in the liturgy of the Church, enjoying the renewal through it. The liturgy becomes universal, and the Church embraces the whole cosmos and all mankind through the Liturgy".³⁴

It was stressed that "addressed through the Eucharist, the world is something that was done to be received, given and shared. The world enters *the circuit Eucharist through the man: God, the priest, the world* (Bishop Kallistos Ware). Patristic teaching and spiritual living always make it clear that nature is not an object or a thing, but a being that co-operates with the other, which is the man.³⁵ *In order to overcome the ecological crisis, man*

³¹ Dr. Daniel Munteanu, *Criterii dogmatice ale ecoteologiei ortodoxe*, în vol. *Cosmosul, între frumos și apocaliptic*, Alba Iulia, 2007, p. 517.

³² Ioannis Zizioulas, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

³³ Pr. prof. univ. dr. Constantin Coman, *O perspectivă filocalică asupra problemei ecologice*, în vol. *Cosmosul, între frumos și apocaliptic*, Alba Iulia, 2007, p. 168.

³⁴ Ieromonah Mihail Stanciu, *Sensul creației, actualitatea cosmologiei Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul*, Slobozia, 2000, p. 94.

³⁵ Pr. lect. dr. Dan Sandu, *Al Domnului este pământul și plinirea lui*, în vol. *Cosmosul, între frumos și apocaliptic*, Alba Iulia, 2007, p. 593-595.

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must become a liturgical being. “Human superiority compared to the rest of creation lies does not in reason that he possesses, but his ability to communicate, i.e. to create relationships such that each being should be freed from selfishness and its limits and to relate to something beyond their own self, to something beyond – to God.”³⁶ This offering, through communication with God, with others and all creation is *made perfect in the Divine Liturgy, as in other services of the Church.* The Divine Eucharist restores the harmony throughout the cosmos and human nature, because Saviour Christ is present, true God and true man. *The Eucharist is the antidote to the ecological crisis;* “it is the bit of yeast that makes the world dead lump leavens mystically... It turns the world into a divine-human communion event... It gives life and existence their meaning and divine reason... The Eucharist is extended dynamically in the faithful life in every phase of world use. It turns the life into a continuous present of communion and relationship that saves and reveals the alterity and individual freedom beyond space-time and necessity. Thus, the Eucharist defines a new human morality. The ethical effort of the faithful is the personal extension of the Eucharist in every phase of life. Profession, economy, family, art, technology, politics, civilisation are located in the Eucharistic relation of man with God.”³⁷ The practical conclusion that emerges from the desire to overcome the ecological crisis of *man's life, who is involved in the Liturgy, is to become itself a liturgy, i.e. a total gift to Christ and of all things, to God, in order to receive them all back sanctified, deified and full of divine life.*³⁸

2. The Fulfilment of Eucharistic Virtue by Fellowship With the Creation

Drawing his attention to God, the man moves towards the gift of creation in the Eucharist by *twinning* with it, and not by dominating it despotically and abusively.

The divine grace is the foundation of the Eucharistic communion, and the fraternity with the creation is the same work of the grace. By grace we acquire a compassionate heart, which opens with the love to the gift of creation that God gave us. “And what is merciful heart?” asks St. Isaac the Syrian. It is “a heart that burns for the entire creation, for people to birds,

³⁶ Ioannis Zizioulas, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

³⁷ Christos Yannaras, *op. cit.*, p. 91-92.

³⁸ Pr. lect. dr. Gheorghe Istodor, *Criza ecologică*, în vol. *Cosmosul, între frumos și apocaliptic*, Alba Iulia, 2007, p. 582-585.

beasts and for all creation. In addition, when he remembers them, or when he sees them tears flow from his eyes (of the merciful). Because of its profound mercy that possesses his heart, and because of the long suffering, the human heart is angry and can not endure, or hear, or see any creature that is injured or distressed. And because of this, he prays with tears and from the great and infinite mercy of his flowing from the heart, the likeness of God, for beasts and enemies of truth, and for those who upset him every hour, also for the crawling creatures. He prays to be secure and forgiven.³⁹

The Eucharistic twinning with the gift of God's creation touches the human heart, and in an impetus of admiration, his love always expands to include the entire cosmos. The elder *Zosima* from the novel *Brothers Karamazov* by FM Dostoevsky has convincing words in this respect, when he finds out that "the mystery of God is the universe...All testify the mystery of God..." And it follows the exhortation: "Love God's creature, love the universe, and every wisp of sand. Love every leaf, every ray of God. Love the animals, love the plants, and love everything...if you love everything, you will discover in it God's mystery. The sky is clear, the air is fresh. How gentle is the grass! What is beautiful and pure nature! Only we do not understand that life is a paradise. If we want to understand this, all the beauty of the land would become a haven and we would embrace each other and we would cry with joy..." And, indeed, a spiritualised man, full of Jesus prayer grace, can feel this reality in his overflowing soul, witnessing a very real admiration and devotion to God's creation: "And when I pray in the intimate recollection of my heart, everything surrounding appeared miraculously and charming to me: trees, grass, birds, earth, air, light seemed to tell me that everything was created for man, that everything turned out from God's love to man, that everything pray to God and all praise and worship Him. Then I understood the meaning of words in the *Philokalia*: understanding everyone's language, and I saw that I can talk to all beings and they understand me."⁴⁰ The foundation of this reality is that for the faithful man, the nature, that is God's creation, is an open book where he can decipher in the mysteries of God. "The divine mystery is revealed by the beauty and diversity of nature. Bright sunlight offers the irreplaceable experiences that metaphorically expresses the light coming from the divine element. In addition, fresh air and wind is the basis of our physical ideas about the Holy Spirit. The effect of clear running water is a

³⁹ *Cuvinte despre nevoință*, LXXXI, p. 343-344.

⁴⁰ Nichifor Crainic, *Sfințenia – împlinirea umanului*, Iași, 1993, p. 162.

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profound symbol of renewal experience made by the appointment with the sacred. And soil and life fertility, along with seasonal renewal, are indispensable for the religious hope in the resurrection⁴¹.

On the other hand, “the surrounding nature is not a closed and isolated structure. The vegetable, animal and human worlds are closely related, they are like a house where the man is not the master, but the administrator, like a temple where he is the priest who serves the Creator”⁴². This approach leads to fellowship between the creation man. Starting from this, St. Francis of Assisi made a *hymn of glory brought to the Creator with gratitude for His creation* so useful to man: “Be praised, my Lord, with all Your creatures, Especially Brother Sun, By whom You bring us the day and who brings us the light; Fair is he and shines with a very great splendour...Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars, which you have set clear and lovely in heaven. Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Wind, and for air and cloud, calms and all weather... Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Water, who is very useful and humble and precious and clean. Be praised my Lord for Brother Fire, through whom You give us light in darkness, and he is bright and pleasant and very mighty and strong. Be praised, my Lord, for our Sister Mother Earth, who sustains us and keep us, and brings forth fruits and flowers of many colours and leaves...”⁴³.

The Eucharist reference to the gifts of God’s creation stands as *reciprocity of benevolence and gratitude, especially in human relationships with animals and birds*. The first form refers to their domestication and the born a *true friendship* with the unreasoning, through their master-ship by the man. The second form is *the gratitude of animals towards man’s kindness*. From the multitude stories reported in the *Lives of Saints*, we will refer to one best known, became the reference in this regard. It is said that St. Gerasimus, a hermit who lived in the fifth century, in a cave he built on the Jordan banks, cured a lion of a wound it had to its paw. Since then, the lion remained grateful to the saint, faithfully serving him, and the saint fed it. After the death of the old hermit, the lion remained steadfast at his grave, bellowing and bouncing his head to the ground, until it also died⁴⁴. Reflecting on this case, an author considers that “this was not because the

⁴¹ John F. Haight, *Știință și religie de la conflict la dialog*, București, 2002, p. 268.

⁴² Pr. lect. dr. Gheorghe Istodor, *op. cit.*, p. 582.

⁴³ Trad. Alexandrina Mititelu, în rev. “Floarea Darurilor”, nr. 6 / 1934, p. 156-157.

⁴⁴ Ioan Moshu, *Limonariu sau livada duhovnicească*, trad., note și comentarii de Pr. T. Bodogae și Pr. D. Fecioru, Alba Iulia, 1991, p. 109.

lion had a thinking soul, but because God wanted to reveal the people who glorify Him, not only during their lives, but also after death, and how obedient the animals were before Adam's transgression and expulsion from heaven delight."⁴⁵

There is nothing more appropriate for this purpose than St Maximus the Confessor's words that man can turn the earth into paradise, if he has the heaven in his soul. In light of this idea, Nichifor Crainic's comment is illuminating: "The nature of things changes according to the inner humour of the soul. And if, being a sinner, the man sees everything around him poisoned by grief, sobbing after salvation – because he broke the agreement between him and everything – then when he rose up again to the state of perfection, he will have a completely different worldview; the view of the restored agreement between him and the world... Things obeyed Adam because he obeyed the divine law and the universal harmony himself. A man raised again to perfection re-lives the feeling of paradise unity of Adam to the world. His eye now sees things in divine perspective..."⁴⁶

At the end of this exposure, it should be appropriate to form a *conclusion*. Namely, we say that the *ecological and economic crisis*, which we hardly pass through, is determined by the *moral and spiritual crisis* in which we deepen more and more... It lies in the secularised anthropocentrism of the modern and post-modern world, that dissolved *The Eucharist triad: God – man – creation*, by excluding the most determining and decisive factor – God; man remains the unique dominant, and he rules the creation arbitrarily. In addition, *this crisis starts within the human soul, which is dominated by selfishness*. The Saviour teaches us that man's heart conceives virtue and sin, affirmation and perfection of life, or its fall (*Mark 7, 18-23*). In fact, *the ecological and economic crisis is based on man's reckless and insatiable desire for domination over creation*. His purpose is the endless accumulation of material goods, for meeting welfare and comfort, as the basis of releasing endless pleasure in its many forms. Unfortunately, this is the very tragedy of man and creation's existence, "for whoever desires to save his life will lose it..." (*Matthew 16, 25*) This fact proves that *hedonistic vitalism, involving more and more the instinct of property, leads to its disruption. And this disturbance generates enslaving passion*, for as ingenious Nicolae Paulescu said, passion is nothing but disturbance of hu-

⁴⁵ *Idem*, p. 30.

⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 164-165.

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man instincts caused by pleasure, which is not the means anymore, but the purpose...⁴⁷ In this case, the passion that enslaves man to the detriment of the creation, as to overthrow the table of values, lies in the dystonia of “being” and “having”, acting as a distortion of the existence and possession...

In this neo-pagan vitalism, *The Eucharist vocation of man is dissolved, turning into idolatry* “who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.” (*Romans* 1, 25) This idolatry is *under the influence of the irrationality of exacerbated instincts and affects, and it develops amid auto-permissive and free of responsibility freedom...*

As stated in the *Seventh General Assembly of the WCC in Canberra* (1991), “understanding that the universe is God’s creation must transform our behaviour towards it. We do not contemplate it from the outside, but look for new forms of relationship with it, in an attitude of reverent attention. The Orthodox notion of “theosis” – the experience of Christ the risen Who transfigures the mankind and the creation – announces the renewal of human life and creation. Our spirituality must be lived in the service of God’s transforming and redemptive purpose, Who embraces all creation “(*Rapport du secretaire general*, p. 3). The Scripture reminds us that the work of redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ, not only renewed the human life, but the whole cosmos too.”(*Rapport Section*, I, p. 3).

IV. Aspects of Ingratitude

In the ecclesial community, in addition to those who *cultivated the charitable Eucharist through diligence and generosity*, scoring the most inspiring page of generosity in history, unfortunately, there occurred too the *ingratitude* of those who did not come close to God “with fear, faith and love”, Who is the Gift of everlasting life, Christ dead and risen for our salvation. There came the dishonest profiteers who, in their reckless ingratitude, as a loss of moral sense, decided to live a parasitic life, getting the most of the brotherly love full of hospitality that grow in the Christian community. The Scripture words come true that: “the rich *has many friends*” (*Proverbs* 14, 20) or that “many entreat the favour of the nobility, and every man *is a*

⁴⁷ *Instincte, patimi și conflicte*, Editura Anastasia, 1995, p. 100.

friend to one who gives gifts. “ (*Proverbs* 19, 6) The Apostle to the Nations includes these people in the category of men who have made “*from piety a means to gain*” and called them “men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth” (*1 Timothy* 6, 5). The Church taking firm attitude against the parasitic profiteers’ ingratitude established *discernment as a judgement of value in cultivating Christian Eucharistic charity and hospitality*. The book called *The Didache or Teaching of the 12 Apostles*⁴⁸⁴⁸ specifically and precisely indicates the attitude to be taken against abusive ungrateful behaviour of those called “*Christ smugglers*’”: “...If anyone who comes to you is a traveller, help him as much as you can, but he must not remain with you more than two or three days if needed. If he wants to settle in as an artisan, he should work and eat, but if he does not have any job, you should concern he does not live with you like a lazy Christian. Moreover, if he refuses to do so, then he makes trade with Christ. *Pay close attention to some of them* (chapter XII, 2-4). Every apostle, who comes to you, should be received as Lord, but he should not stay more than a day and if needed the next day; but if he stays for three days, then he is a false prophet. When leaving, the apostle should not take anything but bread, until he finds another shelter, but if he asks money, then he is a false prophet “(Chapter XI, 4-7). Discernment in the perpetration of charity born caution who is “the mother of wisdom”, hence the admonition: “Let your alms sweat in your hands until you know who receives it” (Chapter I, 5). By putting barrier to the abuses, we do not stop the charitable work at all, but we order our relations, and do not allow generosity to become disordered. Therefore we correct that diaskorp (*Zein (to waste giving with foolish mercy)*), which makes love or generosity become weakness and support idleness, parasitism and abuses of all kinds, knowing that apostolic motto is that: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat (*II Thessalonians* 3, 10).

To overcome the abusive and unpleasant shortcomings, since the fourth century, after the end of the persecution, the Church’s charitable work was institutionally organised and developed in this way over time.

Moreover, we consider it appropriate to present other aspects of *ingratitude encountered in interpersonal relations*. First, we have to specify that the situations of ingratitude constitute a breach in the normality of *mutual relationship between giver and recipient* and the giver dissociation from his gift. This is a defeat of the rule that *the giver is always in*

⁴⁸ *PSB I*, trad. Pr. D. Fecioru, București, 1979.

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his gift and the attitude towards the received gift reflects negatively on the giver. The ingratitude situations have a very wide, varied and contradictory manifestation in the interpersonal relations, according to conscience, faith, character, and especially the interests of everyone.

Concretely speaking, for example, there are situations where the giver can not continue or repeat the expected blessing. For some the gratitude remains as a active memory... For others the gratitude goes out, turning the excitement of another time into oblivion... For others, the gratitude is replaced by reckless rebel... In fact, the latter attitude is nothing but exposing their selfish interest disguised under the mask of hypocrisy and cowardice that bears the ingratitude stigma.

We can also refer to the *false gratitude* when the *hypocrisy*, under the mask of contentment filled with gratitude, hides the desire to obtain more and more benefits... The giver will realise the cheating when, being in difficult situations, the ungrateful and flattering recipient leaves him, although he might help him... But ingratitude may become quite violent when the coveted benefits are “rewarded” with envy, hatred, slander, defamation, or even hostile actions. In such cases, the reactions are varied. Some can overcome the emotional situation, going more easily over injustices that befall them even with indifference... But others feel deeply aggrieved by the injustice of ingratitude, which becomes obsession, and engages them in hostile action... And when the “law of retaliation” can not be overcome as uncompromising justice law, there comes the frustrated ego-centrism with its compensation instinct and revengeful response, generating all kinds of personal animosities and social conflicts...

In addressing the same report between charity and gratitude we refer to issue where the focus is on the *refusal of the gift offered with affection, kindness and generosity*. If the apostle urges us to “rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (*Romans* 12, 15), this means that it is appropriate for us to be a part in the joys of our neighbour’s life, since not only the difficulties of life, but the joys too are intended to be communicated with the same enthusiasm of love. The refusal of the gift our fellow offers us always produces grief, because *unrequited love is painful and leaves a void in the soul through her de-compensation. Nevertheless, joy is complete when the generosity offered as a gift receives as a response a gift too, returned to the beneficiary with the same sincere affection. In*

this case, the receiver becomes giver and benefactor at his turn, and thus the joy of communion increases, receiving the light halo of disinterested love that generated it.

Looking at *the mutual satisfaction between giver and recipient*, we notice that it is *a natural right for the giver to enjoy the gift he offered* and to receive at least *the response of gratitude* from the recipient. However, the joy giver's is complete only when he sees his gift making fruits. Hence the responsibility of the receiver to increase the gift, as we can see from the parable of the talents, where *God the Giver requires an account and punishes the lazy one who did not multiply His gifts...*

In human relationships, we meet the circumstance when not realising the end of his beneficence, the giver lives the heavy disappointment of failure, especially when the gift offered was made by toil... We talk about the parents who invest capital and enthusiastic hope in their children future and they do not realise the objective and the purpose of their action... Willingly or unwillingly, this failure bears the bitter taste of unfulfillment, and of ingratitude somewhere...

In response to this attitude of ingratitude, gratefulness can show *the light of disinterested love, even in the absence of beneficence*. A possible case is that of the sons who are generous and grateful to their parents in need and difficulty, without judging them whether they neglected or abandon their children. This is about gratefulness driven by *the power of love beyond injustice and by forgetting it, they win the war*. The situation can be the same for the parents who offer gifts to their children and the last ones prove they do not deserve them through their attitude and behaviour. It's something like the father of the prodigal son from the Gospel, who receives his son who spent his fortune with forgiving love and enjoys his coming... The father owns the son who defied him by his actions with the utmost affection, and this love draws near the love of enemies. It is the "crucified love", which bears the holy sigh of patience, infusing its benefits without receiving anything in return... In both cases we talk about *the generosity of a great soul that can overcome ingratitude of irresponsible selfishness and neglect...* It's something that seems beyond human naturalness, so we say that *God's grace fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope (Romans, 15, 13) that never dies but encourages the benevolence*. Some of them receive God's blessing, proving by

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their deed to be the “sons of the Most High, for He is kind to the unthankful (ἀχαριστοὺ and evil” (Luke, 6, 35)⁴⁹.

V. Growing of Gratitude as Christian Virtue

By understanding the meaning and importance of gratefulness in people's lives, we have to *cultivate it as virtues in order to become a character trait and skill in interpersonal relations*. The following verses are meaningful: “gratitude is an expensive flower, / Which secretly blossoms in the hearts, / But some instil it just to break it, / And then they wonder that it faded.” (St. O. Iosif).

Indeed, gratefulness has grown too timid and unconvincing especially due to the selfishness settled in our nature, bearing the wounds of sin... It is even less now that the dynamism of this virtue is obscured by the feverish interest which dominates the personal and social life of our time. Yet, in order to live our life with natural authenticity, our moral and spiritual powers should be animated and focused on the perennial values that defines the human soul.

On the basis of *reciprocity between giver and recipient*, it is appropriate to note that only *disinterested kindness could ask the gratefulness to be the same: sincere and disinterested*. In this case the kindness has to be done “heartily, as to the Lord (κ ψυχῆς ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ) and not to men,... knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward... but he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done.” (Colossians 3, 23-25).

We can often hear people expressing grievance against others ingratitude, without analysis their own acts. The Saviour taught always start the judgement with ourselves, and our own actions: “Judge not, that you be not judged” (Matthew, 7, 1) For this reason, we should first give our example

⁴⁹ Deepening this aspect, we say that in this case is about makroqum (long – patience), as a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5, 22), that shares God's love (I Corinthians 13, 4). It can not however be understood only by a "spiritual judgement" (pneumatikis nakr (netai – spiritualiter examinatur – I Corinthians 2, 14), that in substance and in fact is the "mind of Christ" (I Corinthians 2, 15). In other words, he who has the mind of Christ, commits everz work he does "in the Lord Jesus name, giving thanks through Him (gratias agentes) In other words, he who has the mind of Christ, is that any work he does, one commits "in the Lord Jesus name, giving thanks through Him (Colossians 3, 17).

of charity and gratitude. Like any different morally act required to have a clearly defined place in *the character education*, so *the virtue of gratitude ought to be preached to others by personal example*. “*Exempla trahunt*” is the motto that attracts and persuades you to follow the call because only the experienced teaching can be a reliable model. Its actual living first checks truth that convinces, because the way you live it offers the model of specific action. Christ Gospel convinced the world and changed it, because those who preached it first confirmed this teaching viability by their living. St. Paul, for instance, asks the believers to “imitate me” (*I Corinthians* 4, 16) because “I also imitate Christ” (*I Corinthians* 11, 1). St. Paul urges Timothy to do the same, “knowing from whom you have learned them” (*II Timothy* 3, 14), and through him he urges all of us (*II Timothy* 2, 2): “be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (*I Timothy* 4, 12). Moreover, we could continue “with gratefulness” because and it is among this variety of unique gifts too fulfilling as “fruit of the Spirit” (*Galatians* 5, 22).

In interpersonal relationships, the virtue of gratitude can be grown in the hospitality environment. Love of foreign or hospitality (*I Timothy* 3, 2, *Titus* 1, 8) became a rule of Christian behaviour since in the Apostolic Age as a materialisation of brotherly love. The joy of fraternal communion included all those who confess the same faith and shared the fruits of the same divine grace, no matter of space, as a document of the first Christian centuries witnesses: “... *They love each other... The one who has gives to the poor without envy. If they see a stranger, they take him under their roof and enjoy him as a true brother, as they call each other brothers not after the flesh but in spirit and in God*”⁵⁰. This hospitable joy is reflected and always updated within the *gift of the guest*, and the response gift from the receiver. Therefore, *the reciprocal gifts keep alive the memory of the Eucharistic communion fellowship*. And so “*from gift through gift there comes the grace*”, which means that grace creates joy of communion and the gift increases the grace work for the joy of the spiritual life of each.

To become a habit and trait, the virtue of gratitude ought to be *firstly cultivated in the family, from the earliest age of childhood*, by developing a sense of reciprocity between giver and recipient, that born spiritual generosity. Since children are the “eyes of parents,” parents have a para-

⁵⁰ *Apologia lui Aristide*, XV, 7, trad. Pr. D. Fecioru, rev. *Mitropolia Banatului*, 7-8/1983, p. 432.

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mount role in the education within the family, *both through exhortations, and especially by their behaviour example*. It is the place to point out that those parents are wrong who show too much love for their children to satisfy their every whim, and most lack objective reasons, without realising that *lacking of discernment the whims close of the child life spiritual, and develop selfishness*. Therefore, parents who do not cultivate a spirit of generosity by *creating a habit in their children not only to receive but also to offer even a little of their own, or from the gift they received*, will become their children victims of selfishness and ungratefulness, and they will understand it at the old age, when it is too late...

Besides family, other factors of education are *the school and the Church*. The school cultivates the virtue of gratitude both through the religion class and the related religious programme and through civic education and literature classes. The Church cultivates the Eucharist virtue especially in the *liturgical communion*, as St. Ignatius the God-Bearer urges: *“Try your best to gather as often as possible to bring thanksgiving to God (Eucharist – thanksgiving) and His glory. When you come often, the powers of Satan are destroyed, and the union of our faith prepares his destruction.”*⁵¹

In this connection it was noted that “joining the Liturgy the participants are involved in a spiritual moral and ecological education on nature which is the subject offered for consecration and dedication of man...The man gets the spiritual meaning of creation and is aware of his obligation to respect life in all its aspects as a gift of God. He seeks to reach communion with God, with himself and with his peers. During the Liturgy, meeting other people, worship, listening to the Gospel creates a sense of sacrality of the matter. The education for the Eucharist can be a viable alternative to the temptations of the modern world, marked by violence, indifference to the community and hedonism.”⁵² In order to have a permanently lively gratitude in their hearts, the Church created a *special prayer* for this purpose, to help and guide of believers how to ask God that our thanks to our fellows become perfect by His grace and blessing: “God of love, to You I owe thanking for the sweet feeling of love and care, which I enjoy. Oh, Thee, the source of all good things, pour Thy blessings and benefits over your servant (name). Defend him from all dangers that surround the

⁵¹ *Epistola către Efeseni* 13, 1-2, *PSB* 1, p. 161.

⁵² Pr. lect. dr. Dan Sandu, „Al Domnului este pământul și plinirea lui” – *Psalmul* 23, 1, în vol. *Cosmosul, între frumos și apocaliptic*, Alba Iulia, 2007, p. 597.

mortal life on earth. Make the shining sun always rises over him, and the clouds of worries and sufferings clear off. Fill his heart with the joy of Thy salvation... do not let the burdensome suffering cloud his head and bitter his heart... Make every day of his life to be like a clear and smooth river, flowing through green garden among flowers...Either part he goes and stays, shade him with Thy kindness... Thy good angel may accompany and guard him in all his life; and after a long life full of blessings and good deeds, may he be worthy to gain Thy endless goods, prepared for all those who work virtue.”

Gheorghios D. Metallinos¹

„Din apă și din duh” – perspective teologice ale Tainei Botezului

Abstract

St. Nicholas of Cabasila, 14th century, identifies the existence of the Church with The Holy Mysteries. The Church is determined, is revealed and becomes reality through the Holy Mysteries, and especially through the Holy Eucharist. Each Mystery brings about the possibility of man's integration into the ecclesiastic Body, into the divine-human reality of the Church, and the transformation of the natural human existence into an existence above its boundaries. The mystery of mysteries in this restoration process, and the beginning and the condition of all the other mysteries, is the Holy Baptism. St. Basil the Great speaks about the two great aims of the Baptism: a) to destroy "the body of the sin so that it could no longer create death" and, b) the Baptised to live in the Holy Spirit". Baptism moves the whole spiritual evolution of the Christian towards salvation. The patristic theology insists upon the revival of Baptism. Man becomes a new creature in Christ and thus, the Baptism gets its Christocentric character. Baptism has a direct relation with the Church, too.

Keywords

The Mystery of the Holy Baptism, Dogmatic Theology, Church,

Marele tâlcuitor al Dumnezeieștii Liturghiei, Sfântul Nicolae Cabasila (secolul XIV-lea) identifică existența Bisericii cu Tainele ei. „Biserica se descoperă prin Taine”,² înțelegând și subliniind prin aceasta, Taina Bisericii, Dumnezeiasca Euharistie.³ Nu există realitate bisericească fără Taine,

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² Εἰς τὴν Θεῖαν Λειτουργίαν λη΄. PG.150, 452 C.

³ Acest lucru îl susține și Mitropolitul de Pergam, Ioannis Zizioulas, acceptând că, după Cabasila, între Biserică și Euharistie există „unitate reală” (Ευχαριστία καὶ βασιλεία Θεοῦ, ΣΥΝΑΞΗ 52, 1994, p. 81).

fără posibilitățile participării, adică, la Harul Dumnezeiesc necreat și în același timp trăirea caracterului acesteia pnevmatic. Biserica se determină, se descoperă, se înfățișează și devine realitate prin Tainele ei, și înainte de toate prin Dumnezeiasca Euharistie. După același teolog „această cale a așezat-o Domnul, venind spre noi, și prin aceasta a deschis poarta, venind în lume, și către Tatăl urcând nu a mai închis-o, ci dintru Acesta, prin ea conviețuiește cu oamenii... în acest mod, în El viețuim și ne mișcăm și suntem” (Fapte 17, 28).⁴

Biserica „există și continuu se formează în Taine și prin Taine”.⁵ Limitele ei se stabilesc, local, numai în acord cu viața sacramentală a corpului ecclesial. „Cei ce trăiesc în afara vieții sacramentale sunt în afara Trupului lui Hristos”.⁶ Iar în spațiul exterior acestora stăpânesc Satana și puterile lui.

Fiecare Taină aduce posibilitatea integrării omului în Trupul ecclesial, în realitatea divino-umană a Bisericii și prefacerii modului natural al existenței umane într-unul mai presus de fire, un mod de viață și existență, ceea ce îl presupune pe om receptiv harului dumnezeiesc.⁷ Prin Sfintele Taine se înnoiește firea credinciosului, se restaurează și se plăsmuiește în chip dumnezeiesc. De altminteri, după Sfântul Macarie, „Domnul nostru pentru aceasta a venit, ca să schimbe firea noastră, să înnoiască și să reconstruiască sufletul nostru, care a fost distrus de patimi, din pricina călcării poruncilor... și, într-un cuvânt, a venit să-i facă oameni noi, pe câți cred întru Acesta”.⁸

2. Taina cea dintâi în acest proces de restaurare, dar și începutul și condiția prealabilă a tuturor celorlalte, este Sfântul Botez, „cel dintâi dintre darurile duhovnicești”.⁹ Teologia botezului este dezvoltată pe larg de către Sfinții Părinți, începând cu cei Apostolici, până la Marii Părinți ai sec. al IV-lea și al V-lea, continuând până la Nicolae Cabasila și Simeon al Tesalonicului (1429). Această învățătură o recapitulează Marele Vasile, stabilind cele două mari scopuri și dinamica însăși a botezului: a) să desființeze

⁴ PG.150, 304CD. 501D – 504A.

⁵ Pr. Ioannis Romanidis, *Păcatul strămoșesc*, Atena 1989, p. 173.

⁶ *Idem*.

⁷ Tainele presupun cele două ipostasuri (moduri de existență) ale omului: biologic și ecclesial. Vezi Mitropolitul de Pergam, Ioannis Zizioulas, *De la mască la chip*, în vol. Χριστήρια, în cinstea Mitropolitului de Halkidona, Meliton, Tessaloniki, 1977, p. 308.

⁸ *Cuvântări duhovnicești*, 44, 1 – Editura Dorries, p. 291.

⁹ PG. 155, 185

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„trupul păcatului, pentru a nu mai rodi prin el moartea” și b) să trăiască cel botezat „în Duhul, și să rodească acesta prin har” (vezi Galateni 5, 22). Aceasta este nașterea și renașterea duhovnicească a omului, redată în cuvântul lui Hristos către Nicodim, „din apă și din Duh” (Ioan 3, 5).

Același lucru îl subliniază și Sfântul Grigorie de Nissa: „dacă nu se naște cineva din apă și din Duh, nu este cu putință să intre în Împărăția lui Dumnezeu, (în comuniunea și participarea harului).¹⁰

Botezul, ce se împlinește prin harul Duhului Sfânt, pune în mișcare întreaga evoluție duhovnicească a creștinului către mântuire. „Și dacă nu trăiești asemanarea morții Lui, cum vei deveni părtaș Înverii Lui”, întreabă Marele Vasile,¹¹ iar răspunsul, „pe cât botezul devine putere spre înviere”.¹² La fel, după Sfântul Simeon al Tesalonicului, cel botezat „se înfățișează la Botez pentru a scoate murdăria păcatului și a lipsei legăturii duhovnicești cu Dumnezeu, și să devină întreg nou și să se îmbrace în haina Noului Adam.¹³ Renașterea înseamnă a deveni omul de aceeași formă cu Hristos, (vezi Romani 8, 29), purtând chipul cel ceresc (I Corinteni 15, 49).

Rezultatele supranaturale ale botezului sunt evidențiate de Sfântul Grigorie de Nyssa: „Botezul este curățire de păcate celui ce se botează, lăsare de greșeli, cauza înnoirii și renașterii, prin renaștere înțelegând cu mintea, pe care nu o vede nimeni cu ochii săi, pe cel rănit și distrus de păcate și îmbătrânit de faptele cele rele, harul lui Hristos readucând omul la curăția și nevinovăția celui nou-născut.¹⁴ Teologia patristică insistă asupra lucrării de renaștere a Botezului. Sfântul Ioan Hrisostom pune următoarea întrebare: de vreme ce Botezul „curăță toate păcatele noastre”, de ce nu se numește „baie curățitoare de păcate ci baie de a doua naștere?” Și răspunde: se cheamă astfel, deoarece „nu curățește la modul simplu păcatele noastre, ci din nou (vezi Ioan 3, 7) ne recrează și plăsmuiește, însă nu din pământ, iarăși,... ci dintr-un alt element, din natura apei.”¹⁵ Pentru aceasta cuvântul folosit este – re-plăsmuire, re-creație, adică nouă și din nou creație. Exact ceea ce înseamnă cuvântul paulin: „făptură nouă” (II Corinteni 5, 17), însemnând unirea omului cu Hristos: „se face făptură nouă în Hristos”.

¹⁰ *Omilia povățuitoare la Sfântul Botez*, 2, PG. 31, 428A.

¹¹ *Idem*.

¹² PG. 155, 216B.

¹³ La sărbătoarea Luminilor, PG. 46, 580D.

¹⁴ Cateheza I, 3, PG. 49, 227.

¹⁵ PG. 155, 181A.

Este evident, prin urmare, caracterul hristocentric al Botezului. Ceea ce subliniază Sfântul Simeon al Tesalonicului; „Logosul lui Dumnezeu prin iubirea de oameni, a împlinit mai întâi în Sine Însuși – Tainele – astfel încât să devină pentru noi începutul bunătaților, să le primim, noi toți, de la Acesta ca izvor, cu bunăvoința Tatălui și conlucrarea Duhului Sfânt.”¹⁶ Fundamentarea hristologică ne conduce spre dimensiunea triadologică. Etapele lucrării mântuitoare a lui Hristos acționează soteriologic în om. După cum Întruparea Logosului Divin, Acesta reconstruiește cu putere chipul desfigurat al omului, astfel, după Sfântul Grigorie Palama, botezul lui Hristos în Iordan pregătește propriul nostru botez cu toate consecințele mântuitoare. Recapitulând, „... noi primim botezul ca mimare a Domnului și Învățătorului și Conducătorului nostru, nu murind îngropându-ne în pământ, după cum Acela s-a îngropat, ci cufundați într-un element înrudit cu pământul, apa, ne îngropăm în această (apă) după cum Mântuitorul nostru în pământ, și făcând aceasta de trei ori, ne închipuim nouă înșine întreitul har al Învierii.”¹⁷ Acest text patristic explică practica baptismală din Ortodoxie – Biserica: împreună îngropare cu Hristos în apă (trei afundări).

3. Botezul are totodată o directă relație bisericească. Astfel, „cei mântuiți” (Romani 6, 3-5; Fapte 2, 27) devin „împreună sădiți cu Hristos” (Romani 6, 3) dobândind posibilitatea participării la viața cea întru Hristos, la tipul bisericesc de existență, care conduce la rezidirea naturii stricate. Practic, aceasta înseamnă că suntem conduși către un nou mod de viață, care poate să conserve harul ce ne renaște, ceva ce nu se poate realiza magic sau automat. Cele afirmate mai sus sunt posibile acolo unde se păstrează tipul de viață al Bisericii (ex. modul de viață monastic de obște sau modelul enoriei din lume), nu însă în cazurile aparent convenționalelor realități parohiale, cărora le aparține doar cultul, dacă se întâmplă și aceasta, în timp ce partea cealaltă a vieții este predată lumii, secularizării. Legătura cu parohia, chiar însăși construcția parohiei, funcționează conform canoanelor într-un mediu religios și, astfel, acest creștinism este înțeles ca religie, – Tainele ca mijloace sau lucrări magice, iar preotul ca – „magicianul curții”, sau al comunității. În viața Bisericii, toate au o cauză.

Pentru a ne mărgini la Botez, în Noul Testament această Taină este în legătură cu Jertfa și Martiriul (Marcu 10, 39; Luca 12, 50), dar și cu moartea (Romani 6, 4; Coloseni 2, 12). Iar acestea nu au importanță

¹⁶ Grigorie de Nyssa, *op. cit.*, PG. 46, 585 AB.

¹⁷ Pr. Ioannis Romanidis, *Antropolgia Marei Evhologhiu*, Kivotos 3(1955), p. 112.

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simbolică sau sens figurat, ci propriu-zis. Botezul este intrare într-o viață martirică și jertfelnică. În tradiția patristică (Sfântul Dionisie Areopagitul, Capadocienii, Sfântul Maxim) se face cuânt pentru etapa „celor care vin spre curățire”, adică cei ce se pregătesc pentru „sfânta luminare” (botez) și pentru perioada catehizării. „Cateheza”, după cum probează exorcismele atașate astăzi la Taina Botezului preconizează inițierea noului creștin în lupta duhovnicească, pentru eliberarea lui din stăpânirea Satanei, prin curățirea inimii acestuia de orice manifestare egoistă sau egocentrică, care întunecă mintea și distrage atenția candidatului de la adevărata unire cea din Biserică.¹⁸ Pregătirea, de altfel, pentru botez se numește „mistagogie”, ceea ce înseamnă inițiere graduală în Tainele Bisericii.¹⁹ Practica bisericească mai coerentă s-a întipărit în canonul 7 al Sinodului 2 Ecumenic (381). Din prima zi a venirii sale în Biserică era numit creștinul la catehumeni, iar din a doua zi era socotit la credincioși.²⁰ Trebuia însă să urmeze moartea cea „din apă” a botezului, pentru a intra în viața trupului „iubirii jertfelnice, implinită prin Taine”.²¹ Acestea se exprimă în rugăciunea primei zile, care precizează clar această lucrare a credinciosului.

4. Taina vieții celei noi în Hristos se celebrează și se exprimă în toată slujba Botezului. Introducerea catehizării alături de exorcisme în slujba Tainei creează confuzie oarecare despre locul acestora în practica prebaptismală a Bisericii. Drumul spre Botez, însă, este legat de procesul eliberării omului de sub puterea diavolului, pentru a face posibilă integrarea acestuia în comuniunea cu Hristos.²² Constatarea realistă a practicii Bisericii primare este posibilă astăzi în viața unei mănăstiri cenobitice, în care, cu toate imperfecțiunile persoanelor, este evidențiată realitatea liturgică: „pe noi înșine și unii pe alții și toată viața noastră lui Hristos Dumnezeu să o dăm”, ceea ce reprezintă scopul primar al vieții cenobitice.

¹⁸ Pr. Alexandru Schmemman, *Introducere la Sfânta Liturghie*, în vol. „Liturghia noastră”, Ed. ZQHΣ, p. 69.

¹⁹ *Pidalion...* de Ierom. Agapie și monah Nicodim, Atena, 1990, p. 163, de unde și scoliile Sfântului Nicodim Aghioritul.

²⁰ Pr. Ioannis Romanidis, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

²¹ Despre cateheze și exorcisme, vezi Const. Callinic, „Biserica creștină și cele săvârșite în ea”, Atena, 1958, p. 411.

²² Exorcismele sunt inițierea credinciosului în lupta împotriva diavolului și metodelor lui (Efeseni 6, 11). Primul lucru al vieții creștine este o negare, o provocare. Nimeni nu poate să aparțină lui Hristos, dacă, mai întâi, nu înfruntă răul, și, mai târziu, nu se pregătește să lupte cu el... (pr. Alexandru Schmemman, *Pentru a trăi lumea*, Atena, 1982, p. 104.

Restabilirea participării credinciosului la viața în Hristos se leagă și de curățirea creației căzute, „care suspină și are dureri” în căderea ei împreună cu omul (Romani 8, 22). Devreme ce omul este parte a creației, comuniunea acestuia cu Dumnezeu se poate restabili numai prin creație. Omul și creația se mântuiesc împreună. Pentru aceasta apa Botezului trebuie exorcizată pentru a se curăți de puterile demonice²³ înainte de a fi afundat cineva în ea, prin Botez.²⁴ Cufundarea, dealtfel, în apă evidențiază Botezul ca adevărata „asemănare” cu moartea credinciosului în Hristos²⁵ (Romani 6, 5). Apa devine icoană a vieții celei noi (Romani 6, 4), a noii realități în Hristos. După Dionisie Areopagitul botezul este „ritual al nașterii în Dumnezeu”,²⁶ a renașterii, adică, în Dumnezeu a omului. Despre „naștere” vorbește în acest sens și Sfântul Grigorie de Nyssa.

Odată cu botezul și cu autentica participare a omului la viața cea nouă în Hristos, credinciosul se altoiește pe modul și caracteristicile existențiale ale trupului bisericesc. Deoarece botezul este, nu sfârșitul, ci exact începutul, unui nou drum, care culminează cu desăvârșirea credinciosului, adică îndumnezeirea lui, însemnând deplina integrare în Trupul lui Hristos.

La slujba Botezului sunt adăugate în Evhologhiu „Canoanele Sfinților Apostoli și ale Sfinților Părinți” (47, 49, 50 Apost., 7 al 2 Ecum., 48 Laod., 6 Neocez., 1, 2, 3 și 6 Timotei Alex. și 111 Cartagina),²⁷ care, răspunzând provocărilor eretice, stabilesc Botezul adevărat al Bisericii (întreita scufundare) și premisele lui bisericești, respingând falsele credințe legate de acesta. Ortodoxia, acolo unde există, insistă cucernic pentru cufundarea omului, pentru adevărata și efectivă botezare.²⁸ Cristelnița, urmașa anticului baptisteriu, funcționează ca „pântece” a re-facerii. Întreita cufundare în apa botezului nu este mod sau alegorie didactică, ci experiență simțită a unui eveniment real. Odată cu botezul, existența umană încetează a mai

²³ Vezi Rugăciunea Sfințirii apei: „să se zdrobească sub semnul chipului Crucii Tale toate puterile cele potrivnice [...] și să nu se ascundă în apa aceasta demonul cel întunecat, nici să se pogoare la acesta ce se botează duh viclean, care aduce întunecare gândurilor și tulburare cugetului.” (P.N. Trembela, op. cit., p. 355/6).

²⁴ Pr. Ioannis Romanidis, *Antropologia...*, op. cit., p. 13, vezi și pr. Alexandru Schmemman, *Pentru a trăi lumea...*, p. 106.

²⁵ Pr. Alexandru Schmemman, *Idem*, p. 109: “este moartea egotismului și a autarhieii, și este asemănarea morții lui Hristos, deoarece moartea lui Hristos este însăși tradiția”, p. 110.

²⁶ *Despre Ierarhia Bisericească*, cap. III, 2.

²⁷ *Evhologhionul Mare*, Ed. Asteros, Atena, 1980, (Veneția, 1862), p. 126.

²⁸ Vezi pr. Gh. D. Metallinos, „*Mărturisesc un botez*” ..., op. cit., p. 23.

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fi rezultatul necesităților biologice. În antiteză cu nașterea naturală, care implică o unitate biologică supusă elementelor naturii, Botezul înalță ființa prin libertate, de la necesitățile naturale, către evidențierea persoanei, care există numai în comuniunea bisericească a persoanelor și în legătura dragostei.²⁹

Moartea omului vechi și renașterea celui credincios nu este doar un simplu eveniment moral, ci unul „sacramental” și „liturgic”, deoarece omul care moare și înviază în Hristos renaște duhovnicește în Trupul Domnului și primește pecetea vieții veșnice, îmbrăcat în Hristos.³⁰ Aceasta este perspectiva eshatologică a Tainei.³¹ Botezul devine pentru cel botezat pecete și preambul al vieții eshatologice a Împărăției cerești.³² Pentru aceasta se și numește „prima înviere”,³³ deoarece devine putere spre „învierea finală”.³⁴

Este justă observația,³⁵ că în toată slujba botezului nu se face cuvânt despre iertarea vreunei culpe strămoșești. În „exorcisme”, deasemenea, nu se face nici o referire la păcatele personale ale catehumenului. Taina, din punct de vedere liturgic, este dezlegată de orice înțeles juridic al „iertării păcatelor”. Slujba gravitează, în ceea ce o privește, spre integrarea celui botezat în comuniunea Bisericii: eliberarea acestuia din „robia vrăjmașului” îl va conduce spre „împărăția cerească” și „unirea” lui cu „îngerul de lumină, păzindu-l pe acesta de toată uneltirea vrăjmașului”.³⁶

În acest context se evidențiază tematica botezului copiilor, care provoacă nesfârșite discuții. Botezul copiilor, cunoscut încă din Biserica primară (vezi I Corinteni 1, 16) s-a impus deoarece nou născutul este deschis harului, dar și pentru un puternic imperativ antropologic: necesitatea absolută a botezului copiilor decurge din faptul că „pruncii se nasc sub stăpânirea diavolului prin firea bolnăvicioasă, a trupului și a sufletului,

²⁹ Hristos Yannaras, *op. cit.*, p. 182/3

³⁰ Expresia Sfântului Apostol Pavel “câți în Hristos v-ați botezat, în Hristos v-ați îmbrăcat” (Galateni 3, 27) a luat locul Trisaghionului în slujba Botezului, dar și al Liturgiilor din sărbătorile împărătești (Nașterea Domnului, Paști, Cincizecime) din cauza prezenței nou botezaților în primele secole.

³¹ Vezi G. Patronos, *Legătura între prezent și viitor în învățătura despre Împărăția lui Dumnezeu a Bisericii Ortodoxe*, Atena, 1975, p. 150.

³² Grigorie Teologul, *Cuvânt* 40, 46 la *Sfântul Botez*, PG. 36, 425 AB.

³³ Grigorie Palama, *Despre patimi și virtuți*, PG. 150, 1049D. pr. Ioannis Romanidis, *Antropologia...*, p. 108.

³⁴ Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Omilia 13 la Sfântul Botez*, 1 PG. 31, 424.

³⁵ Pr. Ioannis Romanidis.

³⁶ *Rugăciunea de catehizare*, P.N. Trembelas, *Evhologhion Mic...*, *op. cit.*

stăpânite de moarte și stricăciune, pe care le moștenesc de la părinții lor și din pricina unirii cu firea cea căzută și consecințele ce provin de aici”.³⁷ De prisos este a se mai spune că respectul pentru spiritul Bisericii implică botezul copiilor, în cazurile părinților și nașilor binecinstitori, care păstrează vie, legătura lor cu trupul bisericesc, după cum nici nu îndrăznește cineva să boteze copiii necreștinilor, devreme ce nu vor avea posibilitatea educației creștinești.³⁸

Trebuie să subliniem că, dacă se botează cineva numai pentru realizarea unei integrări formale în comuniunea bisericească și pentru dobândirea unor „drepturi juridice”, nu poate asigura omului participarea la harul împărtășit prin taina care deschide drumul spre desăvârșirea vieții în Hristos (Matei 5, 48; Efeseni 5, 1) exprimată printr-o iubire dezinteresată. (Romani 14, 7; I Corinteni 10, 24; Galateni 5, 13). Marele Vasile leaga botezul, sub premise curat bisericești, de luminarea Duhului Sfânt, care conduce iarăși, sub premise – spre îndumnezeire: „cel ce nu se botează nu poate fi luminat. Fără lumină, ochiul nu poate distinge nici cele proprii lui, nici suflul nu poate vedea pe Dumnezeu prin contemplație”.³⁹

Botezul este intrarea în viața unei comunități locale concrete și nu integrarea într-o idee generală, universal-creștină.⁴⁰ Este natural astăzi să se piardă toate acestea datorită circulației, care caracterizează membrii Bisericii. Practic, se pierde noțiunea Bisericii locale – a parohiei, atunci când îmbisericirea se conduce după alte motive, binențeles nebisericești, (căutarea de preoți sau psalți cu voce aleasă, a corurilor celebre, etc.) spre desfătarea personală în Liturghie. Aici e potrivit cuvântul Sfântului Ioan Hrisostom: „Biserica nu este teatru, unde mergem pentru delectare!”⁴¹ În botez trebuie să moară „egotismul și autarhia noastră” pentru a se putea stabili comuniunea cu ceilalți membrii. Individualismul este consecința automată a căderii, precum și moartea atitudinii jertfitoare, sacrificată pentru invocarea instinctuală a autosatisfacerii și a prosperității. Botezul însă conduce spre îmbisericirea omului, adică spre metamorfoza individualismului în ființa îmbisericită. Toate se împlinesc în Biserică, rod fiind al conlucrării cu dumnezeiescul har. Iar aceasta implică acceptul și lupta

³⁷ PG. 155, 213 și urmare (Despre Sfintele Slujbe, cap. 31).

³⁸ Pr. Ioannis Romanidis, *Antropologia...*, p. 129.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 130.

⁴⁰ *Omilie povățuitoare la Sfântul Botez, op. cit.*

⁴¹ Pr. Alexandru Schmemman, *Pentru a trăi lumea...*, p. 99.

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omului. Automatisme în Biserică, nu pot exista, căci harul dumnezeiesc nu suprimă libertatea omului, ca posibilitate de a alege, de a accepta sau a respinge (vezi Ioan 5, 6).

Aceasta înseamnă că, în acord cu conștiința și experiența Sfinților, „botezul nu asigură de la sine mântuirea, ci doar introduce și îndreptează pe om spre începutul căii ce duce la viața în Hristos, și prin urmare la mântuirea ce vine de la Hristos.”⁴² După Ioan Hrisostom, participarea continuă a omului la energia cea dătătoare de viață a Duhului Sfânt, nu este garantată oricum prin botez”. Viața în Hristos implică lupta duhovnicească statornică, pentru a face posibilă activarea harului dobândit prin botez.⁴³ Pentru aceasta s-a stabilit încă din primele veacuri cateheza de după botez, dar și Taina Pocăinței, ca al doilea botez, pentru revigorarea luptei duhovnicești a credinciosului, rămânând, astfel, deschis harului. După cum învață Sfântul Grigorie Palama: „deoarece și după dumnezeiescul botez se cer lucrări de pocăință, acestea lipsind, cuvântul de angajare către Dumnezeu nu numai că nu folosește, dar îl și condamnă pe om.” (vezi II Petru 2, 21).⁴⁴

În acest context este necesar să se spună că legarea botezului de Sfânta Împărtășanie nu este de la sine înțeleasă, dacă lipsește statornicia duhovnicească. Ceea ce se spune că, premisă a participării la Dumnezeiasca Euharistie este a fi botezat creștin, înseamnă că a intrat în viața și modul de existență al Bisericii, și desfășoară o luptă duhovnicească pentru a rămâne deschis harului. Aceasta înseamnă că cel intrat prin botez în corpul bisericesc, se integrează în același timp printr-o continuă și nesfârșită luptă a pocăinței, pentru a rămâne în Trup. Creștinismul înseamnă un mod de viață diferit de cel al lumii (Ioan 17, 9-19). Credincios este acela care „și-a răstignit patimile dimpreună cu poftele lui” devenind „al lui Hristos” (Galateni 5, 24). Trăiește în Duhul, lucru pentru care se poartă „în Duhul” (Galateni 5, 25). „Roada Duhului Sfânt” este dovada prezenței Duhului Sfânt în inima curățită de patimi. Iar curățirea este lucrul urmărit în lupta duhovnicească, pentru a rămâne omul deschis harului divin.⁴⁵

O imagine cât mai corespunzătoare a acestui drum, dar și modelul istoric al ființei autentic bisericești, îl oferă monahismul. Viața cenobitică, în

⁴² Pr. Ioannis Romanidis, *Antropologia...*, p. 109

⁴³ PG. 49, 58.

⁴⁴ *Hrisostom despre harul dumnezeiesc*, Atena, 1956, p. 73.

⁴⁵ *Omilia III la Epistola către Efeseni*, PG. 60, 23.

limitele ei patristice, este modul autentic de viață bisericească și prototipul continuu al vieții de parohie. Încă din sec al IV-lea, la începutul drumului și dezvoltării vieții monastice, Sfântul Ioan Hrisostom face următoarea subliniere: „cel ce trăiește acum în mănăstire (sec IV), trăiește precum creștinii în primul secol la Ierusalim”.⁴⁶ Monahismul s-a descoperit ca o continuare a autenticei vieți bisericești, atunci când pericolul secularizării a devenit amenințător. Cunoscuta frază din istoria bisericească „se locuiește pustia”, înseamnă exact aceasta: orașul se mută în pustiu pentru a face posibilă viața cea întru Hristos, spre desăvârșirea botezului în drumul spre îndumnezeire. Pocăința monahală, ca al doilea botez, este înnoire a botezului. Monahii rămân „lumina oamenilor”, ca exemplu continuu al îmbisericii. Pentru aceasta și noi, ca membrii ai parohiilor noastre, privind continuu spre mănăstire, cu viața ei de obște, adică spre parohia din pustie, avem un îndrumător statornic pentru drumul și modul de viață, ce poate salva harismele Botezului și calea spre îndumnezeire.

Traducere de Arhim. Simeon Stana

⁴⁶ *A XI-a Omilie la Faptele Apostolilor*, PG. 60, 98.

Theodoros Alexopoulos¹

The Renewal-Regeneration of Human Existence and its Ecclesiastical Intergration Through the Baptism According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa

Abstract

Putting away the old man and being clothed with the new tunic of incorruptibility in the Baptism, human existence is engaged in a new course of spiritual ascent, which cannot be conceived separately, but intimately tied up with the Whole of a concrete moral way of life strengthened from the grace of the Church through the continuous participation to Its mysteries. Faith, Baptism and Church belong to each other and are bound together as an inseparable unity. So the ascent to reach perfection is only possible through an intimate connection with the Church and as result of participation to the grace-giving powers which go through Its body. Church is the womb for those who are brought to birth in conformity with God. In it grows the internal communion of the believers to each other, a fact which leads to the perfection of the body of the Church and to the restoration of the image.

Keyword

Baptism, Faith, Church, God.

Gregory's sacramental theology is primarily related to his anthropological views and more precisely with the notions of participation (metousia) and image, constituting fundamental axes, round which his theology of baptism turns. Within the narrow limits of this lecture an attempt will be made to show how deep and indestructible is the bond that unites the theology of baptism with the concepts of participation and image.

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In the first place, human being is above all conceived in patristic thought and in particular in the thought of Saint Gregory as a relational being, a being in communion. There is no living thing without communion. Nothing exists as an “individual”, conceivable in itself.² The cornerstone of Gregory’s theology of participation is summarized in the following phrase: **ἡ μετουσία τοῦ ὄντως ὄντος τοῦ ἀεὶ μένοντος καὶ πάντοτε ὡσάυτως ἔχοντος, ἐν τῷ εἶναι φυλάσσει τὸν μετασχόντα** (the participation of the “real being”, which is eternal and is always the same, preserve that who partakes of It in being).³ It consists in regarding God (**πρὸς τὸν θεὸν βλέπειν**)⁴, or becoming familiar with him (**οἰκειωθῆναι θεῷ**)⁵, who is the personal source unremittingly giving a share in a divine perfection to the creature. In other words the human being is essentially connected with the real Being, namely God, who is the first and ultimate reason of human existence.⁶ To be in a true and proper sense is not bare existence, but communion with God, which is rather an ongoing process of never ending receiving. This participation of God is described also by Gregory as Knowledge⁷ of God and depends above all on the ability of the human being to be receptive to the gifts bountifully granted by Him; it is lost by the ignorance (**ἄγνοια**)⁸ of God and had as basic consequence the fall, the alienation from true life, from the real Being, something synonymous to ultimate evil.⁹ In ignorance, namely in the erring in the Knowledge of the being¹⁰, which truly exists, Gregory perceives the basic reason for the arising of sin. On the contrary the understanding of the Being that really is and is good by nature (**τὸ τῆ φύσει καλόν**)¹¹ constitutes the ontological

² J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church* (= Contemporary Greek Theologians 4) New York 1985, 18.

³ Cf. Greg. Nyss., *De infantibus preamature abreptis*. (GNO III/2, 79, 11-13 Hörner).

⁴ Cf. *Infant*. (GNO III/2, 80, 1 Hörner).

⁵ Cf. *Infant*. (GNO III/2, 81,6 Hörner).

⁶ K. Skouteris, *Consequences of the fall and the laver of regeneration*, Athens 1973, 24.

⁷ Cf. *Infant*. (GNO III/2, 80, 22-23 Hörner): **γνώσις κατὰ τὸ ἐγχωροῦν ἐστὶν ἡ μετουσία.**

⁸ Cf. *Infant*. (GNO III/2, 80, 23 Hörner).

⁹ Cf. *Infant*. (GNO III/2, 80, 25-26 Hörner): **ἡ δὲ ἄγνοια οὐχί τινός ἐστιν ὑπαρξίς, ἀλλὰ τῆς κατὰ τὴν γνώσιν ἐνεργείας ἀναίρεισις, τῷ δὲ μὴ ἐνεργεῖσθαι τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν μετουσίαν ἢ τῆς ζωῆς ἀλλοτριώσις ἀναγκαίως ἐπηκολούθησε (τοῦτο δ’ ἂν εἴη τῶν κακῶν τὸ ἔσχατον).**

¹⁰ Cf. *De Vita Moysis* II, 23 (GNO VII/1, 40, 5-6 Musurillo): **τοῦτο δε ἔστι... ὀρισμὸς ἀληθείας τὸ μὴ διαψευσθῆναι τῆς τοῦ ὄντος κατανοήσεως.**

¹¹ Cf. *De mortuis* (GNO IX, 34, 11 Heil).

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condition for the maintaining of being in the proper way of contemplating and knowing God, who is the invariable truth existing for itself, immutable, most desirable, and in whom all beings participate in order to join in the perfection more or less according to their free dispositions and their receptiveness. Participation appears to be a process of continuous progress and growth: “For if a single luminary can comprehend everything alike that lies beneath it by the power of its light, and impart itself to all who partake of it while present to each whole and undivided (**ὅλος ἐκάστω καὶ ἀδιαίρετος πάρεστι**), how much more shall the Creator of that luminary become all in all as the Apostle says, and be present to each, imparting Himself in the measure in which the subject is able to receive Him (**ὅσον τὸ ὑποκείμενον δέχεται**)”.¹² By partaking constantly of the divine pleasure (θεία τρυφή)¹³, the beings partake of higher life, the eternal life, which is similar to the life of the human souls and angels in their original status (**ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ ζωῇ**) before the fall.¹⁴

The fall had devastating but not irreversible consequences for the human being. This remark has great anthropological significance and is intimately connected with the theology of image, whereas according to Gregory only man is “image and likeness” of God in order to regard the similar through the similar (**τῷ ὁμοίῳ βλέπειν τὸ ὅμοιον**)¹⁵. Image and likeness express both in the thought of Gregory the possession of the same attribute as the Archetype and have also a dynamic connotation: They affirm the struggle of human being for progressive participation by virtue of his own freedom, to the divine perfections.¹⁶In the Catechetical Oration Gregory deploys his views about man as image and likeness of God: “as the eyes must have some innate brightness in order to partake of light,... in the same way man who was created to enjoy the divine goods had to have in his nature something akin (συγγενές) to that of which he partakes. Hence he was endowed with life, reason, wisdom, and had all divine goods, so that by each of them his desires may be directed to what is akin... The account of creation sums all this up in a single expression when it says that

¹² *Infant.* (GNO III/2, 85, 24– 86,2 Hörner).

¹³ *Infant.* (GNO III/2, 84, 19-20 Hörner).

¹⁴ Cf. *De anima et resurrectione* PG 46, 148A.

¹⁵ Cf. *Infant.* (GNO III/2, 79, 23-24 Hörner).

¹⁶ Cf. D. Balas, *ΜΕΤΟΥΣΙΑ ΘΕΟΥ. Man's participation in God's perfections according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa* (= Studia Anselmiana 55) Rom 1966, 146-148.

man was created “to the image of god”. For the likeness according to the image is equal to the listing of all the divine attributes”.¹⁷

Thus, image is the gathering of all the divine attributes such as purity and apathy¹⁸ immortality, outspokenness¹⁹ from which man is bestowed in order to take advantage of them and so to accomplish and fulfill his mission, the likeness with God. But he did not. Making bad use of his inherent ability to choose of his own free will (**αὐτεξούσιος προαίρεσις**)²⁰, the human being gave space to the sin which strictly means the rupture of communion between God and Man.²¹ Immediate consequence of the sin is death which means dissolution (διάλυσις) of the elements which constitute the human being but in no way annihilation (**ἀφανισμός**).²² Neither soul nor body returns to nothing. But apart from corporeal death there is also spiritual death, the death of the soul, when it is separated from the true life which is God.²³ That is exactly the sin: the alienation from God, who is the true life. This separation from the true life is expressed in the context of Gregory’s teaching about the divine image in human being. Because of the fall the divine image in Man was not totally lost, but it became so unclear that it is difficult for someone to discern it. “The godlike beauty of the soul, which has been made to imitate the model, was blackened like an iron from the rust of evil and because of this was not capable any more

¹⁷ *Oratio Catechetica* V, 5-7 (GNO III/4, 17, 21-25; 18, 6-9). See also *De hominis opificio* PG 44, 184B.

¹⁸ Cf. *De Beatitudinibus. Or.* VI (GNO VII/2, 144, 1-4 Callahan): **ἐὰν ἐπὶ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐγκατασκευασθεῖσαν ὑμῖν χάριν τῆς εἰκόνοσ ἐπαναδράμητε, ἐν ἑαυτοῖς τὸ ζητούμενον ἔχετε. καθαρότης γὰρ καὶ ἀπάθεια καὶ κακοῦ παντὸς ἀλλοτριώσις ἡ θεότης ἐστίν. εἰ οὖν ταῦτα ἐν σοί, ὁ θεὸς πάντως ἐστὶν ἐν σοί.** See also *Cant. Or.* IX (GNO VI, 272, 18-19 Langerbeck). The notion of apatheia has in Gregory a double meaning: the freedom from any kind of passion [*De Professione Christiana* (GNO VIII/1, 134, 14-16 Jaeger)] and abstinence from passions in respect to a life according to virtue [*Or. Cat.* VI, 8 (GNO III/4, 24, 18)]: **ἡ ἀπάθεια τῆς κατ’ ἀρετὴν ζωῆς ἀρχή...** On the notion of Apatheia see W. Völker, *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker*, Wiesbaden 1955, 259-264.

¹⁹ Cf. *Oratio Dominica* V (GNO VII/2, 60, 23-25 Callahan): **τί ἀποκλείεις σεαυτῷ τὴν παρηρησίαν τὴν τῆ ἐλευθερία τῆς ψυχῆς ἐνυπάρχουσαν τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς συνουσιωμένην τῆ φύσει.**

²⁰ *Or. Cat.* XXI,1 (GNO III/4, 55, 7-8).

²¹ *Refutatio confessionis Eunomii* 174 (GNO II, 385, 24-25 Jaeger): **ἁμαρτία δὲ ἐστὶν ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλοτριώσις, ὅς ἐστὶν ἡ ἀληθινὴ τε καὶ μόνη ζωή.**

²² Cf. *Or. Cat.* VIII,3 (GNO III/4, 30, 16-24):... **λύεται τὸ αἰσθητὸν οὐκ ἀφανίζεται.**

²³ Cf. *Or. Cat.* VIII,5 (GNO III/4, 31, 25-27).

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to maintain the grace of the image belonging (from the beginning) to its nature... so fallen into the mud of the sin, man lost its capacity of being image of the imperishable God and because of the sin put on also the dress of the perishable and clay image, which the word of the Scripture advises him to put away and to wash it clean through the water of the pure way of living... so that the beauty of the soul can be revealed again.²⁴

The human soul should wash clean all the dust and mud, throw away all the foreign elements and passions, scrape off the rust²⁵ from itself, regain its purity, return to the grace of its prototype²⁶ so that its Godlike beauty shines again.²⁷ In other words, it must return to the same thing from which it was fallen away.²⁸ That means to regain the divine image which it still has within itself. This restoration of the obscured but not destroyed image is contemplated by Gregory on the basis of imitation of Christ in a double perspective: in the working of virtues and in the participation in the sacramental life of the Church, which is conceived as the body of Christ and characterized by the complete sympathy and harmonic coexistence of its parts.²⁹ Concerning the first aspect Gregory points out: “if we also are to become an image of the invisible God, it is fitting that the form of our life be struck according to the example of the life set before us. But what is that? It is living in the flesh, but not according to the flesh... one must prepare the pure colours of the virtues,... so that we become an image of the image, having achieved the beauty of the prototype through activity as a kind of imitation, as did Paul, who became an imitator of Christ through his life of virtue.”³⁰

²⁴ Cf. *De Virginitate* XII (GNO VIII/1, 299, 19-22. 299, 28-300, 5 Cavarnos): **καὶ τὸ θεοειδὲς ἐκεῖνο τῆς ψυχῆς κάλλος τὸ κατὰ μίμησιν τοῦ πρωτοτύπου γενόμενον οἷόν τις σίδηρος κατεμελάνθη τῷ τῆς κακίας ἰῶ, οὐκέτι τηνικαῦτα τῆς οἰκειᾶς αὐτῷ καὶ κατὰ φύσιν εἰκόνας τὴν χάριν διέσωζεν... οὕτω κάκεινος ἐμπεσὼν τῷ βορβόρῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἀπώλεσε μὲν τὸ εἰκὼν εἶναι τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ, τὴν δὲ φθαρτὴν καὶ πηλίνην εἰκόνα διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας μετημφιάσατο, ἣν ἀποθέσθαι συμβουλεύει ὁ λόγος, οἷόν τι νεῦδατι τῷ καθαρῷ τῆς πολιτείας ἀποκλυσάμενον, ὡς... πάλιν τῆς ψυχῆς φανερωθεῖ τὸ κάλλος.**

²⁵ Cf. *Beat.* VI (GNO VII/2, 143, 16-20 Callahan): **ὁ ἔνδον ἄνθρωπος... ἐπειδὴν ἀποξύσεται τὸν ἰώδη ῥύπον... πάλιν ἀναλήφεται τὴν πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον ὁμοιότητα καὶ ἀγαθὸς ἔσται.**

²⁶ Cf. *Beat.* VI (GNO VII/2, 143, 28 Callahan).

²⁷ Cf. *Beat.* VI (GNO VII/2, 143, 11-13 Callahan); *Virg.* XII (GNO VIII/1, 300, 13-15 Cavarnos).

²⁸ Cf. *In inscriptiones Psalmorum* I 7 (GNO V, 46, 22 – 47, 1 Mc Donough).

²⁹ Cf. *De Perfectione* (GNO VIII/1, 197, 19 – 198,4 Callahan).

³⁰ *De Perfectione* (GNO VIII/1, 195, 5-9. 196, 10-15 Callahan).

It is essential for every Christian to imitate Christ not only in the coherence of his own life, which means by following his footsteps in the virtue but also in the sacramental life. The rite and in our case the baptism as place of a new communion, of a reunion with God is tied up with the concept of imitation. Gregory's account in that respect is the following: "But the descent into the water, and the trine immersion of the person in it, involves another mystery. For since the method of our salvation was made effectual not so much by His precepts or the way of teaching as by the deeds of Him Who has realized an actual fellowship with man, and has effected life as a living fact, so that by means of the flesh which He has assumed, and at the same time deified by Him, everything kindred and related may be saved along with it, it was necessary to contrive a manner by virtue of which, there might be, in the baptismal process, a kind of affinity and likeness between him who follows and Him Who leads the way. Needful, therefore, is it to see what features are to be observed in the Author of our life, in order that the imitation on the part of those that follow may be regulated, as the Apostle says, after the pattern of the Captain of our salvation."³¹ Baptism is therefore based on the events of life of Christ, on his acts whose virtuosity are actualized once more in the sacrament of Baptism. It is in the sacraments and in Baptism first of all, that the sequence Christi is founded.³² For this reason, "it is necessary that those who have the same desire for the Good follow through imitation (**διὰ μιμήσεως**) Him who without a doubt is the guide to our salvation, enacting that which was shown by Him in an exemplary manner. For, it is not possible to reach the same end if the same paths are not followed".³³

It is necessary to follow in the footsteps of Christ in order to get away from the labyrinth of this earthly life, as one would, if one walked with someone who could show him the way out. The labyrinth is death; and only Christ could help us to escape its corruption. Gregory detects a kind of symbolism contained in the mystery of Baptism related to the events of the death and resurrection of Christ. There are three immersions in the water, as there were three days spent by Christ in the sepulcher; and there is also a great affinity between earth and water since both elements are heavy

³¹ *Or. Cat.* XXXV, 1-11 (GNO III/4, 86, 6-19).

³² G. Maspero, *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa* (= SVigChr 99) Leiden 2010, 91. Entry: Baptism.

³³ *Or. Cat.* XXXV 2 (GNO III/4, 86,19-23. 87, 1-4). Translation according to G. Maspero, *The Brill Dictionary...* 2010 (see note 31).

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and have a downward tendency.³⁴ So as Christ undertook mortality after being placed under the earth and on the third day rose alive, in the same way everyone who is familiar to Him according to the nature of the body, by looking forward to the same achievement, namely to the end of life, and by covering himself with water and being immersed in that, imitates the grace of the three-days Resurrection.³⁵ Thus Baptism give access to eternal life, actualizing in time the same effects as the Resurrection of Christ. It has an essentially eschatological dimension.³⁶ The Baptism with water give us a foretaste of the grace of our Resurrection at the End, for is the same as that of re-emerging from death.³⁷

Aside from its eschatological dimension, the Baptism as the imitation of the Death of Christ has also an ethical dimension which cannot be ignored. Imitation of Christ's death means in terms of virtue the deadening of the passions³⁸, the deadening as a product of man's own free will (**ἐκούσιος**)³⁹ with respect to the sin.⁴⁰ The resurrection would have no effect, if the voluntary mortification (in respect to the sin) was not precedent. The immersion into the water, which is a shadow and relief of death,⁴¹ creates a new status of communion between Man and God, for the image of the water implies the breaking off of the continuity of evil, but not its complete annihilation (**οὐ μὴν τελείως ἀφανισμόν, ἀλλά τινα διακοπή τῆς τοῦ κακοῦ συνέχειας**). Gregory points out: "In what does this imitation consists? It consists in the effecting the suppression of that admixture of sin, in the figure of mortification that is given by the water, not certainly a complete effacement, but a kind of break in the continuity of evil, two things concurring to this removal of sin— the penitence of the transgressor and his imitation of the death. By these two things the man is

³⁴ *Or Cat.* XXXV 3 (GNO III/4, 87, 21. 88, 1-5).

³⁵ *Or Cat.* XXXV 3 (GNO III/4, 88, 5-12).

³⁶ G. Maspero, *The Brill Dictionary...* 2010, 92.

³⁷ Cf. *Or Cat.* XXXV 6 (GNO III/4, 90, 13-16): **διὰ τοῦτο τοίνυν ἀναγκαῖον ἡμῖν τὸ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι προμελετῆσαι τὴν τῆς ἀναστάσεως χάριν, ὡς ἂν εἰδείημεν, ὅτι τὸ ἴσον ἡμῖν εἰς εὐκολίαν ἐστίν, ὕδατί τε βαπτισθῆναι καὶ ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου πάλιν ἀναδύναι.**

³⁸ Cf. *In Canticum canticorum* XII (GNO VI, 344, 2-3 Langerbeck): **τὴν οἴκοθεν ἐκ προαιρέσεως τῶν σωματικῶν παθημάτων γινομένην νέκρωσιν διὰ τούτου σημαίνων...**

³⁹ Cf. *Cant.* (GNO VI, 343, 9-10 Langerbeck): **οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐνήργησεν ἡ ἀνάστασις μὴ προκαθηγησαμένης τῆς ἐκουσίου νεκρότητας.**

⁴⁰ Cf. *Or Cat.* XXXV 5 (GNO III/4, 89, 18).

⁴¹ Cf. *In Ascensionem Christi* (GNO IX, 324, 8 Gebhardt).

in a measure freed from his congenital tendency to evil; by his penitence he advances to a hatred of and averseness from sin, and by his death he works out the suppression of evil... But since... we only so far imitate the transcendent Power, as the poverty of our nature is capable of, by having the water thrice poured on us and ascending again up from the water, we enact the same burial and resurrection which took place on the third day, with this thought in our mind, that as we have power over the water both to be in it and arise out of it, so He too, Who has the universe at His sovereign disposal, immersed Himself in death, as we in the water, to return to His own blessedness."⁴²

⁴³Nevertheless, since the Christian is found between the first and the last Resurrection, in order to achieve his task, he must be engaged into a process of unremitting moral uprising, which starts with the laver of regeneration, the first Resurrection.⁴⁴ That is where it lies the quintessence of Baptism, in the regeneration and renewal⁴⁵ of the human existence, for it brings the divided things again to communion. It brings the human nature back to its old authenticity.⁴⁶ Gregory provides us with a comprehensive definition of the Baptism: It is cleansing of sins, remission of faults cause of renewal and regeneration.⁴⁷ I find more attractive the second aspect of definition, that of renewal and regeneration on which I intend specifically to focuss my analysis at the end of the present study.

Considering Gregory's teaching of the perfection of Man, we are struck by his tendency to relate it with his view of the divine image inherent in Man. Baptism affects nothing else but the restoration and renewal of the Image, obscured because of the sin. Gregory states: "Our nature is through the generation from the heaven, been transformed from the perishable to imperishable and renewed from the old Man according to the Image of Him who created the godlike model".⁴⁸ Through the Baptism

⁴² Cf. *Or Cat.* XXXV 5 (GNO III/4, 89, 5–90, 5).

⁴³ Cf. *Or Cat.* XXXV 5 (GNO III/4, 89, 5-9).

⁴⁴ Cf. *Or Cat.* XXXV 5 (GNO III/4, 91, 4-5): **Μὴ δύνασθαι δε φημι δίχα τῆς κατὰ τὸ λουτρὸν ἀναγεννήσεως ἐν ἀναστάσει γενέσθαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον.** See also, K. Skouteris, *Consequences of the Fall...* 1973 (see note 5) 129.

⁴⁵ Cf. *In Diem Luminum* (GNO IX, 237, 24. 25 Gebhardt): **δῶρον παλιγγενεσίας, ἀνακαινισμὸς σωτήριος.**

⁴⁶ Cf. K. Skouteris, *Consequences of the Fall...* 1973, 159.

⁴⁷ *In Diem Luminum* (GNO IX, 224, 4-5): **βάπτισμα ἐστὶν ἁμαρτιῶν κάθαρσις, ἄφεσις πλημμελημάτων, ἀνακαινισμοῦ καὶ ἀναγεννήσεως αἰτία.**

⁴⁸ *Ref. conf. Eun.* III (GNO II, 313, 13-17 Jaeger): **οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ λόγος τοῦ μυστηρίου, ἐν ᾧ διὰ τῆς ἄνωθεν γεννήσεως μετασκευάζεται ἡ φύσις ἀπὸ τοῦ φθαρτοῦ**

The Renewal-Regeneration of Human...

Man comes back to his beauty with which was bestowed from the beginning (**ἐπανάγει πρὸς τὸ ἐξ' ἀρχῆς κάλλος, ὅπερ ὁ ἀριστοτέχνης θεὸς ἐφ' ἡμῖν διεπλάσατο**)⁴⁹ strengthen his ties again with God, regains his familiarity with Him, his outspokenness and boldness before Him and wins equality with the angels.⁵⁰ Moreover through the Baptism the ongoing process of corruption due to the sin is interrupted, the purity of nature is restored so that he who is purified with the water of cleansing will be again in communion with this one, who is truly pure, namely God.⁵¹ In that way Man finds once more the life which is familiar and appropriate to him and consists in partaking of God.⁵² In other words in the mystery of Baptism the repainting of the divine Image takes place along with Mans free condescension, since every person according to Gregory is the painter of his own life, and choice is the craftsman of the work and the virtues are the colours for filling up and completing the image.⁵³ In the Baptism every believer joins in the death and resurrection of Christ, is clothed upon with Christ and renewed in a new Person leaving away his old and sinful existence. This idea is clearly expressed in the prayer of consecration of the water in the baptismal rite according to the orthodox liturgy: “Wherefore, O Lord, manifest thyself in this water, and grant that he who is baptized therein may be transformed; that he may put away from him the old man, which is corrupt through the lusts of flesh, and that he may be clothed upon with the new man, and renewed after the image of him who created him: that being buried, after the pattern of my death, in baptism, he may, in like manner, be partaker of my Resurrection.”⁵⁴

Putting away the old man and being clothed with the new tunic of incorruptibility in the Baptism, human existence is engaged in a new course

πρὸς τὸ ἄφθαρτον, ἐκ τοῦ παλαιοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀνακαινιζομένη κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος ἐν ἀρχῇ τὸ θεοειδὲς ὁμοίωμα. See also *Cant.* XIII (GNO VI, 384, 21– 385, 6 Langerbeck).

⁴⁹ Cf. *In Diem Luminum* (GNO IX, 222, 15-16 Gebhardt).

⁵⁰ Cf. *In Diem Luminum* (GNO IX, 222, 24– 223, 1 Gebhardt).

⁵¹ Cf. *Or. Cat.* XXXVI (GNO III/4, 92, 18-20): **ὁ καθαρθεὶς ἐν μετουσίᾳ τῆς καθαρότητος ἔσται, τὸ δὲ ἀληθῶς καθαρὸν ἢ θεότης ἔσται.**

⁵² Cf. D. Balas, *Man's participation...* 1966 (see note 15) 93.

⁵³ Cf. *De Perfectione* (GNO VIII/1, 196, 3-5 Callahan): **τῆς ἰδίας ἕκαστος ζωῆς ἐστὶ ζωγράφος, τεχνίτης δὲ τῆς δημιουργίας ταύτης ἐστὶν ἢ προαίρεσις, χρώματα δὲ πρὸς τὴν ἀπεργασίαν τῆς εἰκόνας αἱ ἀρεταί.** See also K. Skouteris, *Consequences of the Fall...* 1973, 167.

⁵⁴ Cf. J. Goar, *Euchologion sive rituale graecorum*, Graz 1960, 289.

of spiritual ascent, which cannot be conceived separately, but intimately tied up with the Whole of a concrete moral way of life strengthened from the grace of the Church through the continuous participation to Its mysteries. Faith, Baptism and Church belong to each other and are bound together as an inseparable unity. Saint Gregory points out in the context of his teaching on the spiritual birth: “This (new kind) of birth is attained through faith; through the regeneration in Baptism is brought into light; Church becomes its feeder”.⁵⁵

So the ascent to reach perfection is only possible through an intimate connection with the Church and as result of participation to the grace-giving powers which go through Its body. Church is the womb for those who are brought to birth in conformity with God⁵⁶. In it grows the internal communion of the believers to each other, a fact which leads to the perfection of the body of the Church and to the restoration of the image.⁵⁷

It seems plain that this restoration of the image of God in us in and through Christ as basic element of Gregory’s anthropological views constitutes in addition the keystone of his sacramental theology. For Gregory, Baptism is a new creation leading to a new mode of existence, to a regeneration and consequently to a new ecclesial existence. Baptism passes through the imitation of the *acta Christi*. The whole life of Christian is for Gregory an authentic *imitatio Christi*, which one approaches through the sacraments which gradually restore the primordial image in the human being.⁵⁸

Sacramental and moral imitations are intimately connected in the theme of the symbolism of «myrrh» and «Libanus» often recurring in the Commentary of the Song of Songs. «Myrrh» is taken by Gregory as symbol of burial and death; «Libanus» means the Divinity; and thus their connection expresses the Pauline doctrine that we have to partake through Baptism and mortification of the passions and death of Christ in order to share His Resurrection and Divinity.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ *De tridui Spatio* (GNO IX, 278, 4-6 Gebhardt): οὗτος ὁ τόκος διὰ πίστεως κνοφορεῖται· διὰ τῆς τοῦ βαπτίσματος ἀναγεννήσεως εἰς φῶς ἄγεται· τροφὸς τούτου ἡ ἐκκλησία γίνεται.

⁵⁶ Cf. *De deitate illi et spiritus sancti*, PG 46, 573 B.

⁵⁷ W. Völker, *Gregor von Nyssa...* 1955 (see note 17) 102.

⁵⁸ G. Maspero, *The Brill Dictionary...* 2010, 90.

⁵⁹ Cf. *In Cant.* 7 (GNO VI, 243, 17-18 Langerbeck).

Florin Dobrei¹

The Exarchate of Bulgaria (1870-1945)

Abstract

For fear of a rebellion from the Bulgarian population of the Empire, discontent with the Greek Bulgarian Orthodox Church, but also to foil Russian Pan-Slavism political current plans through favoring, in Greek prejudice, Ottoman Slavism, The High Gate issued on 11th of march 1870 an order, through which the establishment of an autonomous Bulgarian territory ruled by a Bishop under the leadership of the Holy Synod was decided; Bulgarian Church independence was thus settled although through that document, autocephalous Bulgarian Church had the autonomy under the ultimate jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople not recognized, and the moment was actually the plunge in the way of restoring the spiritual unity of the Bulgarian people, under the pastoral care of their spiritual leader, of the same ethnicity. But no delayed reactions occurred, patriarchal synod, meeting during 10-28 September 1872, decided excommunication as schismatic, based on the accusation of “philetism”, of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. The conflict ended only on 25 February 1945, resolving the problem completely in 1953 by raising the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to the rank of Patriarchate.

Keywords

Autocephaly, Bulgaria, Constantinople, exarchate, schism.

1. The premises of the Bulgarian-Constantinople ecclesiastical schism

The history of the Bulgarian orthodox Church spreads over more than one millenium. In 864, the Czardom of Boris-Michael I (852-889) was officially Christianized; in the year 927, the emperor Romanos Lekapenos (919-944) and the Byzantine Senate recognized the status of Patriarchy (which was reduced to the level of Archiepiscopacy in the year 984) of

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the Bulgarian Church, recognition which came also from the ecumenical Patriarchate from Nicaea in the year 1235². But the times changed. For almost five centuries (1393/1396-1878), Bulgaria was from a political point of view under Ottoman domination, and ecclesiastically under the jurisdiction of the ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople. Through the investiture diploma of the sultan Mohamed II (1451-1481), the patriarch was recognized his quality of ethnarch, thus becoming the religious and civilian leader of the whole Greek nation (“rum mileti”), namely of the whole Christianity under the Sublime Porte. By the time, the provisions of the investiture diploma were more and more often broken; the Islamization of the Christian population had reached alarming dimensions and the simony had become a current practice³.

Under these conditions, Russia considered that the moment had come to intervene. Through the peace treaty from Küçük Kaynarca (1774), it was declaring itself the protector of all the orthodox people under the Turkish rule. The subsequent Russian-Turkish treaties – at Andrianople (1829), Hunkiar-Iskelessi (1833) and Sankt Petersburg (1834) – raised again the problem of the oppression of the christians, forcing the Turks that within the “Tanzimat” (the epoch of the great reforms) initiated by the sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839), to take into calculation this issue, too. The sultan Abdul Mejid I (1839-1861), through “hatt-i shariff from Ghül-Hané” from 3 November 1839, brought the first modifications: civilian equality in front of the law, respecting the freedom of consciousness etc.; through “the sultan’s decree” on 6 June 1853 these privileges were reconfirmed. The edict “hatt-i humayun”, from 18 February 1856, was bringing other modifications: remunerating the church personnel and organizing the administration, granting equal rights to all the Christian churches in the Empire (not only to the Orthodox one), abolishing the death penalty for the Muslims who were embracing Christianity etc. The Porte accepted, at the pressures of the Great European Powers, to penalize in 1860 a law project of the Patriarchate which was aiming at its internal organization so that the

² Nicolae Chifăr, *Istoria creștinismului*, vol. III, Iași, 2002, p. 52-58, 152-154; Vasile V. Muntean, *Istoria creștinătății de la Hristos până la Reformă*, București, 2004, p. 220-221, 268.

³ Adrian N. Popescu, *Situația creștinilor ortodocși în Imperiul Otoman în secolul al XIX-lea*, in rev. “Studii Teologice”, București, 7 (1955), no. 7-8, p. 454-455.

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edict may not remain only at the level of project⁴. Salutary, the measures were however interpreted and transposed into practice differently by the cohabiting Christian nationalities. Thus, instead of growing the Christian unity, a deep disunion was reached, brought about by the rigid ecclesiastic policy of the Patriarchate in Constantinople. In other words, the Greek was imposed instead of the Slavonic and the non-Greek clergy was disregarded. The aimed ones were the Bulgarians⁵. The reactions did not delay to appear. In fact, from the very beginning of the 19th century the Bulgarians' fight for their own hierarchy, for the preservation of the language and of the ancient traditions had taken the form of the fight for identity, independence and national assertion. An imminent conflict was already taking form between the ecumenical Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Church; the Greek hierarchs sent to replace the Bulgarian ones were welcome distrustfully and with enmity⁶.

The Bulgarian discontent was older. Even from the year 1824 the believers all over the Eparchy of Vratsa led by the merchant Dimitrakis, were asking insistently the appointment of their own hierarch; the same will do the Christians in Samokov and Skopje in 1833. When finally the Bulgarians obtained with the help of the Sublime Porte, the appointment of a bishop of their own, Dionysius from Cutel, at Vidin, in 1850, the Patriarchate took an "extreme" measure: poisoning him. Another candidate (at the metropolitan seat in Veliko Tarnovo), the enthusiastic patriot Neofit Bozveli from Hilandar, the co-author of a *Scholastic Encyclopedia* in 6 volumes, was exiled more times, dying in Mount Athos in 1849⁷. Starting from the 1840's of the 19th century the protests took an organized form, all over Bulgaria being established secret circles in order to drive away

⁴ Gheorghe Zotu, *Așa-numita "Schismă bulgară"*, in rev. "Biserica Ortodoxă Română", București, 6 (1882), no. 10, p. 597; A. N. Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 459-464; Ioan Rămureanu, Milan Șesan, Teodor Bodogae, *Istoria Bisericească Universală*, vol. II, București, 1993, p. 428-429; N. Chifăr, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 325; Vasile Muntean, *Istoria creștină generală*, vol. II, București, 2008, p. 354-355.

⁵ Badea Mangăru, *Bulgaria din punct de vedere istorico-religios*, in rev. "Biserica Ortodoxă Română", București, 37 (1913), no. 10, p. 746; S. Simeonov, *Legislația Bisericii Ortodoxe Bulgare*, in rev. "Biserica Ortodoxă Română", București, 59 (1941), no. 5-6, p. 352-353; Silviu Anuichi, *Biserica Ortodoxă Bulgară de la înființarea Exarhatului până la înființarea Patriarhiei*, in rev. "Glasul Bisericii", București, 19 (1960), no. 11-12, p. 945.

⁶ S. Simeonov, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

⁷ G. Zotu, *op. cit.*, p. 598-599.

the Greek clergy⁸. An outstanding success was when the Bulgarian community in Constantinople, which had about 30,000 people, obtained the authorization for building the church "Saint Steven" in Fanar (consecrated in the year 1849), with the Bulgarian as the language of celebrating the divine service⁹.

As one could not obtain any right amicably, the only solution which was prefigured was breaking off rapidly the ties with the Patriarchate; in other words, the schism. This happened in the same year, on the Easter day (3 April 1860), when the educated hierarch Hilarion of Macariopolis, at the request of his conationals, refused during the Holy Liturgy at the church "Saint Steven" to mention the name of the ecumenical patriarch Cyril VII (1855-1860). His example was quickly followed by the Bulgarian priests in the provinces; on the list of persons for whom the priest prays during the divine offices the patriarch's name was replaced with that of the sultan. From this moment on, the Bulgarian Church was considered to be national. The Patriarchate and the Porte opposed to this. However, after the visit of the Great Vizier, Kibrisli Mehmed, in Bulgaria, in May 1860, a series of high officials were replaced and the Greek bishop Antim of Pirot was asked to resign¹⁰.

Through an encyclical letter of an extreme violence the new ecumenical patriarch, Joachim II (1860-1863; 1873-1878), condemned all the requests of the Bulgarians; the bishops Hilarion of Macariopolis and Auxentius of Durazzo, accused as being main agitators, had to embark on the path of exile. Moreover, within a synod – held on 4 February 1861 – in which the other three patriarchs of the East participated, too, the two hierarchs together with all the priests which they had conferred holy orders on, were excommunicated¹¹.

Unexpectedly the things took another turn. As a reaction to Constantinople a strong prounionist current took form; about 60,000 Macedonian Bulgarian passed to Uniates, Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) conferring holy orders even to a bishop for them, Father Superior Yosif Sokolski from Gabrovo¹². As the Catholic proselytism – even the Uniate metropolitan

⁸ Plamen Pavlov, Iordan Ianev, Daniel Cain, *Istoria Bulgariei*, București, 2002, p. 86.

⁹ Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Istoria Balcanilor. 1840-1945*, București, 2002, p. 105.

¹⁰ G. Zotu, *op. cit.*, p. 602; B. Mangâru, *op. cit.*, p. 750.

¹¹ B. Mangâru, *op. cit.*, nr. 11, p. 876-877.

¹² G. Zotu, *op. cit.*, p. 602-604; S. Vailhè, *Bulgarie*, in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, éd. II, tome II/1, Paris, 1923, col. 1228-1235; N. Chifâr, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 326.

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bishop Alexander Sterca-Șuluțiu of Blaj (1853-1867) had sent missionaries¹³ – and the Protestant one were continuing, the Patriarchate decided to make 15 concessions to the Bulgarian Church, promising that in the pure Bulgarian provinces he will appoint autochthonous bishops, in schools the native language will be taught, and in some parties even the Slavonic Liturgy will be introduced (the decisions were not applied)¹⁴. At the same time, at Russia's intervention, the bishop Hilarion and those together with him were called back from exile¹⁵.

In the years 1862 and 1864, the two patriarchal synods met, without finding any solution to the problem. In the year 1865, the election of an equal number of Greeks and Bulgarians was suggested, elected by the eparchial congregations, one of the Bulgarian members becoming exarch, with the residence at Constantinople. A big meeting of the clergymen and Greek laics rejected however the proposals. The new patriarch Gregory VI (1835-1840; 1867-1871) expressed his own view on the "Exarchate": a half-independent structure formed from the eparchies beyond the Balkan Mountains, having as leader a metropolitan bishop with the title of "exarch of the entire Bulgaria"¹⁶. This proposal was not effected either¹⁷.

In these conditions the Porte, for fear of a general uprising of the Bulgarian population and in order to baffle the plans of the Russian Pan-Slavic, by favoring the Ottoman Slavism to the Greeks' detriment, decided to intervene directly in the conflict¹⁸. In fact, the Bulgarians themselves wanted this, justifying that as the Porte had put the old Patriarchate of Tarnovo under the jurisdiction of the ecumenical one, it is its responsibility to repair this historical error¹⁹. Thus, in the evening of 28 february/12 March 1870, the representative of the Turkish Government, Ali Pasha, with the consent of the sultan Abdul Aziz (1861-1876), convoked the Greek and Bulgarian

¹³ I. Rămureanu, M. Șesan, T. Bodogae, *op. cit.*, II, p. 484.

¹⁴ G. Zotu, *op. cit.*, p. 603-604.

¹⁵ B. Mangâru, *op. cit.*, p. 877-878; Charles Jelavich, Barbara Jelavich, *Formarea statelor naționale balcanice. 1804-1920*, Cluj-Napoca, 1999, p. 164-165; P. Pavlov, I. Ianev, D. Cain, *op. cit.*, p. 87-88.

¹⁶ G. Zotu, *op. cit.*, p. 605-606; B. Mangâru, *op. cit.*, p. 879-880.

¹⁷ Dragomir Demetrescu, *Biserica Bulgară*, in rev. "Biserica Ortodoxă Română", București, 20 (1896), no. 2, p. 185.

¹⁸ Nicolae Dobrescu, *Organizarea Bisericii bulgărești*, in rev. "Biserica Ortodoxă Română", București, 38 (1914), no. 5, p. 469; N. Chifăr, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 326.

¹⁹ S. Simeonov, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

representatives of the two Churches, handing them over a “firman” (it was wearing the date of the previous day), by which the setting up of the Bulgarian Exarchate was decreed, thus establishing again the independence of the Bulgarian Church²⁰.

2. The Bulgarian Exarchate (1870-1945).

The issue of the “firman” by the Turkish Government represented a moment of ordeal in the history of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, its 11 articles containing in an outlined form the provisions regarding the setting up and organization of the future Exarchate. At the basis of these provisions seem to have lain the canonical principles of the patriarch Gregory VI’s project, in the year 1867²¹. Thus the autonomous Bulgarian Exarchate came into being, under the leadership of a Saint Synod, having in jurisdiction the following eparchies: Rusciuk (today Ruse), Preslav, Veliko Tarnovo, Sofia, Lovech, Vratsa, Vidin, Niš, Pirot, Kyustendil, Samokov, Veles and Philippopolis (today Plovdiv); there is a partial jurisdiction in Slimno Sandžak and in the county Sozopol. Besides, there was the specification that if two thirds of the inhabitants of a region expressed their will to take part in the Exarchate, the request had to be complied with immediately²² (unfortunately exactly this provision generated in Macedonia an extremely bloody conflict among Greeks, Serbians and Bulgarians)²³.

Although through this “firman” the autocephaly of the Bulgarian Church was not recognized, but only its autonomy, under the supreme jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the moment represented a decisive step in reestablishing the spiritual unity of the Bulgarian people, under the leadership of their own shepherd of the same ethnicity as had once been the patriarch of Tarnovo²⁴. Notified about the content of this “firman”, which was taking from his jurisdiction about four million believers, Gregory VI declared it anti-canonical, considering it a violation of the rights and immunity of the Patriarchate. In these conditions he sent

²⁰ B. Mangâru, *op. cit.*, p. 883.

²¹ S. Simeonov, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

²² N. Dobrescu, *op. cit.*, p. 470-471; S. Simeonov, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

²³ Ch. Jelalavich, B. Jelalavich, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

²⁴ B. Mangâru, *op. cit.*, p. 883-884.

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an epistle to each of all the leaders of the autocephalous Churches and to all the metropolitan bishops under his jurisdiction, in which he was proposing the convocation of a big pan-Orthodox Synod meant to solve the Bulgarian-Constantinople crisis. Russia and Serbia rejected this proposal; the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Romanian Church did not give any answer. As the supporting ones were only the Patriarchates of Alexandria and Antioch, as well as the Church of Greece, and the Porte was rejecting categorically this convocation, the patriarch handed in his resignation, in his place being reelected Antim VI (1845-1848; 1853-1855; 1871-1873)²⁵.

Under the new patriarch took place, without success, new attempts to bring the two parties closer. Meanwhile, the Bulgarian Synod worked rapidly at the drawing up and validation of the “Law of Organizing the Bulgarian Exarchate” (“Екзархийски Уставъ отъ”), a genuine constitution of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, in accordance with the canons and ecclesiastic practice of the East; with the approval of the Turkish Government it came into force starting from the year 1871²⁶. At the festival of the Epiphany of the year 1872, three Bulgarian bishops, urged by their conationals, took the decision to officiate pontifically in their churches in the district Galata; at the ecumenical patriarch’s request they were exilated. As the Bulgarians’ protests tended to transform in a general revolt, the Porte called them again, summoning even the Patriarchate to apply the provisions of the “firman” from 1870; the patriarch protested. Being convoked very quickly, the National Bulgarian Meeting elected Hilarion as exarch, but in order not to make things more difficult he handed in his resignation; on 28 February 1872, in his place was elected Antim (1872-1877), former bishop of Vidin²⁷. As exarchal residence was chosen the small locality Ortaköy (on Bosphorus); from 1877 the exarch moved to the outskirts of the Capital and in the year 1907 in the Constantinople district Şişli²⁸. Through a decree the sultan Abdul Aziz sanctioned this appointment; instead, the ecumenical patriarch refused any dialogue, oral or written, with him²⁹.

In order not to worsen the situation, the exarch Antim decided not to officiate any divine service until the Patriarchate issues an authorization in

²⁵ Dr. Demetrescu, *op. cit.*, p. 186-188.

²⁶ S. Simeonov, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

²⁷ B. Mangâru, *op. cit.*, p. 885-886.

²⁸ N. Dobrescu, *op. cit.*, p. 472; S. Anuichi, *op. cit.*, p. 948.

²⁹ B. Mangâru, *op. cit.*, p. 886.

this sense. As the approval delayed to appear, Antim officiated in his new quality, on 11/23 May 1872 – the holiday of the Saints Cyril and Methodius –, the Holy Liturgy at the end of which he read in a solemn manner the document of proclamation the religious autonomy of the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria. The hierarchical separation was thus definitively declared!³⁰

As response to the proclamation of the ecclesiastical independence of the Bulgarian Exarchate, the ecumenical patriarch, at the expiry of the 30 days offered as time for coming back under the previous jurisdiction, decided to convoke a big Synod. The patriarchs Antim VI of Constantinople (and three of his predecessors), Sofronius IV of Alexandria (1870-1899) and Hierotheos of Antioch (1850-1885), the archbishop Sofronius of Cyprus and other 25 metropolitan bishops and suffragan bishops of the ecumenical Patriarchate, decided, in the meetings from 10, 24 and 28 September 1872, the excommunication as schismatic, on the basis of the accusation of “phyletism”, of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. It is worth to remember that the ecumenical patriarchate “neglected” to invite at the Synod the representatives of the Romanian, Serbian-Montenegro, Russian and Greek Churches and of the Patriarchate of Sremski Karlovci (together with the Orthodox Metropolitan Churches of Sibiu and Chernivtsi) and the patriarch of Jerusalem, Cyril II (1845-1872), although present, preferred to go home (was after a short time dismissed)³¹.

The reaction of the Bulgarian party did not delay to appear. A Synod of all the Bulgarian hierarchs of the Exarchate met at the beginning of October (on the new style), combated point by point the patriarchal document – through which the national principle in the Orthodox Church was condemned (on the basis of the blame that the Bulgarian Church wanted to be a Church without borders) – declaring null both the decision of the Synod of Constantinople and the meeting itself, on the basis of not complying with some formal principles (the participation of other eastern patriarchs in a local Synod, not pan-orthodox; the ecumenical presence of the honorary bishops; reconsulting, according to the canons, the blamed party; the pressure exercised by the panhellenistic current) and of internal order (in the East there was not a full clarification of the relation Church – Nation)³².

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 886-887.

³¹ G. Zotu, *op. cit.*, p. 607; B. Mangâru, *op. cit.*, p. 886; S. Simeonov, *op. cit.*, p. 361; S. Anuichi, *op. cit.*, p. 947; I. Rămureanu, M. Şesan, T. Bodogae, *op. cit.*, p. 485 etc.

³² S. Simeonov, *op. cit.*, p. 362-363.

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The pastoral of the first exarch developed under very difficult conditions, because although the Porte had issued “decrees” of confirmation for the newly elected Bulgarian hierarchs – Dositej of Samokov, Hilarion of Tarnovo, Victor of Pirot (Nišava), Simeon of Preslav and Grigory of Silistra –, the Patriarchate was not withdrawing from these Eparchies the former Greek bishops³³. And the Bulgarian nationalism – nourished by Russia – had gone too far, Bulgarian hierarchs having been sent even in the regions with a population predominantly Greek (Salonic, Philippopolis, Adrianople), from where the old administration had not been withdrawn³⁴. Moreover, forgetting the situation in which the Bulgarian Church had been until recently, it had passed itself to the “bulgarization” of the believers of others ethnicities in the Eparchies under his suborder³⁵.

Until the year 1876, when because of the so-called “April epic”, finished with the killing of over 15,000 Bulgarian believers³⁶, Antim himself was accused of rebellion, dismissed and exiled in the Turkish locality Ankara – at the head of a Bulgarian delegation, had sensitized the public opinion in the main European capitals with regard to the horrors of repression the popular uprising³⁷ – other uprisings were not registered any longer. In his place was elected Iosif (1877-1915), former metropolitan bishop of Lovech; between 1878 and 1888, Antim, who had come back from exile, occupied again his metropolitan seat in Vidin³⁸.

Once the Russian-Romanian-Turkish war in 1877-1878 started again, the animosities between the two camps burst again. Through the peace treaties in San Stefano (19 February/3 March 1878) and Berlin (1/13 July 1878), the Bulgarian regions, which had been until then under a unitary political regime within the Ottoman Empire, were shared among more states: the Principate of Bulgaria (the territory between the Danube and the

³³ B. Mangâru, *Bulgaria...*, (38) 1914, no. 11, p. 14.

³⁴ I. Rămureanu, M. Şesan, T. Bodogae, *op. cit.*, p. 485; N. Chifâr, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 326.

³⁵ Ghenadie Enăceanu, *Patriarchia de Constantinopol*, in rev. “Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, Bucureşti, 1 (1874), no. 2, p. 143-144; no. 3, p. 295-296.

³⁶ B. Mangâru, *op. cit.*, p. 16-17.

³⁷ S. Simeonov, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

³⁸ Ghenadie Enăceanu, *Ecsarchatul Bisericeii Bulgare*, in rev. „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, Bucureşti, 3 (1877), no. 5, p. 218-220; no. 6, p. 266-267; no. 7, p. 308-309; no. 10, p. 475-476; no. 12, p. 600-601; Idem, *Biserica Bulgară*, in rev. „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, Bucureşti, 4 (1877), no. 1, p. 57; 4 (1878), no. 10, p. 640; B. Mangâru, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

Balkan Mountains), the autonomous province Eastern Rumelia (southern Bulgaria) and the Ottoman Empire (Macedonia and Eastern Thrace)³⁹. In these conditions, the Bulgarian Principate and the Exarchate did not coincide any longer from a territorial point of view. The exarch, moved to the outskirts of Constantinople – even after the annexation of Eastern Rumelia by Bulgaria, the exarch Yosif remained at Constantinople in order to supervise the eparchies in Thrace and Macedonia which were still under his jurisdiction –, was a clergyman over the believers living in different states. Only the exarchal Synod was situated at Sofia, but its jurisdiction was limited only to the territory of Bulgaria itself⁴⁰; in the year 1909, at Constantinople, came into being the second Bulgarian Synod, made up of 4 metropolitan bishops in the Empire, respectively a combined church council instead of the old laical commission which had activated until then⁴¹.

The year 1913 was bringing other territorial modifications. Through the peace in Bucharest (10 august 1913), which was sanctioning the end of the second Balkan conflict, Bulgaria was losing for ever wide territories in Macedonia and Thrace, together with the Bulgarian Eparchies which were here, which had passed now under the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Churches of Serbia and Greece. Over 500,000 Bulgarian ethnics were repatriated from these regions, while other approximately 40,000 thickened the ranks of the Diaspora in the United States of America. In these conditions, the existence of the Bulgarian Exarchate in Constantinople – the Turkish Government had limited its jurisdiction only on the minority Bulgarian population in Constantinople and around – was questioned⁴².

In the year 1915, the exarch Yosif died. At the head of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church no other exarch was chosen any more, the whole leadership devolved upon the Saint Synod. However, the centuries which had passed until the annulment of the schism did not represent a period of stagnation, as during this very interval the concord with the other sister Ortho-

³⁹ P. Pavlov, I. Ianev, D. Cain, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

⁴⁰ Nicolae Dobrescu, *Din peninsula balcanică*, in rev. "Biserica Ortodoxă Română", București, 34 (1910), no. 6, p. 709; S. Simeonov, *op. cit.*, p. 366; S. Anuichi, *op. cit.*, p. 948.

⁴¹ Idem, *Organizarea Bisericii bulgărești...*, p. 483.

⁴² S. Simeonov, *op. cit.*, p. 367-368; I. Rămureanu, M. Șesan, T. Bodogae, *op. cit.*, p. 485.

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dox Churches succeeded. With some of them – as it is the case of Romania – this developed until the reestablishing of the Eucharistic communion, the supreme act of reestablishing the links between the two Churches⁴³. At this time, too, in the Bulgarian Church was organized a genuine social assistance, a definite position was taken against the invasion of the sectarian menace, schools were opened and a lot of theological books and magazines were printed, several monasteries and orthodox “brotherhood” were set up. During the World War II the Bulgarian Church protested together with the political class, against deporting the Jewish population in the extermination camps; due to this effort over 50,000 human beings were saved (over 11,000 Jewish people were however deported)⁴⁴.

The taking over of the power by the “Patriotic Front”, at 9 September 1944, meant not only the setting up of communism in Bulgaria for more than four centuries, but also a period of deep and tragic changes, which did not avoid the Church, either. Having become part and parcel of the “Socialist Camp”, Bulgaria had to comply docile with all the “eastern standards” among which an important one was the reeducation of the working class in the spirit of the new communist atheistic doctrine. In the name of “strengthening the class fight”, during the Dimitrov (1946-1949), Kolarov (1949-1950) and Cervenkov (1950-1956) Governments, thousands of arrests were made from among the hierarchs, priests, monks and simple believers; the monasteries were closed and the religious education was definitely abolished (1947). For the critics brought to the “Priests’ Association” – to which were belonging members of the communist “Patriotic Front” –, the exarch Stefan (1945-1948) himself had to resign. Only with the death of Stalin, in 5 March 1953, followed by the so-called “de-Stalinisation” of the communist society (the reeducation camps and the forced work camps were closed at 1 January 1954), the situation started to relax. Following its own way, the Bulgarian Church, separated from the State through the provisions of the Constitution in the year 1947, survived, with difficulty in this troubled epoch⁴⁵.

⁴³ S. Anuichi, *op. cit.*, p. 949.

⁴⁴ P. Pavlov, I. Ianev, D. Cain, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

⁴⁵ Jean Meyendorff, *Biserica Ortodoxă ieri și azi*, București, 1996, p. 141-142; P. Pavlov, I. Ianev, D. Cain, *op. cit.*, p. 154-155; V. Munteanu, *op. cit.*, II, p. 355.

3. Solving the conflict. Recognizing the Patriarchate

Hesitating attempts of reestablishing the brotherly communion had always existed. However, the first official step was made only in the inter-war period. On the day of 10 June 1930, in one of the meetings of the Conference of the Orthodox Churches at the Vatopedi monastery, the bishop Nicolai of Ohrid suggested the abolition of the schism, considered as a serious stain at the address of the Eastern Church. At the suggestion of both parties, the patriarch Damian of Jerusalem (1897-1931), accepted to mediate the discussions preliminary to the elaboration of the document of ecclesiastic reconciliation. Because of his death the difficult mission was taken over by his deputy, the metropolitan bishop Keladion of Ptolemaida (1931-1935). The debates, which took place at Jerusalem in April 1932, took in consideration both the proposals of the ecumenical patriarch Photios II (1929-1935) and those of the metropolitan bishop Stevan of Sofia (represented by Boris of Stobi), elaborating 9 articles according to which the schism was considered to be abolished. To everybody's surprise, on 31 December 1934, the vice-president of the Bulgarian Saint Synod, the metropolitan bishop Neofit of Vidin, was announcing that the Bulgarian Church was not yet prepared to solve this disagreement, waiting for more favorable circumstances!⁴⁶

These "favorable conditions" appeared at the end of World War II. The withdrawal of the Nazi army and the replacement of the old invader with the Soviet one forced the Bulgarian Church to open again, urgently, the issue of solving the ecclesiastic conflict with the ecumenical Patriarchate. Being aware of the delicate situation in which was the Bulgarian party, the patriarch Benjamin I (1936-1946) decided, after more than seven centuries, to abolish the schism. Thus, at 25 February 1945, the separating wall between the Bulgarian Church and the other sister Orthodox Churches was falling down, the document of recognition the new Autocephalous Bulgarian Orthodox Church being signed by the patriarch and other 12 Greek metropolitan bishops, members of the Patriarchal Synod. One more issue was still to be solved, that the Bulgarian Orthodox Church should be reinstated in her own rights. In this sense, between 8 and 10 May 1953, at Sofia took place with the approval of the Government of the Bulgarian Popular Republic led by Vulko Cervenkov (1950-1956), the works of the third big

⁴⁶ Olimp N. Căciulă, *Amânarea ridicării schismei bulgare*, in rev. "Biserica Ortodoxă Română", București, 53 (1935), no. 3-4, p. 179-180, 183-188.

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National-Ecclesiastic Congress, at the end of which, through secret vote, was elected the new patriarch of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church: Dr. Cyril Markov (1953-1971), former metropolitan bishop of Plovdiv, exarch and provisional president of the Saint Synod. Many delegations of the sister Orthodox Churches, among which that of Romania, too, participated in the solemnity of the installation. The official recognition of the newly established Patriarchate came also from the part of the ecumenical patriarch Athenagoras I (1949-1972), on 1 August 1961⁴⁷.

4. Final considerations

By analyzing the reasons of this Constantinople-Bulgarian breaking-off, the historical objectivity makes us draw the conclusion that the real cause of the scission between the two churches was not a dogmatic one, but one of jurisdictional order: which eparhies are purely Bulgarian, which are mixed and how can be this problem solved territorially? If we add to this finding the political nuance given to the event – the religious revival, followed by the proclamation of the ecclesiastic independence, as an action preceding the re-establishment of the Great Bulgarian Czardom –, the image of the bursting and developing conflict appears fully outlined. The fact that this schism was perpetuated over many centuries is nothing else but the perfect expression of human vanity and pride, as neither of the churches wanted to make any concession to the other one. And the consequences of this act did not delay to appear. While the Greek Language Churches condemned the Bulgarians as schismatics under the accusation of “phyletism”, the others showed more carefulness, some of them even encouraging tacitly the measures taken at Sofia (Romania, Russia and Serbia)⁴⁸. Who had to lose? Only the Orthodoxy!

That is why, in order not to repeat the errors of the past, in the spirit of the saving Christian love and leaving aside any other vanities specific to the secular, the Orthodox East has the responsibility to foresee and to solve in a synodal way (not one-sidedly) and amicably any possible discontent appeared in the bosom of one of another of the national Churches, which are equal and perfect parts of the big trunk of the Orthodoxy.

⁴⁷ S. Anuichi, *op. cit.*, p. 950-951; I. Rămureanu, M. Şesan, T. Bodogae, *op. cit.*, p. 485; J. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 141; N. Chifăr, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 327.

⁴⁸ G. Zotu, *op. cit.*, p. 607-608; S. Simeonov, *op. cit.*, p. 360-366.

Lucian Farcașiu¹

The use of spoon for offering the Eucharist to the believers in the Orthodox Church

Abstract

The joy of receiving the Eucharist (Christ) should be the first thought when we come to receive the Eucharist and not the anxiety for not getting ill by using the spoon successively. If we got ill by using the spoon successively, then the first subject to contamination should be the priests, because they consume after each Divine Liturgy everything that remained in the Holy Chalice, after the believers received the Eucharist, by introducing the spoon in it successively. The reality shows us that the situation is different because no priest got ill after consuming the Eucharist from Chalice. The Holy Eucharist is not a cause for the fact that we get ill, but it is the fountain of life and health.

Keywords

Liturgical Theology, Eucharist, spoon.

The spoon is the liturgical object made of metal, usually plated with silver or gold, used in the service of Divine Liturgy for offering the Eucharist to believers.

I. The way of offering the Eucharist in the Early Church. The historical framework of the apparition of spoon as liturgical object and the motivation of its use in worship

The spoon for offering the Eucharist is not used only in the Orthodox Church but also in the Oriental Non-Chalcedonian Churches (at optic

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orthodox and uniates), at Ethiopians and at occidental Syrians (Jacobites), at latter being used only for offering the Eucharist to clerics². Starting from this, many liturgists from the past showed that the spoon was used in the Byzantine liturgical rite before the 4th century, when the Coptic and Ethiopian monophysite churches broke off from the Orthodox Church, and the fact that they still use them is considered by liturgists as an evidence for its use before their division from the Orthodox Church in the 4th century. The ancient liturgists, by using a piece of information from Nicephorus Callistus³, from the 4th century, considered that the spoon was introduced in the worship by Saint John Chrysostom⁴. In spite of this evidence, the origin of the liturgical use of the spoon could not be that early. Its presence in the liturgical use of Old Oriental Churches can be explained through the late influences that the Byzantine liturgical worship exerted upon these oriental rites. Another idea favourable to this hypothesis is the fact that the spoon is not used in the worship in the Non-Chalcedonian churches that are more conservative (Armenian, Nestorian, Maronite). In all Christian churches from the first seven centuries the use of spoon is unknown.

In the first centuries, the believers received the Eucharist in the same way as the clerics. Thus, the believers were receiving the Holy Body in the right palm, positioned across the left one, and they sipped the Holy Blood directly from the Holy Chalice which was held by deacon. We have for that purpose the evidence of *Apostolic Constitutions* from the 4th century: “The bishop give the Holy Bread, saying: *the Body of Christ*, and the one who receives say: *Amen*, and the deacon hold the Chalice and, giving it, say: *the Blood of Christ...*”⁵.

² S. Salaville, *Les liturgies orientales. La Messe, II*, p. 63-65, apud Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, *Liturgica Generală*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1993, p. 595.

³ Nichifor Calist, *Istoria bisericească*, cartea XIII, cap. 7, apud Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, *op. cit.*, p. 595.

⁴ To be seen for that purpose *Liturgiarum Orientalium Collectio*, Collegit. Eus. Renaudot, ed. secunda, 2 tomuri, Francfurti ad Moenum, vol. I, 1847, p. 195-196; 262; J. Goar, *Euchologion sive Graecorum*, p. 105 și H. Daniel, *Codex liturgicus*, t. IV, p. 380.

⁵ *Apostolic Constitutions*, VIII, 13 To be seen for that purpose *Liturgiarum Orientalium Collectio*, Collegit. Eus. Renaudot, ed. secunda, 2 tomuri, Francfurti ad Moenum, vol. I, 1847, p. 195-196; 262; J. Goar, *Euchologion sive Graecorum*, p. 105 și H. Daniel, *Codex liturgicus*, t. IV, p. 380.

Another evidence can be found in Baptismal Catecheses of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem: “In approaching therefore, come not with thy wrists extended, or thy fingers spread; but make thy left hand a throne for the fight, as for that which is to receive a King. And having hollowed thy palm, receive the Body of Christ, saying over it, “Amen”. So then after having carefully hollowed thine eyes by the touch of the Holy Body, partake of it; giving heed lest thou lose any portion thereof; for whatever thou lovest, is evidently a loss to thee as it were from one of thine own members. For tell me, if any one gave thee grains of gold, wouldest thou not hold them with all carefulness, being on thy guard against losing any of them, and suffering loss? Wilt thou not then much more carefully keep watch, that not a crumb fall from thee of what is more precious than gold and precious stones? Then after thou hast partaken of the Body of Christ, draw near also to the Cup of His Blood; not stretching forth thine hands, but bending, and saying with an air of worship and reverence, “Amen”, hallow thyself by partaking also of the Blood of Christ!”⁶.

Another similar evidence can be found in the *Letters* of Saint Basil the Great⁷.

The act of offering the Eucharist to believers – the Holy Body received in the palm and the Holy Blood sipped directly from the Holy Chalice – is kept until nowadays in the liturgical rite of Nestorians⁸.

In other parts, the Holy Body was offered to believers in the palm, but being introduced before in the Holy Blood, so that the Chalice was not offered for sipping directly from it. The Armenians do this even nowadays⁹. From *Baptismal Homilies* of Saint John Chrysostom it can be understood that even in his period the same way of offering the Eucharist to laymen (giving the Holy Body in the palm) was present¹⁰.

To the end of the 7th century, the Council of Trullo (Quinisext, 692), in the canon 101, looks for imposing this ancient practice of offering the

⁶ Sfântul Chiril al Ierusalimului, *Cateheze*, Cateheza XXIII, 21-22, trad. Pr. D. Fecioru, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2003, p. 366.

⁷ Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Epistola 93 (Către nobila Chesaria)*, P.G., t. XXXII, col 485.

⁸ S. Salaville, *op. cit.* în vol. cit, p. 63-64, apud Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, *op. cit.*, p. 595.

⁹ *Liturgiarum Orientalium Collectio*, vol. I, p. 262.

¹⁰ Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Catheza II către candidații la Botez*, 2, în P. G. t. XLIX, col. 233.

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Eucharist, condemning those who “instead of hand, use vessels made of gold or other material, for receiving the divine Gift”¹¹.

Even in the 8th century, Saint John of Damascus recommends that “by crossing the palms, receive the Body of the Crucified One”¹².

In the same century, the patriarch Germanos of Constantinople speaks about λαβίς¹³, but this term does not designate the liturgical object that is called today *spoon*, but the tongs made by the fingers of priest’s hand that held the Body of Christ, “the divine coal”, offering it to believers for the forgiveness of sins.

In the 9th century, the 10th canon of the local Council named First-Second (Constantinople 861) enumerates the *spoon* among the holy vessels used during serving at the Holy Altar and condemns the non-liturgical use of this liturgical object: “... The Holy Synod decided to unfrock those who take for their own purpose or use the Holy Chalice for unsanctified use, or the Holy Diskos, or the *spoon*, or the vestment, or the epitaphios, or any other holy object from the Holy Altar, or from the vessels or holy garments...”¹⁴. This text is considered by the new editors of the Greek *Pedalion* as being interpolated¹⁵.

However, the new liturgists suppose that the use of spoon for offering the Eucharist to the laymen must have been introduced, even only in some regions, from the 7th century, since Saint Sophronius of Jerusalem (+ 638) shows in *The Life of Saint Mary of Egypt* (IV, 34) that abba Zosimas took, in a small chalice, the Most Pure Body and Blood of Lord, mixed, for offering them to Saint Mary¹⁶, situation that implies the use of spoon for offering the Holy Eucharist. It seems that the spoon was introduced for the first time, according to some liturgists, in the region of Syria, around the 7th

¹¹ Arhid. Prof. Univ. Dr. Ioan N. Floca, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe-note și comentarii*, Sibiu, 1992, p. 160.

¹² Sfântul Ioan Damaschin, *Expunerea credinței ortodoxe (Dogmatica)*, cartea IV, cap. 13, traducere Pr. Dumitru Fecioru, Editura Scripta, București, p. 132.

¹³ Sfântul Gherman al Constantinopolului, *Tâlcuirea liturgică*, în P.G. t. XCVIII, col. 433.

¹⁴ Arhid. Prof. Univ. Dr. Ioan N. Floca, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

¹⁵ C. Kaliniku, *Sfântul locaș și cele ce se săvârșesc întrânsul* (în limba greacă), ed. III, Atena, 1969, p. 182.

¹⁶ To be seen for that purpose Viața Sfintei Maicii noastre Maria Egipteanca, scrisă de Sfântul Sofronie, patriarhul Ierusalimului, în *Triod*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2000, p. 751-752.

century¹⁷, and according to others, in Egypt, and its use being generalized in East starting from the 10th century¹⁸.

The practical explanations regarding the generalization of using the spoon for offering the Eucharist to believers are two. The first explanation concerns the possibility that crumbs from the Holy Body or drops from the Holy Blood may fall on the ground, either because of the negligence of priests or of believers who came to receive the Eucharist. The second explanation is that certain believers were keeping the Holy Body in the palm, entirely or a part from him, for using him outside the Church either in occult purposes, in witchcraft, or they might have taken with them at home for those who were blinded from the Eucharist, for their unworthiness.

Just by putting in the spoon, both the Holy Body and the Holy Blood, and being consumed directly by those who came to receive the Eucharist, were avoided the problems enumerated above.

The first certain mention regarding the use of *spoon* in the service of offering the Eucharist to believers can be found in the *Liturgical interpretation* of Pseudo-Sophronius from the 12th-13th centuries.

II. The mystical and symbolical signification of the spoon as liturgical object

In the *Liturgical interpretation* of Pseudo-Sophronius is also indicated the symbolism of this liturgical object, namely the *spoon*. Thus, it symbolizes firstly the tongs used by the seraphim, in the apparition of prophet Isaiah (VI, 6-7), with which he took the coal and put, by commandment of the Lord, in the mouth of the prophet, as sign of cleaning him of sins and of his prophetic mission. This celestial coal foretells the eucharistical Christ who we receive in the Divine Liturgy.

The same symbolical signification of the spoon can be found, later, at the Archbishop Symeon of Thessaloniki, in the 15th century: “The bishop use the spoon for offering the Eucharist, and he does this following the

¹⁷ S. Salaville, *Liturgies Orientales. Notions generales. Elements principaux*, p. 138; Idem, *Liturgies Orientales. La Messe*, II, p. 62, apud Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, *op. cit.*, p. 596.

¹⁸ C. Kaliniku, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

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apparition of prophet Isaiah¹⁹. The spoon foretells also the Theotokos who had in her womb the celestial Bread²⁰. For this purpose, it should be mentioned that in the *Canon of the Eucharist*, the last sticheron of the 8th hymn shows the following about the Theotokos: “Truly, Theotokos, in your womb grew the divine Bread of life, guarding unharmed your innocent womb²¹. In such an acceptance, the *spoon* that has in it the Holy Body and the Holy Blood of Lord, being a symbolical representation of the Most Pure Theotokos who had Christ, the Redeemer of the world, in her womb.

III. Practical considerations regarding the use of spoon for receiving the Holy Eucharist

At present it can be observed innovative tendencies regarding the use of spoon for offering the Eucharist (Holy Body and Blood of Christ). In some regions of Romania there are isolated cases in which, for offering the Eucharist to believers, are used more spoons, sterilized successively during their use. This situation started because some believers refused to receive the Eucharist with the common spoon for not getting contaminated with transmissible diseases.

This kind of tendencies, which are not new, were also met in the past of our Church²², even in the Church of Greece, and they gave birth to controversies and discussions²³.

As it is shown above, a part of the believers of our Church, numerically insignificant, ask from priests to receive the Eucharist with separate spoons, bringing reasons about the existence of the danger of contamination with transmissible diseases and trying in this way to avoid such a disease that

¹⁹ Sfântul Simeon al Tesalonicului, *Tratat asupra tuturor dogmelor credinței noastre ortodoxe, după principii puse de Domnul nostru Iisus Hristos și urmașii Săi*, volmul I, Editura Arhiepiscopiei Sucevei și Rădăuților, 2002, p. 154.

²⁰ Pseudo-Sofronie, *Tâlcuire liturgică*, cap. V, traducere de Pr. Prof. N. Petrescu, în rev. „Mitropolia Olteniei”, 1960, nr. 5-6, p. 360.

²¹ *Ceaslovul*, Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășanii, Canonul, Cântarea a 8-a, stihira de la Și acum..., Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1973, p. 630.

²² To be seen for that purpose Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, *op. cit.*, p. 597.

²³ To be seen for that purpose the study of the architect Mihai Urzică, *Necinstirea Sfintei Împărtășanii. Abateri, vinovății și necredință*, București, 1930.

may be caused, according to them, by the use of the same spoon for offering the Eucharist to all the believers that come to the Divine Liturgy. This demand made by believers is, unfortunately, satisfied by the priests, even if most of them are not convinced if this practice is reliable. Their only argument regarding this practice is the concern to not impair the believers and to keep them close of the Church and of the Holy Mysteries, by using the word of Saint Apostle Paul: “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some”.

In this situation, during the Divine Liturgy two or more spoons are used, and the priest has near them a deacon or an altar boy who holds a vessel with water in which the spoon is rinsed after each use, and after that it is wiped with the pall. During this, the priest offers the Eucharist to the next person with the second spoon, and after this the spoon is rinsed in the water and wiped too, as it is shown above in the case of the first spoon.

There are exaggerated situations in which the believers either bring from home their own spoon for receiving the Eucharist, which is afterwards received right after they received the Eucharist, or the priests use disposable spoons.

It must be specified from the beginning that the demand regarding the receiving of Eucharist with separate spoons comes from the believers little integrated into the liturgical life of the Church, too often superficial and indolent, who come to church only before Easter, for confessing and receiving the Eucharist, having such demands when they come for the Holy Eucharist.

Firstly, it must be accentuated that the Holy Eucharist is given “*for the health of the soul and of the body*” and by receiving the Eucharist one cannot get ill. The fact that the Holy Eucharist is received for health and not for disease is repeatedly accentuated the prayers from the *Eucharistic Canon*, both those before offering the Eucharist and those after. In this respect, it is necessary to be mentioned both the text of the eighth and the tenth prayer before receiving the Holy Eucharist and the text of *Prayer of Saint Basil the Great* and of the prayer to *Most Holy Theotokos* from the *Prayer of thanks after the Holy Eucharist*, which show expressly the fact that this is received “*for the healing of the soul and of the body*”²⁴, or “*for*

²⁴ Ceaslov, *Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri*, Rugăciunea a opta, Rugăciunea Marelui Vasile și Rugăciunea către Preasfânta Născătoare de Dumnezeu, p. 644, 649, 651.

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the health of the soul and of the body"²⁵. It also should be mentioned the miracle related in *Life of Saint John Maximovici*, in which one of the priests that were serving in the same church as John Maximovici put, without being known by Saint John, a considerable quantity of poison in the wine that the Saint was using for the adjustment of Eucharist from Chalice by pouring it above the Eucharist and by this making easier the consumption. After the consumption of this quantity of wine mixed with poison, together with the Eucharist from Chalice, the Saint state became bad, but despite the wishes of his enemies he didn't die of poisoning²⁶.

On the other hand, the spoon used for offering the Eucharist to believers is not a habitual object, but a *liturgical object*, blessed and sanctified, consecrated for serving the Liturgy, by a prayer of sanctification and by sprinkling it with Holy Water, as it can be seen in the service prescribed for this in *Euchologion*. In this prayer it is shown both the symbolical signification of this liturgical object and its exactly destination for offering the Eucharist to believers: "Lord, God Almighty, Who, by the coal taken in the tongs by one of the seraphims, you cleaned the lips of your prophet by touching them and thus You foretold the power of Your holy Eucharist, of the Body and of the Blood of Your Christ, bring Your mercifulness upon our prayer and send Your heavenly mercy upon this spoon and bless it and sanctify it, to be worthy vessel for receiving and offering of Your most holy Body and of most beloved Blood of Your Christ, who will be given by this spoon to your faithful people, for cleaning of all the uncleanness and for forgiving the sins..."²⁷. In the case in which it would be accepted that every believer bring his own spoon from home, it is out of the question that this might be blessed and sanctified, therefore consecrated exclusively for serving at the Holy Altar. The situation is the same in the case in which disposable spoons are used, because these were neither conceived for having a destination exclusively liturgical.

The blessed and sanctified spoon cannot be ever destroyed, but in the moment in which it becomes unusable, because of the fact that the alloy from which it is made has oxidized, it will be kept in the Holy Altar, in

²⁵ *Ibidem*, Rugăciunea a zecea, p. 646.

²⁶ Pr. Serafim Rose și Pr. Gherman Podmoșenski, *Fericitul Ioan Maximovici -viața și minunile-*, traducere și note de Dana Cocorgheanu, Editura Σοφία, București, 2006, p. 78.

²⁷ *Molitfelnic*, Rânduiala sfințirii vaselor de slujbă: Rugăciunea pentru sfințirea linguriței, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1992, p. 587-588.

a clean place, as sanctified object, consecrated for serving the worship, which held the Eucharist.

The spoons that the believers may bring personally from their homes, besides the fact that they cannot be sanctified and consecrated for serving the worship, there exists the risk to be used in other purposes by them, on the one hand, and on the other hand, keeping them in other places than the Holy Altar is a sacrilege.

As concerns the use of disposable spoons for offering the Eucharist to believers, this practice is also a grave deviation from the church discipline, since their destruction after use cannot be justified because it is situated in the same area of sacrilege. On the other hand, they cannot be sanctified and consecrated to the worship because after this they would be destroyed by burning or burying them.

When we talk about the spoon which is used for offering the Eucharist to believers we must never lose sight of the fact that it has in it the Body and Blood of Christ and therefore we cannot keep it anyhow and anywhere. Its place for keeping is the Table of preparation, together with the lance, the star, the Holy Diskos and the Holy Chalice.

In the situation in which two spoons are used for offering the Eucharist to believers, even if they are sanctified and kept in the Holy Altar, according to the canon, their consecutive washing before use, in a vessel with water, held by the deacon or by the altar boy, implies a big practical problem, because the water in which the spoons were rinsed is usually thrown, even if most of the time in a clean place, and this practice implies again the idea of sacrilege because they held the Body and Blood of Christ. Their rinse after each believer received the Eucharist implies the risk that on spoon may remain either a drop of Holy Blood or minuscule parts from the Holy Body. The rinse of spoon in water means inevitable that these parts from the Holy Body and Blood of Christ remain in this water, and it is not permitted that a part of Eucharist, even the smallest part, be wasted or thrown with this water.

If some priests would bring the argument that they consume the water exactly after the believers receive the Eucharist, which is believed to not happen practically, this fact leads us inevitably to the idea that the Eucharist cannot transmit diseases because this water would contain viruses, being contaminated by rinsing concomitantly the spoons in it (unreal fact for a true believer) or, if the priest that consume this water doesn't get ill, this

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fact means that in the same way the believers can receive the Eucharist with the same spoon because by introducing it in the Holy Chalice after each believer, without being rinsed, does not represent a way for transmitting diseases if we take into consideration the act of offering the Eucharist and the reality of Christ's presence in the Holy Chalice, with the eyes of the faith. The Eucharist is a celestial Sacrament, suprarational, which goes beyond the limits of the human mind, and because of this the receiving of Eucharist is firstly made with faith and not only with the mind.

If we analyze the situation from a strictly medical perspective, without implying the faith, the water cannot be disinfectant, but rather microbes and viruses carriers, so that the rinse of the spoon in water does not mean its disinfection, so that this act becomes useless.

As regards the affirmation made, unfortunately, by a priest in a daily²⁸, that the use of the same spoon for offering the Eucharist to all the believers would generate the deformation of the aspect and taste of Eucharist from Chalice, thus obstructing even the adjustment or the consumption of parts from the Holy Body and Blood by the priest, remained here after the priests and the believers received the Eucharist, it seems hilarious, proving superficiality and rather the lack of catechetical preparation of believers until they receive the Eucharist. The affirmation regarding the fact that traces of lipstick or other left-overs may remain on the spoon, resulted from touching the spoon by the mouth of those who come to receive the Eucharist proves that it was not made the basic catechization of the believers regarding their physical and hygienic preparation, together with the spiritual one, before going to receive the Eucharist. This catechetical preparation made either by means of parish catechetical program or individual, during Confession, or immediately after it, is much more necessary. In this way, it can be avoided that women come to the Chalice in a improper wearing apparel or having lipstick on their lips, things that are not characteristic for a Christian woman. These things can be very well decided before, either at Confession, or in the discussion that comes after, so that the believers come to the Holy Chalice with all the respect and decency, without letting appear such stupid affirmations. Furthermore, in a parish catechetical program, which takes place usually in the evening, after the Vespers it should be integrated subjects regarding our bodily preparation for going to receive

²⁸ It is about the interview given by Pr. Lucian Grigore, parish priest at Biserica Domnească „Sfântul Gheorghe” from Pitești, daily „Evenimentul zilei”, 14 march 2010.

the Eucharist, containing even hygienic norms or insisting on the way in which the pall should be kept under the chin during receiving the Eucharist for not wasting anything from Eucharist.

In the first part of this study it was clarified the fact that more spoons for offering the Eucharist to believers never existed in the Church, but the spoon used for Eucharist it was from the beginning one, sanctified and consecrated only for this.

By accepting the use of more spoons for Eucharist, for sparing those weak in faith, one rather intensify the susceptibility regarding the possibility of getting ill after the Eucharist and the state of remaining in this lack of faith. Furthermore, for those unfaithful that never thought at the fact that they could get ill by receiving the Eucharist with the same spoon, this practice becomes impairing or it can put in their heart doubts regarding the reality of Eucharist (the Body and Blood of Christ).

In front of such ill-founded pretensions the priest must clear, with patience, the believers about the fact that we receive the Eucharist for life, especially for eternal life, and by no means for disease or death. Consequently, the touch of spoon by our lips give us Christ eucharistically and this must generate joy in our hearts and the permanent desire of receiving the Eucharist, and by no means fear. The joy of receiving the Eucharist (Christ) should be the first thought in our attention when we come to receive the Eucharist and not the anxiety for not getting ill by using the spoon successively. If we got ill by using the spoon successively, then the first subject to contamination are the priests, because they adjust, namely they consume after each Divine Liturgy everything that remained in the Holy Chalice, after the believers received the Eucharist, by introducing the spoon in it successively. The reality shows us that the situation is different of this because no priest got ill after consuming the Eucharist from Chalice. The Holy Eucharist is not a cause for the fact that we get ill, but fountain of life and health. This fact must be known by all our believers, by means of being learned about the amazing fruits of the Holy Eucharist in their lives, during the parish catechetical programs. When these things are known and understood, with the eyes of the faith, they won't have demands as those presented above, regarding the receiving of Eucharist by using more spoons.

In conclusion, the fact the some believers have the demand to receive the Eucharist with other spoon than the one sanctified and consecrated

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for this, for not be contaminated with transmissible diseases, apart from the fact that it is absurd, it also proves their lack of faith, after all, in the reality of receiving the Holy Eucharist. Those that do not believe that the Holy Eucharist cannot bring disease, but health and life as gift, because the Eucharist gives us Christ-the Life, cannot accept either the reality of Christ's presence, as Body and Blood, in the Holy Eucharist, under the guise of bread and wine. To accept that Christ reveals His real presence, as Body and Blood, under the guise of bread and wine, in the Holy Chalice, implies obligatorily the faith that the Eucharist is a gift for us for health (not for disease) and for eternal life.

Florin Vâlcea¹

Romanian Orthodox Parish Livezeni-Petroșani Church Sanon

Abstract

The author presents aspects of the struggle of some Romanian Orthodox churches from Livezeni in the Hunedoara County to survive and to preserve their authentic image as testimony of the value of the spiritual life they have been carrying during the past two centuries. The names of the old churches are often connected with the name of the priest, of the bishop or of the metropolitan of the epoch since they have always been the ones who had the responsibility to carry on a tradition.

Keywords

History of the Romanian Orthodox Church, historical monography, Church Sanon Parish

Livezeni Parish is located in the south of Petrosani city. The parish consists of Slătinoara village, hamlets Meadow, Dâlja, Coast Sălătruc – Surduc block and neighborhood “Airport.” Former hamlet in the middle of the village Livezeni – Jiu, Romanian Orthodox Church is the parish Livezeni. On the lawn surrounding the church are a lot of old graves, some still guarded by old gravestones carved from solid rock with inscriptions in Cyrillic letters, making the old cemetery of the parish.

This church called “Church Sanon (from San family name², Met at some people now) has lasted for over 200 years, defying time and its

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² Fr Octavian Pătrașcu, *Monograph Sanon church*, parish Livezeni, FC, 1984, p. 1.

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hardships. It is constructed from ash wood planks from the forest site cleared by the faithful – lay pastors in this region centuries ago, most coming from Livadia and Galați, very old villages Hațeg Country, where they draw the name was common – Livezeni.

The material evidence and according to tradition this church was built on the site of the ancient churches of believers burned by the Ottoman invasion in 1788³.

Sanon Church is simple with a ship-shaped tower – bell, about 7m high and tends above the narthex.

In the bell tower are two bells: one – the smallest, with Cyrillic inscription “790 Year of our Lord Jesus Christ” and the second “was in manchen Schaessburg per Michaela em”, embossed in addition to the inscription 1839 above⁴. The presence of these bells and especially the small one, certainly means that in 1790 the present church rebuilding “the Sanon” was completed.

In connection with these bells mention that during World War have been saved by burial in the ground by parishioners.

This place of worship, sat on a river stone foundation was built in two distinct periods. At first the church consisted of nave altar and present, having a length of 9.88 m, width 4.8 m and height of 3.8 m.⁵ A log wall located near the windows defines the narthex nave. The whole construction is the massive beams of ash.

Over time the church became too small and probably in 1839 – after the second bell dating of the church – it was enlarged, adding the present nave called here “tend wimps”, the church is a further long-4m. This addition, as the bell tower is constructed of pine planks (the beams are carved with a penknife on 1872).

The roof of the church was originally of wood shingles, which was renovated in 1931 replaced with tile. It was then also covered with tin and bell tower.

Canon altar located on the east, in a semi-octogonal form, built by the end of the beams into the artistic “dovetail.”

On the altar, maintains an old wooden ark in three steps, you can still read data on an Easter holiday period of years, from 17 April 1894, marked one of the former priests of the church.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴ Inscriptions found on the church bells “St. Constantine and Elena”.

⁵ O. Fr Pătrașcu, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

The iconostasis is made of flat wooden planks all from the ash, being provided with three entrances. Being narrow, they do not have doors, but shut the curtains.

The iconostasis icons are painted on wooden boards arranged in three registers. Register first four icons in the iconostasis royal mounted. On the right is the royal door icon with text in Cyrillic Saviour “Jesus Christ all-mighty”⁶.

At left is the icon of the Virgin Mary with baby Jesus on his left hand. Icon iconostasis is the right dedication of the church, representing St. Michael with sword in his right hand and left into the cup. At the bottom is written in Cyrillic on all 1793. Along with the dedication icon is still two icons: one worn and one representing the Assumption.

The left side of the iconostasis is the icon of St. Nicholas. Along with an icon is painted on two wooden boards attached, representing St. George.

The upper register is 14 II celebrating icons. From left to right they are: the Virgin’s Birth, the Holy Trinity. At the bottom of the icon can be deciphered a signature, his name Simeon Popa. By inference we assume that it would be the name of Simeon Popa iconographer Piteșteanu that in the late eighteenth century and painted several churches in this part of Transylvania iconostases⁷.

Baptism is the third icon, other icons are the Nativity, Candlemas at the temple, the Crucifixion, Ascension, Easter (Resurrection), Palm Sunday, the Annunciation, “Vovedenia – entrance to the church of the Virgin Mary, Assumption Lord, Transfiguration and a degraded image that stands an archangel. All icons have outstanding color tones, with figures well defined, balanced living in the pure Orthodox Byzantine style and design.

In the third record – are all top century 14 icons, representing the Holy Apostles and Evangelists.

At the top of the iconostasis, is located directly above the Holy Apostles on the iconostasis of Jesus Christ crucifixion scene, framed by the Virgin Mary and the apostle John.

In addition to icons on wood or painted directly on the beams, “Sanon Church” and was adorned with old glass icon. Of these three are extant

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

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today, which is considered by some specialists were identified as belonging to the school in Gherla – Nicula near Cluj⁸.

Among the ancient treasures, “Sanon Church” to include religious books kept over time and still impressing the Romanian book lovers. Among them a few more precious: Apostol, printed in 1791 in Râmnic during the king and Bishop Alexander Dositei Moruzzi, boilers, printed in 1792 in Râmnic, Gospel, printed in 1794 in Râmnic, the Missal printed in 1797 Râmnic, Missal printed in 1835 in Sibiu, Sibiu Missal printed in 1856 under the Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna, Aghiazmatar, printed in 1857 in Buzau, Penticostarian, printed in Sibiu in 1859 as Andrei Șaguna, Tridion, printed in 1860 in Sibiu, Molitfelnic, 1879, printed by Metropolitan Prokopios Ardealului. All of these books were printed in the Cyrillic alphabet. As can be seen, most titles were printed in the Romanian Country, the Râmnic, Buzau, and some in Sibiu. Most books in the Jiu Valley were brought to „Sanon Church” by monks from monasteries and Lainici Tismana which have maintained close ties permanent cult.

Among these links as well as the fact that many existing printing and now the „Church Sanon” were brought from the monasteries of the Romanian country and the Episcopal Râmnic centers, Târgoviște, Bucharest, Buzău proves national unity, permanent and unshakable cult Romanians Transylvania with those of the Romanian country and Moldova.

That this was reality, we confirmed that a pall of the old „Sanon Church” sent by the former parish priest of LIVEZENI – Father Theophilus Ioanovici – in 1927 the Metropolitan of Sibiu for exchange center, came from Ramnic, being sanctified and gave „Sanon Church” by Bishop Ungro – Wallachia, Kir Dositei in 1795.

„Sanon Church, by the age and its importance, the Jiu Valley is the only remaining original style and form is a very important monument. It certifies the existence and seamless continuity of the Romanians in this region and is a precious remnant of our national faith and art, showing permanent links between local people and their brethren across the mountains jieni.

Among the priests of this church remember: John Murariu – Livezeni priest in 1810 and son Petrila priest Gheorghe Popa, Popa Micleuși Szelistianu priest – parish Livezenyi disunity in the church and Szeletrucului Szinonyilor according to the inscription of 25 January 1862 printed on

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 6.

the Gospel Sibiu 1844 by Metropolitan Vasile Moga – kept in the church gospel Sălătruc – Livezeni priest Basil Socol 1880-1913, Theophilus Ioanovici priest from 1914 to 1965,⁹ Nicolae Octavian Pătrașcu priest in 1965 – today.

In 1967 the church was proposed for demolition. Nicolae Octavian Patrascu parish priest and opposed the demolition with the help of former Bishop Arapasu Teoctist, Patriarch of Romania and then passed away, he spoke to the Department of Historical Monuments in Bucharest churches managed to include this historical monuments and saving it from demolition. Petrosani Football Stadium Sports Club which was designed to be placed over the memorial church “St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel” – called “the Sanon” has been redesigned and located downstream of church monuments.

Failing the demolition of the church were designed and executed three blocks with four floors, two very ancient cemetery of the parish’s desire to be blurred and obscured. In this situation Octavian Patrascu parish priest helped the then Bishop of Arad and Hunedoara Reverend Teoctist Arăpașu prepared project estimate Sanon relocation and restoration of the Church to a new location – the newly created shelf west of the church “St. Helen Constantine and Elena “wanting to be restored and turned into an ethnographic museum village of Jiu Valley. He even obtained approval for this project but believers in Jiu natives, neighbors adjacent to this church, the natural desire to remain with their own households in the protection of the church monument “to Sanon”, earnestly opposed the plan The relocation of the church. Thus the church has remained on the old site where other parishioners have not approved capital restoration (original style)¹⁰.

Romanian Orthodox Church Sălătruc “Saint Great Martyr George

In addition to the parish church (Holy Archangels to Sanon”) of Jiu, rebuilt by the inhabitants and parishioners Livezeni to 1788, after fires and old churches in the last invasion of the Turks, we assume that all the

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 7.

¹⁰ From what the priest priest Nicolae Octavian Pătrașcu.

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late eighteenth century, the ancient Romanian Orthodox saints bottom Livezeni have built and the parish church of “St. George the Martyr” in Livezeni – Sălătruc.¹¹

So in the south of the parish church is Livezeni Sălătruc hamlets – Surduc is located upstream of the creek Sălătruc. This church was built on low stone foundation built in the river and fir beams. Until 1900 it was covered with shingle, and then was repaired and shingled roof was replaced with tiles by local villagers toil and faithful devotion.

In 1922 they again made minor repairs to the roof under grazing Ioanovici priest Theophilus, and on 12 December 1923 to the church he served and preached His Eminence Nicolae Bălan, the Metropolitan of Transylvania.

Architectural form of the church is plain in the land of Transylvania – a simple vessel with semioctogal altar, nave. It has a lobby supported by four pillars which enters. Above the wooden church spire is covered with tin in which are two bells, one from 1820 and another in 1836 and Tocile.¹² Church is the 11m length, width of 5.25 m, 3.9 m vault, the height of the altar, and tends narthex is 2.3 m. The iconostasis is wooden planks, with three narrow entrances without doors, with curtains.

After taking in the fall of 1965 Livezeni parish by parish priest Octavian Pătrașcu, after repair of the new church parish in the autumn of 1967 the church was completely repaired and restored, the roof, the floors and the windows have been changed together with the plastering and painting inside. Work continued in the spring of 1968, introducing electric lighting and installing it is a beautiful chandelier with six arms. New icons were painted on the iconostasis, painted in oil on wood painting in the school workshop run by the Church of the Holy Patriarchs Very Reverend Archimandrite High Sofian Boghiu the Antim Monastery, Bucharest.¹³

On 1 November 1970 and served the church preached Sălătruc Reverend Teoctist Arăpaș of Arad and Hunedoara.

Church repaired and so adorned and painted again in 1978, was consecrated on the Feast of the Resurrection of 2 May 1979 by His Grace Bishop Gerasimos Hunedoreanu Vicar.¹⁴

¹¹ Idem, Sălătruc Orthodox Parish, p. 1.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁴ As reflected in the inscription.

The church was painted in tempera technique fat by Eminence St. Peter Church Iacobescu parent teacher in Timișoara. All Iacobescu father painted the iconostasis of the Holy Church in oil on wood. The painting is in the traditional style Neo – Byzantine very successful in terms of technical and artistic.

The church is ancient objects and values. Among the old books as:

Octoechos – jobs saints Blaj printed in 1792 under Bob Bishop John Apostol, printed in 1802 Blaj Stratnic – printed in 1800 Blaj Gospel, printed in Sibiu in 1844 when Bishop Nicholas Moga. On this Holy Gospels written in Cyrillic Livezeni one of the priests of churches in the two columns is an inscription in Cyrillic letters on 25 January 1862 and signed “priest Micleuși Szelisteanu¹⁵ – Neun Livezenyi parish, the Church and Szeletrucului Szinonyilor. Other books are boilers, printed in 1855 in Sibiu during the Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna, Molitfelnic in 1879 in Sibiu in Metropolitan Prokopios, Triodion in 1897, printed in Bucharest and in 1902 donated by the priest Socol, Pentecostarion printed in 1845 as Metropolitan Gennadius.

Icons on glass in the church seem Sălătruc eighteenth century and belong to the school of Nicula – Gherla – Cluj. Icon mention Jesus Christ, the Virgin and Child icon, the icon of the Assumption, patron icon of St. George the Martyr church, the icon of the Holy Trinity of St. Nicholas, the Transfiguration icon, the icon of the Archangel Gabriel and Lamentations. These books, old icons, style and especially the church of St. Prestol stone altar made of rock, leads us to assume and assert that the church is so contemporary church Sălătruc Sanon, ie at the end of the eighteenth – century.¹⁶

String priests of this church is at 1810 John Murariu, Micleuși Szelisteanu in 1862, Basile Socol between 1880 – 1913, Theophilus Ioanovici 1914-1965 Octavian Pătrașcu 1965 – today, and since 2004 with Octavian Pătrașcu Father is called Father Nicolae Tănase -PM.

Romanian Orthodox Church Livezeni “St. Constantine and Elena”

After World War I and the Great Union of December 1, 1918 to put more and more intense central problem Livezeni new church building.

¹⁵ O. Fr. Pătrașcu, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

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Following the intervention made by the parish priest Theophilus Ioanovici was obtained on 2 July for the construction of new parish churches place called “round”. On 14 October 1930 he placed the cornerstone of the new place of worship, dedicated to “St. Constantine and Elena”. With the invaluable help of local believers, and especially the municipal Department of Petroșani coal began and continued construction of the church which lasted from 1930 until 1940.

It is cruciform with a semicircular sanctuary, narthex and lobby entrance, with a right deaconry altar. The dimensions of the church are 22m long, 12m wide and 14m high, 22m high tower being.

The right tower were originally installed in December 1940, two old bells – from 1790 to 1839 the church Sanon.

With trade in the II – World War, the new church Livezeni could not be done and so in December, with the approval of His Eminence Nicolae Bălan of Transylvania, was made by Dean John Duma of Petroșani provisional blessing. Since then, jobs were perfected in the new church, “St. Constantine and Elena” and the church of St. George the Martyr “in Sălătruc, and in the old church,” Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel “– the only Jiu Sânilor of Hram and at Easter.

In the fall of 1965, the parish priest was taken Livezeni local Octavian Pătrașcu. Immediately after installing the new priest initiated and achieved electrification and painting the interior of the church parish. In 1968 was drafted by the Very Reverend Archimandrite High Sofian Boghiu – Antim Monastery abbot St. Bucharest. The estimate for the iconography of the fresco painting of the new church “St. Helen.” In the summer of 1969 he began painting the fresco by Master Joseph church in Bucharest Vason. Painting was completed in the fall of 1970.

The church was consecrated by His Eminence Teoctist Arăpașu – then Bishop of Arad and Hunedoara.

In 1971 and 1972 the church was adorned with over 40 celebrating icons painted on wood by artist George Matthew from Arad. In 1973, the same talented and full of humane master painter Joseph Vasu church and outside church adorned with several scenes and medallions.

Parish Church “St. Constantine and Elena” in Livezeni as new construction has its own assets and property objects. But it is in books and old icons belonging to the old church “St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel” in Livezeni. New bell was cast by 500 kg and two chandeliers were made in workshops church Bible Institute Bucharest.

Also in these workshops was carved oak furniture Plumbuita Monastery church in 1989 – 1992 due to the effort of the same priest Nicolae Octavian Pătrașcu.¹⁷

¹⁷ Files Church of “St. George the Martyr” established between 1998-2001.

Romanian Orthodox Church Livezeni – Petroșani “The Saint Martyr Barbara”

After the Revolution of 1989, the Jiu Valley in the parish Livezeni felt the need to reaffirm the spirit of authentic Orthodox pulse length in this region and to link the old Romanian has now past the two wooden churches and the Sanon of Sălătruc this parish, have begun efforts to build a new wooden church in the parish of the Orthodox faithful Livezeni especially for those who attended church Sălătruc, which had become overcrowded.

Between 1990 – 1994 was the new church project, have obtained necessary approvals and 30 November 1994 it obtained the building permit.

On 4 December 1994 the foundation laid foundation stone of the new church. They immediately began excavation work for basement and foundations in November. In March 1995 when the foundation is prepared shooting commences representative of the State Inspection for quality construction work had stopped on the grounds that it was designed to build a shelter, although the church was designed, approved and conducted under the full basement divided church. The ban took seven months to clarify the misunderstanding. In autumn 1995 he started pouring the foundations, the underground resistance and nets. In 1996 the church building was done to the roof.¹⁸

Architectural project of this church was established by the late master architect honorary Goga Nicolae in Bucharest – former political prisoner, aged 84 years and his apprentice architect Chiaburu Liliana. Part of the building was drawn up by engineer Julian rut in Bucharest.

Architectural style of the church is a simple vessel of 26 meters in length and width of 12 m tower – 36 m high bell as authentic Maramureș style.

Inside the church has balconies all around. The church roof was made of wood and shingles in 1997, also in Maramureș style. Work continued in 1998 – 2001 by craftsmen from Maramureș Bârsana led by the young Basil Păteaș traditional wood construction. The basement was made of reinforced concrete with the company Consmin Petroșani. Plastering inside and subsoil were performed by local craftsmen led by Michael Balău mason. The iconostasis and church furniture was made and carved by master Maramureș Mircea Vasile at the Sighet, and the two bells weighing 700 kg were made throughout the SC. Gutinul Maramureș, Baia Mare. Since August 2000 the church interior was painted in Byzantine style and

¹⁸ Parish Archives Livezeni the years 1990-2002.

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technique of the painter tempera fat hieromonk Porphyry Kuchuk church originating from Vulcan.

Church of the Holy Martyr Barbara “placed before the General School No.7” Andrei Șaguna “Petroșani was built by the local faithful devotion in the parish and other well-meaning people of different faiths in the Jiu Valley.

After making the fundamental stone every year on December 4 Saint Barbara day were served the miners memorial fallen hero to jobs involving local believers and representatives of Mining Unions of the Jiu Valley League of authorities.¹⁹

The first provisional consecration Mass was committed at Pentecost in 2000.

Sanctification – the consecration of the church took place on October 7, 2001 were committed by Teoctist, the Romanian Patriarch surrounded by six bishops, the Holy Synod members, parents abbots, arch-priests, priests and deacons in a traditional and inspiring celebrate.²⁰

Project and all works were initiated and coordinated permanent parish priest Nicolae Octavian Pătrașcu, who still struggled to finish and the church basement, to organize a welfare center for people in need, building and heating plant with methane gas for heating and built a parish house and other necessary papers.

The new church was built in local traditional style but with specific Maramureș upgrade the ancient parish churches Livezeni: historic church from the XVII – XVIII dedicated to “St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel” called “to Sanon” in the Jiu and the church as Old St. George “in Livezeni – Sălătruc.

¹⁹ According to parish priest Nicolae Octavian Pătrașcu.

²⁰ Fr Nicolae Octavian Pătrașcu, *Progress Report to the dedication of the church, Holy Martyr Barbara -7 October 2001.*

BOOK REVIEWS

Paul Meyendorff, *Taina Sfântului Maslu – ungerea bolnavilor*, traducere, prefață și note Cezar Login, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2011, 150 p.

This year, at the publishing house of Archdiocese of Vad, Feleac and Cluj, with the blessing of His Eminence metropolitan Bartolomeu, was published the study of Prof. Dr. Paul Meyendorff, titular professor at the department of Liturgical Theology of the St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary from Crestwood, New York. This work is translated in Romanian by the young theologian Cezar Login, the one who also wrote the preface and the notes from the work.

The book contains four chapters which are preceded by a preface and an introduction and succeeded by 2 appendices. The preface, as mentioned in the lines above, is written by the translator, Cezar Login. In it, he shows that the Holy Unction must be seen and understood only in relation to the Saint Liturgy and with the others Holy Sacraments of the Church, because "... when it is separated from the rest of the life of the Church and of the Church Sacraments, the Holy Unction does not accomplish its purpose because the purpose of our entire life is to reach the perfection and to be redeemed, and these cannot be realized outside the life of the Church, the mysterious body of Christ" (p. 11). In addition to this preface there is a list with the main publications of the author of this study, Prof. Dr. Paul Meyendorff, a list that contains 33 titles: books, translations and articles.

In the Introduction, the author of this work shows that through the Sacrament of Holy Unction, when we want to understand its meaning and purpose, we acquire from Christ the Redeemer, through the power and work of the Holy Spirit, spiritual healing, firstly, and bodily healing, secondly, because "the true healing, which is both physical and spiritual, can be offered only by Christ, the One who is the "doctor of our souls and bodies" (p. 18). By referring to this reality practically, the author shows that, on pastoral sphere, the deficiencies are still major because we do not succeed to regard authentically this Holy Sacrament yet. As concerns this issue, the

Paul Meyendorff, *Taina Sfântului Maslu – ungera bolnavilor...*

author shows that “there are few parishes that encourage their members to take part in this serving that, usually, is forgotten or left only in the care of the priest. There are few communities that use entirely and adequately the Sacrament of healing, the Unction of the ill persons, the Holy Unction. We do not place this Sacrament at least to the members of our parishes or to the members of our families who are much too often let suffer and die alone, in hospitals or in shelters. We are responsible for this” (p. 19).

The first chapter of this work, suggestively entitled *The healing dimension of the serving of the Church*, presents the points of reference of the authentic life in Christ and the central position of the complete healing, spiritual and bodily, in the Christian life, and it identifies the place and the role of the Sacrament of Holy Unction in the larger context of the serving of the Church and its relation with the other Holy Sacraments, especially with Baptism, Chrismation and Eucharist. It is very important to bear in mind the fact that the Holy Unction, when is separated from the rest of the life of the Church and of the Church Sacraments, it does not accomplish its purpose because the purpose of our entire life is to reach the perfection and to be redeemed, and these cannot be realized outside the life of the Church, the mysterious body of Christ” (p. 11).

The second chapter of this book is a detailed presentation of the *history of the service of the Sacrament of Holy Unction*, because, as all other Holy Sacraments of the Church, the Sacrament of Holy Unction has a specific order of its service, order that was developed, amplified or reduced during the centuries until it had the present form. In this chapter there are presented the main manuscripts preserved which render the structure of this service concerning the typikon, as it was developed during the ages, until the definitive form of the present order of this Holy Sacrament. When it refers to the present order of the service of the Sacrament of Holy Unction, the author presents, mainly, the Greek and the Slavonic tradition in the pastoral sphere and a series of specific characteristics of the Western Orthodoxy, more precisely from diaspora. In this way, one can observe that in these areas (Greek, Slavonic and the Orthodoxy from diaspora) the serving of this Holy Sacrament is quite rare, and it is most often limited to a single serving of it in a liturgical year, the serving of the “community Unction” from the Holy Wednesday of the Holy Week. As it is mentioned by the translator in the preface of this work, in the Romanian tradition the situation is different, in the sense that “... at least in the last years, we can

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see a tendency that is diametrically opposed, that the Holy Unction has become a more and more popular service, and many churches, especially from cities, include a weekly serving (or even more frequent) of the Sacrament of the unction of ill persons” (p. 11).

It is important to mention the fact that the author does not limit himself to a series of historical and reasons regarding the typikon as concerns the exposition about the Sacrament of Holy Unction. In this respect, the third chapter of this work is about the theology of illness and of sin, but also about the theology of spiritual and bodily healing as a remedy for this fall. Therefore, this chapter actually presents the entire theology of the Sacrament of Holy Unction with all its spiritual implications for the life of the believer.

The fourth (last) chapter answers to the question *What can be done?* by *Some pastoral suggestions*. In this chapter, very present problems are thoroughly presented, as *The restoration of the healing serving in parishes*, a theological approach of the service of the *community Holy Unction in the Holy Wednesday, the Unction and the Confession, the Unction and the Eucharist*, practical problems regarding the *Celebration of the Holy Unction*, or the categorical answer to a very challenging question especially in the context of the world nowadays: *Can the Holy Unction be served for those who are not Orthodox?* All the problems approached in this chapter contribute to the identification of the place and of the purpose of this service in the present context of the modern world.

At the end of this work there are two appendices, very closely connected to the contents of the second chapter, that refer to the historical evolution of this Holy Sacrament until the definitive form of its present ritual. The first appendix presents the complete text of the service of this Sacrament, as it appears in the Orthodox divine service books and the second appendix, which is very interesting, presents a short form of this Holy Sacrament, as it appears in the Slavonic manuscripts of the 14th-15th centuries. The latter version is used in extreme and urgent situations, in which the presence of more priests or the serving of the entire divine service are not possible.

As a conclusion, that will show implicitly the value and the impact of this work in the theological world, even from the Western area, we will render the words through which the western and very important liturgist Robert Taft ends the review for this volume, which, happily, is translated

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also in Romanian: “My only regret is the fact that I am not the author of this excellent book. It should be bought, read, used and understood not only by Orthodox people but also by all the Christians who are interested in the renewal of the traditional service of the Church of Christ towards those who are ill and dying” (R. F. Taft, review of P. Meyendorff, *The Anointing of the Sick*, in *OCP 76 (1)*, 2010, p. 261-262).

This presentation wants mostly to point out an exceptional editorial apparition that we consider very necessary for the priests, theologians and for the public because it fills a lack that was felt for a very long time in the specialized reference material, especially as regards the Romanian one. This book is all the more welcome as it prefaces in a way the theme that the Holy Synod of our Church has chosen as theme of reflection and of thorough study for the entire year 2012, the *Homage year of the Holy Unc-tion and of looking after ill people*, being a resource for the theological and pastoral reflections that will come for this theme.

Rev. Lucian Farcașiu

The Third Conference of International Association of Orthodox Dogmatic Theologians (Thessaloniki, Greece, 23-26 June, 2011)

The IAODT is a younger community of professors, researchers and institute involved in the study and teaching Orthodox Dogmatic theology, born at the first conference, held on Orthodox Theology Faculty of Arad in 2007. From that point, the IAODT “aims at promoting research in Dogmatic Theology at the international level in the spirit of the holy Tradition as it expresses itself in Bible, in the Ecumenical Councils and in the Holy Fathers’ works” (cf. The Statute). Here was establishing the calendar of the next conference, once at two years. For this reason, the second conference was also held in 2009 in Arad.

The theme of first two conferences was: “*Stresses and Perspectives of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology for the Church’s Mission in Contemporary World*” (2007) and “*Tradition and Dogma: What kind of Dogmatic Theology do we propose for nowadays?*” (2009).

The proceedings of the third International Symposium of the IAODT, with the theme “**The Function and the Limits of Reason in Dogmatic Theology,**” took place with the blessing of the Holy Metropolitan of Thessaloniki at the University Ecclesiastical Academy, 23–26 June 2011. This symposium was made possible through the gracious offering of the facilities of the Academy, the generous sponsorship of the St Gregorios Palamas Cultural Foundation, and the collaborative support of the French Orthodox quarterly journal *Contacts*.

This academic event opened with a service of prayer at the university chapel. The service was chanted by the Byzantine Choir of the Ecclesiastical Academy under the direction of Mr. G. Patronas, who also performed a short concert in the plenary hall.

The inaugural session featured several significant messages and words of welcome: Dr. Christophoros Kontakis, Dean of the Theological Faculty of the Ecclesiastical Academy welcomed the symposium participants; A

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message from His All Holiness Bartholomeos, Ecumenical Patriarch, was read by Archimandrite Irinaios Hatzieframidis; Archimandrite Iakovos Athanasiou, representing H.H. Metropolitan Anthimos of Thessaloniki, offered words of welcome from the Metropolitan Ph.D Michael Tritos, Dean of the Faculty of Theology, Aristotle University, Ph.D Dimitrios Kaimakis President of the School of Theology – Faculty of Theology of Aristotle University). The address of Rev. Ph.D Ioan Tulcan, IAODT President, outlined the origins and the hopes of the Association, and remarked upon the significance of the conference theme.

The first two sessions, entitled *Reason in the Theology of the Fathers* was moderated by Ph.D Giorgios Martzelos and Dr. Aristotle Papanikolaou. Here, was presented the following contributions: Ph.D Pyotr Mikhailov, from St. Tikhon's Orthodox Humanitarian University of Moscow/Russia: *The Competence of Rationality in Christian Theology according to the Great Cappadocians*; Ph.D Despina Prassas, from Providence College, Rhode Island/USA: *To the Limits of Reason and Beyond: St. Gregory the Theologian's Theological Orations*; Ph.D Peter Bouteneff, from St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, New York/USA, *The Transfiguration of Reason in Ps. Dionysius*; Rev. Ph.D Ioan Tulcan, from Theology Faculty of Univ. "Aurel Vlaicu" Arad/Romania, *The Importance of Human Reason in Knowing God according to St. Maximus the Confessor*; and Ph.D Alexey Fokin, from The Philosophical Institute of Moscow/Russia, *Rational Methods in Latin Patristic Trinitarian Dogma*.

Third session, entitled *Reason in Medieval Byzantine Theology*, was moderated by Ph.D Peter Bouteneff. The next papers were presented by: Ph.D Michel Stavrou, from Theology Institute *Saint-Serge* Paris/France, *La raison illuminée par la foi dans la théologie byzantine du XIIIe siècle [Reason Illumined by Faith in 13th-c. Byzantine Theology]* and Ph.D Stavros Yangazoglou, from Hellenic Open University, Patras/Greece, *Discours théologique et expérience ecclésiale lors du conflit hésychaste (XIVe siècle) [Theological Oration and Ecclesial Experience during the Hesychast Controversy of the 14th c.]*

The fourth session, entitled *Reason in 20th-c. Orthodox Theology* was moderated by Ph.D Michel Stavrou. Here, was presented the following contributions: Ph.D Christoph Schneider, from Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies Cambridge/UK: *Beyond the Limits of Reason: Reflections on Pavel A. Florensky's "The Pillar and Ground of Truth"*, Dr. Pan-

telis Kalaitzidis, from Volos Theological Academy, Volos, Greece , *La théologie comme science et doxologie: logocentrisme, apophaticisme et théologie mystique chez quelques théologiens orthodoxes contemporains [Theology as Science and Doxology: Logocentrism, Apophaticism, and Mystical Theology in Certain Contemporary Orthodox Theologians]*.

The fifth session, named: *Reason in the Theology of Fr Dumitru Staniloae* was moderated by Rev. Ph.D Nicolae Moşoiu. The speakers were: Ph.D Cristinel Ioja, from Theology Faculty of Univ. “Aurel Vlaicu” Arad/Romania, *The Function of Human Reason in the God-Man-World Relationship as Reflected in Fr Dumitru Staniloae’s Annotations in the Romanian Philokalia*; and Rev. Ph.D Nicolae Răzvan Stan, from Theology Faculty, University of Craiova/Romania, *The Function and Limits of Reason in Certain Scholia of Fr Dumitru Staniloae*.

The sixth session, named *Rational or Spiritual Theology? The East-West Encounter* was moderated by Ph.D Pyotr Mikhailov. The next papers were presented by: Rev. Dr. Nikolaos Loudovikos, University Ecclesiastical Academy of Thessaloniki, Greece, *Maximus the Confessor and Thomas Aquinas: The Limitations of Reason in Dogmatic Theology*; Rev. Ph.D Nicolae Moşoiu, Theology Faculty of Univ. “Lucian Blaga” Sibiu/Romania, *“We have the mind (nous) of Christ” (1Cor 2:16) - Rational and Spiritual Knowledge of God’s Creation*; Dr. Georgios Martzelos, Theology Faculty of Thessaloniki /Greece, *Reason and Revelation according to Luther and to Orthodox Tradition*; Rev. Dr. Adrian Niculcea, Theology Faculty of Univ. “Ovidius” Constanța/Romania, *Modern Discourse about God: “Natural Theology” or “Biblical Theology.” Barth’s Criticism of “Natural Theology” – One Possible Orthodox Response*.

The seventh session, named: *Theological Reason within an Orthodox Vision* was moderated by Ph.D Despina Prassas. The speakers were: Rev. Ph.D Valer Bel, from Theology Faculty of Univ. “Babeş-Boylai” Cluj/Romania, *The Participative Logic and the Iconic Ontology of Theological – Ecclesiastical Knowledge*; Rev. Ph.D Ştefan Buchiu, from Theology Faculty of Univ. Bucharest/ Romania (*in absentia*), *The Role and Limits of Reason in Apophatic Knowledge in the Thought of Fr. Dumitru Staniloae*; and Ph.D Aristotle Papanikolaou, from Lincoln Theology Center of Fordham University, New York/USA, *The Role of Reason in the Formulation of the Dogma of the Trinity*.

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After the paper presentations of the participants along with the debates they were released a few interesting reflections, specified in the official report of the meeting:

“1. The IAODT gained much by meeting in Thessaloniki, welcoming several new members, each of whom brings their experience in reflecting on contemporary Orthodox theology. The participants of this symposium greatly appreciated the importance and usefulness of this symposium for Orthodox theological teaching and research, and for the Church’s life and mission. They recognized specifically the importance of this theme for the understanding of the human person, the divine-human communion, and the nature of theology, as lived and studied in the East and in the West.

2. Throughout the papers presented, and the often extended and penetrating discussions that followed, the sources of this symposium’s reflection on the uses and limits of human reason were diverse and spanned the two millennia of Church’s tradition since the apostolic era. Sessions focused on fathers of the conciliar era, on late-Byzantine and Medieval thinkers, and on modern figures, from the Christian East and West. Among the modern theologians discussed (including Fr. Georges Florovsky, Vladimir Lossky, and Fr. Sergius Bulgakov, among others) a special place was occupied by Fr. Dumitru Staniloae who, particularly through his thorough engagement with the *Philokalia*, contributed profoundly to contemporary understanding of the human person and specifically the role of human reason. This being said, the following points emerged.

3. The created world is a rational world in that it is founded upon the divine logoi. Within the created visible world, humans alone are endowed with the faculty of reason, intellect, and the grace of freedom. The intellectual, rational, spiritual dimensions of his being distinguish the human person from the rest of the material world.

4. The human person is created in the image of God, and human reason (logos) reflects the Divine Logos. This is both its origin and its aim. Within the conditions of the fallen world, human reason is capable of leading the human person towards sin and distortion as well as drawing the human person towards God.

5. Reason, properly directed, has a unique and indispensable role in the realization of divine-human communion. The proper direction of human reason, which presupposes the pursuit of virtue and purity, entails a recognition of the limits of reason, and a cruciform submission to the

limitlessness and unknowability of God. Reason, by the grace of the Holy Spirit and through asceticism, is to be transfigured.

6. All of the greatest exponents of the Church's tradition expressed theology in a reasoned manner: the fathers, both ancient and modern, relied on human reason in the articulation of theology and in their polemic with heretical views. Yet as a whole—especially in the Christian East—their theology was characterized by a deeply apophatic nature. The apophatic character of theology—serving as a balance to the cataphatic mode of expression—itself speaks to both the limits and the uses of human reason: apophaticism is an acknowledgement of the limitations of reason and yet it presupposes reason. The mind voluntarily engages the mode of apophaticism and self-transcendence in a movement towards mystical and super-intellectual union with God.

7. Reason is invoked both personally and communally, in this it helps to constitute the conciliar nature of the Church. Reason, as a gift of God to the human person, plays a discerning role in the evaluation of subjective experience in relation to ecclesial experience.

8. The technical or potentially “scholastic” modality of reason, sometimes associated exclusively with the West, as seen for example in the deployment of syllogisms and pure logic, is problematic only when seen as an independent and self-sufficient modality of the pursuit of theological truth, rather than as a means that requires completion and correction.

9. A symposium can not exhaust all the dimensions of such an important theme as the uses and limits of human reason in theology. It was recognized that further reflection would be necessary in order to help identify more clearly what human reason is, in relation to (or in distinction from) “logic,” “thinking,” “rationalizing,” “intellectualizing,” and other concepts, as well as the role of reason in speaking to the relevance of dogmatic theology to other disciplines such as ethics, the humanities, and the sciences”.

The final session was moderated by the IAODT Presidium: Rev. Ph.D Ioan Tulcan, Ph.D Peter Bouteneff, Ph.D Michel Stavrou, helped at the secretary office by Rev. Ph.D Filip Albu. Here was elaborated, corrected, and approved a final report, welcomed new members into the Association, discussed the theme of the next meeting, and took other decisions pertaining to the Association. Rev. Ioan Tulcan, with Ph.D Michel Stavrou, presented a financial report of the Association. The members of the Associa-

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tion present at the meeting unanimously re-elected Ph.D Michel Stavrou as vice president.

In discussing the next meeting of the Association, it was agreed to aim for a meeting in 2013, with attention to coordinate the precise date with other meetings that will involve Association members. The Association Board (Presidium) will welcome and suggestions of venue or offers of hospitality.

After an extensive discussion on possible themes for the next meeting, the following theme was agreed: **Dogma and Terminology in the Orthodox Tradition and its Relevance Today**. While the precise phrasing of this theme can be adjusted as the Association members submit their proposed titles, this thematic area was seen as bearing much potential for discussing such topics as: the distinction between dogma and terminology; the limits and provisional nature of language; the evolution of terminology during the conciliar era; the question of whether our use of these terms is faithful to that of the fathers and the councils; the question of “the development of doctrine”.

During this symposium the participants also enjoyed excursions to the monastery of Vlatadon, touring its extensive archives and libraries, as well as to the St. John Prodromos Monastery and to Verria.

**IAODT Secretary Office
Rev. Ph.D Filip Albu**

Thomas Laird, *The Story of Tibet. Conversation with the Dalai Lama*. Translated by Doina-Anca Târnoveanu, All Publishing House, Bucharest, 2011, 401 p. (Deac. Caius Cuțaru)

Over time there have been written several histories of Tibet, well documented, prepared by experts who came into direct contact with the Tibetan realities, but a history written after lengthy dialogues with political and spiritual leader of Tibet, Dalai Lama have not been achieved so far. This thing was done by Thomas Laird, who over many years (from November 1977 to July 2000) was received in audience by 18 times, in India, by Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet. To this we can add the “direct research for decades” – as the author himself confesses (p. XIX).

The paper is divided into fourteen chapters, preceded by a foreword and an introduction and followed by a bibliography, consistent marks on each chapter and a useful index of names and themes.

Tibetan history is lost in the mists of time and is accompanied by a series of foundational myths, which the Dalai Lama, like every Tibetan, has taught since childhood and never ceased to study (p. 9). Tibetans are told the story of the male monkey that along with a female demon stood on a rock, and the Dalai Lama had the representation in a temple, realizing in this way, the myth of the origins of humanity in the Tibetan tradition. In fact, one who was incarnate in a monkey Chenrizi Bodhisattva (Buddha’s compassion incarnation), which by this time helped the Tibetan people to overcome the animal, repeatedly appeared in human form. Until today Tibetans consider that the Dalai Lama is a living manifestation of Chenrizi, an event for every generation to go through each path to liberation. According to the scientific data that support them and the Dalai Lama, Tibetans were first in the western part of Tibet, and then moved to the east. According to archaeological discoveries, Tibet was living with 6000-10000 years before Buddha (p. 13).

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But we have only more consistent historical data from the sixth century AD, the period during which the largest military force would be concentrated around Yarlung royal house, who unified Tibet Plateau existing kingdoms and began campaigns against India, China, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The first figure in the dynasty (about whom we have historical data) was Songzen Gampo, who ascended to the throne at the age of thirteen. He will be the greatest king of all time, and creator of unified Tibet, historical data are sometimes overwhelmed by the mythology surrounding his figure. With Songzen Gampo Tibet's history begins in the imperial era, he was the one who will lay the foundation for Tibetan empire expansion, which is made by his followers (p. 25). Peace with China and the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD) will be achieved through the marriage of Chinese Princess Wencheng to Songzen Gampo, who will remain in history only for bringing a huge statue of Buddha in the Tibetan capital and building Jokhang temple to accommodate it. "She called Han artisans with the purpose of making the Tibetans familiar with occupations such as metallurgy, agriculture, weaving, construction, milling, brewing and production of paper and ink. Astronomy and the Han Chinese calendar have also been introduced in the region" (p. 30).

In the following centuries (7th – 9th), the force of Tibet will be a considerable one, making Tibet a powerful empire impressing its neighbors until the Mongol supremacy appeared. During this period, the Tibetans conquered even the capital of China having their own king. This things will seem very remote in time to the spiritual leader when, in 1954, will make a visit to Mao Tse-tung and when he will be shown the ruins of ancient city Chang'an (now Xi'an), conquered city of Tibetan more than a millennium ago (p. 38)! During 7th-8th centuries five major powers were fighting for supremacy in Central Asia: the Arabs, the Turks, the Uighurs, the Tibetans and the Chinese, history and exchange alliances being often established between them. In his account, the Dalai Lama insists that Tibet has not only mastered Tibet Plateau, but large army had invaded and occupied most of western China in the eighth century and the ninth century, and China has not ever held, during the Tang Dynasty, large portions of Tibet. Tibet and China that were equal and independent states, which fought among themselves for supremacy. Statements like this come to assert the independence of Tibet and to argue against any claim on the territory of China. This is the substratum of the whole dialogue between the Dalai

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Lama and Thomas Laird, making himself ruler of Tibet spokesman of a nation currently under Chinese rule, deprived of private and civil religious freedom.

After this period of glory of the Tibetan empire, the political and military decline is caused by repeated revolts (797-977 AD), and Buddhism will experience the same decline.

From the religious point of view, the Buddhist orders were formed in the years 978-1204. In the eleventh century three of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism modern order began to organize: Nyingma, Sakya and Kagyu, the fourth order, Kadam, worked a couple of centuries, then disbanded. The order from which the Dalai Lama belongs is called Gelug and it is the main historical follower of the Kadam order (p. 64). Tibet's spiritual leader reminds all those preachers of Buddhist monks in Tibet: Marpa, Milarepa, Atisha, Tsongkhapa, Gampopa. The author confesses that he has studied what the Dalai Lama said to him and he was informed from several sources about the emergence of Buddhist orders in Tibet. Moreover, he succeeded in visiting Tibet under Chinese occupation.

Centuries that followed this period of peace meant repeated Mongol invasions, which were unstoppable. Tibet had no military power during his first reign of Songzen Gampo, because after Lang's Darma death, in 842, his empire crumbled. From this moment and until it reached Mongol rule, in 1268, the state remained dismembered (p. 91). Powerful nobles and monasteries were struggling to gain control of each region. Although Mongols will dominate the Tibetan political and military way, in terms of religion, the Tibetan Buddhism will be one that will spread through Mongol Empire via Phagpa. The Tibetan supremacy over the Mongols will be imposed at cultural level, the empire adopted an alphabet created by the Tibetans. The relationship between the Mongolian master and the Tibetan Dalai Lama, and later the relationship between the latter and the Manchurian emperor will be characterized as similar to the one between the king and the priest, and not to the one between the lord and the vassal, like such contemporary Chinese historians would suggest.

In the following chapters, Tenzin Giatso will consider the Dalai Lama's institution, from the first (Gendundrup) until him (the XIV century). The current Dalai Lama will feel a strong affinity with the fifth and the thirteenth Dalai Lama, as he considers himself a reincarnation of them, but at the same time a manifestation of Bodhisattva Chenrizi. The fifth Dalai

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Lama, Ngawang Gyatso Lozsang was an extraordinary personality, contributing significantly to the prosperity of Tibet and will always remain a benchmark for later sovereigns. It also insists on how to choose a spiritual leader in Tibetan Lamaism, a true religious tradition in this sense existing, the reincarnation representing a link between their successive existences.

The current Dalai Lama's life is presented in detail in Chapters XI-XIII, with a wealth of data in this respect, the wealth of information can be explained by the autobiographic character of these stories, Tenzin Giatso talking about the early years of his life, 1935-1950 (Chapter XI, p. 225-269), about his life under Chinese occupation (Chapter XII, p. 269-291) and about the years of his exile in India, with his visits and lectures throughout the world (Chapter XIII, p. 291-320).

The book is intended as an objective statement of the main events that took place in the history of Tibet, but the Dalai Lama can be accused of lack of objectivity, knowing the current situation in Tibet, that became a province of China. However, reader's opinion inclines to the view of Tibetan spiritual leader, not only out of sympathy for the weak and defenseless, but also because of logical arguments raised. It is also a fresco of historical permanence of Tibet, without losing sight of the religious context of this Buddhist state. The exposure of the Dalai Lama is balanced, even when it comes to sensitive issues such as relations between Buddhism and expanding Islam or relations with Communist China. On the other hand, information is supplemented by extensive documentation by the author, Thomas Laird, that receives answers to some questions that we have vis-à-vis the Buddhist tradition.

Deac. Caius Cuțaru

Writing requirements for the studies included in the “Teologia” review

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The description of the theoretical framework of the theme

- accuracy in description and presentation;
- present interest and relevance of the bibliography used in connection with the theme;
- relevance of the information regarding the theme;

The aim of the study

- accuracy of expression;
- originality;
- relevance of the aim for the analysis and the innovation of the suggested theme;

The objectives of the study

- accuracy of expression;
- relevance and operational degree according to the stated aim;
- relevance regarding the stated theme;

The advanced hypothesis and the considered variables

- accuracy of expression;
- relevance of hypothesis according to the stated theme, aim and objectives;
- correlation between hypothesis and variables;

The description of the research methodology

- accuracy of building up research techniques;
- accuracy in applying the research techniques;
- relevance of the used methodology according to the theme, aim and objectives;

The presentation of the resultus of the investigation

- relevance of the results according to the theme, aim and objectives;

- quality of the results and their presentation according to the stated aim;
- quantity of results;

Interpretation of the results obtained

- relevance of interpretation according to the hypothesis, aim and objectives ;
- relation of the interpretation with the theoretical framework of the theme;
- accuracy, originality and extent of interpretation;

Suggestions

- innovative degree of suggestions;
- capacity of the suggestions to solve the identified problems;
- transferable value of the launched suggestions;

Remarks:

- the author is obliged to specify the domain of the scientific research of the study;
- the consultant and the editorial staff reserve the right of publishing the article according to the epistemic or/and the editing requirements;
- each article will be analyzed according to the requirements of the domain it belongs to, the above requirements being the reference framework;
- the editorial staff guarantees the author the feedback right, during the first week after receiving the article;
- the editorial staff will, confidentially, send and comment both the positive and the negative feedbacks;
- the consultant and the editorial staff will accept for publication the rejected articles, in an improved form.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Contributions should be written in English, German, French or Italian. The article should not be longer than 12.000 words, including footnotes.

Articles should be accompanied by an abstract (max. 150 words), preferably in English. The abstract should present the main point and arguments of the article.

The academic affiliation of the author and his e-mail address must write at the first note of the article.

GENERAL STRUCTURE OF A FULL ARTICLE

- Title
- Abstract
- Keywords
- Main text:
 - Introduction
 - Methods
 - Results
- Conclusion

MAIN TEXT

Authors are kindly asked to submit the final form of their article, carefully edited according to the instructions below, proofed for language, spelling and grammar. Articles with spelling and grammatical errors cannot be accepted.

Please use Normal Style, with Times New Roman, 12 point font, single line spacing, justified, first line indented at 0.8 cm. (0.32 in.). For headings use Heading 2 Style.

For Hebrew and Greek quotations please use Bible Works fonts (BWhebb, BWgrkl), Hebraica, Graeca, or Scholars Press fonts (the latter can be downloaded from the Biblica site)

FOOTNOTES

Footnotes are numbered continuously, starting with 1.

Footnote numbers in the text should be inserted automatically (Insert footnote), placed in superscript after the punctuation mark. Do not use

endnotes or other methods of inserting notes. For Footnotes use Footnote Text Style with Times New Roman, 10, single, justified, hanging indent at 0.5 cm. (0.2 in.).

QUOTATIONS WITHIN THE BODY OF THE ARTICLE:

Please avoid unnecessarily long quotations, unless they are very important for your point. Quotations shorter than four lines should be included in the text, between quotation marks, followed by the footnote indicating the source.

Please use quotation marks according to the rules of the language in which you write: “English”, „German”, and «French» or «Italian».

Quotations longer than four lines should be written as a different paragraph, without quotation marks, indented 0.5 cm (0.2 in.) left and right.

REFERENCES

References to books and articles have to be placed in the footnotes. Do not add a bibliography.

The last name of the author(s) should be written in SmallCaps, the title of the book, article, periodical, volume in italic.

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