

Foreword

Twenty years after. A brief chronicle of the Romanian Orthodox bioethics

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Abstract:

As an editorial essay, I offer here an inventory and a summary evaluation of the events and publications that illustrate the concerns for bioethics within the Romanian Orthodox theology during the post-communist period, followed by a presentation of the various stuff of this monographic issue.

Keywords:

bioethics, Romanian Christian-orthodox bioethics

In 1998, this academic quarterly, *Revista Teologică (The Theological Review)*, published a monographic number dedicated to bioethics, a premiere in the field of Romanian Orthodox theology. More than a decade before (1986) the same publication - under the name of that epoch, *Mitropolia Ardealului* - inaugurated the reception of bioethics problems within the Orthodox moral theology in Romania.² Between these

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² *Revista Teologică*, VIII (80), no. 1, 1998 (containing papers by Fr. John Breck, Dr. Gheorghe Scripcaru, Hierom. Iuvenalie Ionașcu, Jean-Claude Larchet, Metropolitan Nicolae Corneanu, Fr. Florin Pușcaș, Dr. Marc Andronikof, S. Moldovan). Fr. Prof. Ilie Moldovan, „Probleme actuale de bioetică în atenția teologilor contemporani” [Current problems of bioethics in the attention of contemporary theologians], *Mitropolia Ardealului*, 31 (1986), no. 2, p. 259-262. Obviously, topics such as sins against procreation or, in general, against the life, usually included in the category of "deadly sins", the class "sins that cry to Heaven", have appeared in the studies of Romanian Orthodox theology even before, especially in periods in which there was also a social and / or political "command". They can be included, retroactively, in the fields of bioethics, but, in its own sense, bioethics is the product and expression of biomedicine, with the novel anthropological situations it creates, not of any (ab) uses of life with medical, legal and moral implications. In this editorial presentation I tried to be as

two moments, the Orthodox Church and its theology passed, along with the whole country, through the violent overthrow of the communist regime and the orientation towards new socio-political forms. Among the main moral issues that appeared were undoubtedly the necessary *metanoia* for the Communist past, with its plenty of abuses and compromises, and the recrudescence of the abortion phenomenon, which saw a true explosion in the first years after 1989.

None of these were addressed to its seriousness and relevance, neither by institutions (political, scientific, cultural, religious alike), nor by most individuals. Moreover, it is a tragic irony that in the dominant popular mentality, the separation of communism was equivalent - among other things, but in a preeminent place - with the legal right to elective abortion.³ In this context, it is explainable why the first contributions to Christian-Orthodox bioethics here were focused mainly on the beginning of life and belonged to the "prolife" movement that was just developing in Romania.⁴

Regarding this period, I will only mention that the first public expression concerning the abortion of the higher authority of the Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC) came in 1997, in the form of pastoral letters issued, the first by the Patriarch, the second by the Holy Synod. Another 8 years later, the supreme forum will approve and publish a larger document on this phenomenon, from now on in the process of statistical "stabilization", but with no less significant moral, social and demographic implications. The document was part of a group of three pieces (Organ Transplantation (2004), Abortion (2005), Euthanasia (2005)) and represented, on the

complete as possible, but not exhaustive. I only mentioned the publications in volume, not the articles, for obvious reasons. Apart from this exclusion, all possible omissions are unintentional, and I apologize in advance for them.

³ The way in which "sentencing to give birth" and "sentencing to death" became almost synonymous in the mentality of the time shows how far can reach an entire people subjected, voluntarily and involuntarily, to a regime, not only politically, but also morally, missing of faith. From the perspective of a science for which genocide does not have prenatal stages, see Vladimir Trebici, *Genocid și demografie* [Genocide and demography], Humanitas, 1991. After a period of new demographic evolution, no less worrying, and from another epistemological perspective, see Ilie Bădescu, "Demopolitica în Occident, în Europa centrală și Eurasia. Contribuții la critica demoscopiei pozitivistice" [Demopolitics in the West, Central Europe and Eurasia. Contributions to the criticism of positivist demoscopia], *Geopolitica*, 1 (5), 2005, p. 6-15.

⁴ For a historical presentation, not entirely accurate, of the emergence of this movement in Romania, see Larisa Ciochină, Constantin Iftime, *O viziune asupra vieții* [A vision on life], Provita Media, 2003, pp. 275-283. The effort of this brave publisher, whose editorial appearances can be seen here, is worth appreciating: <https://provita.ro/editura-provita-media/>. The informative and educational material offered on its site far exceeds the published volumes and deserves regular pursuit; the same remark for another meritorious online publication, <http://www.culturavietii.ro/>.

one hand, the consecration of bioethics issues on the pastoral-missionary agenda of the ROC,⁵ on the other hand, the cessation of the work of the bioethics committees that the Synod had created earlier in order to elaborate the drafts of the documents in question. For almost two years, the respective commissions constituted the first concrete meeting and collaboration, in an interdisciplinary effort, between theologians, doctors and jurists, from the incipient history of the Romanian bioethics.⁶

Although *de facto* abolished, their activity was seminal. Under the spiritual patronage of the Archdiocese of Cluj, the church center from where the commissions' initiative was set up, and in the organization of the County Hospital from the city of

⁵ The documents are only published on the portal patriarhia.ro in the section "Social-philanthropical activity", section "Bioethics". Their current order is alphabetical, they are not dated, they have no presentation and do not declare who the author is, nor what their authority is (<http://patriarhia.ro/bioethics-370-en/>).

⁶ On these commissions' creation and activity in the context of that time and on the content of the documents, see S. Moldovan, „Comisiile de bioetică ale Bisericii Ortodoxe Române” [Bioethics commissions of the Romanian Orthodox Church], *Anuarul Academic al Facultății de Teologie „Andrei Șaguna” 2001-2002*, Editura Universității Lucian Blaga, Sibiu, 2002, pp. 421-436; Ștefan Iloaie, “Ethics and life. The documents of the Romanian Orthodox Church on bioethics”. *Revista română de bioetică*. Vol. 7, Issue 2 (April-June 2009): 18-29.; also, regarding the most important document, about the transplant, Ștefan Iloaie, Crișan Mircioiu, „Hotărârea Sfântului Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române referitoare la transplantul de organe” [The decision of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church on organ transplantation], in Mircea Gelu Buta (ed.), *Medicii și Biserica*, vol. III, Renașterea, 2005, p. 120-121; S. Moldovan, „Observații la proiectul de document al Sfântului Sinod cu privire la transplantul de organe” [Observations on the draft document of the Holy Synod on organ transplantation], *Anuarul Academic al Facultății de Teologie „Andrei Șaguna” din Sibiu 2014-2015*, XV (XL), 2017, pp. 76-88. A debate arised on the concept of brain death, accepted with reservation and confusion in this document. See, in addition, the contributions on this topic from: J. Breck, F. Pușcaș S. Baștovoi, S. Moldovan, L. Macrea, I. Bizău, [*Ce este moartea?*, What is death?], Patmos, 2003; S. Moldovan, *Eseuri de bioetică* [Essays on bioethics], Astra Museum, 2013; P. Chirilă, Nicoleta Sturzu, *Fața tristă a medicinei contemporane* [The sad face of contemporary medicine], Christiana, 2019. From the report of Fr. Prof. Ștefan Iloaie, the Cluj commission continued its work after 2003, elaborating documents on other topics, whose content and destiny is not known to me. Taking into account a series of circumstances like the setting up of the committees, the order of the approval of the documents by the Synod and their publication, the late nature of the abortion document and the early nature of the euthanasia document (prohibited in our country), the subsequent relevance of these documents, as well as the fact that the Synod did not assume other topics, I think the real stakes of the ROC bioethics committees was the support provided to the transplantation system in Romania, inspired by the example of the Roman Catholic Church in Spain and Austria. We do not know with what real effect, since we do not have an objective evaluation; for a subjective one, see Moldovan, "Observations ...", p. 76, note 1.

Bistrița, whose director, Dr. Mircea Gelu Buta, proved an exceptional academic manager, in this locality was born in 2001 the most important and, to date, the most long-standing public event of the Romanian bioethics, namely "The Seminar of Medicine and Theology", an annual scientific event, with national and international audience.⁷ Probably also under the impulse of this event, at the initiative of the school of legal medicine in Iași, led by Prof. Dr. Vasile Astărăstoae, future rector of the University of Medicine in Iași and president of the Romanian College of Physicians, the Romanian Bioethics Society is formed, an association that organizes since 2004 its own annual event, "The National Bioethics Conference". A year before Dr. Astărăstoae had launched, under the aegis of the Bioethics Committee of the Romanian College of Physicians and in the editing of the Iasi Medical College, the most important national publication in the field, namely *Revista Română de Bioetică* (*Romanian Journal of Bioethics*). Although addressed to scientists, both the journal and the conference were from the beginning open to the theologians' participation and the dialogue with them.⁸

Another remarkable contribution to the crystallization of the Romanian Orthodox bioethics was the translations of internationally relevant works, translations that were, most of the times, the occasion of long-term implications on the part of their authors in promoting the bioethics in Romania. In 1997 it was published in Sibiu the volume *The theology of the disease* of the famous French patristic scholar Jean-Claude Larchet, at "Oastei Domnului" Brotherhood (Army of the Lord) as the publisher and through the effort of Father professor Vasile Mihoc, then, in 2001, at the Cluj-Napoca publishing house Patmos, *The sacred gift of life*, the first treatise of orthodox bioethics worthy of this name, through the collaboration of the Right Reverend Irineu Pop, then vice-bishop, as translator, and of the theologian and publisher Vasile Manea. The author of this volume, Father John Breck, renowned New Testament and Ethics professor at St. Vladimir's Seminary in New York and at St. Sergius Theological Institute in Paris, had begun a series of conferences on bioethics, hermeneutics and Orthodox spirituality in 1999, at the great university centers of the country, which continued for many years. In 2002, the Deisis publishing house in Sibiu delivered by the exemplary work of Archdeacon Ioan Ică jr. the Romanian translation of the document of social doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church, adopted in the jubilee year 2000, which contains a

⁷ The series of volumes comprising the studies resulting from the presentations of the Seminar, coordinated by Prof. Dr. M.G. Buta, and entitled "Doctors and the Church", reached volume 17 (and can be identified on the website of the Renașterea publishing house, [http://www.renasterea-cluj.ro /](http://www.renasterea-cluj.ro/)).

⁸ The editorial board of this journal, prematurely disappeared after 13 volumes only, included the theologians Fr. Nicolae Achimescu, Fr. Prof. Gheorghe Popa, and Hierom. Iuvenalie Ionașcu.

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substantial chapter on "the health of the person and the people" and on "the problems of bioethics". At the same publishing house appeared in 2005 the Romanian version of the most important book of Christian bioethics worldwide, the *Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, of the doctor and philosopher Hugo Tristram Engelhardt Jr., converted to Orthodoxy, with the baptismal name Herman, one of the founding fathers of this field.⁹

For the famous Texan professor, the opportunity to visit us came in 2008 when the St. Irina Foundation in Bucharest, established by the spouses Dr. Pavel Chirilă and Dr. Maria Chirilă, the initiators and animators of Christian medicine in our country, organized the first representative international conference for Romanian Orthodox bioethics, with a theme about the end of life. It was attended by the Greek Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, the French doctor Marc Andronikof, the Russian psychologist Dmitry Avdeev, the German philosopher Corinna Delkeskamp-Hayes, and the American priest of Romanian origin, Iulian Aniței. Engelhardt and Delkeskamp-Hayes returned to a second conference of the same foundation, in 2010, dedicated this time to martyrology,¹⁰ after which their presence became a constant, with an almost annual frequency, first at the Seminars in Bistrița, then at the International Symposium of Science, Theology and Arts organized by the Faculty of

⁹ J.-C. Larchet, *Teologia bolii*, Oastea Domnului, 1997 [*Théologie de la maladie*, Cerf, 1991]; Pr. John Breck, *Darul sacru al vieții. Tratat de bioetică*, Patmos, 2001 [*The Sacred Gift of Life: Orthodox Christianity and Bioethics*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999]; Sinodul Episcopal Jubiliar al Bisericii Ortodoxe Ruse, „Fundamentele concepției sociale a Bisericii Ortodoxe Ruse” [The basics of the social concept of the Russian Orthodox Church], in Ioan Ică Jr., Germano Marani (ed.), *Gândirea socială a Bisericii. Fundamente—documente—analize—perspective* [The social thinking of the Church. Foundations – documents – analysis - perspectives], Deisis, 2002, pp. 236-250; H. T. Engelhardt jr., *Fundamentele bioeticii creștine. Perspectiva ortodoxă*, Deisis, 2005 [*The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*. Swets & Zeitlinger, 2000]. Other important translations: D. Beaufils, A. Kahn, J. Breck, *Clonarea umana între mit și realitate. O evaluare ortodoxă*, Patmos, 2003 [*Bioéthique orthodoxe, Actes du 4e Colloque de l'Association Orthodoxe d'Etudes Bio-éthiques*, Institut de théologie orthodoxe Saint Serge, 2001]; Dominique Beaufils, Boris Bobrinsky, John Breck ș.a., *Bioetica și taina persoanei. Perspective ortodoxe*, Bizantină, 2006 [*Actes du 1er Colloque de l'Association Orthodoxe d'Etudes Bio-éthiques*, Institut de théologie orthodoxe Saint Serge, 1997]; Pr. John și Lynn Breck, *Trepte pe calea vieții. O viziune ortodoxă asupra bioeticii*, Sophia, 2007 [*Stages on Life's Way: Orthodox Thinking on Bioethics*, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006]; D. Beaufils, *Credința ta te-a mântuit. O viziune ortodoxă asupra bolii și a morții*, Trinitas, 2009 [*Ta foi t'a sauvé: Approche orthodoxe de la maladie et de la mort*, Desclée De Brouwer, 1996]; Anthony Stehlin, *Taina căsătoriei și contracepția*, Doxologia, 2018 [*Orthodox Christianity, Marriage & Contraception*, 2013].

¹⁰ The proceedings were published in the volume *Moartea martirică*, [Martyric Death] Fundația Sf. Irina, 2010.

Orthodox Theology of Alba Iulia, under the patronage of the local Archdiocese and University. The two have been joined in recent years by the North American bioethicists Mark Cherry, Ana Iltis and Ryan Nash, disciples, close collaborators and important academic followers of the late Professor H.T. Engelhardt Jr., who left us in 2018. It is worth mentioning here the translation of the volume *At the foundations of Christian bioethics. Critical essays on the thinking of H. Tristram Engelhardt jr.*, in 2011 at the Renaşterea publishing house in Cluj-Napoca, an indispensable collection of studies for understanding Professor Engelhardt's conception on the identity, specificity, methods and contents of Christian bioethics.¹¹

Among the significant translations, certainly more numerous than the ones reported here, there are several works written by authors relevant by their presence in our country, too. In 2012, at Egumeniţa publisher, *The man at the crossroads*, of Nikolaos Hatzinikolaou Metropolitan of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki, the chairman of the Synodal Committee on Bioethics of the Orthodox Church of Greece, a small but suggestive volume, illustrating the affirmation, only apparently surprising, the high hierarch made on the occasion of a conference held at Brâncoveanu Monastery, Sâmbăta de Sus, in 2013: "Orthodox bioethics is not of answers, but of questions [i.e., prayer, my note]". A year later, the Christiana publishing house and the Nera Monastery provide us with the volume *Bioethics and biotheology* of another contemporary Greek theologian, Hierotheos Vlachos, Metropolitan of Nafpaktos and St Vlassios. Renowned for pleading for a return to a kind of knowledge as an authentic spiritual experience (the so-called "empirical theology") and to understanding Orthodox doctrine and spirituality as therapeutic *par excellence* (hence the phrase "Orthodox Psychotherapy" he popularized), the author launches another phrase with a similar meaning, "biotheology", as a spiritual overcoming of both the scholastic and the secular deadlock in bioethics.¹²

¹¹ Ana Smith Iltis și Mark J. Cherry (eds.), *La temelile bioeticii creștine. Eseuri critice asupra gândirii lui H. Tristram Engelhardt jr.*, Renaşterea, 2011 [*At the Roots of Christian Bioethics: Critical Essays on the Thought of H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr.*, M & M Scrivener Press, 2009].

¹² Nicolae Mitropolitul Mesoghiei și al Lavreotichiei, *Omul la răscruce*, Egumeniţa, 2012 [Μητροπολίτου Μεσογαίας και Λαυρεωτικής κ. Νικολάου, *Άνθρωπος μεθόριος, Από τα άναπάντητα διλήμματα στα περάσματα της «άλλης λογικής»*, Έκδόσεις «Μελωδικό Καράβι», 2005]; Ieroteos Vlachos, Mitropolit de Nafpaktos și Sfântul Vlasic, *Bioetică și bioteologie*, Christiana/Sfânta Mănăstire Nera, 2013 [Μητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου και Αγ. Βλασίου Ιεροθέου, *Βιοηθική και βιοθεολογία*, Ιερά Μονή Γενεθλίου της Θεοτόκου, 2005]. Although he did not publish books, the theologian Ion Croitoru, a lecturer at the Department of Orthodox Theology in University of Târgovişte, should be remarked for his contribution to the knowledge of Orthodox bioethics in Greece; see his contributions in *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai – Bioethica*, nos. 1/2007, 2/2008, 1/2009, and *Studii Teologice*, no. 1/2012.

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A special contribution to the much-needed recovery of the "Father's mind", including in Orthodox moral theology, offers us the series of volumes on topics related to bioethics by Jean Claude Larchet, probably the most important contemporary Orthodox patristician, most of the volumes at Sophia publishing house.¹³ Last but not least, in the same category of significant translations, it is worth mentioning, at the same publishing house, a special volume, *Suffering and the nature of healing*, by the American Orthodox doctor Daniel B. Hinshaw, a presence as discreet in public as energetic and constant in the Romanian medical space, which, together with his wife, Dr. Jane Hinshaw, have supported more than a decade, through annual courses and conferences, the development of palliative medicine in Romania.¹⁴

¹³ Apart from the volume mentioned above, the following also appeared: *Etica și antropologia procreației*, Ed. Sophia, București, 2003 [*Pour une éthique de la procréation. Éléments d'anthropologie patristique*, Cerf, Paris, 1998]; *Creștinul în fața bolii, suferinței și morții*, Sofia, 2004 [*Le Chrétien devant la maladie, la souffrance et la mort*, Cerf, Paris, 2002]; *Tradiția ortodoxă despre viața de după moarte*, Sophia, 2006 [*La vie après la mort selon la tradition orthodoxe*, Cerf, Paris, 2004]; *Terapeutica bolilor mintale*, Sophia, 2008 [*Thérapeutique des maladies mentales*, Éditions de l'Ancre, 2007]; *Dumnezeu nu vrea suferința omului*, Sophia, 2008 [*Dieu ne veut pas la souffrance des hommes*, Cerf, 2008]; *Semnificația trupului în Ortodoxie*, Basilica, 2010 [*Théologie du corps*, Cerf, 2009]; *Acesta este trupul Meu...*, Sophia, 2012 [*Ceci est mon corps*, La Joie de Lire, 1996]; *Sfârșit creștinesc vieții noastre...*, Ed. Basilica, 2012 [*Une fin de vie paisible, sans douleur, sans honte...*, Cerf, 2010]. Another remarkable translation should be noted here, for the Tradition's contribution to contemporary debates: Marie-Hélène Congourdeau, *Embrionul și sufletul lui la Sfinții Părinți și în izvoarele filozofice și medicale grecești (secolele VI î.Hr.–V d.Hr.)*, Deisis, 2014 [*L'embryon et son âme dans les sources grecques (VI^e siècle av. J.-C.-Ve siècle apr. J.-C.)*, Association des amis du Centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2007]. Worth noting, also Kyle A. Schenkewitz, *Dorotei din Gaza și discursul despre vindecare în monahismul gazan*, Renașterea, 2018 [*Dorotheos of Gaza and the Discourse of Healing in Gazan Monasticism*, Peter Lang, 2015]. Also, about Repentance and Anointing, other benchmarks for the theology and ethics of suffering: *Mic manual de spovedanie și mângaiere a bolnavilor și muribunzilor* [A little handbook of confession and comfort for the sick and the dying], Deisis, 2006; Paul Meyendorff, *Taina Sfântului Maslu*, Renașterea, 2011 [*The Anointing of the Sick*, SVS Press, 2009]; Pr. David G. Bissias, *Sfântul Maslu, Taina vindecării*, Doxologia, 2012 [*The Mystery of Healing: Oil, Anointing, and the Unity of the Local Church*, Orthodox Research Institute, 2008]; Ierom. Petru Pruteanu, *Sfântul Maslu și alte slujbe de vindecare; istorie și actualitate* [The Anointing and other healing services; history and nowadays], Ed. Sophia, 2016. A very useful Patristic anthology, in Fr. Liviu Petcu, *Hristos, prietenul nostru în suferință. Florilegiu patristic* [Christ, our friend in suffering. Patristic florilege], Doxologia, 2012.

¹⁴ Daniel B. Hinshaw, *Suferința și natura vindecării*, Sophia, 2016 [*Suffering and Nature of Healing*, SVS Press, 2013]. The role of the palliative movement in the development of the Christian bioethics in our country, and not only, is to be acknowledged, especially by integrating the spiritual dimension in the concept of "total pain" and, therefore, in the care for

Suffering is undoubtedly the anthropological raw material of the moral assessments in bioethics and that which also gives faith its salutogenic relevance - in both senses of the term, biological and spiritual - and to the Church its pastoral and missionary role in the field of health care. The transformation of the sense of suffering is a common place within Christianity, a notion almost abused doctrinally and homiletically, but it is harder to be accomplished in the concrete trials of life. About how some of our fellows have succeeded in converting it from a heavy burden to a means of repentance and improvement, it is Hagiography, older and newer, that gives us a precious testimony. All the lives of the saints are full of stories in this regard. The hagiographic literature published in recent years is immense and any choice can only be subjective and superficial. I note here only a few contemporary spiritual personalities who have been in a closer relationship with medicine, whose writings are at hand, such as St. Luke of Crimea (physician), Elder Porphyry in Athens (servant at the chapel of a medical clinic), Metropolitan Anthony Bloom (physician), Mother Gabriela Papayannis (podiatrist), Elder Symeon Kragiopoulos (Psychology studies).¹⁵ Of course, it is appropriate to recall and put in a proper place in the bibliography of Christian bioethics the literature on suffering and confession in the Communist prisons.¹⁶

the terminally ill patients. Dr. Daniela Moşoiu, priestess and professor of medicine in Braşov, founder of the National Association of Palliative Care, is the pioneer of this movement in Romania. See the journal (<http://www.paliatia.eu/new/>) and the annual conferences of the Association, which reached this year the twentieth edition (<https://www.anip.ro/conferinta-nationalala/>).

¹⁵ Sf. Luca, arhiepiscopul Crimeei, *Am iubit pătimirea*, Sophia, 2008 [Лука (Войно-Ясенецкий). «Я полюбил страдание...». Автобиография. М.: «Русский хронограф», 1995]; Sf. Porfirie Kavsokalyvitul, *Cuvinte despre boală și mângâiere*, Sophia, 2017 [Αγίου Πορφύριου Κανσοκαλυβίτου, Λόγοι Περί Ασθένειας και Παρακλήσεως, Εκδότης Ι.Μ. Χρυσοπηγης, 2014]; Mitropolitul Antonie al Surojului, *Viața, boala, moartea*, Ed. Sfântul Siluan, 2015 [Antoine de Suroj, *La vie, la maladie, la mort*, Editions Laurens, 1998; Metropolitan Anthony of Souroz, *Death and Bereavement*, St Stephen's Press, 2002]; *Maica Gavriilia. Asceta iubirii*, Ed. Episcopiei Giurgiului, 2014 [Nun Gavriilia, *Mother Gavriilia: The Ascetic of Love*, Tertios, 1999]; Arhim. Simeon Kraiopoulos, *Taina suferinței*, Bizantină, 2007 [π. Συμεών Κραγιόπουλος, *Τό μυστήριο τοῦ πόνου*, Ι. Γ. Ησ. "Το Γενέσιον της Θεοτόκου", 2002].

¹⁶ See, Fr. Gheorghe Calciu Dumitreasa, *Suferința ca binecuvântare* [Suffering as a blessing], Cathisma, 2007; For a journey from Bolshevism to Nazi camps as one from avoiding suffering to assuming it, see *Iubirea nebună de aproapele: viața și învățăturile Maicii Maria Skobtsova (1891-1945)*, Deisis, 2000 [Helene Arjakovsky-Klepinine, *Mère Marie Skobtsov: Le sacrement du frère. Biographie Spirituelle*, Le Sel de la Terre, 1995]. An ethical-medical history of the Romanian gulag, similar to the Soviet one, is still awaited; for the moment we have a methodological framework, in Ilie Bădescu, Pavel Chirilă, Andreea Băndoiu, *Principiile*

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Moving on to the section of Romanian authors and their publications, among the pathfinders, after 1990, there was, not by chance, a doctor and a theologian, Dr. Pavel Chirilă, the founder of the first Christian hospital in post-December Romania and a tireless promoter of the medicine made with faith in God and in accordance with His commandments, and Father Mihai Valică, a close collaborator. Along with other workmen, such as Fr. Vasile Mihoc, Fr. Ilie Moldovan or Dr. Vasile Astărăstoae, Dr. Chirilă illustrates what we might call *bioethica militans*, concerned not only with the initiation and consolidation of an academic discipline - to which he also contributed, in full, through didactic and administrative activities, by publications, personal or as a publisher, and by organizing academic events of reference, as already mentioned - but also by assuming a public voice that expresses with the necessary wisdom, but categorically, a responsible attitude towards the good, both physically and spiritually, of the citizens, but also of the physicians themselves, a responsibility derived from the response of the conscience primarily to God, the Creator and Provider of our life.¹⁷

Two more physicians remarked during these years as bioethicists who advocate the ethical convergence of medical science and the Christian faith. This is George

cercetării martirologice [The principles of martyrological research], Christiana, 2010. Another kind of concentration space relevant for bioethics is, of course, the psychosomatic one; to mention only two well-known examples: cancer and AIDS. About the experience of the first, *Mărturie pentru cei ce înfruntă boala. Moștenirea lui Lynette*, Sophia, 2011 [*Lynette's Hope: The Life and Death of Lynette Katherine Hoppe*, Conciliar Press, 2008]; Mioara Grigore, *Cancerul, dragostea mea* [Cancer, my love], Predania, 2014; Florica Bațu-Ichim, *La porțile disperării, începutul speranței* [At the gates of despair, the beginning of hope], Cathisma, 2017; Dmitry Avdeev, *Boala, încercare dumnezeiască. Lupta mea cu cancerul*, Sophia, 2019 [Болезнь - посещение Божие. Страницы из дневника, Москва, 2018]; about the second, see Vasile Chira, *Scrisoarea unui bolnav de SIDA către cer: perspective medicale și teologice ale infecției cu HIV/SIDA*, [Letter from an AIDS patient to the Heaven: Medical and theological perspectives of HIV / AIDS infection], Dacia, 1999.

¹⁷ The public interventions of Dr. Pavel Chirilă are numerous, and some have proved, at least so far, salutary; for example, against the introduction of the so-called "comprehensive sex education" in the school curriculum and against mandatory vaccination. Among the publications, as author and co-author, I mention: *Meditație la medicina biblică* [Meditation on biblical medicine], Christiana, 1992 (with Fr. Mihai Valică); *Conceptul de medicină creștină* [The concept of Christian medicine], Christiana, 2001; *Spitalul creștin. Introducere în medicina pastorală* [The Christian hospital. Introduction to pastoral medicine], Christiana, 2004 (with Fr. Mihai Valică); *Principii de bioetică. O abordare ortodoxă* [Principles of bioethics. A Christian-Orthodox approach], Christiana, 2008 (with L. Gavrilă, C. Gavrilovici, A. Băndoiu); *Întâmplări din Biserică și Spital. Dialog consemnat de Razvan Codrescu*, [Happenings from Church and Hospital. Dialogue recorded by Razvan Codrescu], Christiana, 2014; *Fața tristă a medicinei contemporane* [The sad face of contemporary medicine], Christiana, 2019 (with Nicoleta Sturzu).

Stan, doctor at the Romanian Patriarchy and at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Bucharest, also a graduate of Theology himself, and the doctor Mircea Gelu Buta, an admirable amphitryon of the Bistrița seminars and professor of Christian bioethics at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Cluj-Napoca.¹⁸ In his turn, doctor Vasile Astărăstoae, another prominent pioneer of the Romanian bioethics, including through the multiple administrative responsibilities that he has fulfilled, although he does not resort to theological arguments, he has a vision open to the spiritual-religious phenomenon and its importance for a truly ethical orientation, not only of the medical act and the doctor-patient relationship, but also of the public health care policies. He has permanently been concerned with an academic and civic partnership with the, Orthodox and not only, theological milieus for the physical, mental and spiritual health of the beneficiaries of contemporary medicine.¹⁹

Among the theologians, in the chronological order of the first publication, we note: Father Sorin Cosma, university professor of Moral Theology and Spirituality in Caransebeș and Timișoara, the author of the first Romanian Orthodox bioethics handbook; Archimandrite Iuvenalie Ionașcu, Orthodox archpriest in Rome, the capital of the Roman Catholic bioethics, a vigorous but, unfortunately, too short a presence in the field of bioethics; His Excellency Irineu Pop, the current archbishop of Alba-Iulia, professor of Moral Theology at the Faculties of Orthodox Theology in Cluj and, later, Alba-Iulia, coordinator of the bioethics commission of the Archdiocese of Cluj; Father Vasile Răducă, professor of Moral Theology at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest, member of the central bioethics commission of the ROC; Father Ștefan Iloaie, professor of Moral Theology at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Cluj, director of the Bioethics Center of Babeș-Bolyai University, coordinator of the "Bioetica" collection of the Archdiocese's publishing house *Renașterea* and editor-in-chief of the *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai – Series Bioethica*, the only periodical of predominantly Christian bioethics in our country; the theologian and, from now on, Father Radu Preda, professor of Social Theology at the same faculty, the current director of the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania, whose

¹⁸ Dr. George Stan, *Teologie și bioetică* [Theology and bioethics], Biserica Ortodoxă, 2001; Id, *Teologie și medicina pentru familie* [Theology and family medicine], Cartea Ortodoxă, 2014. The publications of Dr. Mircea Gelu Buta includes the volumes, *Biserica din spital* [The Church in the Hospital], Anastasia, 2004 (second, extended edition, Eikon, 2013; both with Dan Ciachir); *Bioetica între mărturisire și secularizare* [Bioethics between confession and secularization], *Renașterea*, 2008 (with I. A. Buta); *Bioetica în pediatrie* [Bioethics in pediatrics], Eikon, 2008 (with Liliana Buta); *Bioetică și slujire creștină* [Bioethics and Christian service], *Renașterea*, 2017.

¹⁹ Dr. Astărăstoae carries out an intense online writing activity, many of the posts on the personal Facebook page being taken by the portal <https://www.activenews.ro/>.

excellent research in social and political theology includes, naturally, bioethics or, better said, biopolitics.²⁰

²⁰ Fr. Prof. Sorin Cosma, *Curs elementar de Bioetică* [Elementary course in bioethics], Marineasa, 2002; Id., *Bioetica* [Bioethics], Marineasa, 2003; Id., *O abordare creștină a Bioeticii* [A Christian approach to Bioethics], Marineasa, 2007; Father Juvenalie (Ionașcu), *Teroriștii uterului. Terorism științific și etica începuturilor vieții. Eseu de bioetică a gestației* [Terrorists of the womb. Scientific terrorism and the ethics of the beginnings of life. An essay in the bioethics of pregnancy], Anastasia, 2002; Id., *Ispita faustiană. Aspecte ale bioeticii contemporane în lumina Ortodoxiei* [Faustian temptation. Aspects of contemporary bioethics in the light of Orthodoxy], Christiana, 2005; Irineu Pop-Bistrițeanul, *Curs de bioetică* [Lectures in bioethics], Renașterea, 2005; Ștefan Iloaie, *Cultura vieții. Aspecte morale în bioetică* [The culture of life. Moral aspects in bioethics], Renașterea, 2009; Radu Preda, *Concepția socială a Bisericii Ortodoxe din Rusia. Introducere, document & comentariu* [The social concept of the Russian Orthodox Church. Introduction, document & commentary], Eikon, 2011. A master degree program in bioethics has been developed at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Cluj. If the center of the Romanian secular bioethics is in Iasi, the center of the Christian one is in Cluj-Napoca. Recently, the theme of the 4th Theological Consultation between the Evangelical Lutheran social center Diakonien in Neuendettelsau, Germany, and various ROC institutions, held in 2018 at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Cluj-Napoca, was a pastoral-bioethical one; see the proceedings published in Mathias Hartmann, Vasile Stanciu (ed.), *Das Leben als Geschenk Gottes - Christliche Verantwortung im Angesicht des Todes- Viața ca dar al lui Dumnezeu - Responsabilitate creștină în perspectiva morții*, Schiller Verlag, 2018. Other endeavors in bioethics: Serban George Paul Drugaș, *Morala vieții și bioetica* [The morality of life and bioethics], Teognost, 2008; Assoc. Prof. Leontin Popescu, *Bioetica și perspectiva creștină* [Bioethics and the Christian perspective], Istros - Muzeul Brăilei, 2009; Dr. Florea Stefan, *O etică pentru secolul XXI. Principii etice pentru o civilizație a iubirii* [An ethics for the 21st century. Ethical principles for a civilization of love], Valahia UP, 2009; Fr. Prof. Vasile Vlad, *Asumarea (post)modernității* [The assumption of (post)modernity], Univ. Aurel Vlaicu Arad, 2010; Father Nicolae Morar, Daniel Lemeni (eds.), *Teologie și Medicină. Suferința și Moartea* [Theology and Medicine. Suffering and Death], Astra Museum, 2016; Fr. Prof. Ioan C. Teșu, „*Simt boala ca iubire a lui Hristos*” [“I feel the disease as the love of Christ...”], *Doxologia*, 2017; S. Moldovan, *Eseuri...* [Essays ...], cited above, note 5. Even if they do not register thematically in the standard topics of bioethics, we cannot omit, for their biopolitical importance, the studies of Virgiliu Gheorghe, *Efectele televiziunii asupra minții umane* [The effects of television on the human mind], *Evanghelismos*, 2006; *Revrăjirea lumii sau de ce nu vrem să ne mai desprindem de televizor* [The Re-enchantment of the world or why we do not want to detach ourselves from the television], *Prodromos*, 2006; *Știința și războiul sfârșitului lumii*, [Science and the war of the end of the world], *Prodromos*, 2007 (with subsequent editions, under the aegis of the Institute of Psychosocial and Bioethical Research); *Pornografia - maladia secolului XXI* [Pornography, the 21st century disease], *Prodromos*, 2011; *Fața nevăzută a homosexualității*, [The hidden face of homosexuality], Christiana, 2014 (the last one, together with Andrei Dârlău). Also, the works of the biologist Oana Iftime, *Introducere în antievoluționismul științific. Despre evoluția omului de către om* [Introduction to scientific antievolutionism. On the evolution of man

As appropriate, I left at the end of this section the activity of the mentor of most of the theologians mentioned here, Father Ilie Moldovan, former professor of Moral Theology at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Sibiu and one of the founders of the Orthodox prolife movement in Romania, between the missions of which the medicine practiced in Christian spirit and bioethics, both militant and academic, have always been a priority. I will only mention here the series of doctors in theology with theses on bioethics or with relevance for this which Fr. Moldovan directed in Sibiu during the first decade of this century, namely Ștefan Iloaie, Agena Preda-Markovic, Dumitru Mada, Cătălin Părăușeanu, Ionița Timiș, Sebastian Moldovan.²¹

We cannot conclude this summary tour without mentioning the contributions of Romanian theologians and physicians abroad. I have already mentioned the Archimandrite Iuvenalie Ionașcu from Rome. There is currently studying for a PhD in

by man], Anastasia, 2008; and (together with Alexandru Iftime), *Homeopatia. O analiză științifică și spirituală* [Homeopathy. A scientific and spiritual analysis], Lucman, 2012; Eidem, *Homeopatia. Știință? Credință? Medicină? Magie?* [Homeopathy. Science? Faith? Medicine? Magic?], Evanghelismos, 2014, which provoked a fierce public inter-orthodox controversy about the scientific and spiritual authenticity of homeopathy; see, as a reply, Father Sergey Filimonov, *Ortodoxia și homeopatia* [Orthodoxy and homeopathy], Episcopia Giurgiului, 2014.

²¹ Ștefan Iloaie, *Responsabilitatea morală privată în specificul ei personal și comunitar, în vremea noastră* [Private moral responsibility in its personal and communitarian specificity, in our time] (2003); Agena Preda, *Eutanasia - o plagă a existenței contemporane în perspectiva teologiei morale ortodoxe* [Euthanasia - a contemporary plague in the perspective of Orthodox Moral Theology] (2004); S. Moldovan, *Antropologia și etica procreației în teologia morală ortodoxă. Aspecte biblice și patristice* [The anthropology and ethics of procreation in Orthodox Moral Theology. Biblical and patristic aspects] (2004); Dumitru Mada, *Învățătura ortodoxă despre păcatele străine și exacerbaria lor în lumea de astăzi* [The Orthodox teaching on foreign sins and their exacerbation nowadays] (2005); Cătălin Părăușeanu, *Legea morală în Teologia Ortodoxă contemporană* [The moral law in contemporary Orthodox Theology] (2006); Ionița Timiș, *Destinul personalității religios-morale în comunitatea umană și avatarurile manevrării genetice contemporane* [The destiny of the religious-moral personality in the human community and the avatars of contemporary genetic manipulations] (2007). A list of Fr Moldovan's publications may be found in Ciprian Toroczka (ed.), *Teologie ortodoxă în destin românesc. Omagiu Pr. Prof. Dr. Ilie Moldovan la 80 de ani* [Orthodox Theology in Romanian destiny. Homage to Fr. Prof. Dr. Ilie Moldovan at 80 years old], Andreiana, 2008. I mention here only the solid volume Dr. Christa Todea-Gross, Prof. Ilie Moldovan, *Îndrumarul medical și creștin despre viață al Federației Organizațiilor Ortodoxe Pro-Vita din România* [The medical and Christian guide about life of the Federation of Prolife Orthodox Organizations from Romania], Renașterea, 2008. The prolife and ecotheological summer camps ("universities") annually organized by Fr. Ilie Moldovan, between 1993 and 2008, in monasteries such as Recea, Jacu Românesc (Mureș County) Izvorul Mureșului (Harghita County), and parishes like Hârja and Poiana Sărată (Bacău County) cannot be omitted.

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bioethics another Romanian priest, Father Gabriel Popescu. In Marburg one of the authors of this issue studied and received the doctorate, namely Father Ispas Ruja, who will be introduced below, and in Paris, Mrs. Andreea Ionescu elaborated a valuable master's thesis on the morality of contraception. In the United States, Father Iulian Aniței, the priest of an Orthodox community in Huston, Texas, is an important member of the editorial board of the famous academic journal *Christian Bioethics*, founded by Prof. H.T. Engelhardt jr. A remarkable activity takes place in the capital of France - headquarters of the former *Association Orthodoxe d' Études Bioethiques* -, both within the "Dumitru Stăniloae" Orthodox Center for Studies and Research and within the Brotherhood of St. Luke of Crimea, an association of Orthodox physicians. Until recently Dean of the Center, the late Father Jean Boboc (1943-2019), doctor in medicine, distinguished himself not only as a French translator from Mihai Eminescu and Dumitru Stăniloae, but also as an Orthodox bioethicist of international renown. Alongside with him, Father Răzvan Ionescu, doctor in biomedical engineering and in theology, an exponent of the new Romanian school of Orthodox apologetics, a learned researcher of the relations between theology and the contemporary sciences of nature, also approaches at times bioethics topics.²²

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It would be inappropriate to try a value assessment of the Romanian Orthodox bioethics only based on such a quantitative and incomplete account. However, we can perceive something.²³ Despite all the activities, especially publishing, dedicated to bioethics evoked here, apparently rich, the number of Romanian theologians who carry out a constant research in this field is, unfortunately, derisory. More significantly, with only a few, too few, exceptions, those forms of collaboration imperious for progress in education and the development of knowledge of any

²² Jean Boboc, *La grande métamorphose*, Ed. Cerf-Patrimoines, 2016; Id., *Le Transhumanisme décrypté*, Ed. Apopsix, 2017 (the Romanian version of the last book is coming soon at the Doxologia publishing house in Iași); *Au carrefour de l'humain. Religion, anthropologie, bioéthique*, Astra Museum, 2016 (coeditor with S. Moldovan). Fr. Răzvan Ionescu, *Teologie ortodoxă și știință: Conflict, indiferență, integrare sau dialog?*, Doxologia, 2015 [*Théologie orthodoxe et science*. Vol.1: *Questions d'ordre méthodologique. Typologie des rapports*; vol. 2: *Les défis théologiques de la recherche*; vol. 3: *Approche apologetique et patristique*, Lulu, 2016]. For more about the Brotherhood of St. Luke of Crimea, see: <https://www.science-et-religion.fr/cat-temoignage/105-la-fraternite-des-medecins-orthodoxes-saint-luc-de-crimee-faire-de-la-science-avec-une-conscience-chretienne>.

²³ I heard that to the question recently asked to a most high ecclesiastical authority regarding a possible resuscitation of the ROC's bioethics committees, the answer received would have been: "we have no experts". We cannot verify the truth of this story, but even if it is not true, it is well found.

academic field, especially when it comes to one where pluridisciplinarity is at home - forms such as the professional associations, collective research, doctoral studies, journals and reviews, and whose content is critical debate and reception - rather shine through absence. If this situation persists, it would not be surprising if the needed experts will not appear in the next twenty years, either. In order to overcome the current stage of sporadic events and of benefits for individual professional careers, useful but insufficient, the Romanian Orthodox bioethics needs to enter the logic of a communion of knowledge both academic and spiritual, becoming a truly ecclesial activity. The various people and centers that have worked so far, more on their own and in a provincial dimension, to find answers to the ever more complex challenges of biomedicine and biopolitics, could rather turn the challenges into the prayer's invocations and the research's vocation, by creating a community of Romanian Orthodox bioethics able to receive, to elucidate and to use at the same time the data of the sciences and the messages of the Spirit for our days.²⁴

²⁴ Certain aspects of the situation reported are valid for the Romanian Orthodox theology as a whole; for example, the almost general lack of a consistent reception of colleagues' work. Referring to bioethics, it is encouraging the inclusion of some topics in the program of priestly training courses and the first scientific works for obtaining the premier degree in priesthood with such topics have been defended (e.g., at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Sibiu, Fr. Alexandru Stanciu, *Aspecte morale și pastorale ale utilizării mijloacelor de asistare medicală a procreării* [Moral and pastoral aspects of the use of the means of medically assisted procreation] 2017; Pr. Augustin Bar, *Aspecte de bioetică în pastorația de spital* [Bioethics aspects in hospital pastoral care], 2019; unpublished). At a higher academic level, doctoral theses in bioethics are also a rarity (e.g., Fr. Radu-Sever Ungureanu, *Misiunea preotului de slujire caritativă în contextul bolii oncologice* [The mission of the charity priest in the context of the oncological disease], Iași, 2017; Fr. Chiorean Bogdan Aurel, *Elemente de bioetică și spiritualitate ortodoxă în îngrijirile paliative. Studiu de caz: Centrul de îngrijiri paliative Sfântul Nectarie Cluj* [Elements of bioethics and Orthodox spirituality in palliative care. A case study: Saint Nectarios Palliative Care Center in Cluj], Cluj-Napoca, 2019; unpublished). An example for the sometimes regrettable situation of bioethics within Romanian Orthodox theology: The valuable and praiseworthy initiatives to develop an authentic dialogue between Orthodox theology and sciences, including life sciences, give it at best a marginal place, when do not ignore it, although bioethics had been part of the initial program of the promoters of this dialogue; see, by comparison, Fr. Prof. Dumitru Popescu (ed.), *Știință și Teologie. Preliminarii pentru un dialog* [Science and Theology. Preliminaries for a dialogue], XXI: Eonul dogmatic, 2001, and Adrian Lemeni, Dn. Adrian Sorin Mihalache, Fr. Cristinel Ioja (eds.), *Adevăr, cunoaștere, credință. Perspective științifice, filosofice și teologice* [Truth, knowledge, faith. Scientific, philosophical and theological perspectives], Basilica & Univ. "Aurel Vlaicu" Arad, 2018. Not only that bioethics - ethics, in fact - cannot be missing from the chapters of this dialogue, but the most important contribution that theology makes here is not a scientific, intellectual one, but precisely a moral and spiritual reorientation (and between these two,

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The purpose of this new issue of *Revista Teologică* dedicated to bioethics is mainly to recover. In a first group of articles, we publish here, for the first time, with the consent of the authors, three of the communications held at the Symposium entitled "The spiritual assistance of the dying patient. The Christian-Orthodox approach", organized by the St. Irina Foundation and held on March 4-5, 2008 at the Christiana Monastery in Bucharest. Although the audience was a significant one, its publicity did not rise to the importance of the event, and the works were no longer published. The theme was chosen, of course, according to the specificity of the Foundation, whose mission is precisely palliative care.

In the first of these communications, the late Professor H. Tristram Engelhardt jr. applies to the context of end-of-life care a critique of the secularized culture and bioethics that he systematically developed throughout the second part of his prodigious career spanning half a century. If in its first part Engelhardt passionately engaged in examining the rational grounds of conceptualization and heuristic methods in bioethics, the epistemological (not metaphysical) skepticism that this approach led him to, combined with his conversion to the traditional Christian-Orthodox faith, led him to a completely different approach, one inspired by the ascetic and sacramental life in Christ and its specific noetic theology. All the writings of the "second Engelhardt" constitute a broad and thorough "disenchantment" of the claims of universal rational validity and moral relevance of the bioethics proposed in the absence of God or, to use a typical post-modern expression, of Hegelian inspiration, proposed "after God", "after" understood precisely as "post-", not "in accordance with". For the uninitiated reader in the author's work, the essay published here, on the bioethical consequences of the loss of soteriological significance of death, may constitute an accessible introduction to Engelhardt's ideas and style.

The second piece belongs to Mrs. Corinna Delkeskamp-Hayes, German philosopher and bioethicist, a friend and close collaborator of Professor Engelhardt, converted, in her turn, to Orthodox Christianity, by the name of Cornelia. In good

Orthodox theology makes only a distinction of degree, not of essence). This is what proves, for example, precisely the contributions of professors A. Lemeni and A.S. Mihalache in the quoted volume, and, more widely their volumes, Dn. Adrian Sorin Mihalache, *Ești ceea ce trăiești. Câteva date recente din neuroștiințe și experiențele duhovnicești ale Filocaliei* [You are what you live. Some recent data from the neurosciences and the spiritual experiences of Philokalia], Trinitas, 2017; Adrian Lemeni, *Adevăr și demonstrație. De la incompletitudinea lui Gödel la vederea mai presus de orice înțelegere a Sfântului Grigorie Palama* [Truth and proof. From Gödel's incompleteness to St. Gregory Palama's seeing above all understanding, Basilica, 2019], Basilica, 2019 . Unfortunately, the situation is not only a local exception. The huge inaugural conference of the International Orthodox Theological Association (IOTA), held in Iasi in January 2019, could not host a bioethics session simply for organizational reasons.

continuation of the previous one, the purpose of her communication is to highlight the two hypostases, twins, but also contradictory, under which the secularist bioethics most often presented itself, exemplified here in the case of end-of-life decisions: the liberal hypostasis, centered in the doctrine of autonomy, and the socialist one, centered in the doctrine of equality. It is by no means a surprise the political character of these hypotheses of morality. With the separation from God, the role of establishing the norms of coexistence is left only to the dominant political form, and the bifurcation in options centered on the individual or centered on the state is, on the one hand, inevitable, on the other, arbitrary, according to preferences and to subjective and / or conjunctural constraints. Coming from the Western politically and materially civilized world, but in the process of religious-moral volatilization, Delkeskamp-Hayes addresses with a careful and worried attention to us, the Eastern Orthodox Christians, tempted to appropriate together with the forms of academic and cultural fashions through which we "integrate" ourselves to that world, contents which are incompatible with the revealed faith and practice of the Church.

A perspective closer to the realities that involve such decisions, more precisely, within their clinical context is that approached by Dr. Marc Andronikof, head of an Intensive Care Unit at a large Parisian hospital, son of the great theologian of Russian origin, Constantin Andronikof, heading one of the most common, most stringent and controversial problems, namely the justification of initiating or continuing a medical procedure under the conditions of a negative prognosis or, in other words, in the case of so-called medical futility. Defining the therapeutic obstinacy by exceeding a threshold of utility and medical justification, Dr. Andronikof asks two basic questions: how do we define this threshold and what does it explain the existence of such a threshold in the first case? His answer reveals a constellation of individual and social, scientific and cultural, material and spiritual factors, which are interwoven in a mutual determination of a greater complexity, the higher our expectations from medicine. And it seems to be possible to cut this Gordian knot only by a new endeavor of medicine to overcome itself, especially technologically... Did we not come out of the logic of obstinacy (and futility, by that matter)? There is only one way remaining, that is overcoming oneself in the logic of faith: accepting "what is impossible to humans ...".

With the same intention to popularize in a wider theological space the studies of Orthodox bioethics, in this case Romanian, we take over here, with the publisher's agreement, some sections of the doctoral thesis of Father Ispas Ruja, currently the pastor of the parish "St. Demetrios the New" from Dortmund, Germany, together with the adaptation for the Romanian language by the author of the thesis. Held at Philipps University in Marburg and titled "The reaction of Churches on bioethical issues in the Federal Republic of Germany and Romania. A comparison", the thesis confronts the bioethics documents published by the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and by

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the Romanian Orthodox Church. For the present selection, we have retained the analysis of the methodological aspects, regarding the authority of the concerned documents within the respective ecclesial spaces, the themes and the bioethical contents chosen by the two institutions as doctrinally and pastorally relevant, the types of ethical argumentation employed in these documents and, also, the possible ecumenical relevance of these aspects. The author suggests that the ROC may benefit from the richer experience of EKD in bioethics and that bioethical issues may be a fertile ground for the ecumenical dialogue.

A second group of articles recovers, this time thematically, some less-addressed problems, such as those arising from biomedicine at the beginnings of life. At the time of writing these lines, the news about the approval in Japan of the experimental creation of animal-human hybrids, namely the introduction of human stem cells (iPS type) into animal embryos in order to mature them and obtain human organs as possible sources for transplantation, has just burst worldwide.²⁵ Orthodox bioethics is far from systematically interrogating the anthropological and moral issues of cell biology and biotechnology. A simple question is what kind of identity, life or, if you prefer, what kind of soul animates the human cells grown outside the organism of origin, either in the laboratory or, here, in the organism of another species? The constitutive relationship between soul and body - a problem completely absent from modern biology - is central to Orthodox theological anthropology, and Father Roman Tarabrin, a graduate of the Moscow Spiritual Academy and assistant professor of philosophy at the Moscow University of Medicine, where he teaches bioethics, briefly remind us of the fundamental problem of identifying the beginning of ontogenesis, the bioethical consequences of this identification and the implications of accepting the Orthodox perspective on human origin concomitant with the biological event of fertilization.

One of the issues in which the status of the human embryo plays an important role is the biomedically assisted procreation. In the last article of this group, I bring again to the attention of the Orthodox theological community the moral and spiritual issues of these means, more precisely of the *in vitro fertilization*. The number of spouses complaining of infertility is increasing, as is the number of clinics offering solutions by replacing the affected biological processes with increasingly promising technologies. At the same time, at least in Romania, both the legislation related to the field and the theological and pastoral examination are in the stage of abandoned projects. A more general presentation of the matter will find the reader in a document of the Greek Orthodox Church, whose translation is included in this volume. My purpose is to examine two aspects: first, the argument from the existence of natural

²⁵ David Cyranoski, Japan approves first human-animal embryo experiments, *Nature*, 26 July 2019, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-02275-3>.

procreative loss, often invoked as a justification for the procreative loss that accompany IVF, followed by the embryonic and fetal selection, inevitable a decision in the current clinical practice, faced by the spouses who appeal to this procedure. A selecting decision that puts their procreative intentions in the light of their personal relationship with the Creator of life. Without being an exceptional situation, the parental project is a case of the planning of life, not just the family, which raises the spiritual problem of any planning: is it according to the will of God or not?²⁶

Further, in the section dedicated to the "Church News" we publish the Romanian translation of three documents belonging to the Orthodox Churches of Greece and Russia, indispensable for a proper knowledge of the concerns and positions regarding the bioethical problems of the ecclesiastical entities that make up the universal Orthodox Church. The documents were chosen according to their topics, that have not been the subject of significant concerns in the ROC so far.²⁷

The first document, "Basic positions on the ethics of assisted reproduction", dates from 2005 and belongs to the Bioethics Committee of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, established in 1998. In addition to this document, the Committee has also published on major topics such as organ transplantation (1999), euthanasia (2002) and, most recently, gender identity (2017).²⁸ Of note is the pastoral opening and caution of these large and minute documents, in the introductions of which we read a similar

²⁶ I point out a few studies of Father Roman Tarabrin on this topic: Анализ методики криоконсервации эмбрионов при экстракорпоральном оплодотворении с точки зрения православной биоэтики, *Биоэтика*, 2(2018), pp. 16-19; Id., ЭКО как рекомендованный метод лечения бесплодия и вопросы пастырского душепопечения, <https://kateheo.ru/library/manuals/node563b9077452a9/eko-kak-rekomendovannyi-metod-lecheniia-besplodiia-i-voprosy-pastyrskogo-dushepopecheniia>; Отношение Православной Церкви к экстракорпоральному оплодотворению, <http://www.mepar.ru/library/vedomosti/77/1716/>.

²⁷ The Federation of Prolife Orthodox Organizations in Romania submitted to the Patriarchy, in August 2017, a report on the problem of embryonal loss in the techniques of biomedically assisted procreation and the problem of viral vaccines produced on cell cultures taken from aborted human fetuses. In its response (no. 8802 / 27.08.2017), the Church authority states: "As regards the analysis of the bioethical implications of the use of vaccines produced with the help of cells taken from aborted human fetuses and of the technologies of medically assisted procreation by the Commission on Bioethics of the Romanian Orthodox Church, we specify that this request was approved."

²⁸ The document, in Greek, English, French and Russian, may be seen here: <http://www.bioethics.org.gr/en/Assisted%20Reproduction4l.pdf>. The first documents can be found in a single volume; see *Ιερά Σύνοδος της Εκκλησίας της Ελλάδος-Επιτροπή Βιοηθικής, Επίσημα Κείμενα Βιοηθικής, Μεταμοσχεύσεις, ευθανασία, υποβοηθούμενη αναπαραγωγή, Ιερά Σύνοδος της Εκκλησίας της Ελλάδος, Αθήνα 2007*, on-line version, here: <http://www.bioethics.org.gr/Episimakeimenavioithikis.pdf>. On the work of the Commission, see <http://www.ecclesia.gr/greek/holysynod/commitees/bioethics/bioethics.htm>.

warning of this kind: “[A]lthough the document has been approved by the Holy Synod, it has not been distributed yet officially to the clergy or the faithful. It is not a text of indisputable ecclesiastical word, but its publication aims at initiating discussion on the issue of [the matter in case]. However, we believe that it maintains the accuracy of scientific and clinical reality and safe-guards the relevant basic principles of Orthodox anthropology. The text is explicit, provides guidance to people, embraces man as an image of God and constitutes a witness of the Orthodox Christian ethos.”

The following document, "On the baptism of children born to surrogate mothers" comes from the Russian Orthodox Church, whose Synod approved it in 2013. It has a much narrower topic than the previous one, but it must be read together and in connection with the chapters on health care and bioethics in "The basis of the social concept of the Russian Orthodox Church", from 2000, until now the most developed document of Christian-Orthodox social doctrine.²⁹ Its importance lies in highlighting "costs", not only material, but also psychosocial and, especially, spiritual, not only for couples, but also for children and, more broadly, for the community, which biomedically assisted procreation can claim. The avoidance, legislative and pastoral, of such a subject does not warrant such costs; it only shows that those concerned do not take seriously all the pastoral responsibilities that their office bear. In both documents translated here, the respective Churches are extremely cautious about resorting to these technologies, avoiding both their unconditional rejection and unconditional acceptance.

Also coming from the Russian Orthodox Church, but from a consultative body this time, namely the Patriarchal Commission for Family Issues and the Protection of Maternity and Childhood, the last document translated and presented here is "About the rights of parents in the field of child health and immunoprophylaxis", from 2019, and responds to requests from the Russian public space for the Church to react on legislative initiatives to introduce compulsory vaccination and, implicitly, to limit the exercise of parental rights.³⁰ Similar initiatives have also taken place in Romania in recent years and have produced the reaction of a part of the Orthodox laity, hence the

²⁹ The text has been translated into Romanian from the English version, accessible here: <http://www.pravmir.com/on-the-baptism-of-children-born-to-surrogate-mothers/>, by confrontation with the official Russian version, accessible at: <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/3481024.html>. For the social document of the Russian Church, see above, note 8.

³⁰ The text has been translated after an English version, accessible here: <https://russian-faith.com/news/russian-orthodox-church-officially-opposes-compulsory-vaccinations-children-n2136>, as confronted to the Russian original, accessible here: <http://pk-semya.ru/novosti/item/7319-o-pravakh-roditelej-v-sfere-zaboty-o-zdorove-rebenka-i-immunoprofilaktiki.html>.

interest in knowing this document.³¹ It is worth highlighting, again, that the warning in the Greek document should be taken as applying to all our translations published here: our sole intention is to offer a valuable matter for ethical reflection, academic research, and spiritual insights.

Finally, bioethics is also the subject of some reviews of books, older and newer, most of them in Romanian, which should be added to those inventoried in this chronicle.

This issue of *Revista Teologică* would not have been possible without the willingness of the authors to provide us with their papers³² and without the substantial help of those who struggled with the translation: Mihaela Drăgici, from English, Maria-Otilia Oprea, from French, and Fr. Ispas Ruja, from German. We express our deep gratitude to every one of them. As a guest editor, I gratefully dedicate this monographic number to my doctoral advisors, Fr. Sorin Cosma and Dr. Pavel Chirilă, as well as to the two great Orthodox bioethicists recently departed from us, Prof. Herman Tristram Engelhardt jr. and Fr. Jean Boboc. May our merciful God give the first two many fruitful years in the field of Romanian bioethics and the two later to see His goodness in the Land of the living!

³¹ "Raising awareness about the importance of presenting to the doctor for vaccinations" is part of the Cooperation Protocol of the partnership "Medical and spiritual assistance" signed in 2008 between the Romanian Patriarchate and the Ministry of Public Health (accessible at: http://patriarhia.ro/images/pdf/SocialFilantropic/Protocol_Min_Sanatatii.pdf) At the same time, in the context of public debates regarding the draft Romanian law for compulsory vaccination, the Patriarchate has stated that it supports those vaccination programs "which pursue therapeutic purposes" (sic!), not the mandatory regime. See the its Address no 12096 of 28.11.2017 (accessible here: <http://www.cuvantul-ortodox.ro/recomendari/patriarhia-a-raspuns-mirenilor-in-chestiunea-vaccinarilor-bor-a-subliniat-importanta-vaccinarii-fara-a-sustine-obligativitatea/>), as the interview with Fr. Ionuț Mavrichi, spokesman of the Patriarchate in this case (https://www.rfi.ro/soci_of-97_137-bor-despre-vaccinare-respectam-dreptul-la-libertatea-de-opinie-militam-pentru-dreptul).

³² In the case of Professor H.T. Engelhardt jr., through the willingness of his wife, Mrs. Susan Engelhardt, to whom we express our most sincere thanks; we also thank Father Julian Aniței for facilitating this agreement.