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## STUDII ȘI ARTICOLE

### ARTICLES

#### **‘All things came into being through him:’ Creation and Incarnation**

David O. Brown<sup>1</sup>

**Summary:** The problem of timelessness and the incarnation is not new and is well explored. However, the related question of a single divine act and the incarnation is largely ignored. How does God create and become incarnate? This follows from divine simplicity and atemporality. There is one divine act and many different extrinsic relations to that one act. However, the difference between creation and incarnation does seem to be intrinsic for God. Many theologians seem to accept that God is doing something different in the incarnation to what God does in creation. Drawing on elements of Thomism, and particularly Duns Scotus’ distinction between essentially-ordered and accidentally-ordered series, this paper will argue that if creation is understood as an ontological relation, rather than a specific act of God, then one can re-interpret the incarnation to be that which mediates ontological relation. It will then suggest that this leads to a reinterpretation of kenosis, which sees it as a synonym for participation, rather than a literal divestment. This makes kenosis an essentially-ordered relation between God and creatures that explains how creatures participate in God.

**Key Words:** Incarnation, Creation, Jesus Christ, Kenosis, Participation

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<sup>1</sup> Title: Research Fellow, Affiliation: Queen's University Belfast, Contact: Queen's University Belfast, University Road, Belfast, BT7 1NN, United Kingdom, david.brown@qub.ac.uk

## Introduction

The problem of reconciling a timeless,<sup>2</sup> unchanging God and the incarnation is not a novel problem. Quite apart from (but certainly related to) the logical problem of reconciling two natures in Christ, there is also ‘a *prima facie* difficulty in reconciling this view of eternity with the christian belief in the Incarnation, the hypostatic union of timeless God and time-bound man in one Christ.’<sup>3</sup> That is, it is not just a question of how Christ can be both temporal and atemporal simultaneously, but how Christ can *become* temporal at a specific time if God is atemporal, or whether the incarnation can be ‘said to be the divine response to a previous state of affairs, namely the Fall.’<sup>4</sup> Thomas Senor sees this as insurmountable, and rejects divine timelessness as a consequence,<sup>5</sup> as do others.<sup>6</sup> However, some such as Eleanor Stump and Norman Kretzmann defend atemporality and the incarnation,<sup>7</sup> as do others.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> By ‘timeless’ and ‘atemporal,’ this paper takes as axiomatic to mean the analogy of the centre of circle to its circumference or what Katherin Rogers calls ‘fifth dimensionism’ (Katherin Rogers ‘Anselm on Eternity as the Fifth Dimension’, *The Saint Anselm Journal* Vol. 3 No. 2 (2006), p. 7). Other ideas of atemporality, such as sempiternality or omnitemporality will be assumed to be incorrect.

<sup>3</sup> J.L. Tomkinson ‘Divine Sempiternity and Atemporality’, in *Religious Studies* Vol. 18 No. 2 (1982), p. 186.

<sup>4</sup> Tomkinson ‘Divine Sempiternity and Atemporality’, 186; however, I take it as axiomatic that John Duns Scotus’ solution - that the incarnation is primarily concerned with creation and only secondarily concerned with a Fall (which evolution suggests almost certainly was not an historical event) is an adequate solution (see *Ordinatio* 3, d. 7 q. 3; see also Bogdan Bucur ‘Foreordained from All Eternity: The Mystery of the Incarnation According to Some Early Christian and Byzantine Writers’, in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* Vol. 62 (2008)). In this way, what is offered in this paper can be seen as an attempt to make sense of Scotus’ claim that the incarnation is ontologically prior to creation.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Senor ‘Incarnation and Timelessness’, in *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* Vol. 7 No. 2 (1990)

<sup>6</sup> Emily Paul ‘Incarnation, Divine Timelessness, and Modality’, in *TheoLogica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology* Vol. 3 No. 1 (2019); Nicholas Wolterstorff ‘Unqualified Divine Temporality’, in Gregory Ganssle *God and Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove IL.: IVP Academic, 2001); Richard Holland *God, Time, and the Incarnation* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012)

<sup>7</sup> Eleanor Stump & Norman Kretzmann ‘Eternity’, *The Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 78 No. 8 (1981).

<sup>8</sup> See Paul Helm ‘Divine Timeless Eternity’, in Gregory Ganssle *God and Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove IL.: IVP Academic, 2001); Douglas Blount ‘On the Incarnation of a Timeless God’, in Gregory Ganssle & David Woodruff *God and Time: Essays on the Divine Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 236-48; Alexander Garton “‘Very Truly I tell

However, an element of this question that receives little attention by contemporary scholars is whether or not the incarnation contravenes the related claim that there is only a single divine act. Thomas Aquinas writes that 'God's activity can be considered either on the part of the doer or of the done. If on the part of the doer, there is only one activity in God ... but considered on the side of what is done, there are indeed different activities.'<sup>9</sup> The immediate context of this quotation is divine simplicity, but there are obvious temporal dimensions. Paul Haffner and David Lane both argue that between creation and conservation 'there is no essential difference, because God is performing one act outside of time which "maintains the whole temporal sequence from its first moment onwards,"'<sup>10</sup> and that '[c]reation and conservation of the universe is one timeless act.'<sup>11</sup> More explicitly, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin writes that '[t]here is always only *one* creative action (identical with conservation) which continually raises creatures towards a fuller-being by means of their secondary activity and their earlier advances,'<sup>12</sup> so that creation, fall, incarnation and redemption 'are, in some way, aspects (distinct in reality but physically linked) of one and the same divine operation.'<sup>13</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, too, 'does not seem to distinguish clearly between the gracious generosity of God in creating and what the Scholastics will call habitual or sanctifying grace.'<sup>14</sup>

In this way, assuming that the classic doctrine of simplicity holds along with atemporality, then 'since the divine essence is simple, it is simple also in its actions...The divine creativity is...one in its source, many in its relations to things.'<sup>15</sup> so that while there are 'various temporal effects' of God's act, there is still only one 'single eternal act identical with God, God's action in the strict sense.' That is,

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you, Before Abraham was, I am": A Theological Treatise on the Concept of Time in John's Gospel', in *Modern Theology* Vol. 35 No. 4 (2019); Brian Leftow 'A Timeless God Incarnate', in Stephen T. Davies, Daniel Kendall, & Gerald O'Collins (eds.) *The Incarnation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Aquinas *Selected Writings* (London: Penguin, 1998), *Disputed Questions on the Power of God* 7, p. 294-295.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Haffner *Mystery of Creation* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1995), p. 91.

<sup>11</sup> David Lane *The Phenomenon of Teilhard: Prophet For A New Age* (Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), p. 45.

<sup>12</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin *Human Energy* (London: Collins, 1969), p. 23.

<sup>13</sup> Teilhard de Chardin *Human Energy*, p. 53.

<sup>14</sup> William Riordan *Divine Light* (San Francisco CA.: Ignatius Press, 2008), p. 154; see also Robert Scuka 'Resurrection: Critical Reflections on a Doctrine in Search of Meaning', in *Modern Theology* Vol. 6 No. 1 (1989).

<sup>15</sup> Junius Johnson 'The One and the Many in Bonaventure Exemplarity Explained', in *Religions* Vol. 7 No. 144 (2016), p. 12.

‘[divine] actions in the world are at least *prima facie* explicable as extrinsic accidental characteristics of the unique divine action.’<sup>16</sup> Creation, conservation, and deification are not objectively different acts of God, but are merely ‘extrinsic accidental characters’ of the one act. Just as it is the person’s turning around that changes the location of the pillar, so it is the individual’s relationship (response) to the one divine act that changes, not the act itself.<sup>17</sup> That one act is neither creation, conservation, nor deification, but to the creature that act is all of those things depending on their relationship to it.

Yet, if the incarnation happens ‘by God in the very same non-temporal act by which God also creates and consummates the created order,’<sup>18</sup> how is this to be conceived? One could pose a solution like that of Maurice Wiles, in which there is not *genuinely* one act, but a ‘unity of intention’ that brings together different ‘sub-acts’ into one ‘master-act.’<sup>19</sup> Yet, this would imply that God is temporal (experiences succession) and (God’s action at least) not simple. Denis Edwards offers a comparable interpretation. Even though Edwards writes that ‘creation, incarnation, and final fulfilment are united in one act of divine self-giving,’<sup>20</sup> he qualifies that ‘there is a real distinction, for example, between God’s act in creation and God’s action in Jesus of Nazareth’<sup>21</sup> so that ‘God’s action with regard to creation is both one and diverse. It is one act of self-giving love. But this one act issues forth in creation in a range of particular acts.’<sup>22</sup> However, this means that God’s action is not *literally* singular and so either God is not genuinely atemporal or not genuinely simple.

While it is (somewhat) easy to understand how creation and deification can be different extrinsic relations to the one act,<sup>23</sup> creation and incarnation do seem to be

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<sup>16</sup> Eleonor Stump and Norman Kretzmann ‘Absolute Simplicity’, in *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* Vol. 2 No. 4 (1985), p. 356, 366; see also Philip McCosker ‘Grace’, in Philip McCosker & Denys Turner (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to The Summa Theologiae* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 208-216.

<sup>17</sup> See *ST* 1, 13, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Keith Ward ‘Cosmos and Kenosis’, in John Polkinghorne (ed.) *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* (Cambridge MA.: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), p. 152.

<sup>19</sup> Maurice Wiles *God’s Action in the World* (London: SCM Press, 1986), 96; see also Gordon Kaufmann ‘On the Meaning of “Act of God”’, in Owen Thomas (ed.) *God’s Activity in the World: The Contemporary Problem* (Chico CA: Scholars Press, 1983), p. 143ff.

<sup>20</sup> Denis Edwards *How God Acts: Creation, Redemption, and Special Divine Action* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2010), p. 40.

<sup>21</sup> Edwards *How God Acts: Creation, Redemption, and Special Divine Action*, p. 39.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 57.

<sup>23</sup> Of course, there are those who reject this distinction between intrinsic singularity and extrinsic multiplicity, see William Lane Craig ‘Timelessness, Creation, and God’s Real

different acts *for God*; i.e. God's creating and God's incarnation seem to be *intrinsically* distinct.<sup>24</sup> As Edward Oakes writes, 'God's power to create and sustain the universe in being is not the same as his power to become incarnate.'<sup>25</sup> Karl Rahner, too, explicitly argues that 'we can understand creation and Incarnation as two moments and two phases of the *one* process of God's self-giving and self-expression,' but then qualifies that claim with the comment that 'although it is an *intrinsically differentiated* process,'<sup>26</sup> that is, they are differentiated *for God*. The question then is: if God's act is both 'typal' one (i.e. God only does one 'thing'), on the one hand, and 'numerically' one (i.e. God only acts one 'time') on the other, if atemporality and simplicity are upheld, can a single divine act be maintained coherently along with creation *and* incarnation?

The task of this paper is not to convince the reader that atemporality, simplicity and a (literal) single divine act *should* be accepted, only *that* such an interpretation can be consonant with the incarnation. Taking as axiomatic that a timeless God and the incarnation can be held together coherently, this paper is concerned with the coherence of holding together a single divine act and the incarnation and will pose a novel solution.

## **1. Creation and Relationship**

Traditional Christian theology has maintained that creation and incarnation are separate events. Bonaventure writes that 'just as God had created all things through the Word Not Made [sic], even so he restored all things through the Word Made Flesh [sic].'<sup>27</sup> The Christian tradition has always kept these events separate; creation *and* incarnation; *two* distinct acts. So that '[t]wice that word had spoken; once in creation...and a second time at the incarnation.'<sup>28</sup> At most, Christ in the incarnation 'brings to completion what had been partial and imperfect.'<sup>29</sup> Although Chul Won Suh cautions that 'the personal identity of the author in the divine drama does not induce us

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Relation to the World', in *Laval théologique et philosophique* Vol. 56 No. 1 (2000) cf. Matthew McWhorter 'Aquinas on God's Relation to the World', in *New Blackfriars* Vol. 94 No. 1049 (2013).

<sup>24</sup> See Holland *God, Time, and the Incarnation*, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Edward Oakes *A Theology of Grace in Six Controversies* (Grand Rapids MI.: William B. Eerdmans, 2016), p. 38.

<sup>26</sup> Karl Rahner *The Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York NY: Crossroad, 1978), p. 97 (*italics added*).

<sup>27</sup> Bonaventure *Breviloquium* (Paterson NJ.: At. Anthony Guild Press, 1963), IV, 1, 2.

<sup>28</sup> J.W.C. Wand *The Four Great Heresies* (London: A R Mowbray & Co., 1955), p. 27.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Wilken *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* (London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 67.

to regard the two works as the same or the continuation of one another;’ just because ‘the same author works,’ does not mean that ‘one [i]s the continuation of the other.’<sup>30</sup>

However, it is not entirely clear that the ‘first speaking’ - *creatio originalis* - is an isolated, specific, particular *event*; to say that the universe was created does not mean that God *did* something in the past. Andrew Davison writes that *creatio ex nihilo* is not ‘some putative first moment in the past’ but is ‘primarily about derivation of all things from God.’<sup>31</sup> Philip Clayton writes that ‘the creation doctrine arose as a present-tense doctrine, one less about an initial act of God than about the ongoing dependence of [creatures]...in their creator.’<sup>32</sup> This is nothing more than the logical conclusion of Thomas Aquinas’ claim that the universe can be created *and* eternal (i.e. infinite temporal duration) without contradiction.<sup>33</sup> If it is quite coherent for the universe not to have a beginning, then creation is not about beginnings.<sup>34</sup> Thus, ‘the tendency to see a connection between “the beginning of time” in the Big Bang and “the beginning of time” in the doctrine of creation...is very questionable.’<sup>35</sup> Scripture might reveal that there is a beginning, but this is not what *creatio* is about; to be created is to derive being from, and so be ontologically dependent upon, God. *Creatio* is any and every moment in which the creature derives their being from, and so ontologically utterly depends upon, God.

Importantly, the rejection of *creatio originalis* (or, more accurately, the rejection of *creatio originalis* as an ‘event’ that can be seen as coincident with any temporal moment, especially as one limited to the past) is *not* to be taken as support for *creatio continua*, in which the offending element is ‘in the past,’ so that God can be thought of as continuing an unfinished act of creation.<sup>36</sup> Rather, it rejects that *creatio* is concerned

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<sup>30</sup> Chul Won Suh *The Creation-Mediatorship of Jesus Christ* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1982), p. 269.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew Davison *Participation in God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 26.

<sup>32</sup> Philip Clayton *God and Contemporary Science* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 26.

<sup>33</sup> *ST* 1, 46, 2-3; see Thomas Aquinas *De Aeternitate Mundi*, in Thomas Gilby (trans.) *Philosophical Texts* (Durham NC.: The Labyrinth Press, 1982), p. 142-147.

<sup>34</sup> See Étienne Gilson *Medieval Essays* (Eugene OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 169ff.; and Gavin Kerr ‘A Thomistic metaphysics of creation’, in *Religious Studies* Vol. 48 (2012), p. 346.

<sup>35</sup> William Stoeger ‘Contemporary Cosmology and Its Implications for the Science-Religion Dialogue’, in Robert J. Russell, William Stoeger, & George V. Coyne (eds.) *Physics, Philosophy, and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding* (Vatican City: Vatican Observatory, 1988), p. 240.

<sup>36</sup> c.f. John Haught *Making Sense of Evolution* (Louisville KY.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 105; Not to mention that *creatio continua* assumes that God is temporal (i.e. acts successively), is passible (i.e. is affected by and responds to the universe), and faces significant

with *any* moments; it is a rejection of the idea that *creatio* consists in the physical construction of the universe. To assume that the question of whether or when creation is completed is a valid theological concern is to entirely miss the point of Aquinas' claim that the universe could very well have infinite duration; *creatio* is about ontological dependence, not physical construction or an event that is started and finished at certain times.<sup>37</sup> Instead, *creatio* is (according to Avicenna, whose 'definition of creation' was taken over by Thomas Aquinas),<sup>38</sup> 'an ontological relationship - a relationship in the order of being - with no reference to temporality.'<sup>39</sup> Creation is not something that can be finished or re-done in the future; it is a relationship. As Paul Tillich writes, '[t]he formula *creatio ex nihilo* is not the title of a story...[but] is the classical formula which expresses the *relation* between God and the world,'<sup>40</sup> or, as John Bishop and Ken Perszyk put it, 'God's creative action *just is* creation's dependence on God for its existence.'<sup>41</sup>

## **2. Essentially-ordered and Accidentally-ordered Series**

To say that creation is a relationship - participation - and not an event (even an event that continuously unfolds throughout history) can be restated using the language of cause *per se* and cause *per accidens*. Creation is not something that God does, but is a relationship of dependence that creatures have with God.

For Scotus (who, again, was influenced by Avicenna), this distinction has three elements: (a) essentially-ordered causes are depended upon by their effects; (b) essentially-ordered causes are ontologically prior and superior to their effects; and (c)

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questions of where to locate the 'causal joint' (see Sarah Lane Ritchie 'Dancing around the Causal Joint: Challenging the Theological Turn in Divine Action Theories', in *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* Vol. 52 No. 2 (2017) and Richard Grigg 'Religion, Science, and Evolution: Paul Tillich's Fourth Way', in *Zygon: Journal of Science and Religion* Vol. 38 No. 4 (2003)).

<sup>37</sup> See Gilson *Medieval Essays*, p. 150-169 for distinction of efficient cause of motion and efficient cause of being.

<sup>38</sup> Gilson *Medieval Essays*, p. 176.

<sup>39</sup> Steven Baldner & William Carroll (trans.) *Aquinas on Creation* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1997), p. 16; see also Baldner & Carroll *Aquinas on Creation*, 4; see *ST* 1, 45, 3.

<sup>40</sup> Paul Tillich *Systematic Theology Vol.1* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 254 (*italics added*).

<sup>41</sup> John Bishop & Ken Perszyk 'The Divine Attributes and Non-personal Conceptions of God', in *Topoi* Vol. 36 (2017), p. 614.

essentially-ordered causes are temporally simultaneous with their effects.<sup>42</sup> If accidentally-ordered causes are concerned with physical causes such as ‘transitions of energy, [or] movements of mass’ (which includes physical origins, i.e. the Big Bang),<sup>43</sup> then essentially-ordered causes are ‘ontological causes’ and are concerned with the ‘donation of being.’<sup>44</sup> If an accidentally-ordered series is a series of temporal events, then an essentially-ordered series is a series of ontological relationships. To use the classic examples, God is not like a mother who gives being to a daughter who is *then independent* and can exist after the mother has died (or when the mother has stopped being a cause), rather God is like the oxygen on which the candle entirely depends and without which the flame could not exist. Thomas Aquinas used precisely this distinction to support his doctrine that *creatio* is ontological relationship, rather than a beginning.<sup>45</sup>

Causes *per accidens* are necessarily temporal; they are necessarily successive and necessarily have beginnings and endings (times before and after when they are not causative, although an accidentally-ordered series can be infinitely extended). On the other hand, causes *per se* do not necessarily have any temporal characteristics. While it is possible (assuming that there are genuine causes *per se* in nature) that some causes *per se* are temporal,<sup>46</sup> it is impossible for a cause *per accidens* to be atemporal. An atemporal cause cannot be a cause *per accidens* (which would temporally locate it - i.e. it *must* be before or after something else) and so *must* be a cause *per se*, that is, simultaneous with its ‘effect.’ It is not so much that all causes *per se* must be atemporal,

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<sup>42</sup> John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, in Allan Wolter (trans.), *Philosophical Writings* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), I, d2, q1; see also John Duns Scotus (trans. Evan Roche), *De Primo Principio* (St. Bonaventure NY.: The Franciscan Institute, 1949), c.3, 2

<sup>43</sup> David Bentley Hart *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss* (London: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 103-104.

<sup>44</sup> Hart *The Experience of God*, p. 55, 103-104.

<sup>45</sup> *ST* 1, 46, 2; see *ST* 1, p. 45-46; see also Hart *The Experience of God*, p. 21-22.

<sup>46</sup> Timothy O’Connor (‘Scotus on the Existence of a First Efficient Cause’, in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* Vol. 33 No. 1 [1993]) doubts whether there are any *genuine* causes *per se* in nature. Richard Swinburne (‘Causation, Time, and God’s Omniscience’, in *Topoi* Vol. 36 [2017]) and William Lane Craig (‘Creation and Conservation Once More’, in *Religious Studies* Vol. 34 No. 2 [1998]) reject completely the idea of ‘simultaneous cause and effect’ as conceptually/philosophically incoherent and so, by extrapolation (causes *per se* are temporally simultaneous with their effects), also doubt the possibility of causes *per se*. Swinburne and Craig’s reservations notwithstanding, the point here is that there is a sharp distinction between the two types of cause; if God is atemporal, then creation, as a divine act, must be a cause *per se*, or, in more popular language, participation.

but all atemporal 'causes' must be *per se*.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, an eternal 'being,' one whose act does not have a beginning or end and is neither before nor after any other act/event, cannot act as a cause *per accidens* and can only be a cause *per se*.

Importantly, *creatio continua* treats *creatio* as a cause *per accidens* and simply extends *creatio* from being the first in an accidentally-ordered series to being many instances within that series; it begins at a specific time (so occurs before other things), has temporal extension and succession, and ends at a specific time (so occurs after other things). For Thomas and Scotus, *creatio* is an essentially-ordered event; it neither begins, nor ends, is neither before nor after anything and so has no temporal extension or succession. It is not a 'putative past event' *after* which creatures have being; it is everywhere and everywhen operative, so that without God's act we 'would return to the nothingness from which we came.'<sup>48</sup> In other words, the *ex nihilo* is not a temporal designation but an ontological one; it is *ex nihilo* not *post nihilum*.<sup>49</sup> *Creatio* is a cause *per se*, not a cause *per accidens*. Or, as already argued, *creatio* is an ontological ordering/hierarchy/relation unrelated to time.

Importantly, as implied above, to say that *creatio* is everywhere and everywhen operation does not mean that God must be temporal, so that God must have a duration at least as long as the universe; rather, God is 'temporally' simultaneous to the universe as the centre of a circle is to its edge. As Wolfgang Smith writes, "the instantaneous and imperceptible moment of creation", to use St. Basil's phrase, is "equidistant"... to all times, even as the center of a circle is equidistant to all points on the circumference."<sup>50</sup> God is not temporally simultaneous/present at all times, but all times are temporally simultaneous/present to God. The *creatio originalis* is not something that God *does*; it is the divine side of a relationship in which the creature depends entirely on God for its being.

### **3. Christ the Creator**

Further, for New Testament authors, Christ is the agent of creation. The opening chapters of John's Gospel (which the title of this paper quotes) are clearly evidence of

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<sup>47</sup> In this way, while the oxygen has to have the same temporal duration as the flame in order for them to be simultaneous, the centre of a circle does not have to have the same length as the circumference (indeed, it arguably has no length) in order for all points of the circumference to be simultaneous with it.

<sup>48</sup> Basil Hume *Searching For God* (York: Ampleforth Abbey Press, 2002), p. 189-190.

<sup>49</sup> Gerard Verschuuren *Aquinas and Modern Science* (Kettering OH: Angelico Press, 2016), p. 102-103.

<sup>50</sup> Wolfgang Smith *Teilhardism and the New Religion* (Rockford IL: Tan Books and Publishers inc., 1988), p. 72; see also Katherin Rogers 'Anselm on Eternity as the Fifth Dimension', in *The Saint Anselm Journal* Vol. 3 No. 2 (2006), p. 7.

this. The connection with the opening chapters of Genesis and the explicit identification of the Word that becomes flesh with the Word that creates leaves little need for further analysis.<sup>51</sup> The opening chapter of Paul's epistle to the Colossians is likewise evidence: 'in him all things in heaven and on earth were created.'<sup>52</sup> Other Pauline passages, such as 'Christ [is] the power of God,'<sup>53</sup> also imply such a doctrine. Patristic theology builds on this, such as Irenaeus' claim that Christ is the 'hand' of God,<sup>54</sup> not to mention the work of Athanasius that argued for Christ's divinity. J.W.C. Wand supports this, writing that '[t]he Apologists taught that creation is the work of the good God, the supreme being. Not that He [sic] performed it directly, by Himself, but through an intermediary, His word.'<sup>55</sup>

In this way, it is entirely appropriate to suggest that *all* divine activity (creation, conservation, deification etc) happens *through* Christ: 'the word by which God drew being from non-being, drew a physical world out of nothing that preceded it, is the same very word by which all of reality is presently sustained and will be consummated.'<sup>56</sup> More accurately, there is *only* one divine act; creation, 'present sustaining,' and consummation are 'extrinsic accidental characteristics' of the *one* speaking of the Word. 'God's word...is God's act;'<sup>57</sup> God does not act *without* Christ.<sup>58</sup> As David Bentley Hart writes, 'God is never without his [sic] Logos, the divine Wisdom, in and through whom the world is created, ordered, and sustained.'<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See Jaroslav Pelikan *Historical Theology: Continuity and Change in Christian Doctrine* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1971), p. 139.

<sup>52</sup> Col 1.16; see also Heb 1.1-3 & 1 Cor. 8.6.

<sup>53</sup> 1 Cor. 1.24.

<sup>54</sup> Irenaeus 'Against Heresies', in Lindsey Hall, Murray Rae, and Stephen Holmes *Christian Doctrine* (London: SCM Press, 2010), V: 6

<sup>55</sup> Wand *The Four Great Heresies*, 27.

<sup>56</sup> Ted Peters & Martinez Hewlett *Evolution From Creation to New Creation* (Nashville TN.: Abingdon Press, 2003), p. 164.

<sup>57</sup> Wiles *God's Action in the World*, p. 57.

<sup>58</sup> As Patristic theology affirmed, particularly through the support for dyotheletism, specifying that a particular person acts does not mean that the other persons are uninvolved. As Augustine writes that 'just as Father and Son and Holy Spirit are inseparable, so do they work inseparably' (Augustine *The Trinity* (Hyde Park NY.: New City Press, 1991), p. 70-71), so that 'the three produced that human being of the Virgin Mary and yet it is the person of the Son alone – the invisible three producing what is the visible person of the Son alone' (Augustine *The Trinity*, p. 114). To claim that it is only Christ who acts, does not mean that the Father and the Spirit are excluded.

<sup>59</sup> Hart *The Experience of God*, p. 235.

#### **4. Christ the Mediator**

This assertion can be strengthened with the further Biblical claim that Christ is the 'one mediator between God and creatures.'<sup>60</sup> This being the case, it is reasonable to claim that if 'no one comes to the Father except through [Christ]'<sup>61</sup> and Christ is 'the actual mediator between God and man *and* [between] man and God *in all things*,'<sup>62</sup> so that 'the gap between heaven and earth is *only* bridged definitively in the figure of Christ,'<sup>63</sup> then it must also be affirmed that 'the Father comes to no one except through Christ.' Christ is not just the sole mediator between creatures and God, but between God and creatures as well.<sup>64</sup> It is not that creatures need Christ to 'ascend' to God, but also God needs Christ to 'descend' to creatures, or, as will be expounded further below, creatures need Christ to 'relate' to God, so God needs Christ to 'relate' to creatures. If God is never without the Logos, then 'all' that God 'does' is through Christ.

Others support the idea of Christ as mediator in other contexts. Frances Young notes that for Hellenist philosophy 'it was hard to relate God, or the One, with the multiplicity of things, the world of which he [sic] was supposed to be the source and ground of being,' which meant that because of God's 'utter transcendence' God was 'substantially irrelevant' to the world.<sup>65</sup> Young points to Christ as the solution. She writes that 'Logos theology and Trinitarian doctrine made it possible for God to be involved,' so that 'the Logos and the Spirit made it possible to believe in a God who is both transcendent and immanent, however paradoxical that might seem to be.'<sup>66</sup>

Crucially, Christ is the mediator between utterly transcendent God and creatures *because* he is both fully God and fully created (Christ is not a demiurge). This seems to suggest something few explicitly recognise; Christ can *only* be a mediator *as* incarnate. Emil Brunner,<sup>67</sup> Thomas Torrance,<sup>68</sup> and Sergei Bulgakov<sup>69</sup> both appear to link Christ's

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<sup>60</sup> 1 Tim 2.5.

<sup>61</sup> Jn 14.6.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas Torrance *Space, Time, and Incarnation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 52 (*italics added*).

<sup>63</sup> Rupert Shortt *God Is No Thing* (London: Hurst & Company, 2016), p. 77 (*italics added*).

<sup>64</sup> See Garton "'Very Truly I tell you, Before Abraham was, I am": A Theological Treatise on the Concept of Time in John's Gospel', p. 627.

<sup>65</sup> Frances Young 'A Cloud of Witnesses', in John Hick (ed.) *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM Press, 1977), p. 24.

<sup>66</sup> Young 'A Cloud of Witnesses', p. 41-42; see also Torrance *Space, Time, and Incarnation*, p. 13, 15.

<sup>67</sup> Emil Brunner *The Mediator* (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1934), p. 309.

<sup>68</sup> Thomas Torrance *The Mediation of Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clarke, 1992), p. 63-65.

role as mediator with his incarnation. Thomas Aquinas does so explicitly.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, it is this ‘traditional devotion to Jesus as mediator between the purely divine and the purely human’ that necessitates ‘the humanity of the exalted Christ.’<sup>71</sup>

Thus, this does not mean that Christ was only mediator for the 30 odd years in which he was alive, nor that Christ began to be mediator at the birth of Jesus. Stump and Kretzmann argue that ‘the second person eternally has two natures; and at some temporal instants...the human nature of the second person has been temporally actual,’<sup>72</sup> so that ‘[i]f God is eternal, then God’s having an assumed human nature is not something characteristic of God at some times but not at others...God is never in the state of not having an assumed human nature.’<sup>73</sup> The incarnation is an eternal event; there is a time before *Jesus* was born, but there is not a ‘time’ when *Christ* is not incarnate.<sup>74</sup> Stephen Theron acknowledges likewise that ‘God is not now living in a time after the Incarnation, whereas once he [sic] lived in a time before it. One says the same, after all, about the act of creation, viz. that it entails no change in God.’<sup>75</sup> The incarnation was not *foreordained* from all eternity; it *is* eternal. The relationship between the Son and Jesus, the hypostatic union, is no more temporal than it is spatial.<sup>76</sup> The hypostatic union is not an event in the life of the Logos, it is an ontological ordering or relation. Thus, as Paul Helm writes, ‘[t]here is therefore no sense in talking of the eternal Son of God apart from the incarnation.’<sup>77</sup>

This leads to a rethinking of the ‘pre-existence’ of Christ. The Son does not temporally precede Jesus, but is ontologically more primary than him.<sup>78</sup> Timothy Pawl

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<sup>69</sup> Sergei Bulgakov *The Lamb of God* (Grand Rapids MI.: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), p. 220-221.

<sup>70</sup> *ST* 3, 26, 2.

<sup>71</sup> Peter Forrest ‘The Incarnation: A Philosophical Case for Kenosis’ in *Religious Studies* Vol. 36 No. 2 (2000), p. 134.

<sup>72</sup> Stump & Kretzmann ‘Eternity’, p. 453.

<sup>73</sup> Eleonore Stump *The God of the Bible and the God of the Philosophers* (Milwaukee WI: Marquette University Press, 2016), p. 100.

<sup>74</sup> See Paul Helm ‘Divine Timeless Eternity’, in Gregory Ganssle *God and Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove IL.: IVP Academic, 2001), p. 54; Ioan Mircea Ielciu ‘Doctrinal Aspects in Evagrius Ponticus’, in *Revista Teologică* Vol. 99 No. 1 (2017), p. 25; see below for exposition of what this means for Christ’s pre-existence.

<sup>75</sup> Stephen Theron ‘Creation *stricto sensu*’, in *New Blackfriars* Vol. 89 No. 1020 (2008), p. 209; this, Paul Helm notes, ‘does not mean that the incarnation was logically necessary any more than it means that creation was logically so’ (Helm ‘Divine Timeless Eternity’, p. 54).

<sup>76</sup> See Torrance *Space, Time, and Incarnation*, p. 2-3.

<sup>77</sup> Helm ‘Divine Timeless Eternity’, p. 54.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 54-55.

agrees that '[o]ne should be hesitant to interpret this "pre-existence" as a temporal pre-existence, since Christ, in his divine nature, does not exist in time.'<sup>79</sup> Niall Coll makes a similar observation. He writes that '[w]hat lies at the heart of the doctrine of Christ's pre-existence is the belief... that Christ's personal identity is that of the eternal Son of God and that his personal being did not originate when his earthly human history began.'<sup>80</sup> That is, the Logos does not temporally precede Jesus, but neither is the Logos limited to Jesus nor 'absorbed and exhausted in Jesus alone.'<sup>81</sup> Drawing on Gerald O'Collins, Coll agrees that it is better to speak of a 'trans-existence' or 'meta-existence' rather than a pre-existence, so as to avoid the inevitable but incorrect temporal implications.<sup>82</sup> This is nothing but an extrapolation of Jesus as 'the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created...He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.'<sup>83</sup> As Celia Deane-Drummond comments, Christ is 'the 'first-born'... [in] rank...since temporal priority is hardly what the author is trying to emphasize here.'<sup>84</sup>

This same point can be put differently, in the language already established, the Son is essentially-ordered to Jesus, not accidentally-ordered. Thus, the incarnation is related to the birth of Christ in an identical way to the way *creatio originalis* is related to the Big Bang,<sup>85</sup> i.e. essentially (atemporally) not accidentally (temporally). Just as *creatio originalis* is not confined to a past event (or any event), so the incarnation is not confined to the birth of Jesus. Rather the incarnation is about Jesus' ontological derivation and dependence on the Logos; the created nature depends on the incarnation for its being just as creatures depend on *creatio* for their being. The birth of Jesus no more makes the incarnation a temporal event than the Big Bang makes *creatio* a temporal event. The

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<sup>79</sup> Timothy Pawl *In Defence of Conciliar Christology: A Philosophical Essay* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 15; In this way, it is utterly incoherent to 'hypothesize that Jesus had some memories of his pre-incarnate state' (Forrest 'The Incarnation: A Philosophical Case for Kenosis', p. 129), which makes God temporal.

<sup>80</sup> Niall Coll *Christ in Eternity and Time* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), p. 175.

<sup>81</sup> Paulo Gamberini 'The Concept of 'Person': A Dialogue with Contemporary Asian Theology' in *Irish Theological Quarterly* Vol. 76 No. 3 (2011), p. 265.

<sup>82</sup> Coll *Christ in Eternity and Time*, 179; see Gerald O'Collins *Christology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 238.

<sup>83</sup> Col 1.15.

<sup>84</sup> Celia Deane-Drummond *Christ and Evolution* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2009), p. 105; see also Edward Oakes *A Theology of Grace in Six Controversies* (Grand Rapids MI.: William B. Eerdmans, 2016), p. 131.

<sup>85</sup> Although, obviously, whereas the universe did not need a beginning, Jesus did need a birth. However, this does not detract from the claim that Christ's birth is accidental to Jesus (in the Scotus sense) in the same way that the Big Bang is accidental to the universe.

incarnation, then, does not introduce a change or time in God.<sup>86</sup> That is, just because the birth of Jesus happens in time, does not mean that the incarnation is accidentally-ordered in relation to other events; it is essentially-ordered to other temporal events. Jesus' birth happens in time, but Christ's incarnation is to the universe as the centre of a circle is to its circumference.

Crucial for the argument of this paper, then, if the incarnation is an ontological ordering/relation, not an event in the temporal life of Christ, then Christ as the agent of creation cannot be separate from, or an act that Christ does 'before,' the incarnation. If Christ is 'that in which all things hold together,'<sup>87</sup> then it is the *incarnate* Jesus Christ in which all things hold together. If God 'always' acts through Christ, and Christ 'always' acts as Christ *incarnate*, then 'Christ cannot be other than the cause of all created actuality, and he is such not simply as the Logos, but as the Logos incarnate.'<sup>88</sup> This is likely to be contested by many. Thomas Senor, for example, rejects Stump and Kretzmann's claim of an 'eternal incarnation' in his essay 'Incarnation and Timelessness.'<sup>89</sup> However, arguments to the contrary noted (this paper takes as axiomatic that Stump and Kretzmann are correct), it is nothing more than the logical conclusion of God's atemporality and Christ's agency in creation. It is not 'merely' Christ who 'bridges' the 'gulf' between God and creatures; it is the *incarnate* Christ who is that 'bridge.'<sup>90</sup>

## 5. Christ as the 'Eternal' Relation

Here, then, putting these ideas together, one can say that calling Christ the creator does not mean that Christ is that which (accidentally) causes the Big Bang, but that on which all creatures depend for their being. Creation is not an event (either limited to origins or seen as continuous effective), but relationship; creation is a cause *per se*, not

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<sup>86</sup> Importantly, this use of essential and accidental does not oblige the conclusion that Christ's created nature is an 'essential property' of the Son. Certainly the Son *could* have 'chosen' not to be incarnate, but *that* Christ 'chose' to become incarnate does not mean that such an incarnation is not an eternal event for God, and so essentially-ordered to the birth of Jesus (see Helm 'Divine Timeless Eternity', p. 54; Theron 'Creation *stricto sensu*', p. 209; Blount 'On the Incarnation of a Timeless God', p. 343-344).

<sup>87</sup> Col. 1:17.

<sup>88</sup> Donald Keefe *Thomism and the Ontological Theology of Paul Tillich* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), p. 92.

<sup>89</sup> Senor 'Incarnation and Timelessness', p. 157-158.

<sup>90</sup> See Douglas Farrow *Ascension and Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clarke, 1999, p.53; see also Jordan Daniel Wood 'Creation is Incarnation: The Metaphysical Peculiarity of the Logoi in Maximus Confessor', in *Modern Theology* Vol. 34 No. 1 (2018), p. 93.

cause *per accidens*; creation is participation. Thus, for Christ to be the creator means that Christ is that through which all creatures participate. In other words, if creation is an ontological relation, and all are created through Christ, then Christ is that which mediates that ontological relation: the incarnation is a step in the essentially-ordered series between God and creatures, not an accidentally-ordered cause.

*Creatio originalis* and the incarnation are not two accidentally-ordered events that are temporally separated, one of which completes (or re-does/repeats) the other.<sup>91</sup> Rather, the incarnation becomes the mediation of being in an essentially-ordered series - one the 'instrument' or 'vehicle' of the other - indicating the 'flow' of being, not temporal completion. The incarnation *is* the donation of being that is to creatures the *creatio originalis*. In other words, there are not *two* speakings of the word,<sup>92</sup> that would have the effect of seeing both succession (so God cannot be atemporal) and complexity (so God does not do one simple 'thing'), in God. There is one simple and eternal speaking of the word - one divine act - which is the incarnation and is to the creature the donation of being.

Put simply, but more controversially, there is no creation (as an identifiable concrete act/event), only incarnation; if creation is about an ontological relationship that has 'no reference to temporality,' then the incarnation is that relationship: 'it is the *eternal relation* of God to man which is manifest in the Christ.'<sup>93</sup> Christ does not come to re-do or complete what was started previously; Christ *is* that eternal and simple relationship. God is not *also* incarnate *in addition* to being the ground of being; the incarnation is *how* God is the ground of being, the incarnation is *how* creatures depend on God. This means that the incarnation, the cause of grace in the world, is not related to the creature as a Mother is to her daughter, so that after the incarnation (and the reception of grace) creatures can live 'independent' of that incarnation. Rather the incarnation is related to the creature as oxygen is to a flame or the centre of a circle is to its circumference.

Thus, when Norman Wirzba writes that 'the loving power that Jesus models in his feeding the hungry, healing the sick, exorcising the demon-possessed, and befriending the stranger and outcast is the same divine power that brings all creatures

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<sup>91</sup> Between the *creatio originalis* and the 're-doing' - both of which Christ is the agent and, (if Christ is eternally incarnate) both of which are done through Christ incarnate - the distinction is extrinsic. It is only creatures that see the donation of being in Christ as either '*originalis*' or 'salvation,' to God they are the same thing: the eternal bestowal of grace in Christ, upon which creatures are as much dependent for their being as they are for salvation/deification.

<sup>92</sup> cf. Wand *The Four Great Heresies*, p. 27.

<sup>93</sup> Paul Tillich *Systematic Theology Vol.2* (London: SCM Press, 1957), p. 96 (*italics* added).

into being and that daily sustains and nurtures them,’<sup>94</sup> he is essentially correct, but that claim requires nuancing. It does not mean that the ministry of Jesus is *another instance* of what God does in creation, but the ministry of Jesus is absolutely and literally identical to the *creatio ex nihilo*. That is, the ministry of Jesus is that on which all creatures depend as the circumference of a circle to its centre, not another continuing instance of divine creation in time. The point here is that *creatio* is not an ‘event’ (whether located in the past or completed in the future) but an ontological relationship, and that relationship is uniquely in Christ. Jesus does not cause the Big Bang, the ministry of Jesus is the ontological relationship. The ministry of Jesus, then, becomes the cause *per se* of the universe.<sup>95</sup>

Essentially, ontologically, Christ is the cause of being for all creatures. Christ is that through which all creatures receive being. Both *creatio* and incarnation must be donations of being, yet if it is Christ through which God bestows being on creatures (Christ is the agent of creation and the one mediator), then the incarnation is *how* God bestows being: incarnation is creation. Christ, as agent of creation and mediator, is never creator nor mediator without also being incarnate.<sup>96</sup> Creation happens ‘just as light is produced in the air by the presence of the sun,’<sup>97</sup> yet ‘just as the rays of the sun do not set fire to anything by themselves, so God does not touch our souls with the fire

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<sup>94</sup> Norman Wirzba ‘Creation Through Christ’, in Andrew Torrance & Thomas McCall (eds.) *Christ and the Created Order Vol.2* (Grand Rapids MI.: Zondervan, 2018), p. 39.

<sup>95</sup> This does not mean, as some suggest, that ‘the act of creation happens within the womb of Mary’ (Lincoln Harvey, quoted in Chris Tilling ‘Paul, Christ, and Narrative Time’, in Andrew Torrance & Thomas McCall (eds.) *Christ and the Created Order Vol.2* (Grand Rapids MI.: Zondervan, 2018), p. 166), as this still perceives creation as a specific event, but just resituates it. Rather, this paper has argued that creation is not an event (cause *per accidens*), but is an ontological relationship (cause *per se*), and that such a relationship cannot exist outside of the human Jesus, but is constituted through him.

<sup>96</sup> I take it as axiomatic, although it needs to be made explicit, that I consider there to be no ontological distinction between humanity and other creatures. Others call this ‘deep incarnation,’ but I consider that *all* creatures (from quarks to humans and everything in between) are addressed in the incarnation. Christ is only accidentally human, but essentially a creature. If feminist theologians emphasise Christ’s humanity, so that his masculinity is unimportant, then we should use the same logic; we emphasise Christ’s createdness, so this his humanity does not exclude other creatures. If, following Paul (Gal 3:28), there is no Jew or Gentile, nor male or female, then neither is there human or non-human; all are one in Christ.

<sup>97</sup> Marilyn McCord Adams *What Sort of Nature? Medieval Philosophy and the Systematics of Christology* (Milwaukee WI.: Marquette University Press, 1999), p. 52; see also Kerr ‘A Thomistic metaphysics of creation’, p. 345-347; and Matthew R. McWhorter ‘Aquinas on God’s Relation to the World’, *New Blackfriars* Vol. 94 No. 1049 (2013).

of supernatural knowledge and experience without Christ.<sup>98</sup> If creation is an 'ontological relationship,'<sup>99</sup> the ontological 'derivation of all things from God,'<sup>100</sup> if 'God's creative action *just is* creation's dependence on God for its existence,'<sup>101</sup> then this ontological relationship/dependence is mediated through Christ: '[t]he word of God is the medium of creation, the dynamic spiritual word which mediates between the silent mystery of the abyss of being and the fullness of concrete, individualized, self-related beings.'<sup>102</sup>

## **6. Kenosis and Participation**

Assuming this interpretation is correct, this leads to a nuanced view of *kenosis*. The previous section argued: (a) 'God is never without his [sic] Logos, the divine Wisdom, in and through whom the world is created, ordered, and sustained,'<sup>103</sup> (b) the Logos 'eternally has two natures'<sup>104</sup> so that there is 'no sense talking of the eternal Son of God apart from the incarnation,'<sup>105</sup> so the Logos never 'acts' without the created Jesus;<sup>106</sup> and (c) if *creatio ex nihilo* is not 'some putative first moment in the past' but is 'primarily about derivation of all things from God'<sup>107</sup> (i.e. an eternal ontological relationship), then God eternally creates (has relationship with creatures) through the incarnate Logos. If this is the case, then it is not incoherent to hold both a single divine act (literally understood) on the one hand and creation *and* incarnation on the other. *Creatio* is not an act that God does *in addition* to the incarnation; the incarnation is that through which all creatures depend on God. God only does the incarnation, creation is the name of a particular (extrinsic) relationship to the incarnation, not the name of another act that God does in addition to the incarnation. Christ as the agent of creation is that who mediates that relationship, not that who does a particular thing at the beginning of time: to call Jesus 'creator' does not mean that he (accidentally)

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<sup>98</sup> Thomas Merton *New Seeds of Contemplation* (London: Burns & Oates, 1961), p. 106.

<sup>99</sup> Baldner & Carroll *Aquinas on Creation*, p. 16.

<sup>100</sup> Davison *Participation in God*, p. 26.

<sup>101</sup> Bishop & Perszyk 'The Divine Attributes and Non-personal Conceptions of God', p. 614.

<sup>102</sup> Tillich *Systematic Theology Vol.1*, p. 158.

<sup>103</sup> Hart *The Experience of God*, p. 235.

<sup>104</sup> Stump & Kretzmann 'Eternity', p. 453.

<sup>105</sup> Helm 'Divine Timeless Eternity', p. 54.

<sup>106</sup> And the human life of Jesus is always cruciform; '[t]he universe assumes the form of Christ - but, O mystery! the man we see is Christ crucified' (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin *Writings in the Time of War* [New York NY: Harper & Row, 1968], 208).

<sup>107</sup> Davison *Participation in God*, p. 26.

caused the Big Bang, but that in his Person is the ontological relationship through which all creatures derive their being and on which all creatures depend at every moment for their being. This leads to the suggestion that *kenosis* is not about ‘emptying’ but about participation.

Normally, *kenosis* is understood as an alternative to Chalcedon. The history of the doctrine of *kenosis* and the motivations that lie behind it are well known.<sup>108</sup> Its role in modern theological history is that of an alternative to Chalcedon. Assuming Chalcedon to be incoherent, it postulates instead that Christ sacrificed his divinity in order to become human. David Brown writes that whereas the Chalcedonian theory is ‘the view that Jesus was simultaneously God and man’, *kenosis* is ‘the view that God became man and subsequently became God again.’<sup>109</sup> This has been understood in various ways, from emphasising *krypsis* rather than *kenosis*, in that Christ only hid those attributes (i.e. chose not to utilize them) rather than relinquished them,<sup>110</sup> to arguing that Christ only relinquished accidental attributes (e.g. all ‘omni’ attributes which presuppose a world over which to have power, know etc. rather than essential attributes).<sup>111</sup>

However, not all see *kenosis* as an alternative to Chalcedon but (recognizing that the effectiveness of the incarnation lies in Jesus being *simultaneously* divine and creature) merely as ‘a way of interpreting Chalcedon’<sup>112</sup> and so as overcoming ‘the difficulty of conceiving two complete natures united in the one person.’<sup>113</sup> Cyril of Alexandria<sup>114</sup> and Hilary of Poitiers<sup>115</sup> both understood Christ to empty and remain

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<sup>108</sup> See Robert Stackpole *The Incarnation: Rediscovering Kenotic Christology* (British Colombia: The Chartwell Press, 2019); C. Stephen Evans (ed.) *Exploring Kenotic Christology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)

<sup>109</sup> David Brown *The Divine Trinity* (London: Duckworth, 1985), p. 102-103; see also C. Stephen Evans ‘The Self-Emptying of Love: Some Thoughts on Kenotic Christology’, in Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, & Gerald O’Collins (eds.) *The Incarnation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 254.

<sup>110</sup> David Williams ‘*Kenosis* and the nature of the Persons in the Trinity’, in *Koers* Vol. 69 No. 4 (2004), p. 628-629; see also Forrest ‘The Incarnation: A Philosophical Case for Kenosis’, p. 127.

<sup>111</sup> See Stackpole *The Incarnation: Rediscovering Kenotic Christology*, p. 91ff.; see Forrest ‘The Incarnation: A Philosophical Case for Kenosis’, p. 130.

<sup>112</sup> Stephen T. Davis S, 2011, ‘The Metaphysics of Kenosis’, in, Jonathan Hill & Anna Marmodoro *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 115.

<sup>113</sup> Ferdinand Prat *The Theology of St. Paul: Vol.1* (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1945), p. 320.

<sup>114</sup> See Ilia Delio ‘Is Creation Eternal’, in *Theological Studies* Vol. 66; Bulgakov *The Lamb of God*, p. 31.

God. More recently, Karl Barth understood *kenosis* to consist 'in a renunciation of His being in the form of God alone.'<sup>116</sup> Christ does not divest himself of being God; he divests himself of being *only* God. Sergei Bulgakov also writes that '[i]n becoming man, God does not stop being God; even after descending from heaven, he remains in heaven'<sup>117</sup> so that 'without ceasing to be God, God ceases to be God.'<sup>118</sup> For Bulgakov, *kenosis* is not just a possible interpretation of Chalcedon, but is the 'fundamental idea tacitly implied by the Chalcedonian dogma.'<sup>119</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar also defends *kenosis*, arguing that it is the only way to avoid Nestorianism and Monophysitism.<sup>120</sup> Sarah Coakley also argues that *kenosis* need not refer to a divestment, but can be seen as a 'making room for the other.'<sup>121</sup>

There is not the space for a textual analysis of Philippians to determine which is more faithful to Paul's original intentions.<sup>122</sup> Assuming that *kenosis* can legitimately be interpreted as complementing Chalcedon, what is important is that *kenosis* should not be seen as a 'mode' of being incarnate, but as a 'mechanism' for *how* God '*becomes*' incarnate. *Kenosis* is how Christ 'makes room' for the created nature, not a solution to the (apparent) contradictions in claiming that Christ was both God and creature. As Graham Ward writes 'the "taking form" and "becoming like" are both modalities of the main verb *kenoō*,'<sup>123</sup> that is, *kenosis* describes how Christ becomes a creature, not a necessary divestment to accommodate the other.

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<sup>115</sup> Hilary of Poitiers 'On The Trinity', in Henry Bettenson (ed.) *The Later Christian Fathers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 50.

<sup>116</sup> Karl Barth *Church Dogmatics: Study Edition* (Edinburgh: T&T Clarke, 2009), IV, 59, 1 (p. 172-173); see also Bruce McCormack 'Karl Barth's Christology as a Resource for a Reformed Version of Kenoticism, in *International Journal of Systematic Theology* Vol. 8 No. 3 (2006), p. 248.

<sup>117</sup> Bulgakov *The Lamb of God*, p. 220; See also p. 225-229.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 221.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 239; see also p. 236.

<sup>120</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar *Mysterium Paschale* (Edinburgh: T&T Clarke, 1990), vii-ix

<sup>121</sup> Sarah Coakley "Kenosis and Subversion: On the Repression of 'Vulnerability' in Christian.

Feminist Writing" in Daphne Hampson (ed.) *Swallowing a Fishbone: Feminist Theologians Debate Christology* (London: SPCK, 1996).

<sup>122</sup> See Ralph Martin *Carmen Christi* (Grand Rapids MI.: William B Eerdmans, 1983), p. 165-196.

<sup>123</sup> Graham Ward 'Kenosis: Death, Discourse and Resurrection', in Lucy Gardner, David Moss, Ben Quash and Graham Ward *Balthasar at the End of Modernity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clarke, 1999), p. 21.

In this way, ‘emptying’ does not mean ‘relinquishing,’ rather, it explains how the created nature is the *effect* of *kenosis*, *not* how the divine and created natures are related *after* the incarnation (i.e. once Christ is human). Indeed, ‘one could more truly say that kenosis involves gain rather than loss.’<sup>124</sup> Edwin Chr. van Driel’s claim that there is distinction between the ‘classical theologian’ who ‘thinks about the Incarnation in terms of an *addition*’ and the *kenotic* theologian who ‘understands the Incarnation in terms of a *divestment*’<sup>125</sup> is not accurate; *kenosis* can be understood as *how* Christ ‘makes room’ for (and so ‘adds’) a second nature.

To put it differently (and somewhat speculatively), for the ‘anti-Chalcedonians’ *kenosis* was a cause *per accidens*, after which God has changed. The Scotist distinction, then, is absolutely crucial for understanding *kenosis* properly; it is not an event in the temporal life of God (or Christ) which necessarily treats divine activity and creaturely activity in competition, rather, it is an eternal event of ‘making room’ that, *uniquely* in Christ, God makes room for the other to participate. *Kenosis* is not the name of a cause *per accidens*, after which Christ is no longer God; rather, *kenosis* is the name of a relationship, a cause *per se*, an atemporal, eternal, ‘making room,’ through which Jesus has being. *Kenosis* is the name of the ontological ordering/relation that takes place in Christ’s person.

If, as this paper has suggested, that the ontological relation that takes place in Christ’s person is that through which all creatures participate in God - the hypostatic union is that which mediates the dependence of all creatures on God, then *kenosis* becomes the divine side of an ontological relationship with all creatures, mediated through the incarnation. Indeed, Graham Ward is explicit that with *kenosis* ‘we are concerned with the relationship between the Logos and mediation;’<sup>126</sup> *kenosis* is *how* Christ is the mediator (remembering that Christ *has* to be both God and creature simultaneously in order to function as mediator). Christ as creator is not Christ as the accidentally-ordered ‘pusher’ of the first domino; Christ as creator is Christ as mediator of being. *Kenosis* is that on which creatures depend for their being, not an accidentally prior act that makes creation and creaturely freedom possible. *Kenosis* is about participation not divestment, thus, ‘not only do rational beings participate in the logos,’ but ‘[w]ithout their participation in the word, the entire universe would revert to the

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<sup>124</sup> Sarah Coakley ‘Kenosis: Theological Meaning and Gender Connotations’, in John Polkinghorne (ed.) *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* (Cambridge MA.: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), p. 195.

<sup>125</sup> Edwin Chr. van Driel ‘The Logic of Assumption’, in, C. Stephen Evans (ed.) *Exploring Kenotic Christology* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2006), p. 265-266.

<sup>126</sup> Ward ‘Kenosis: Death, Discourse and Resurrection’, p. 20.

nothingness from which it came.'<sup>127</sup> Jordan Daniel Wood seems to hint at this idea, writing that '[t]he cosmos is at once Christ, who generates it by self-identifying with it,' so that 'the world only *is* because of the self-evacuation of the Word.'<sup>128</sup>

*Kenosis* is concerned with ontological dependency, not literally emptying or divestment. *Kenosis* is the name of an essentially-ordered series, the identical essentially-ordered series that we call participation. From the creaturely perspective it is called participation, from the divine perspective it is called *kenosis*. That is, the *Logos* is a 'hierarchical' mediator; the *Logos* mediates - i.e. passes on being - between the Father and creatures hierarchically (essentially-ordered), rather than temporally. Yet, it is not just the *Logos* who does this, it is the *Logos incarnate*; the hypostatic union becomes the 'point of mediation,' the eternal 'point' in the person of the Son, where being is passed on to creatures. All creatures depend on God, and they depend on God through the Son, and the hypostatic union is the point of dependency. The incarnation is *how* God mediates participation; *kenosis* is how there can be a relationship between a transcendent atemporal and immutable God and the temporal and mutable universe.

Here, then, those theologians who link the *kenosis* of the Son with the *kenosis* of the Father can help to further strengthen this claim. Bulgakov writes that 'Sonhood is already *eternal kenosis*.'<sup>129</sup> Balthasar calls this the 'eternal "super-Kenosis"' of the Father.<sup>130</sup> In doing so, *kenosis* is linked with creating, so 'the inner-divine processions are the condition of the possibility for a creation.'<sup>131</sup> The 'super-*kenosis*' of the Father - the procession of the Son from the Father - is that which makes creation - by implication, the *kenosis* of the Son of God - possible. It is important to ensure that the procession of the Son is different from creation (there is a distinction between the Son receiving being from Father through *kenosis* and creatures receiving being through Jesus in *kenosis*; the Son is equal to the Father, but creatures are not equal to (participate in) the Son), but there is a sense here in which the Son receives being from the Father through *kenosis* and the Son then 'passes on' being through the *kenosis* of

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<sup>127</sup> Samuel Powell *Participating in God* (Minneapolis MN.: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2003), p. 18.

<sup>128</sup> Wood 'Creation is Incarnation: The Metaphysical Peculiarity of the *Logoi* in Maximus Confessor', p. 98-99.

<sup>129</sup> Bulgakov *The Lamb of God*, p. 99.

<sup>130</sup> Balthasar *Mysterium Paschale*, vii-ix; see also Hans Urs von Balthasar *Theo-Drama II: Dramatis Personae: Man in God* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1990), p. 154; Aristotle Papanikolaou 'Person, *Kenosis* and Abuse: Hans Urs Von Balthasar and Feminist Theologies in Conversation', in *Modern Theology* Vol. 19 No. 1 (2003), p. 48); Ward 'Kenosis: Death, Discourse and Resurrection', p. 45.

<sup>131</sup> Balthasar *Mysterium Paschale*, vii-ix.

the incarnation.<sup>132</sup> As Bulgakov writes Christ is ‘pre-eternally “sacrificed” in the creation of the world;’<sup>133</sup> the *kenosis* of Christ is creation. Thus, Christ’s generation from the Father (pre-existence), the incarnation (firstborn), and *creatio* form an ontological (essentially-ordered) series, not a temporal (accidentally-ordered) one. Christ does not create *and then* become incarnate, rather, there is an ontological derivation in which the Son, who receives being from the Father, passes on being to all creatures *through* his being incarnate in Jesus.<sup>134</sup> *Creatio originalis* does not temporally precede the incarnation; the incarnation is ontologically prior to *creatio originalis*, and is temporally and numerically identical to it.<sup>135</sup>

There is clearly a link here with Pseudo-Dionysius and hierarchy. For Pseudo-Dionysius, being is passed on ‘down’ the hierarchies to all creatures. As Sarah Wear and John Dillon write, hierarchy is the way that ‘God relates to his creation’ and, therefore,

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<sup>132</sup> See Giles Emery ‘Trinity and Creation’, in Rik Van Nieuwenhove & Joseph Wawrykow (eds.) *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame IN.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), p. 59; there are also significant links with Pseudo-Dionysius (see below).

<sup>133</sup> Bulgakov *The Lamb of God*, p. 129.

<sup>134</sup> See Davison *Participation in God*, p. 209; there is a link here with Hans Urs Von Balthasar and Bulgakov, who situate the *kenosis* in the Godhead (see above).

<sup>135</sup> This also leaves the question of other acts that in the Bible temporally precede the incarnation, and requires a considerable amount of demythologising (especially of the Old Testament). For example, ‘[i]t is often said that the action of God even in the Old Testament is that of the Son, in a pre-incarnate state’ (Williams *Kenōsis of God*, p. 95), yet there cannot be thought of a pre-existence in which Christ acts without the human Jesus. Thus, for example, Jesus explicitly identifies himself as the ‘I am’ of the burning bush in Exodus, but this should not be taken (as Peter Forrest puts it [‘The Incarnation: A Philosophical Case for Kenosis’, p. 129]) as a memory that Jesus has of a past event. However, it admittedly seems strange to suggest that this event is a revelation of Jesus to Moses that is in no way separate from the incarnation, and not have Moses preach Christ incarnate. Stump and Kretzmann have argued that all the inspirations of God are extrinsic accidental characteristics of the one simple act (Stump & Kretzmann ‘Absolute Simplicity’, p. 355), and so, drawing, on this, it would be possible to suggest something similar, perhaps in relation to Karl Rahner’s idea of anonymous Christians in which Moses’ preaching was a genuine expression of the incarnation but in a Hebrew context. This also requires a ‘full’ or ‘strong’ doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum*. The divine and human energy in Christ are certainly distinct (duothelitism must be upheld), but they are also ‘performed’ by a single person. This means that Christ is not sometimes acting as God and sometimes acting as human, but ‘He did all things as the God-Man.’ (Bulgakov *The Lamb of God*, p. 237). As Pseudo-Dionysius writes, in Christ there is one ‘theandric’ activity (*Collected Works* [New York: Paulist Press, 1987], p. 265), which is not a confusion of God and human, but an acknowledgment that Christ always acts as both. This means, quite literally, that those actions attributed to the ‘pre-existent’ Logos are not ‘performed’ without and/or outwith the human Jesus (see Helm ‘Divine Timeless Eternity’, p. 54).

'the activity of the hierarchy is the act of God's creation.'<sup>136</sup> Significantly, 'every hierarchy ends in Jesus';<sup>137</sup> it is through Jesus that being is 'passed on' to all creatures.<sup>138</sup> Marilyn McCord Adams notes the same idea in Thomas Aquinas: 'as God is fontal source of natural being (esse) and goodness in creatures, so Aquinas envisions a cascading flow of grace: from Godhead into the human soul hypostatically united to it; from the soul of Christ into all the members of the body of which he is the head.'<sup>139</sup> Thus, drawing on Paul's instruction to '[b]e imitators of me, as I am of Christ,'<sup>140</sup> all creatures imitate (participate) in God, through Christ, so that '[i]f [Jesus'] life was the imitation of the Father, their life as disciples was to imitate him.'<sup>141</sup> As moral as such an imitation might be, it is primarily ontological; the ontological hierarchy through Christ, Jesus and to all creatures is characterised by a *kenosis* 'down' the hierarchy and a participation 'up' it;<sup>142</sup> *kenosis* and participation are thus literally identical, they explain the same ontological relationship from both sides. That is, from the divine side, it looks like *kenosis*; from the creature side, it looks like participation/imitation.<sup>143</sup> That ontological hierarchy is essentially-ordered (Torstein Tollefsen describes it as

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<sup>136</sup> Sarah Wear & John Dillon *Dionysius the Areopagite And The Neoplatonist Tradition* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), p. 51, 66.

<sup>137</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius *Collected Works*, p. 236.

<sup>138</sup> See David Brown 'Teilhard de Chardin and Pseudo-Dionysius: Convergent Evolution, Hierarchy, and Divine Activity,' in *Heythrop Journal* (forthcoming)

<sup>139</sup> Marilyn McCord Adams *What Sort of Nature? Medieval Philosophy and the Systematics of Christology* (Milwaukee WI.: Marquette University Press, 1999), p. 52.

<sup>140</sup> 1 Cor 11.1.

<sup>141</sup> Ernest Tinsley *The Imitation of God in Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1960), p. 100; see also Elizabeth Castelli *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Louisville KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), p. 89-117.

<sup>142</sup> See Ashley M. Purpura *God, Hierarchy, and Power: Orthodox Theologies of Authority from Byzantium* (New York NY.: Fordham University Press, 2018), p. 24.

<sup>143</sup> There is also the element of imitation of Christ. If 'to imitate God is to participate in God' (Torstein Theodor Tollefsen *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 163; see also David O. Brown *Incarnation and Neo-Darwinism: Evolution, Ontology, and Divine Activity* (Durham: Sacristy Press, 2019), p. 144), then participation through Christ means that all creatures imitate Christ; to be created is to participate in God through Christ, which has the identical meaning of to be created is to imitate Christ.

‘vertical’),<sup>144</sup> it has no accidental relation (i.e. it is not coincident with any putative first (or any) moment), and so is unconnected with history and providence.<sup>145</sup>

Here, then, responses can be made to those who criticise *kenosis*, such as Andrew Davison, who writes that *kenosis* leads to a ‘truncated’ God.<sup>146</sup> As an alternative to Chalcedon, certainly *kenosis* is non-participatory; but this does not mean that *all* interpretations of *kenosis* are. Rather, drawing on the idea of ‘making (ontological) room,’ it could be suggested that *kenosis* is the ‘divine side’ of the relationship of dependence that is the creature’s participation in God. If *kenosis* is creation, and creation means to be given being, then *kenosis* is the divine side of how creatures have being by derivation and are at all times dependent on that being. In this sense, *kenosis* does not mean that God in Christ relinquishes all the (unnecessary) divine attributes, but that God ontologically ‘makes room’ for the other. In this way, participation is not a ‘sharing,’ which Holmes Rolston III claims ‘has the Old English and Germanic root *sker*, to cut into parts.’<sup>147</sup> *Kenosis* is not God *sharing* ‘being’ - which would mean that God and creatures are in a ‘zero-sum’ game - but is participation in God’s being. For God to ‘make room’ is not for others to *share* a part of God but to *participate in* God.

Davison *et al*’s problem with *kenosis* then is that they assume that it means ‘share’ rather than ‘participate,’ but it is not entirely clear that *kenosis* must only be a participation *of* (i.e. sharing) and not a participation *in* God.<sup>148</sup> *Kenosis* is not God sharing, but creatures participating.<sup>149</sup> In this way, when *tzimtzum* is said to create a ‘space,’ outside of God, within which creation takes place, this is nothing but another way of saying that the universe participates in God as its being. The ‘self-emptying’ is analogical. God does not literally ‘self-empty.’ Rather, *kenosis* is a ‘symbol’ or

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<sup>144</sup> See Torstein Theodor Tollefsen *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 113; see also Philip Sherrard *Christianity: Lineaments of a Sacred Tradition* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), p. 239.

<sup>145</sup> There are also significant ecclesial and sacramental dimensions to this question (e.g. the Church is the ‘continuation of the incarnation’ and it is through the ecclesial hierarchy that the divine light is ‘passed on’) that lie outside the scope of this essay.

<sup>146</sup> Davison *Participation in God*, p. 212.

<sup>147</sup> Holmes Rolston III ‘*Kenosis and Nature*’, in John Polkinghorne (ed.) *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* (Cambridge MA.: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), p. 48.

<sup>148</sup> Davison *Participation in God*, p. 137.

<sup>149</sup> There is a connection here with *epektasis*; the inexhaustibility of God in terms of an ever-greater potential for more and closer participation in God is mirrored in God’s ever-greater ‘ability’ to ‘make-room’ for the other in *kenosis*. God descended that we might ascend; God became a creature that we might become God; God (in Christ) self-empties that we might participate in God (through Christ).

'image' that points to participation. Davison therefore looks at *kenosis* from the wrong perspective; *kenosis* is not a 'pushing out' of divinity, but a 'letting in' (or 'letting be') of creatures - a letting in that is the ground of their being and *how* creatures depend on God for their being. The Christological *kenosis*, then, is a *tzimtzum*; it describes the specific (personal) participation of the human Jesus in the eternal Logos.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper has made two arguments: (a) if God never acts without the logos, and the logos is eternally incarnate, and *creatio* is ontological relationship not 'putative past event,' then there is no contradiction in holding that the incarnation is the single divine act, through which creatures are ontologically derivative and dependent; and, that being the case, (b) *kenosis* as understood as 'making ontological room' for creatures to participate in God becomes a more Chalcedonian-friendly interpretation of the hypostatic union.

To be sure, this is a speculative way of looking at Christian doctrine. Most exponents of *kenosis* treat it as an accidentally-ordered cause that is an alternative to traditional doctrines of God or incarnation: Christ empties and *then* re-acquires divinity or divine attributes. Likewise, traditional Christianity explicitly separates creation and the incarnation, although the east is more open to seeing them as being two parts of one act. There will be those who question the role of the cross or Holy Spirit in such a theological paradigm as the one presented here. There might be those who question the necessary collapse of creation into deification. This does not even take into account those who see the incarnation as reason enough to dismiss divine atemporality and simplicity.

However, this paper has sought to do nothing except suggest that, if one follows through the logic on a number of these issues, such as *creatio* as ontological relation and the eternity of the incarnation, then there is no theological problem with suggesting that the incarnation is *how* creatures can depend on God, who is utterly transcendent of all creatures. In other words, 'the question of creation has never simply concerned some event that may have happened "back then," at the beginning of time, or some change between distinct physical states...but has always concerned the *eternal relation* between logical possibility and logical necessity, the contingent and the absolute, the conditioned and the unconditioned,'<sup>150</sup> and it is that '*eternal relation* of God to man which is manifest in the Christ.'<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Hart *The Experience of God*, p. 304 (*italics added*).

<sup>151</sup> Tillich *Systematic Theology* Vol. 2, 96 (*italics added*).

*David O. Brown*

This does two things. First, it provides a possible solution to the question of how creation and the incarnation can be related in a paradigm which accepts the validity of the idea that there is only one divine act. The incarnation and creation are essentially-ordered, not accidentally-ordered, that is, the incarnation acts as that which mediates an ontological ordering or relation. Second, it leads to the suggestion that *kenosis* becomes entirely identical with participation. *Kenosis* is that which permits creatures to participate in God.

# **The Spiritual dimension of environmental protection in military conflicts: on the status of the Serbian spiritual Dowry in Kosovo**

Alexandru Herciu<sup>1</sup>

**Summary:** In 2018 I wrote a paper in a scientific conference proceeding about the consequences of ISIS's actions on the world's cultural heritage. Most honestly, I thought it was the last situation of this kind that I can encounter in my professional, didactic, and scientific career! This year, in the summer of 2020, I decided to spend my vacation in Kosovo, entirely and utterly surprising for everyone. I decided to continue the series of articles dedicated to the spiritual heritage destroyed or in danger of being demolished in military conflicts-, in the hot areas of the world. I would never have thought that so close to my homeland, Romania, Orthodox churches and monasteries are so oppressed, that the Orthodox faith is silenced and banned in what Serbia considers its historical, religious, cultural, and architectural heart! That monuments and buildings of universal value are daily the objects of attacks and destructive actions of other denominations in a country that officially pretends to be multinational, multi-ethnic, and democratic!

Cultural dowry is one of the environmental factors that must be taken seriously to be protected during military conflicts. In some cases, the consequences of military action on the environment are terrible and irreversible. This happened due to the Islamic State's activities, which intentionally destroyed cultural objectives on the territory of Iraq, Syria, and Libya under the organization's control. ISIS began in 2014 the deliberate destruction and looting of cultural heritage in Iraq, Syria, and, to a lesser extent, in Libya. Various places of worship and ancient historical artifacts located in areas under the organization's control were targeted. It seems that the same thing is happening in Kosovo with Orthodox monasteries and churches, most of the architectural monuments dating

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<sup>1</sup> Colonel, professor, Alexandru HERCIU, Doctor of Science Land Forces Department/Command and Staff Faculty/ "Carol I<sup>st</sup>" National Defence University, Bucharest; Email: herciu\_alexandru12@yahoo.ro

from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, of inestimable cultural, spiritual, and architectural value, not only for Serbs but for all humankind!

**Keywords:** environmental protection, cultural heritage, ecological factors, spiritual values.

### **Introduction**

The history of this turbulent area marked by turmoil and interethnic struggles began in the 7<sup>th</sup> century when ethnic Serbs migrated to territories now known as Kosovo. Before this migration, the central Balkans were part of the Roman and Byzantine Empires. In the Middle Ages, Kosovo became the Serbian Empire's religious, cultural, and architectural centre. Between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, important Serbian sacred sites were built on this extraordinary natural beauty territories-many architecturally significant Serbian Orthodox churches and monasteries, which today are invaluable to the universal cultural heritage. The defeat of Serbian forces at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 led to five centuries of Ottoman rule, leading to significant deployment of ethnic Turks and Albanians in the conquered territory, replacing the ethnic Serb population 19<sup>th</sup> century. Serbia regained control of Kosovo during the First Balkan War of 1912. After World War II, it became an autonomous province of the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) with its administrative boundaries.

Despite legislative concessions from the Serbian government, Albanian nationalism returned in force in the 1980s, leading to riots and demand for independence. In response, Serbs, who perceive Kosovo as their religious, cultural, and architectural heart, established a new constitution in 1989 that revokes Kosovo's autonomous status. Serbia took repressive action against Kosovo Albanians in the 1990s, sparking a Kosovo Albanian insurgency.

Albanian leaders in Kosovo responded in 1991 by holding a referendum declaring Kosovo's independence. In 1998, Serbia carried out a brutal counterinsurgency campaign that led to massacres and mass expulsions of ethnic Albanians (some 800,000 ethnic Albanians were forced out of their homes in Kosovo)<sup>2</sup>. After international attempts to mediate the conflict failed, NATO's three-month air operation against Serbia, starting in March 24, 1999, charged Serbs to accept the withdrawal of their military and police forces from Kosovo. UN Security Council Resolution 1244/1999 placed Kosovo under a transitional administration, the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), pending the establishment of Kosovo's future status. An UN-led process began in late 2005 to determine

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<sup>2</sup> Information available online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kv.html> accessed on September 9, 2020.

Kosovo's final grade. The 2006-07 negotiations ended without an agreement between Belgrade and Pristina. However, the UN issued a comprehensive report on Kosovo's final status, which approved its independence. On February 17, 2008, the Kosovo Assembly declared Kosovo independent. Since then, more than 100 countries have recognized Kosovo and joined numerous international organizations. Kosovo's independence was challenged in October 2008. Serbia sought an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legality of Kosovo's declaration of sovereignty under international law. ICJ issued its advisory statement in July 2010, stating that Kosovo's declaration of independence did not violate the general principles of international law, UN Security Council Resolution 1244, or the Constituent Framework.

Under the close observation of the missions of the security agencies and the international community deployed in Kosovo (NATO, UNMIK, OSCE, EULEX), Kosovo is trying to prove that it is a sovereign, multi-ethnic, democratic country. Under these auspices, the new self-proclaimed state ended the period of supervised independence in 2012. Serbia and several other states that may find themselves in the same situation at some point continue to refuse to recognize Kosovo's independence. Over time, through talks facilitated by the EU and the international community, the two countries have agreed to normalize their relations, reflected in several subsequent agreements that the parties undertake to implement, even if the general situation is still susceptible.

Kosovo signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU in 2015. A 2018 EU report named it one of six Western Balkan countries that will join the organization once it meets the criteria to accede. Kosovo also seeks memberships in the UN and NATO.<sup>3</sup>

### **1. The spiritual dimension of environmental protection**

The environment, in general, consists of all-natural factors (water, air, soil, subsoil, forests, and any form of terrestrial, aquatic vegetation, nature reserves, and monuments) and factors created by the activity of plant species, animals, and human populations, embodied in systems interconnected and ecologically interdependent.

Thus, the environment represents the set of conditions and natural elements of the Earth: air, water, soil, subsoil, distinctive aspects of the landscape, all atmospheric layers, all organic and inorganic matter, as well as living beings, interacting natural systems, including the elements listed above, including material and spiritual values, quality of life and conditions that influence human well-being and health.

Environmental protection is a branch of applied ecology. It has the task of guiding and coordinating all human actions on the ecosphere to maintain ecological

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem.*

balance and ecosystems sustainability, thus ensuring better living conditions for current and future generations.

Environmental protection in the military sense represents the totality of measures adopted by commanders, staff, military and civilian personnel working in the military sector to limit or reduce the destructive effects on environmental factors caused by the preparation, organization, and conduct of military actions. For example, in the Romanian Army, environmental protection is defined as a set of institutionalized activities to improve the state of the environment and quality of life by preventing and reducing pollution in areas of responsibility or action of the army following the principles governing this activity.

The NATO Standard AJEPP-4 defines one of the environmental planning guidelines for military activities: (7) Endangerment of Natural and Cultural Resources: *Impacts on natural and cultural (historical and archaeological) resources should be prevented where possible.*

The army's mission is mainly to fight and win the wars of the nation for which it fights. By its very nature, war is destructive to humans and the environment. Therefore, military commanders are obliged to exercise judgment in the application of combat power and the limitation of damage to the environment, so far as the mission's performance so permits. Commanders and staffs must plan operations specific to armed struggle (offensive and defensive), implement post-conflict stability measures, and always maintain the health and safety of forces and civilians in the conflict zone. Integrating environmental issues into the planning process helps the armed forces identify, prevent, and mitigate potential ecological threats (including those affecting historical and cultural heritage) and potential environmental hazards that impact subordinate forces and population.

Environmental considerations do not focus exclusively on environmental protection. We must not forget that, in the issue of environmental protection in question, the concern to keep in normal parameters of environmental indicators aims to maintain their quality at an optimal level to ensure human life on Earth. Therefore, in military operations, the issue of Force Health Protection (FHP) is - and must be addressed - as being causally related to the effects of operations on the environment and, implicitly, on fighters and civilian populations. The FHP will benefit significantly from the integration of environmental issues into the conduct of military operations. The integration of the ecological problems supports, among other things, natural resources, reduces the logistical footprint, promotes positive relations with the host nation and action partners (multinational forces, governmental and non-governmental organizations, etc.), and supports post-conflict stability efforts. We believe that all these objectives contribute to the mission's effectiveness and when properly integrated, serve as force multipliers rather than distractions from mission accomplishment.

Effective integration occurs in organizations that promote an environmental ethic, actively practice the concept of sustainable development, and carry out an ecological risk assessment as early as possible in operation planning. The environmental considerations must include all aspects related to the mission, from pre-deployment to force redeployment. Environmental concerns will apply to all operations, and the environmental risk assessment may highlight their variable relevance.

## **2. The environmental disaster during the Kosovo conflict**

When the Rambouillet agreement<sup>4</sup> failed, and NATO launched attacks on March 24, 1999, in Yugoslavia, alarming environmental damage reports caused by bombing and military action began to appear. The Kosovo conflict has given rise to two major overlapping issues highlighted in the 1999 UN Environment Program and UN Centre for Human Settlement (Habitat) report, *The Kosovo conflict, and its consequences on human settlements*. Firstly, a major humanitarian crisis. According to the document, in Kosovo, Serbian forces systematically emptied and destroyed many towns and villages inhabited by ethnic Albanians. Damage to housing, infrastructure, systems for providing essential services to the population was evident. When Kosovo Albanians fled their homes, much of the documentation establishing legal ownership of property and land was lost, destroyed, or confiscated, complicating refugees' return to their origin areas. The influx of refugees has caused environmental problems, with systematization works, sanitation, and drinking water services insufficient to cope with a massive presence in overcrowded refugee camps.

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<sup>4</sup> Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo (Rambouillet Accords), This agreement aims to end the violence in Kosovo and facilitate the return of refugees and displaced persons. It also calls for the adoption of a new constitution for Kosovo that respects the territorial integrity of the Former Republic of Yugoslavia while simultaneously establishing the principles of democratic self-government for three years until final status of Kosovo is determined. This agreement was not signed however has been given effect by Security Council Resolution 1244. It was a proposed peace agreement between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and a delegation representing the Ethnic Albanian majority population of Kosovo. It was drafted by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and named for the Château de Rambouillet, where it was initially proposed in early 1999. The significance of the agreement lies in the fact that Yugoslavia refused to accept it, which NATO used as justification to start its intervention in the Kosovo War. Belgrade's rejection was based on the argument that the agreement contained provisions for Kosovo's autonomy that went further than the Serbian and Yugoslav governments saw as reasonable. Information available online on <https://peacemaker.un.org/kosovo-rambouilletagreement99> accessed on September 12, 2020.

According to the previously cited report, a second serious problem was the environmental crisis generated by the conflict, which divided public opinion into two groups. On the one hand, there was a fear of a major ecological disaster in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and neighbouring countries. On the other hand, NATO has argued that its use of sophisticated weapons against carefully selected targets and surgical strikes will minimize environmental and “collateral” damage.

NATO’s military strikes against Yugoslavia, along with material and human losses, have caused an ecological disaster with serious consequences for both human health and the quality of the environment, including in some neighbouring countries. The exact extent and nature of the damage to the environment is not yet known and could not be quantified. According to the findings of the UN officials, members of the Balkans Task Force, four localities were particularly affected by pollution: Pancevo (20 km far from Belgrade), Novi Sad (capital of Vojvodina), Kragujevac (Southern Serbia) and Bor (near the border with Bulgaria).

Images of the burning Pancevo and Novi Sad oil refineries, toxic chemicals leaking into the Danube river, and bomb craters in protected areas compete with tens of thousands of refugees fleeing their homes in Kosovo. The Kosovo conflict has also had a broader regional impact: Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have had to receive large numbers of refugees from Kosovo, although they were not prepared for the scale of the influx. Other neighbouring countries, especially Bulgaria and Romania, downstream along the Danube, feared the effects of cross-border pollution from damaged industrial facilities. Fires at oil refineries and oil depots sometimes lasted for many days and created clouds of pollution in the vast area. News of dangerous chemicals leaking into the air, land, and water was prominent in the international media. The report mentions among the most critical objectives targeted by the air attacks and with the most apparent consequences: Pancevo, Novi Sad, Kragujevac, Bor, Pristina, Nis, Novi Beograd, Obrenovac, Kraljevo, and Prahovo.<sup>5</sup>

Under these circumstances, the Joint UNEP/UNCHS (Habitat) Balkans Task Force (BTF)<sup>6</sup> was formed in early May 1999, which acted in five areas: *Environmental consequences of airstrikes on industrial sites*, *Environmental*

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<sup>5</sup> UN Environment Programme and UN Centre for Human Settlement (Habitat), *The Kosovo conflict, the consequences for the environment and human settlements*, Switzerland, 1999 available online at <https://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/finalreport.pdf> accessed on September 8, 2020, p. 4-7.

<sup>6</sup> Balkans Task Force (BTF) was a joint initiative between UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat) and in line with the mandate of UNCHS to focus on normative functions, the task force integrated a human settlements component working alongside the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

*implications on Danube River, Consequences on biodiversity in protected areas, Consequences on human settlements and the environment in Kosovo and Possible use of depleted uranium weapons in Kosovo.*

The BTF organized five technical missions to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The missions took place with the cooperation of local authorities and with the assistance of the United Nations Liaison Office in Belgrade and the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). The longest of these, on the consequences on human settlements and the environment in Kosovo, conducted between July and October 1999, does not mention the destruction of cultural and spiritual dowry during the conflict until this day.

### **3. How the Orthodox spiritual values are suppressed today in Kosovo**

In the summer of 2020, despite the problematic pandemic situation, we undertook a two-week tour of Kosovo, among other circumstances, to inform myself about the situation in this country, out of pure professional curiosity. The overall picture revealed to me through the prism of professional education is one that overlaps two planes of the same reality. On the one hand, efforts to normalize relations between Serbia and Kosovo, on the other, environmental protection in an area of outstanding beauty, but suffering from the consequences of the hot events of the last 30-40 years. In the context of the ecological crisis generated by the recent past's historical events described above, the inter-ethnic tensions of the present, the lack of education of the population, and especially of the young generation, attacks on invaluable spiritual values occupy a special place.

The monasteries of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo and Metohija are located in the historical and geographical regions, which since February 17, 2008, have been controlled by the partially recognized Republic of Kosovo.

Suppose the statement "*Kosovo IS Serbia*" is not at all apparent. In that case, it is difficult to argue with another nationalist slogan, "*Kosovo IS the heart of Serbia*". There are Orthodox churches and monasteries built in the Middle Ages by Serbian rulers. And despite the dreadful economic and political situation, they are still Serb settlements. Albanian Muslims surround small pieces of Orthodox Serbia. Dozens of Orthodox churches and monasteries on its territory were built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. They survived both Ottoman rule and Albanian pogroms.

Among Kosovo's most significant historic sites are the medieval Serbian Orthodox monasteries of Visoki Dečani (Albanian: Dečan), Gračanica (Gračanica, near Pristina), and Peć (Pejë), as well as the Church of the Virgin of Ljeviša (Prizren). In 2004 the Dečani Monastery was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site; the

others were inscribed in 2006.<sup>7</sup> Inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage list confirms the exceptional universal value which deserves protection for the benefit of all humanity.

Following the conflict, revenge attacks damaged or destroyed several Orthodox churches, although the World Heritage sites survived.

Below we will display some snapshots and personal impressions of my journey through Kosovo, related to incidents that occurred during this period that concerned Orthodox churches or monasteries, in an attempt to present a current and real picture of the situation.

**Visoki Dečani Monastery** is the most important Orthodox monastery in Kosovo, the largest medieval church in the Balkans. It is located just half an hour from Peć to the south, near the town of Dečani, on the road connecting the cities of Peć and Djakovica (Albanian name - Gyakova), right at the foot of the Prokletije mountain range.

The monastery was built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century in a legendary picturesque place by the Serbian king Stefan Urosh III Dechansky. After his death, the king has been canonized and his relics are now preserved inside the monastery's church.<sup>8</sup>



*Figure 1 - Serbian Orthodox Monastery of Visoki Dečani. Picture taken by the author on August 22, 2020*

Witnesses of Kosovo's events during the war present the monastery as a holy place where people of different faiths found refuge and escape the terror. This fact may explain its excellent condition today. According to some sources, whose testimonies we will try to reproduce precisely to exemplify as accurately as possible the drama of the events that took place here. It is said that police and paramilitary officers were still torching Albanian buildings once the war ended. Afraid of being burned alive, ethnic Albanians in this small

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<sup>7</sup> Information available online at <https://www.britannica.com/place/Kosovo/Cultural-life#ref1090208> accessed on September 8, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Information available online at <https://perito-burrito.com/posts/serbian-kosovo> accessed on September 8, 2020.

Kosovo town fled their homes, cowering in the woods for a rainy, seemingly endless night. Then, winding down a wooded lane, came two monks in a white van from the cloistered and ancient Serbian Orthodox Monastery of Visoki Dečani. “Come with us! We will keep you safe!” they said. “Without them, my whole family would be dead!” asserted 58-year-old Albanian painter and art teacher Nimon Lokaj. In the ashes of post-war Kosovo, filled with accounts of brutality and hate, the monks’ story is a rare tale of courage and mercy. Ignoring their fears in the panicked final days before the Serb retreat, they may have saved as many as 150 ethnic Albanians. Now that some Albanian Kosovars are returning to charred ruins with a vengeance in their hearts, it is frightened Serbs and Gypsies turning to the monks for refuge. “Throughout history, both Serbs and Albanians living in this area protected the monastery from harm,” Abbot Theodosia said. “Albanians living here now are proud of this, and I am sure they will continue in the same spirit... They consider this monastery is their home.”<sup>9</sup>

When withdrawing Serb forces pillaged this southwest Kosovo town, that time held about 6,000 ethnic Albanians and 700 Serbs before the war. Fighting that started months before the NATO bombing campaign chased out all but 350 of the ethnic Albanians and reduced their mosque to ruins. The abbot of the Serbian Orthodox monastery sheltered ethnic Albanian villagers’ scores within the stone walls’ 14<sup>th</sup>-century building. When Serb soldiers went on a final rampage of burning, looting, and raping in western Kosovo, the abbot made from the monastery’s green grounds an oasis of peace for Serb and Albanian ethnic residents. However, this time, they were Serb monks and townspeople, fearful of violence at the hands of the ethnic Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). In this complex context, local Albanians remembered the monastery’s courage and kindness and vowed to protect those insides. “If they are going to kill them, they must kill us first,” an ethnic Albanian villager, Shaban Bruqi, said of the monks. “They saved us.” It was a rare act in Kosovo. Faith and nation are almost the same in Serbia, predominantly Serbian Orthodox Serbs and predominantly Muslim ethnic Albanians. “They were honest people of all faiths and nations,” advocate the Abbot Theodosia. “It was the Christian thing to do. It was the human thing to do.”<sup>10</sup>

“They are the best people you can ever see,” said Venera Lokaj. “They are people of God. They heard Dečani was burning, and they came to search for people.

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<sup>9</sup> Scott Canon, *Decani Monks' Courage Saved the Lives of Many Kosovars*, Knight Ridder Newspapers, June 23, 1999, available online at [http://www.kosovo.net/decani\\_peace.html#4](http://www.kosovo.net/decani_peace.html#4) accessed on September 8, 2020.

<sup>10</sup> Ellen Knickmeyer, *Serb Monastery Protects All Peoples*, The Associated Press, June 17, 1999, available online at <https://apnews.com/e0b8f8be656e837bfedbc8778d510db> accessed on September 8, 2020.

They found us there in the open, with everything burning, and they told us: “We are blessed to see you alive. Please come with us. Please come to the monastery.”

Miss Lokaj is an Albanian, one of the 200 or so who have taken refuge in this monastery, undercooling trees, retrieved from the fathers’ misery. She had lived in nearby Peć, which was destroyed by Serb forces and paramilitaries in their rampage of revenge when NATO began bombing Yugoslavia from March 24 to June 10, 1999<sup>11</sup>. She moved with her father to Dečani because Serbs had already been destroyed the previous summer. “I thought it would be safer. When the OSCE left, they told us they would be back in two weeks, and everything would be the way we wanted it. We hoped so, but after three days, everything changed. When NATO started bombing, the police and the paramilitaries started destroying everything that was Albanian. The Serbs made war against civilians, against people with empty hands. There was no KLA in Dečani or Peć, and they had no right to do what they did. This is a catastrophe, and the world saw this, it saw everything, and the world is too late. I know the world felt it had the best intentions, but there is a fatality about good intentions, and they always come too late,” she asserted bitterly.<sup>12</sup>

Today the monastery is permanently guarded by KFOR Italian and Moldavian forces, alternatively, the defensive formation being an impressive one: an armoured container for the military staff at the entrance in the monastery, two safety rings-hundred metres one far from another, a barrier, zig-zag obstacles for vehicles approaching the monastery, and access based on a personal identity document, retained by the military forces at the entrance. No body checks!



Figure 2 - Radonjić Lake. Picture taken by the author on August 22, 2020

Usually visited the same day with the monastery due to its proximity, **Radonjić (or Radoniq) Lake** is the second largest Kosovo after **Gazivoda**. In 1998, the Lake Radonjić massacre site testified the mass murder of at least 34 Serbian, Albanian, and

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<sup>11</sup> On June 10, 1999, NATO suspends “Operation Allied Force”. UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1244. This Resolution entrusts establishment of the international civilian administration in Kosovo to the Secretary-General. Serb forces start withdrawal from Kosovo. US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott travels to Moscow to work out the Russian participation in KFOR. Troops from the Russian contingent in Bosnia and Herzegovina enter the FRY on their way to Kosovo.

<sup>12</sup> Steven Erlanger, *Refuge for Kosovars in Serbian Monastery, After the Burning*, June 16, 1999, available online at <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/world/europe/061699kosovo-church.html> accessed on September 12, 2020.

Roma ethnicity civilians in its proximity, by the village of Glodjane Kosovo, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on September 9, 1998.<sup>13</sup>



*Figure 3 - Gračanica Monastery. Picture taken by the author on August 23, 2020*

**Gračanica Monastery** is situated inside a Serbian enclave ten kilometres Southeast of Pristina. This town is home to the same name's monastery, one of four Kosovo monuments listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Now it is inhabited by about 20 nuns who are engaged in icon painting and agriculture.<sup>14</sup> The 14<sup>th</sup>-century monastery church is impressive here!

Gračanica Monastery, among Kosovo's most significant historic sites, is the closest to my soul, perhaps because here, we felt closest to God! The silence that surrounds the monastery, even if it is in the middle of the community, is one that invites to meditation, prayer, and contemplation. It is all about the place's energy, "*energetically magnificent*", someone significantly, incredibly special to my soul explained it to me! And she is right! The monastery has exceptional beauty, a miniature copy of the Romanian Monastery Curtea de Argeș, or at least that is how we perceived it, just as spectacular and dramatic in its long history! The altar on the monastery's right side, belonging to the church dated long before the current monastery construction, is an extraordinary place to contemplate and reflect!

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<sup>13</sup> The corpses were then taken away from Glodjane and were thrown into Lake Radonjić. The massacre took place during the Kosovo War. The perpetrator is suspected to be the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). The Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal (ICT) for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and forensic records showed that they had been killed over a period of six months from April to September 1998 during the beginning of the armed conflict in Kosovo.

<sup>14</sup> Information available online at <https://perito-burrito.com/posts/serbian-kosovo> accessed on September 12, 2020.

**Sokolica Monastery**, located at 43 kilometres far from Pristina, was closed to the police, according to a nun assertion with whom we communicated over the monastery's fence on August 26, 2020.

Surrounded by impenetrable fortress walls that seem to be ready for a medieval seriously siege, in fact like all the other Orthodox places of worship in the region under our discussion, it is difficult to find for the unsuspecting traveller. Today's navigation systems (GPSs) will lead any passenger on the wrong routes, in the absence of adequately placed road signs! "It may be open if the police will approve this, on the Feast of the Assumption of Holy Mother of God," the nun told us, fact that we retained and returned on Friday, August 28, 2020.

This time (Friday, August 28, 2020) it was indeed, opened! The small, beautiful, chic, neat, placed in its perfectly natural fairy-tale surroundings, a real "eagle's nest"! The majority people from Serbia (judging by the license plates of their cars, only) stand in line to pray for a minute each person at the Virgin Mary's miracle-carved stone statue with the baby Jesus in Her arms!

The Church of Virgin's Maphorion at Boljetin is better known as Sokolica, named after the hill at whose foot it is located. It was built in the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century, probably by a landlord from the surroundings of the town of Zvecan. It got rank of monastery thanks to the sculpture of the Virgin Mary with Christ in Her arms, which was brought there from the Western portal of the Banjska Monastery to hide it from Turkish invasion. The Byzantine art's splendid example, the white marble sculpture of the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child in Her hands, is dating back to 1312-1316.

Nowadays, all the Sokolica Monastery surroundings are settled by the Albanian population since the last Serb family moved from this village in 1967. Since 1956



*Figure 4 - Sokolica Monastery: the white marble sculpture of the Virgin Mary and Christ Child. Picture taken by the author on August 28, 2020*



*Figure 5 - Sokolica Monastery. Picture taken by the author on August 28, 2020*



*Figure 6 – The imposing fence of Sokolica Monastery. Picture taken by the author on August 26, 2020*



*Figure 7 - Mosaic at the entrance to the Sokolica Monastery (on the left side of the gate). Picture taken by the author on August 26 2020*

Sokolica Monastery is the monastic place of nuns significantly engaged in icon-painting and fresco-painting in their delicate devotion. Mother Makaria/Macaria, the Abbess of Sokolica Monastery, known as one of the most prized icon-painters in Serbia for her theological and artisan skills, besides her doctorate in chemistry and acknowledgments from the Theological Faculty in Thessaloniki, declared once: “The Angels’ eyes on the icons I paint tell the Kosovo and Serbian people story. Kosovo is a vast country. There is a place for both, Gypsies and us, and others. Albanians cannot push us out, and we cannot push them out. What happened here is nonsense. It is better to sit at a table and talk rather, then fight.”<sup>15</sup> This is the power of logical judgment, an indisputable one!

Asked whether she trusted NATO to protect the convent, she answered so candid: “I think God will protect us. Our Albanian neighbours will do for us as we did for them. All Albanians are not bad, and all Serbs are not bad.” And continued: “You see, they love each other. If a cat and a dog can live together, Albanians and Serbs can surely learn to live together.”<sup>16</sup>

The cult of Sokolica Virgin has always enjoyed an excellent reputation among the people, regardless of their confession. During the ten years war, between 1998 and 1999, the monastery was the place of refuge and assistance to Serbs and Albanians. Since it is situated in the predominantly Serbian inhabited Northern part of

Kosovo, the monastery continued a relatively peaceful life after the war. It is continuously under the protection of KFOR troops because of the neighbouring Kosovo Albanian village.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Information available online at <http://www.panacomp.net/sokolica-monastery/> accessed on September 8, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Ray Moseley, *Abbess Helps Serbs, and Ethnic Albanians*, available online at [http://www.kosovo.net/decani\\_peace.html#4](http://www.kosovo.net/decani_peace.html#4) accessed on September 8, 2020.

<sup>17</sup> Information available online at <http://www.kosovo.net/esokolica.html> accessed on September 8, 2020.



*Figure 8 – Devin-Voda Monastery. Picture taken by the author on August 26, 2020*

Artemis laid the foundation stone. The construction of the church was completed in 2006, and the mural of the church in 2016. The monastery has been in operation since 2009.<sup>18</sup>

Although it is located just 11 kilometres far away from the Sokolica Monastery, closed by the police this time (August 26, 2020), Devin-Voda Monastery is opened for visitors, and the peace and discretion of those who serve there invite to shyness and contemplation! The beauty of the monastery, the landscape, the silence that reigns, the utter trust assigned to the visitors, really makes you feel in the house of the Lord!

**Prizren** is the second-largest city in Kosovo after the capital of Pristina. Strategically located, the 11<sup>th</sup>-century Prizren Fortress closed for centuries the Southern entrance to Kosovo's highly contested fertile plain (while the Mitrovica Fortress closed the Northern gate).

It is worth noting that the events of 1999 did not seriously affect Prizren, one of the oldest Balkan cities, and this is a genuine significant thing we ought to mention! Still, this exciting city is linked to the tragic events of 2004 when the body of an Albanian boy was found in the Bystrica River, drowned in some unknown

**Devin-Voda Monastery** (Serb. Manastir Devina Water) or Devine-Vode (Serb. Devine Water). Positioned on the road between Zverechan and Zubin-Potok in Northern Kosovo, the monastery is devoted to the Icon of the Mother of God and belongs to the Rashko-Prizren diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The monastery is named after the source of the Devin Water. On November 3, 2002, the Bishop of Rashko-Prizren



*Figure 9 – Devin-Voda Monastery - the inner yard. Picture taken by the author on August 26, 2020*

<sup>18</sup> Information available online at <https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/> accessed on September 9, 2020.

circumstances. The media accused the Serbian side, fact which led to the degeneration of the situation; the crowd set fire to several temples and threw the entire Serbian population out of the city.<sup>19</sup>



*Figure 10 - Holy Archangels Monastery.  
Picture taken by the author on August 27, 2020*

a mountain river and under the ruins of fortifications on top of the mountain above the monastery.

In Prizren are a significant number of Orthodox churches, as well as mosques. The Orthodox temples, however, suffered after the 2004 pogroms, some of which ignited. The reality today is that all Orthodox churches are closed! Some are surrounded by barbed wire, police guard some.

If you enter the city following the communication Pristine - Strpce - Prizren, near the entrance, you are greeted by **Holly Archangels Monastery**, located in a natural setting of exceptional beauty, on the banks of



*Figure 11 - Church of our Lady of Ljeviša. Pictures taken by the  
author on August 27, 2020*

all! Nevertheless, first of all, Prizren is one of the most exciting places in all of Kosovo. Furthermore, here in the centre of the city on the Northern bank of the river Prizrenska-Bistritsa (in Albanian - Lumbari and Prizrenit) is the fourth Kosovo object of UNESCO - the **Church of the Virgin of Ljeviša** of the 14<sup>th</sup> century - more

The Prizren Serbs suffered the same fate as their compatriots from Peć, who once constituted a large part of the city's population and left to escape the war and the pogroms. Now Prizren is not associated with Serbian culture at

<sup>19</sup> Information available online at <https://perito-burrito.com/posts/reasonskosovo> accessed at September 9, 2020.

precisely, what remains of it after the arson in 2004. Now the temple's bare walls can be seen only through a fence with barbed wire, the entrance for which is prohibited.

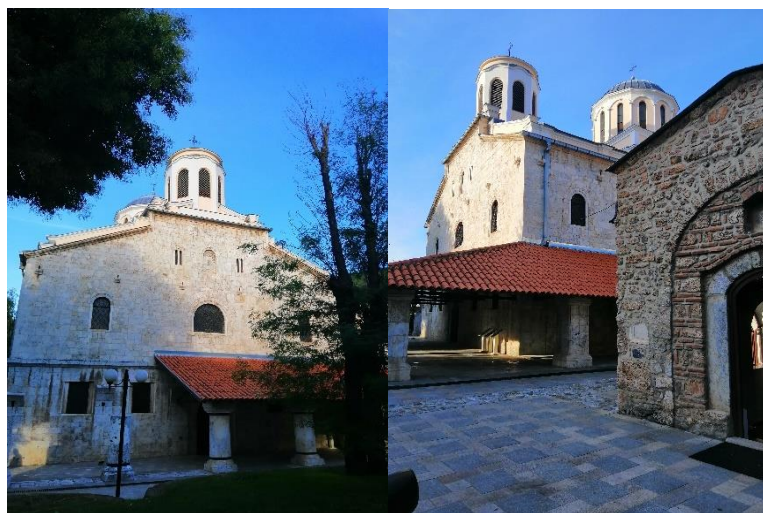


Figure 12 - The Church of Saint George Runovic. Pictures taken by the author on August 27, 2020

the Bishop of Raska-Prizren. It was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century over the ruins of an earlier church, probably dating to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, whose foundations were identified in excavations and whose imprint remains on the floor of the court-yard area.

In 2004, during a period of violent unrest, the building complex was set on fire. In the Church of Saint George, due to the fire, the wall paintings suffered distortions, and the wood-carved templon was entirely destroyed!

The temple has already been completely restored after the arson, but the inside is still not allowed. The Church is closed, guarded by the police and KFOR, under UNMIK's protection, only a small altar, located at the back of the churchyard, is open to prayer!

On the South bank is another Orthodox shrine – the **Church of Saint George Runovic**. The chapel, named after its donor, is in the complex of the Orthodox Cathedral church of Saint George in Prizren, which also includes the residence of

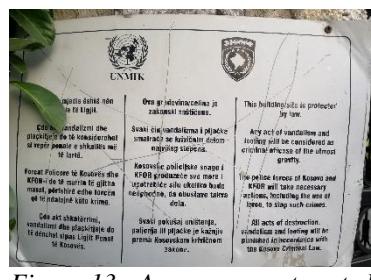


Figure 13 - Announcement posted at the entrance to St. George's Church in Prizren. Picture taken by the author on August 27, 2020



Figure 14 – The Church of the Holy Saviour in Prizren. Picture taken by the author on August 27, 2020

Climbing the hill where the ancestral Prizren Fortress is located, the **Church of the Holy Saviour** and the **Church of Svete Nedejde**'s ruins could be still seen! Albanian mobsters also burned them both in 2004. **The Church of Svete Nedejde**, situated on the path that goes up to the fortress, small, locked, with the police booth at the entrance, offers a lonely image! Hard to see!

In the evening in Prizren, the mosques ostentatiously lit in the summer twilight that spread over the city, call to prayer the Muslims while on the Orthodox churches' closed gates hang heavy padlocks like the silence that reigns closed inside them!

Some of them partially collapsed,

intentionally destroyed or eroded by people negligence and difficult times, with broken windows and doors, with wooden planks beaten with nails and concertina wire nets instead of some astonishing stained glass, surrounded by concertina wire instead of outdoor gardens, and guarded by dogs locked behind high walls, the questions that instantly arises in the consciousness of visitors are: *How long will they stand, under the action of environmental factors and the vicissitudes of modern times?* or *What is left for future generations of this invaluable dowry of millennial or more recent paintings and frescoes, ennobled by the suffering of believers and monks who once lived within their walls?*



Figure 15 - The Church of Svete Nedejde in Prizren. Picture taken by the author on August 27, 2020



Figure 16 - The Patriarchate of Peć. Picture taken by the

**The Patriarchate of Peć.** Peć, unlike Gracianica, is not a Serbian enclave. On the contrary, most of the Serb population left here during the Kosovo War, and almost all of the few remaining did after the pogroms in 2004. But in Peć is the Monastery of Pechka-Patriarshia - the second of the list of UNESCOs!

The park entrance is located near Peć's town, which is vital for Serbian Orthodoxy: the Serbian

Orthodox Church is considered the heir to the Peć Patriarchate, which existed from 1346 to 1463 and from 1557 to 1776.



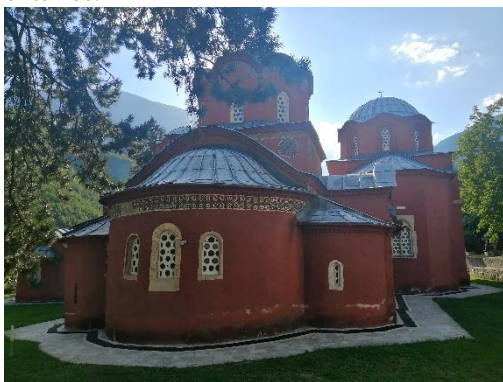
*Figure 17 - Patriarchate of Peć - the inner yard and the secular mulberry tree. Pictures taken by the author on August 29, 2020*

Peć's Patriarchate is one of the most critical sacral monuments of spirituality, culture, and Serbian history. It is located in Metohija, near

Peć's city, at the entrance to the Rugovska Klisura gorge.

This ancient, renowned, and a very significant cultural-historical monument stands under a single roof topped by three domes and comprises three churches (Church of the Holy Apostles, built 1233-1263; Church of Saint Demetrius, built 1317-1324; The Church of the Mother of God Hodegitria, built 1330), a common narthex (built at the beginning of the fourth decade of the 14<sup>th</sup> century), and the adjoining Church of Saint Nicolas (built 1330-1337) on the South side. Since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Peć Patriarchate Stavropegial Laura has been the seat of Serbian archbishops and patriarchs, who have been enthroned and have resided here as spiritual heads of the Serbian Church and Serbian people. The Church of the Holy Apostles contains the marble throne on which archbishops and patriarchs of the Serbian Church have been enthroned for centuries.

In the coquettish inner yard stands a branchy mulberry tree (Sham-dud), about 750 years old, planted, according to spoken tradition, by Saint Sava, which continues to bear delicious fruits ton this day! This monument of nature has got legends about itself! It is believed that Archbishop Savva II, nephew of one of the most revered Serbian saints Savva I, brought here a seedling from Syria - hence the name Sham. Locals claim that it is the oldest tree of this species in Europe and the oldest tree in Serbia. Savva II's body was buried right there in the compound



*Figure 18 - The Patriarchate of Peć - the four churches under a single roof! Picture taken by the author on August 29, 2020*

and the ashes of several other Serbian medieval religious leaders.<sup>20</sup>

From its founding, throughout medieval times, and especially during the time of the Turkish enslavement, the holy Patriarchate of Peć has played a significant role in the spiritual, ecclesial, national, and cultural life of the Serbian people and, especially today, in the preservation of the Serbs living in Kosovo and Metohija.<sup>21</sup>

The monastery is surrounded by an extremely high fence and a tower, guarded by the police, and to enter, you will need a passport! Upon entering the monastery, the armored container, similar to the one at the entrance to the Visoki-Dečani Monastery where the KFOR force guards this monument of inestimable spiritual value, will really strike you! You will never expect this image when you visit a monastery, wherever it is located!

#### **4. Snapshots of the current religious situation in Kosovo**

Disputes over the spiritual dowry in this space is something as routine as, for example, a football championship in a developed country.

Albanians consider that the Monastery of Dečani is Kosovo's heritage and not of the Serbs, that "the Serbian Orthodox Church has politicized this and continues to do the same. The Serbian Orthodox Church institutionalized the Albanians consider that the Monastery of Dečani is Kosovo's heritage and not of the Serbs, that the Serbian Orthodox Church has politicized this and continues to do the same. The Serbian Orthodox Church institutionalized the Dečani Monastery. The church builder himself, Vitia Kuqi - a hardworking architect from Kotor, has brought the Romanesque style's spirit. Dečani Monastery is the cultural heritage of Kosovo and not of Serbs. I think that the law that has been made makes positive discrimination about the role of the churches. Space has not been given to the historical aspect, but only to the legal part. The Serbian Orthodox Church has known how to make the most of this. Even during the Ottoman and Albanian period where they had a kind of autonomy, the Patriarchate of Peja was not surrounded by walls. Today, even though not endangered by anyone, barriers exist, but those walls are built of Albanian towers."<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, the Serb replied that In Kosovo and Metohija, UNESCO recognizes Serbian and Ottoman heritage. The Shqiptari has failed to build anything

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<sup>20</sup> Information available online at <https://perito-burrito.com/posts/serbian-kosovo> accessed on September 9, 2020.

<sup>21</sup> *The Patriarchate of Peć*, The Serbian Orthodox Church Press, Belgrade, publishing preparation Gradimir Stanić, translated by Aleksandar Pavić, photographs Deacon Dragan S. Tanasijević, Rajco R. Karisić

<sup>22</sup> Historian Muhamet Mala, *Decani Monastery is Kosovo's heritage and not Serbia's*, in the Info Magazine show on KLAN KOSOVA.TV (17 Aug 18:31); KLAN KOSOVA (17 Aug 20:00) .

older and more valuable than the monument to Bill Clinton. Whoever does not have their own culture must appropriate someone else's. "The Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian people have become the heritage of Kosovo and Kosovars. Furthermore, that is why we will continue to fight to preserve the testimonies of the length of our duration (lasting presence)," said Defence Minister Aleksandar Vulin during the filming of "Corridor" on the occasion of Shqiptari historians' statements that Dečani Monastery was built by Albanians, according to the website of Ministry of Defence of Serbia.<sup>23</sup>

Sava Janic, the abbot of the Dečani Monastery, also expressed profoundly serious concern about Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) monasteries in Kosovo in a statement for *Nova.rs*. "We are seriously concerned about SPC monasteries in Kosovo and Metohija because 150 of our churches and monasteries have been destroyed in the past 20 years of "peace" despite the international presence in Kosovo and Metohija." Commenting on attempts to build a Dečani-Plav road through the protected zone of the monastery, between a road through Dečani Monastery property, Janic said that that the construction of the road is currently suspended, adding that ambassadors of leading Western countries have made it clear after visiting the monastery and Dečani Monastery a few days ago that the law must be respected. "The construction of such a road in a specially protected zone is prohibited, and such a road would cause great damage to the monastery surroundings and the monastery itself due to increased traffic, passage of heavy vehicles, noise, and pollution." Asked if he believes that the story of the construction of the road through the Dečani Monastery protected zone is over and that there would be no more such attempts, the abbot replied: "We will see if the local municipality will respect their law and the stance of Western diplomats. The works were suspended twice so far at international representatives' initiative, but they resumed even though this is an open violation of the law."

Asked about the relations and contacts between the monastery and representatives of the government in Pristina, given that the works were suspended following talks between Kosovo Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti and Decani Mayor Bashkim Ramosaj, Father Sava said: "The visit came the following mediation by international representatives and KFOR Commander, General Michele Risi, attended the meeting. I find it useful that Mr. Hoti expressed the view that the solution must be found within the existing law framework. However, words should always be followed by actions, and we will see about that in the coming period because the Kosovo

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<sup>23</sup> Defence Minister Aleksandar Vulin, *Whoever does not have their own culture, must appropriate someone else's*, during the filming of "Corridor" on the occasion of Shqiptari historians' statements that Decani was built by Albanians, according to the website of Ministry of Defence of Serbia, Mod.gov.rs, Novosti (14:42) Pink.rs, Danas, B92.

Government has changed its position on the highway twice so far. Otherwise, we do not have meetings with representatives of the institutions in Pristina. Except those with an international presence as part of the International Mixed Commission for the Implementation of Monastery Protected Zones.” Bishop Teodosije, together with me or some of the Eparchy officials, participated since 2008, following the SPC Holy Synod’s decision. The last session was held in the fall last year.

Asked whether he is concerned about attempts to present SPC monasteries as part of Kosovo’s historical heritage, Janic said that there is a serious concern: “We are seriously concerned about SPC monasteries in Kosovo and Metohij” a because 150 of our churches and monasteries have been destroyed in the past 20 years of “*peace*” despite the international presence in Kosovo and Metohija.” He warned that at the same time, laws adopted under international pressure to protect the SPC holy sites and rights continue to be ignored. “Attempts to present our heritage as part of Albanian history are continuing and visible in the media, education system, and social networks. I keep asking why then these churches have been attacked and torched by them over the past 20 years if they are Albanian,” he said, adding that there is plenty of documents and testimonies of both local and international historians and travel writers, as well as medieval and Ottoman first-hand sources, that clearly show whose monasteries and churches these are. The abbot said that under Kosovo law, the monasteries belong to the SPC and are part of global heritage: “Of course, we always note that our heritage in Kosovo and Metohija has a legal owner - SPC, something that is stated in Kosovo law, but as cultural heritage of the entire world, it has great importance for all who live in Kosovo and Metohija and around the world, and therefore should serve to bring people together, not cause conflicts between them. Our Church in this area has continuously had a constructive attitude against violence; that is why there are so many international visitors and officials who come to our holy sites and talk with us. We are trying to acquaint our visitors with the history of our people and holy sites, and we believe that this can contribute to a better solution to existing problems,” Janic concluded.<sup>24</sup>

On August 28, 2020, a Serb community representative declared that, on August 26, Serbs repaired the recently damaged Serbian Orthodox Church of “Uspenje Bogordice” in Sredskë/Sredska village, Prizren municipality. Reportedly, the damaged stone tiles were recovered, and a new cross was installed above the altar. The incident at the Church reported on August 21, 2020. The Church’s reparation and cleaning were performed just before the Assumption holiday, celebrated on August 28, 2020.

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<sup>24</sup> Sava Janic for NOVA.RS: *We are concerned about monasteries in Kosovo*, KOSOVO NOVA, September 2, 2020, available online at <http://rs.n1info.com/English/NEWS/a635685/Abbot-worried-about-Serbian-monasteries-in-Kosovo.html>, accessed on September 11, 2020.

## 5. The Serbian cultural, artistic, and linguistic heritage lost in Kosovo and Metohija

The book *Serbian Cemeteries in Kosovo and Metohija: Destroyed Monuments and Language Heritage*, written by professor Mitra Relic, is the result of years of work on collecting monuments from exclusively ruined stone marks, and with the fundamental goal of, based on analysis of the managed timber, to show scale and, theoretically observed, the essential aspects of irreversibly lost cultural, artistic and linguistic heritage.<sup>25</sup>

As the worthiest testimony to the given space's identity, Serbian cemeteries have always been targeted by Albanians, both in Albania, in Macedonia, and KiM. The rapid systematic, and unhealthy destruction of Serb graves began immediately after the protection of the protectorate. This was preceded by the shameless NATO destruction of specific cemetery sites. At the Serbian cemetery in Pristina, devastating NATO airstrikes rained down on two occasions. Behind them, we found huge craters, far ejected massive monuments, mixed bones of the deceased.

In Professor Relic's opinion, the burial of Serbian graves' primary goal is to undo the traces of Serbian existence in KiM and change the Kosovo space's identity definitively. The vandalism and systematic deletion of these leads take place with the full support of the Albanian authorities and tacit approval, in the province of present western representatives of international governance, except for, of course, honorable individuals – Spaniards, Italians, and others who have managed to spiral out of control and at least try to protect themselves.

Being asked by the reporter: "How he sees the situation of the Serbian language in KiM? Moreover, how much it has been affected in the last two decades of conflict?" Professor Relic states that over the previous two decades, "the Serbian

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<sup>25</sup> Professor Mitra Reljič, a professor at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Pristina based in the Northern part of Kosovska Mitrovica and the author of this monograph recently published by Matica Srpska, in a conversation with Jelena Tasic for Danas (Today): *Serbian cemeteries constantly targeted by Albanians*, Radio KiM available online at <https://www.radiokim.net/vesti/drustvo/mitra-reljic-srpska-groblja-konstantno-na-meti-albanaca.html> accessed on September 11, 2020. The book "*Serbian Cemeteries in Kosovo and Metohija: Destroyed Monumental and Linguistic Heritage*" is the result of many years of work on collecting monumental inscriptions from exclusively destroyed stone marks, with the basic goal of presenting the dimensions and the most important aspects of irretrievably lost cultural, artistic and linguistic heritage: "It should be said that the inscriptions placed in the book make up only a small part of the destroyed, but they represent a sufficient corpus for perceiving the looted linguistic and onomastic richness which, along with the age of the tombstones, their content and artistic design, testified to the life and worldview of the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohija, its ethical and value priorities in the time span of nearly 200 years."

language has been continually excluded, abused and humiliated in official acts of state creation, in publications of all kinds, translations and elsewhere, and its users of this century were punished with death. The marginalization of the Serbian language to fully squeeze it out with KiM is a political project to which the language policy does not yet have an adequate answer”.

His firmly position is that “by bringing Kosovo’s Serbs to the national minority and convincing them, as well as Serbs outside the province, that this reality should be accepted, the identity security of the Serb people and, no less, the Serbian identity of the KiM space is most directly undermined”. Being asked who is responsible for such a policy – West, Pristina, Belgrade, Serbian intellectuals? Professor Relic answered: “Altogether, especially Belgrade, because it accepted the premeditated prank of Pristina and the West, so government officials and some intellectuals, consciously or unconsciously, are now promoting the minority status of the Serbian people in their own country”.

### **Conclusions**

The response of the international community? One almost absent!

In the case of ISIS, on September 22, 2014, US Secretary of State John Kerry announced that the State Department had partnered with the American Schools of Oriental Studies.

According to Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, the local parliamentary committee on tourism and antiquities has “filed complaints with the UN to condemn all crimes and abuses of ISIS, including those affecting ancient places of worship.” On May 28, 2015, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution, initiated by Germany and Iraq and supported by 91 member states, stating that the destruction of cultural heritage by ISIS could constitute a war crime and called for action to stop such acts, described as a “war tactic”.

On March 28, 2015, Irina Bokova launched *Unite4Heritage*, a campaign designed to curb a global movement “to protect and safeguard cultural heritage in areas where extremists threaten it.”

Following the destruction (August 2015) of the Palmyra temple, the Institute of Digital Archaeology (IDA) announced plans to establish a digital record of historical sites and artifacts threatened by ISIS’s advance. To achieve this goal, IDA has proposed, in collaboration with UNESCO, to deploy, to partners in the Middle East, 5,000 3D cameras, to be used to make 3D captures of local ruins and remains.

Protecting cultural and spiritual vestiges with a gun, barbed wire, padlock, or impenetrable walls is not the right solution! The solution must be the awareness of their value in the letter and spirit of the sacred text of the universal law of inestimable values, a national attitude of acceptance, forgiveness, and tolerance! In a country with a territory almost as naturally attractive as Romania, I understood that the difference

lies in the way of thinking and the degree of civilization! It will be many decades before Kosovo becomes what it claims to be: a sovereign, multi-ethnic, democratic country!

After two weeks of traveling through Kosovo, the question that arises for me is the following: *Who protects from whom!?* The answer can be straightforward, for those who want to accept it: asked whether she trusted NATO to protect the convent, Mother Macaria, the Abbess of Sokolica Monastery, answered candidly: “I think God will protect us.”

Protecting the environment, especially its spiritual dimension, is a matter of education, a policy at the national level! And Kosovo does not have such knowledge, it must be started as early as possible, now, at the same time and in parallel with all generations, younger and more experienced! This must be a state policy, but of course, it requires political maturity and advanced civic consciousness! And international bodies can and must have a substantial contribution to achieving this!

For any honest visitor, without any personal economic interest, this country is a contrast between misery and luxury, as in no other country you can meet, only in those where corruption still makes the law!

Do not forget that Kosovo signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU in 2015. A 2018 EU report named it one of six Western Balkan countries that will join the organization once it meets the criteria to accede. Kosovo also seeks memberships in the UN and NATO. But no, not at all! Kosovo is not a democratic country; it is by no means multi-ethnic, because petty and macabre interests that anyone will talk to you on any street corner in Pristina, the country’s capital, such as money laundering, prostitution (which strikes here by so many “body massage saloons” located on whole streets and which I was told are specific and normal to Muslim countries!), mafia and corruption, all these are far from making you feel comfortable, like in a developing country!

The same as temple of Baal dedicated to the Mesopotamian God Baal, it was blown up by ISIS in August 2015 or the Lion of the Temple of the goddess Al-lat from Palmira, sec. I BC, blown up by ISIS in August 2015, the Orthodox cultural legacy of Kosovo Serbs is threatened every day by ethnic Albanian Muslims’ vengeful actions!

Should cultural awareness be the explanation? I do not think, it would be too convenient for everyone and all the international organizations involved, who do not seem to notice or understand the amplitude of the disaster!

We visited *Gërmia National Park*, a large beautiful park located in the East part of Pristina<sup>26</sup>, and we climbed to the highest observation point, above the forest that

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<sup>26</sup> Information available online at <https://www.petitfute.co.uk/v57383-pristina/c1173-visites-points-d-interet/c971-parc-> accessed on September 13, 2020.

dominates the park. The landscape's beauty is darkened by the garbage thrown everywhere out from the most expensive cars; the park is a colossal landfill! Stretching over 16 ha, *Arbëria Park* is the most pleasant after that of Gërmia National Park. Located right next to the KFOR Pristina base (Camp Film City), *Arbëria Park*, renovated from EU funds between September and December 2012, means a few broken benches. On a day of Monday, it is so full of rubbish!

*Camp Film City* is not a film studio as the reader could think, but the name of the military base that serves as the NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR), working under the UN mandate since 1999. Located in the extension of *Arbëria Park* in the South, this vast camp is home to about a thousand soldiers, mainly Italian and American, who manage the other four large KFOR bases in Ferizaj/Uroševac (South-East), Maxhunaj/Novo Selo Mađunsko (North-West, between Pristina and Mitrovica), Peja/Peć (West) and Prizren (South). KFOR has about 4,000 troops from 28 nations (France withdrew in 2014)<sup>27</sup> and generates thousands of local jobs.

In the presence of such an impressive international force, it is difficult to understand how every day, Orthodox churches, monasteries, cemeteries can be devastated to erase from the surface of the Earth, the cultural legacy of a nation! Talking amicably with the soldiers guarding them, they will invariably answer you: As long as we (Romanians, Greeks, Moldovans, Italians, and others) are here, this will not happen! But it still happens! It happens because there is no consciousness of the nation, civilization and education to understand that you cannot take revenge on the divinity! From a cultural point of view, what was created in centuries and millennia, in the heart of a nation like Serbia, just to impose your own culture and identity. Others have tried, but failed!

If, as a result of the destruction caused by ISIS in the occupied territories, UNESCO found a way to record in 3D to preserve them for posterity, for the inestimable beauty and value monuments of Kosovo due to the long-suffering, plundered, and devastated it seems that there is still no solution adopted, they remain locked, silenced, guarded by foreign soldiers.

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<sup>27</sup> Information available online at [jardin/1714476-parc-d-arberia-parku-arberia-parka-arberija.html](http://jardin/1714476-parc-d-arberia-parku-arberia-parka-arberija.html) accessed on September 13, 2020.

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# Time's Reason to Be – The Eternity of the Holy Trinity

Ionuț Vlădescu\*<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** For Orthodoxy, the eternal Christ does not abolish our time, but fulfills it, capitalizes on it again and redeems it. True events no longer disappear, but are kept in God's memory (prayer for the dead requires God to “remember them”). Positive time surpasses, neutralizes negation, destruction, and shows that human eternity does not mean the absence of time, but its fulfillment: the messianic feast will see at the same table Abraham, Isaac, James, and people of all historical ages. Eternity is solidary with time, without being confused with it. Eternity is the origin and perspective of time and the force that moves time towards it. In the end, eternity will overwhelm time, give it its quality. Then there will be no more time, because we will have in us only love.

**Keywords:** eternity, time, salvation, history, freedom, holiness.

The eternity of the supreme Person, more precisely, the eternity of the supreme personal communion is not thought about as an amorphous, unconscious eternity, devoid of freedom and of an inner relation. Everything revolves around the mysterious means through which the Eternal trinitarian God creates time and sustains it as the path that advances through every man in connection with others towards Him. Such an existence, certainly, may open to a relationship with the temporal person, called to an increasingly accentuated communion with other persons alike, but also to the personal supreme and absolute Communion.

The possibility of a relation, as stated by Father Dumitru Stăniloae, between the supreme and eternal personal Communion and the temporal one is given by the fact that both are consciously open to good, the first being able to descend from an impulse of the good towards persons created to aspire towards a growth in the good of the communion, and the second, capable to raise towards the good of the

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<sup>1</sup> PhD candidate The Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Oradea University. Email: ionut772002@yahoo.com

supreme Communion. Personal consciousness is, by itself, willing to open to other consciousnesses, towards a communion with them and this is united with the good.<sup>2</sup>

In God, possibilities to manifest and communicate the good are given, but He chooses them as required by the changing situations of creatures. This could even express to some extent the creation of time, or of the changing beings by God, eternal and unchanged in His being, but infinite in His possibilities of manifesting the good, found as a source in His being. It can even explain a relation between time and God's eternity, without questioning the unchanging of His being. Had the world been eternal, it would no longer be the work of His will and there would be no difference between it and God, and the inadequacies in the world would have their cause in His being (including the evil in it). But time and the world are not eternal, statement which avoids the eternity of incompleteness and evil and their attributions as being God's.

In the conception of the Fathers there is a close connection between the infinity of God and the fact that divinity is incomprehensible to the mind. C. Stead<sup>3</sup> argues that St. Gregory of Nyssa is the first to "introduce a new factor when describing God as infinite" which naturally follows from the fact that he is entirely transcendent. However, the continuity in which the Cappadocian Father stands in relation to Origen in this regard cannot be overlooked. Origen is the first to say that God is "infinite"<sup>4</sup> in His being and works: there is no limit to God's glory, and His providence for all creation is "from infinity to infinity and beyond", He is omnipotent<sup>5</sup>. St. Gregory follows him when he speaks of the glory and power of God in terms of infinity, without limit: "the glory of the power of God is infinite", the power of God is "infinite". Moreover, infinity is an ontological feature of the divine nature because while "human nature is small and easy to describe, the divinity is infinite; therefore, it cannot be grasped by any man"<sup>6</sup>.

Andrutsos' phrase, "God is only logically anterior to the world" is not the happiest to explain the relationship between the world and divinity. The creation of the world in time can be reconciled, in the opinion of Dumitru Stăniloae, with the admission of a "before" in God through the teaching about the difference

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<sup>2</sup>Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos – lumina lumii și îndumnezeitorul omului*, Editura Anastasia, București, 1993, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>Charles Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, Cambridge 1994, p. 202.

<sup>4</sup>Origen, *Contra Iulius Celsus* III, 77, PSB 9, trad., studiu introductiv și note de Pr. Prof. Teodor Bodogae, Editura IBM al BOR, București, 1984, p. 188.

<sup>5</sup>Origen, *Fragmenta ex commentariis in Proverbiae*, 18, (PG 17.204) transl. by A.F. Gregg, *Journal of Theological Studies*, 3, London, 1953, p. 38.

<sup>6</sup>Sf Grigorie de Nyssa, *Marele cuvânt catehetic*, 10, trad. G. Teodorescu, Editura Sophia, București, 1998, p. 112.

between the being and the uncreated works of God. Thinking of an “everlasting age”, when God conceived the world, we do not introduce time into the eternity of His being. The Holy Apostles also write in the New Testament that God “chose us in Christ before the ages” (Ephesians 1:11; I Peter 1:19-20; Revelation 13:8). But this “before” when God conceived, does not introduce time into the being of God, nor does His anterior thinking introduce it to what is happening in the world after the world appeared. On the contrary, time protects God from evolution, or from an appearance in Him of something at the moment when He accomplishes that thing in time, thus allowing it to be as He thought about that thing previously.

God did not introduce into Himself, when He created the world also time, a temporal “before”, because He conceived them “before the ages”. For this, however, he was not compelled to create the world before the ages, for the contemplation of the world and of time, or of different times before the ages was not a necessity for His being, but an act of His will. The idea of the world and of time conceived before the ages was not a necessity, and therefore they did not come out of God as everlasting need. Here is the mystery of the Person of God, compelled to think and work something by His very Being, thus having in His being immediately a “before” of any thought and work, but a basis for them.

Starting from the account in Exodus 3:14 “I AM the existing One”, St. Gregory of Nazianzus says that they express eternity as eternally present, above the subdivisions of “was” and “will be” of the time experienced by human beings, in this way, due to the instability of nature in continuous transformation. God, Who “is eternal” is “existence without beginning and without end, He is like an endless and boundless ocean of being, which transcends all thinking about time and nature”.<sup>7</sup> The very notions of “without beginning” and “without end” as descriptive attributes of eternity are simple outlines from the perspective of the creature, the unspeakable of the divine life which, being neither time nor part of it cannot be contained, measured, in a word conceived by man, a temporal being by definition. Eternity is, through the economy of an analogy, what time is for man as a created being: an extension of the uncreated divine life: “namely, everything that flows together with the eternal, as a movement of time and as an interval”.<sup>8</sup>

Time and eternity are defined in this passage by antithesis and analogy: eternity is neither time nor part of time because it does not belong to creation but to the uncreated God. Nevertheless, it can be seen as an extension, as an extension of the divine life altogether, beyond the flow of temporality in the sense that the

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<sup>7</sup> Sfântul Grigorie de Nazianz, *Cuvantare la aratarea lui Dumnezeu* 1, I, 29 in *Taina m-a uns, Cuvantari*, trad,note si comentarii de pr. dr. Gheorghe Tilea, Editura Herald, Bucuresti, 1999, p. 179-180.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, 1, I, 31, p. 180.

movement of time and the interval that borders it are inseparable from the temporal condition of man.

In order to define the notion of “infinity” vis-à-vis the one of “eternity”, Father Dumitru Stăniloae makes a relevant statement inspired by the thinking of Saint Maximus. He answers the philosophical dilemma of the relationship between the actual infinity and the potential one that “...endless discussions...” start from the misidentification of the continuous aspiration to the absolute with the limit of this aspiration. The present infinity of God is the expression of our inability to express the richness of plenitude, in which there is no interval of course, at the end of which to begin another interval<sup>9</sup>. This divine plenitude is better expressed by the notion of stability, not in the sense of stone-stillness, but “a stability in the sense of persistence in one's own being [...] a stability that does not exclude perfection<sup>10</sup>”.

Man, although living in a limited condition, especially temporally, is called to reach God's plenitude. The word “infinite” is only the expression of this impotence of creation, and “eternity” is associated with the plenitude of the intra-trinitarian divine communion as the living infinity of love. The spiritual rhythm of human life is given by the transforming movement, sustained by the longing for the absolute whose expression is the concept of infinite potential. In this way the eternity of God allows time to exist.

Father Stăniloae shows that “eternity cannot be deprived of the most essential dimension of the inexhaustible character, which must be at the same time a dimension of life in plenitude. An eternity devoid of free and conscious life is at best an ambiguous eternity, devoid of the fullness of existence, so in essence a false eternity. Even the eternity of pure reason is a monotony that kills and is therefore limited. True eternity must be the quality of a perfect subjectivity, for only this is totally incorruptible and possesses the most essential dimensions of the inexhaustible character and of the infinite novelty of manifestation: interiority and free will. Only the subject is totally uncomposed, inexhaustible in all its possibilities, and free”<sup>11</sup>.

Inexhaustible plenitude is the perfect communion of perfect Persons and is a movement of divine love above all movement, above any temporal determination. In the Trinity there can be no question of overcoming the communion already achieved towards a fuller one. The *raison d'être* of time is only eternity because

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<sup>9</sup> Sfantul Maxim Marturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, trad. și note de Pr. Prof. Dr. D. Stăniloae, ediția a II-a, Editura Harisma, București, 1993, p. 439.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem.*, nota 592, p. 504.

<sup>11</sup> Pr. Prof. D. Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, ediția a II-a, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1996, vol.I, p. 122.

“.... Only because it is through Him – the plenitude is above all determination and becoming, of every increase and decrease – God was able to create a world destined to share in His eternity understood as the fullness of interpersonal communion [...]. Only an eternity in this sense makes it possible to understand time.<sup>12</sup> St. Gregory Palamas says that the deified becomes without beginning and without end.

In summary, Florovski synthetically approaches what has been presented so far and states: “The idea of the world, God’s thinking and will regarding the world are obviously eternal, but not in a co-eternal sense and not absolutely connected with Him, its idea being distinct by His will from His «being». This distinction does not introduce any separation or cutting into the divine existence ..., which expresses the distinction between being and will ... The idea of the world is based not in essence, but in the will of God. He conceives the world in perfect freedom and, only by virtue of this completely free thought ..., He becomes Creator ... He could also not have created ... And the restraint from its creation would not have altered or impoverished the divine nature”.<sup>13</sup> If the above is true, God, deciding by His will to create the world and time, could think of them before creating them on the basis of the power given in His being, but He was not compelled to think of them and he brings them to fulfillment by work, or to emanate them, or to give birth to them by being.

At least on a semantic level, the Greek language has tried to resolve this antinomy, distinguishing between the eternity of God’s being, His thinking and His will concerning the world and time, before the ages, using for the former the term eternity, and for the latter, the term ageless ages. The world is thought “before all eternity”. God’s thinking about what is special about Him underlies “eternity”. The world also takes place through the thinking and work of God in a way in Himself and through it in eternity, which is not thought of or does not exist without a relation to time, whether it is future (thought by God as future) or present, or past. “Thus, God not only descends in time, thinking of him, giving him existence, or raising those who have lived in time, in Himself, but he has it since He thinks of it in a way in Himself, dependent on Him, full of Himself. Time is similar, especially until it is only thought and after it has been lived by the beings created as another eternity.”<sup>14</sup> In this way, we pray to God for an eternity of His being that He possesses, or an eternity in a fundamental sense “before” the thinking and creation of the world, placed in an eternity conceived as a connection of God with

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 124.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 45.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 46.

the world or the world with God, without which it cannot be thought, realized and perfected.

This eternity implies a relationship of God with the world and with time, before their existence, without taking Him out of His own eternity, exclusively His, or His being's. But this means that God willingly sits, not through His "infinite being or infinite before the ages"<sup>15</sup>, in relation to the time of the world, contemplating to give the temporal world real existence. If He hadn't conceived the world and time before the creation, the world would no longer be a creation, but an emanation. If He were to create the world once with its conceiving before the ages, it would also no longer be creation, but emanation. God is also free from time, not producing it when he thinks of it, but time also acquires great value, being thought of by God before the ages.

To understand the interpenetrations and inter-conditions between time and eternity we must consider their relationship and their relation to the eon. In this sense, the words of Saint Maximus the Confessor are particularly eloquent: "Time, when it stops moving, is an eon, and the eon, when measured, is time carried by movement. Thus, the eon is, to put it briefly, time without motion, and time, the eon measured by motion"<sup>16</sup> or: "Deification, to put it briefly, is the concentration and end of all times and all ages and all that is in time and eternity"<sup>17</sup>. This means that the eternity that will be installed at the end of time will be a concentration of all time, together with the efforts made by men, a concentration penetrated by the eternity of God, with which man entered into full communion.

In other words, the eon becomes time when creation appears with its movement, and time becomes an eon when creation stops in its movement, in God Who is above movement, as One who has in Him everything from eternity to age. The aeon pre-exists as time virtuality in the bosom of divine eternity, without being confused with it, as a reason of time related to the reason of the cosmos (Acts 17:26).

Time, no doubt, began with the created world. However, without a pre-existing eternity, he could not have begun. But he is not just a simple period in the endless periods that have been and will be. Eternity before and after time is

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<sup>15</sup> Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, 60; P.G. 90, 621 urm., in Filoc. rom., vol. III trad. și note de Pr. Prof. Dr. D. Stăniloae, ediția a II-a, Editura Harisma, București 1993, p. 46.

<sup>16</sup> Sfantul Maxim Marturisitorul, *Ambigua*, apud. Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, p. 187, Idem., *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, 59, in Filoc. rom., vol. III, p.315, apud. Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *op.cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>17</sup> Idem., *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, 59, in Filoc. rom., vol. III, p.315, apud. Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *op.cit.*, p. 187.

something other than time. But eternity explains the time that comes from it and ends in it. It was in it as a virtual eon and ends as an eon updated and perpetuated with all the realities lived as unfolded time.

Father Dumitru Stăniloae says that eternity is the basis of time, and this, as the unfolding of the eon, is a kind of extended scale of eternity, or of a work of it, towards the created world. It is a scale extended by the eternity of God made available to me, according to my measure, by a work of God at my level, because I cannot yet live eternity as such. But the highest relationship between the divine and the human person can only be a relationship of love and can pursue nothing but union in full love, the vision of the intimate connection between eternity and time meant to become an eon imbued with eternity, it can be transcribed in terms of this relationship. In other words, God's eternity can be conceived as present in our time through the offering of his love, which provokes and helps our response. As creatures, we are limited, but at the same time, we are able to outdo ourselves and tend to outdo ourselves. It introduces time, that is, the past with a dissatisfaction for what it was and the degree to which we have given ourselves, and the future with a tendency to be more.

The eternal God is placed in an expectation in relation to us. Under these conditions, the relation between Him and time also appears. From this it is seen that God keeps time bound to His eternity. Eternity accepts time in it, namely, God accepts the creature, who lives in time, in His eternity, although time also represents a spiritual distance between created persons and God. Eternity is thus both in time and above time. There remains a distance between us and God, but at the same time, this distance takes place within love, therefore, within the eternity of God. Distance is, therefore, time, as an expectation of eternity directed towards creatures and as a hope of the creature directed towards eternity.<sup>18</sup>

But, on this path of ours to eternity, God himself lives with us the expectation and therefore the time, in the plan of its energies or of his relations with us. This is because He Himself voluntarily experiences the limitation of the offer of His love. This is a kenosis voluntarily accepted by God for creation, a descent (*katabasis*) in relation to the world, lived simultaneously with the eternity of His trinitarian life. He lives them both by making them feel the offer of His eternal love even in our temporal moment. But this means that, in the need to answer, we also live not only our temporality, but also the eternity from which this offer comes, even if we answer only half, or refuse to answer.

Time means for God the length of time between His knock at the gate of the soul and our act of opening it.<sup>19</sup> He does not forcefully enter the hearts of men,

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<sup>18</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *op.cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 191.

time also implies in this respect the respect granted by God to conscious creatures. Union with Him in love cannot be achieved without people's free response to the offer of His love. But God, waiting, lives time without forgetting His eternity, without coming out of it, while we, when we hear His voice, live a time without the consciousness of eternity.

Our time is still a reality for God, but He also remains above time. He is above even by the fact that man is moved inwardly by God's offer, or by His call, by the fact that we are moved in response to God's eternal love. Father Dumitru Stăniloae tells us that through the action manifested by the continuous call, God is like a bow stretched over the interval between His offer and our answer, between eternity and time. Only when we become totally insensitive to this offer, when we no longer have any preoccupation to answer, are we no longer hanging on to God's work, and are we no longer bound by it in a move toward eternity.<sup>20</sup> Thus, God makes His eternity effective in the fact that we are led to exceed the duration between the offer of His love and our response, and therefore to the exceeding of time. We are led to this transcendence by the power of His intra-terrestrial love, so by the eternity of God, His love, and His life beyond time.

The "fulfillment of time" for the coming of God as a man shows that mankind was not allowed to advance alone towards Him, having only a distant help, but it was necessary that He came to it also as a man, in time, to lead man from his maximum closeness to His eternal life. Time is eternally conceived by God, not only as a framework in which men advance toward God somehow by themselves, but also in order to be assumed by Himself, to give them, from His immediate vicinity the power of advancing with Him to eternity: "and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20)<sup>21</sup>. The fulfillment of His time and purpose by the Incarnate Son of God is also a fulfillment of him by the loving Trinity. For once the Son as One in the Trinity has become a participant in human time, the Trinity itself participates in our time, but filling it with the unchanging eternity of His love, thus raising us from now on to this eternity, though we do not live it unchanged and fully, but we often fall from living in Him fully.

The moment of the Incarnation of the Son of God could be considered a center of time, but the New Testament calls it rather the after age, but not the very end of time. This is because, after the coming of the Incarnate Son of God, time has been filled with God himself, to Whom it was made to reach. Not only has God entered into time, but time has entered into God's eternity, though it has not

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 193.

<sup>21</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*, Editura Cristal, București, 1995, p. 74.

yet reached its end. If a modern time — without a transcendent God coming into it — is not capable, as the motion of an essence, of any real progress toward an ultimate goal — in Christ, as the One transcendent of time through His all-perfect deity, time reached its ultimate and culminating goal for the humanity assumed by Him and towards that culmination, He helps to bring closer those who cling to Him, still in the course of history, and thereby leads them to eternity beyond time also with the body, after the resurrection at the end of history. This gives the whole time, as its goal, the eternity, or the plenitude of the endless life of those in it, in the loving God in His Trinity of perfect Persons.

Christ brought eternity into our time through His godliness, into humanity assumed at the Incarnation and fully through the Resurrection, but He also showed us how we can advance to eternity through our time. He attained eternity with His humanity by the total goodness and sacrifice with which this was imprinted by union with the divine hypostasis. He has shown us that the eternity to which we are called is one with perfection, and that we must make every effort to advance, with His help, toward the perfection which He has shown to us as Incarnate. Through His incarnation, He has shown to us what time is given to us for and also its significance and importance for our endeavours to reach an end. The eternal One assumes our time, not giving up eternity, but giving meaning and eternal value to those lived in time, according to eternity, which makes them worthy of eternal duration. By this, He shows the connection between the two, He shows the value of time for eternity, He shows time as a servant of eternity, though not necessarily, but through the freedom of human persons; He shows the good, done in time, capable of an eternal value and duration.

Paradoxically, there is a situation in which time completely loses its valences and characteristics. This happens when man responds to God's call of love with a continuous refusal that fixes the spiritual creature in a total inability to communicate. In this case there is neither expectation nor hope, because there will be nothing new and so it can be said that then there will be no real time, because there will be nothing from eternity in him, and he will be empty of any content. This is the time that has become insignificant, useless, through its total vacuum, through the absence of any movement, of any direction, of any target. This will be, as Father Dumitru Stăniloae tells us, a wretched eternity, which is just beneath time (Saint Maximus the Confessor also speaks about it).<sup>22</sup>

Time totally fallen from the radius of eternity into an unchangeable and fixed monotony, has nothing of its character, being an eternity contrary to true eternity. It is no longer proper time, because it is no longer a succession of ever new states,

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<sup>22</sup> Idem., *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, editia a II-a, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1996, vol. I, p. 200.

stimulated by the hope of repeatedly reaching further into eternity, but it is an eternity of monotony, of emptiness, in which hope is no longer possible, neither waiting nor fulfilling. It is the time empty of substance or succession with a meaning, as nothing else is expected, nothing is done in it, because it is no longer attracted to eternity. It is a unique endless state, lived as a curse, as a petrification, or as a conscious death. It is the impossibility or the black eternity of hell, the darkest outside (of existence), the absence of life lived yet as a torment.<sup>23</sup>

In conclusion to what has been said so far, we can say that eternity is solidary with time, without confounding itself with it. Eternity is the origin and perspective of time and the force that moves time towards it. In the end, eternity will overwhelm time, give it its quality. "That there should be delay no longer (Revelation 10:6), because we will have in us only love." Saint Maximus the Confessor says that: "Through love we can have not only one nature, but also a single deliberative will with God, having no interval (διάστασις) between us and God and between ourselves."<sup>24</sup> "Then God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 21:4), of those who will be fully with Him and in Him. Only in connection with eternity, created by the eternal God and serving Him or His creatures to reach Him, do those committed in the passing time acquire an eternal value, an inexhaustible depth, because they remain connected with the creature who is created to pass through time, but at the same time it binds the creature to God, making it able to reach with the help of those made in time, in eternity. In this sense, Father Dumitru Stăniloae tells us that man is not made for a passing time, but for eternity, time being defined in this case as the road to eternity.<sup>25</sup> The value of time as a path to eternity was shown by God himself, assuming life in time, therefore, a transient life in time. The fact that the Son of God, by assuming the creature, assumed his time, gave our life eternal value.

Man's communion with the eternity of God means his entry into the divine communion of the Most Holy Trinity, not alone, but with others. Man "will have God fully when he is united with all his fellows in love."<sup>26</sup> The whole "logical" structure of the cosmos, the reunion of all the particular meanings of created beings, is activated, it is updated in eschaton through and together in the communion of the saved with the Holy Trinity, with the whole deified creation. Eternity can thus be seen from the perspective of the wholeness of the being, as an

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p.201.

<sup>24</sup> Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Epistola a II-a către Ioan Cubicularul*, PG 91, 396 B, apud. Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *op.cit.*, p. 204.

<sup>25</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*, p. 80.

<sup>26</sup> Pr. Prof.. D. Stăniloae, *Dumnezeu este Iubire*, în *Ortodoxia*, an XXIII, nr. 3 (1971), p. 391.

endless multitude of actualized relationships within it. From the perspective of set theory, it could be said that the possibility of time derives from here, because time appears to us as a complete order<sup>27</sup> relation, the poorest complete relation that mathematics can imagine.

God's unchanging character, which He shares with those who grow in love, is in fact the unchangeability of His loving fullness, beyond which there can be nothing else. Through the Incarnation, God gives Himself to human beings as Hypostasis, in Christ's Mystery, in full communion with the Person of God Himself becoming possible. Through His pneumatized humanity and exalted at the right hand of Father Christ, He remains connected to us and our temporality finds, like a storm, the dawn of His eternity. In the Incarnation of God's Word, any temporal interval between us and God transcends, and there begins an endless inner connection between God's eternity and man's temporal condition.

The relationship of the divine Logos with the time of the human being can be traced in multiple scriptural hypostases from the act of creating the world to the Last Judgment and Restoration. The premise of Origen's theologizing is the absolute transcendence of God's temporality and it is clearly stated: "The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit transcend all times and all ages and all eternity. The rest of the things, yet, those who are out of the Trinity, must be measured in centuries and periods of time".<sup>28</sup>

According to Origen, as of his forerunner, Philo of Alexandria, God did not need time to create the world because no limitation of His omnipotence can be conceived. This leads to a strictly symbolic interpretation, in the spirit of the Alexandrian school, of the six days of creation: they are not temporal durations but rather an expression of an order, of a rationality of the creative work of the divine Logos.

The logos, although present in the world, does not need a certain duration for His saving work, His work does not depend on temporality but overwhelms it, overwhelms it divinely. The time of the divine work is not extended: "even if one needs a long time to share the wealth of the poor, the Logos will not be kept in

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<sup>27</sup> "A relationship is complete if each element involved appears in at least one of the pairs. In general, relationships follow two natural sentences, which are reflexivity (any element should be in relation to itself, if not in its own sense, then at least in the sense of limit) and transitivity. If the relation is also symmetric, we speak of an equivalence relation, and if it is antisymmetric, we speak of an order relation", see Ioan Sturzu, *Viziunea Sf. Maxim Mărturisitorul și a Părintelui Dumitru Stăniloae asupra Revelației naturale. Reflecții asupra valorii teologico-ontologice a paradigmei experimentaliste în fizică*, Teza de doctorat, Editura Universității Al. Ioan Cuza, Iași, 2006, p. 18.

<sup>28</sup> Origen, *Despre principii*, IV.4.1 PSB 8, trad., studiu introductiv și note de Pr. Prof. Teodor Bodogae, Editura IBM al BOR, București, 1982, p. 203.

time to make perfect one who works in this way”<sup>29</sup> and consequently salvation itself can be understood as a work of a moment, and “we should not hesitate to say that this man suddenly becomes perfect”<sup>30</sup>

Starting from the prayer of the Saviour in John 12:27 “Now, my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this I came to this hour”, Origen comments on the meaning of “this hour” which is not a temporal duration but a present, an all-encompassing “now” of His spiritual struggle with the power of evil. This is, he says, “the meaning of the word now (gr. p. 258); because as soon as it began it ended; and it was in fact a point in time”<sup>31</sup> (gr. p. 258). His struggle against the powers of the enemy did not take place in time but in a “now” and was enough for the soul of the Saviour to overcome by obedience all the power of evil. His work takes place in time but has no duration.

Elsewhere, referring to the word of the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 15: 51-52: “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet”, we find a parallel between the Resurrection of the dead and the Judgment, both the particular and the last. The fulfillment of the future judgment does not need time, but “as it is said of the Resurrection that it will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, similarly I think it will be with the Judgment”<sup>32</sup>. Continuing, Origen says that if one can speak of a beginning and an end with regard to the coming Judgment, it will begin with “those who are most indebted” to the Lord, but gives this “beginning” only the meaning of intellectual conception, for the beginning and end of this time’s divine works coincide.

We therefore have a distinction between the time of extension, the time of duration of creatures, the so-called χρόνος διαρκείας, and the time without extension: the moment without ακαταίωτος of the divine work uncircumcised by temporality. The second is as real as the first and is part of it not so much in a quantitative sense, for it does not add moments to its extent but qualitatively because it is the time of the divine life-making works which create, sustain and save the creature.

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<sup>29</sup> Origen, *Comentarii la Evangelia dupa Matei*, 15,18, PSB 7, trad., studiu introductiv si note de Pr. Prof. Teodor Bodogae, Editura IBM al BOR, Bucuresti, 1982, p. 177.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 178.

<sup>31</sup> Origen, *Comentarii la Evangelia dupa Ioan LXXXVIII*, in PSB 6, trad. si note de Pr. Prof. Teodor Bodogae, Editura IBM al BOR, Bucuresti, 1981, p. 114.

<sup>32</sup> Idem, *Omiliile 1-39 la Evangelia dupa Luca*, 79, PSB 7, trad., studiu introductiv si note de Pr. Prof. Teodor Bodogae, Editura IBM al BOR, Bucuresti, 1982, p. 254.

P. Tzalmakis<sup>33</sup> makes an interesting comment on the way in which Origen conceives this time without duration, saying that the Alexandrian author accepts the possibility of the ad infinitum division of time until the beginning and the end tend to coincide. The notion of temporal infinity has two complementary dimensions: what is infinitely long in duration and what is infinitely short. A parallel between the notion of spatial and temporal continuum may be relevant early in the language of Greek philosophy, the term for a geometric point of a line and the one that designates a moment in time is one and the same.

Analysing the problem of the mathematical division, S. Sambursky<sup>34</sup> finds that Greek mathematics has failed to accurately conceive and develop basic notions of infinitesimal calculus such as limit and the process of convergence towards a limit related to modernity. Zeno's paradoxes, considering space a continuum of points, reach the logical impossibility of motion, and only Stoic thought managed to overcome this impasse by advancing remarkably in the field of infinitesimal calculus and the foundations of set theory.

Like Aristotle<sup>35</sup>, the Stoic conceive the present moment, the “now” as the final limit of the past and at the same time the initial limit of the future in a vision of geometric inspiration over time. For the Stoics, as for Aristotle, time is continuous and infinitely divisible, that is, infinite in the sense of duration without beginning and end, and can be divided indefinitely toward an infinitesimal duration. Origen rejects the unscriptural conception of time without beginning and end but would accept<sup>36</sup> the possibility of the existence of an infinitely short duration and considers it a means of God's work in time.

The problem is that the construction of the notion of the divisibility of time in Greek thought is completely foreign in essence from the Revelation. Aristotelianism and the Stoics started in the conception of time from completely different premises than Origen. Thus, for Stoicism there is no transcendence and therefore time is conceived in the architecture of a logic that starts from the irreducible and definitive immanence of the world whose “extension” it is, while for the Alexandrian thinker the timeless time of divine work is the unseen “place” in which the eternity of God touches on the time of this world. In other words, no mathematical determinations such as the limit that tends to 0 can be applied to it. In other words, the timeless duration of the divine works, as Origen understands it, cannot be one and the same with the time of the Stoics, and therefore no comparison is in fact possible.

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<sup>33</sup> cf. P. Tzamalikos, *op.cit.*, p. 259.

<sup>34</sup> Samuel Sambursky, *Physics of the stoics*, London, 1959, p. 89.

<sup>35</sup> Ursula Coope, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>36</sup> P.Tzamalikos, *op.cit.*, p. 255.

St. Maximus the Confessor says that “the reasons of time are in God”<sup>37</sup> and thus reveals to us the complexity of a movement in which there is a reciprocity of the meanings in the relationship between God and creation. The same Holy Father stands out in his work for a linear, chronological historicity, according to which history is a succession of events and moments in a temporal framework. The ages of this world offer us the chance to participate from here on in the transfiguration of history, the simultaneous presence of the eschaton with history making us taste the mystery of the kingdom. The world is the frame of manifestation of the Kingdom of God, a space in which history intertwines with the eschatology, without the present time being identical, in nature, with eternity.

This understanding of reality makes us penetrate the deep meaning of the transfiguration of all creation. The ages subject to temporality here give us only a sequential foretaste of eternity, of final communion with God and the whole cosmos. Instead, the ages beyond the present existence make us partakers of a continual deification, of an infinite advance in communion with God, in eternity. “Thus, the ages of life in the flesh, in which we live now, are the ages of the active state, and the future ones, which follow those here, are the ages of the spirit, of the transformation into the suffering state. So, here we find ourselves in a state of activity, we will reach once, at the end of the ages, the end of our power and work through which we activate, and in the ages to come, suffering the transformation of deification by grace, we will not be in activity, but in passivity, and that is why we will never reach the end of our deification”.<sup>38</sup>

It is in this attitude an overcoming of the geometrized conception, which allowed the measurement of time through the distance between moments. The time of waiting for God offers us a new paradigm of understanding it. It represents the interval between God’s call and man’s free response. This definition is par excellence a personal interpretation of time, which captures the mystery of the interrelationship between God and man. Understanding time in this way allows us to observe the extraordinary dignity of the human being, the crown of all creation. Man has the possibility that through his free answer he can advance in his communion with God, to the point that the limits of time can be overcome by his transfiguration into eternity.

Saint Maximus, thinking about time, as one of the characteristic structures of the created order, is a personal one. “He links time and movement as realities specific to imperfect creation. But, on the other hand, they are not fallen as negative or sinful realities, but as mediators to God’s eternity. It emphasizes God’s

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<sup>37</sup> Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Ambigua*, PG 91, 1164 D; cf. Fapte 17, 26, apud. Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *op.cit.*, p.183.

<sup>38</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *op.cit.*, p. 87, apud. Gheorghe Angheliescu, *op.cit.*, p. 87.

participation in time to receive temporal creation in His eternity. Thus ... time is an interpersonal reality traversed by divine love, by the expectation of God.”<sup>39</sup> Regarding the meaning of the so-called seminal logoi of beings in the thought of Saint Maximus, the logos of an existence is its essential principle or reason, which defines it fundamentally and characterizes it as such, but also its reason for being; its principle and finality are in God, Saint Maximus emphasizing more the “speculative-spiritual side that the contemplation of the seen world offers, through the prism of its symbolic realism, contemplation that reveals in it the spiritual reasons, namely, those spiritual “logoi”... roads that lead to the rational meaning of the whole existence”<sup>40</sup>.

Saint Maximus rejects the Origenist conception according to which the diversity of the seen creation is subsequent to the fall into sin as the beginning of the movement of the beings in their return to the original unity. At the same time, the Platonic conception of the particular is overcome as a fall from the universality of the Idea by valuing each particular existence as the subject of Providence.

Reasons are only God’s thoughts, according to which He brings beings into existence by the determination of His will. Any existence corresponding to a logos makes both the diversity of the created world and the uniqueness of each existing being be founded in God.

The perfect unification of the logoi of creatures is worked out in and through the Logos of God, Who is the beginning and end of all logoi contained and subsisting virtually in Him before beings as such were brought into existence. Divine reasons as all beings’ proper “vocations”, of their fulfillment in God, are not inert<sup>41</sup> models, but volitional creative powers of God that involve the preparation of the models of things. The reasons of creatures, though eternal, do not belong to the uncreated nature but are an expression of His will. Reasons are not existences, but volitional thoughts of God, which means that through creation, one passes from the field of thought to the ontological field, from the field of the creatures thought by God, to the field of their existence by the will of God. Contemplating the divine reasons of created things, we discover their dynamism in time towards the higher purpose of time: For all God’s creatures, contemplated by us through our nature, with the help of proper science and knowledge,

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<sup>39</sup> Maciej Bielavski, *O viziune filocalică asupra lumii*, Sibiu, Editura Deisis, 1999, p. 247.

<sup>40</sup> Pr. prof. dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Darul lui Dumnezeu către noi*, în MMS, nr.344, 1970, p. 267.

<sup>41</sup> Diac. prof. Vicentiu Romanu, Pr. Prof. Patrut Banaduc, *Creația ca dar dumnezeiesc și logositatea ei. O încercare de reinterpretare a cosmo-antropogenezei*, în *Studia theologica* 2003-2009, p. 3.

mysteriously announce us the reasons they were made for, and through them he reveals to us the purpose set by God in every creature”<sup>42</sup>.

From the perspective of God Who sees movement and wills it in the reasons of things, their purpose is their deification. The eternal existence of divine reason and their dependence on the divine will are simultaneous with the will of creatures and their freedom to advance or not to this end. Therefore, every creature exists through its logos, virtually in God before eternity, but present, according to the same logos, it begins to be in time when God, according to His eternal wisdom, considered it opportune to create it: “For in Him reasons of everything are firmly fixed, and it is said of these reasons that He knows them all before they are made, in their very truth, as some that are all in Him and He has them, even if all these, all, those that are, and those that will be, have not been brought into existence together with their reasons, or since they are known by God, but each receives his actual existence and self-existence at the right time, according to the wisdom of the Creator, being created all according to their reasons; for the Creator always exists to the ages of ages as present, while the creatures exist in potency, but not yet as forever present”<sup>43</sup>.

The “right time” presupposed by the logos of each creature leads from a chronological vision of existence to a sabbatical one in which the kairo-logical and eschatological fulfillment of time is the eternal Passover of rest in God.

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<sup>42</sup> Sfantul Maxim Marturisitorul, *Ambigua*, op.cit., p. 92.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 93.

# **Feminine Authorities in the Romanian Orthodox Theology of the 20th Century**

Iuliu-Marius Morariu<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Often accused that feminine voices are not heard, the Orthodox Church has much to do in order to truly value the contribution of women. Nevertheless, there have been important feminine voices who have not only promoted its spirituality and life but also contributed greatly to the theology of this Christian tradition. In this paper, we will identify the most important feminine representatives from the twentieth century Romanian context and their main works in order to recall their contribution to the promotion of Orthodoxy. We will also present the ecumenical aspects of their publications, setting them in the original context in which they were written. The investigation's aim is to show that, despite the difficulties experienced by Romanians during the aforementioned century, there were important women who offered valuable contributions to understanding the spirituality, life and theology of the Eastern Orthodox Church from the Romanian perspective.

**Keywords:** Dumitru Stăniloae, women, Anca Manolache, Christology, Pneumatology, angels, Romanian exile

## **Introduction**

The Eastern Orthodox Church has often been criticized for being an institution dominated by men, not allowing women to have a sufficiently important role within its structures and life. There are undoubtedly many things still to achieve in order to ensure a greater representation of women and more

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<sup>1</sup> Ph.D. Iuliu-Marius Morariu (protosinghel Maxim) "Ioan Lupaș" Centre, Faculty of the Orthodox Theology, "Babeș-Bolyai" University from Cluj-Napoca, Romania Anglicum Pontifical University, Rome, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

diversified possibilities for them to live their vocation within the community. Some advances were surely made within the monastic tradition, where as Abbesses, the women have the possibility to be leaders, to develop different charisms and to teach others.

There were also other important feminine voices who promoted Orthodoxy in the West and in ecumenical circles. The names of women like Myrrha Lot-Borodine<sup>2</sup>, Maria Skobtova<sup>3</sup> or Elisabeth Behr-Sigel<sup>4</sup> are relevant today not only for Orthodoxy but also for ecumenical discourse. This is especially true for example, in matters relating to the mystics, the role of cult in the Church's life, the ordination of women and the Orthodox perception on it<sup>5</sup>, or with ecumenism and the how Orthodox traditions can contribute to its development.

As in other areas, in Romania too, the feminine presence was not truly appreciated during the twentieth century. Still, there were a few representatives of the genre who were leading the way at different moments and who have bequeathed to their posterity many important ideas that are still used today in contemporary research. Moreover, some of them were also involved at key historical moments. In the paragraphs which follow, we will try to highlight the most important feminine theologians, their respective contributions and the insightfulness of their message.

## **Feminine Authorities in the Romanian Orthodox Theology of the 20th Century**

### **Mina Hociotă (1896-1977) and the Theology on the Battlefield**

As is well known, the twentieth century was a bloody one. The first World War provoked a particular response from the Romanian Orthodox Church. At the time, there was a well-structured military chaplaincy coordinated by the Primate Metropolitan of Bucharest. Priests went onto the battlefield in order to offer the Eucharist to the soldiers and to pray together with them. They also distributed prayer books and catechisms to those who were fighting.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Iuliu-Marius Morariu, "Myrrha Lot-Borodine et la redécouverte de la théologie orthodoxe dans l'espace français," in *Studia Monastica* 60 (2020), nr. 2, p. 413-419; Iuliu-Marius Morariu, "Mystagogie und Sakrament. Myrrha Lot-Borodine (1882-1954)," in *Geist & Leben* 93 (2020), p. 142-146.

<sup>3</sup> Morariu Iuliu-Marius, "Une vocation singulière du monachisme orthodoxe: la Sainte Marie Skobtsova", in *Studia Monastica* 62 (2020), no. 1-2, p. 293-304.

<sup>4</sup> Olga Lossky, *Vers le jour sans déclin. Une vie d'Elisabeth Behr-Sigel*, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, Kallistos Ware, *The ordination of women in the Orthodox Church*, World Council of Churches Publication, Geneva, 2000.

The armed forces needed nurses too. They were called to cooperate with the Red Cross and to take care of the wounded. In this context, there was a nun who would go on to distinguish herself through the amazing work she did caring for those who were injured. Together with Ecaterina Teodoroiu, to whom she would often be compared<sup>6</sup>, she was the first woman to become an officer in the Romanian Army<sup>7</sup>. Born in Transylvania in the village of Săliștea Sibiului,<sup>8</sup> she crossed the Carpathian Mountains and became a nun, initially in Moldavian lands at Văratec Monastery and then later in the South, where she became the Abbess of Nămăiești Monastery. As a nun, she studied and became a nurse; a fact that propelled her to go on the front lines<sup>9</sup>. Her care for wounded soldiers was well documented and it was here on the front lines where she was wounded also, almost losing her leg. As a nun, she is numbered among the women who have made a rich contribution, developing a mission of prime social importance. As one biographer noted:

„Mina Hociotă was a real support for the wounded people, but she was also a heroine, due to the fact that she offered to serve voluntarily and disinterestedly the cause of the neighbor, of the Romanian nation and of the Church.”<sup>10</sup>

In 1916 she was a youth of only twenty years. Her bravery at such a tender age is surely the result of her understanding of the Gospel put into practice. For all her efforts the Communist authorities, who did not have a very good relationship with the Orthodox Church, decorated her and held her up as a model to be followed. Unfortunately, for the women concerned with activities like those of the Văratec orphanage, administrative work or the care of ill people, Mina Hociotă did not write any theology books.

The only manuscript that bears her signature is in an autobiography, published in 2018, by Dragoș Lucian and Daniela Curelea.<sup>11</sup> It has been cited by

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<sup>6</sup> Antonie Plămădeală, „Marina Hociotă, Maica Mina de la Săliștea Sibiului, „o nouă Ecaterina Teodoroiu” în războiul din 1916-1918”, in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 116 (1978), no. 11-12, p. 1274.

<sup>7</sup> Dragoș Lucian Curelea, Daniela Curelea, *Reconstruirea unei icoane de om: Monahia Mina Hociotă (1896-1977)*, Editura Andreiana, Sibiu, 2018, p. 25.

<sup>8</sup> Mihai-Octavian Groza, „Prefață”, in Dragoș Lucian Curelea, Daniela Curelea, *Reconstruirea unei icoane de om: Monahia Mina Hociotă (1896-1977)*, Editura Andreiana, Sibiu, 2018, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Mihai-Octavian Groza, „Prefață”, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Dragoș Lucian Curelea, Daniela Curelea, *Reconstruirea unei icoane de om: Monahia Mina Hociotă (1896-1977)*, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> Dragoș Lucian Curelea, Daniela Curelea, *Reconstruirea unei icoane de om: Monahia Mina Hociotă (1896-1977)*.

all the major historians and theologians who tried to find out more about her life and activity. Still, by word and deed, Mina Hociotă was undoubtedly a central figure in the Romanian female religious landscape. She proved that, in a context where feminism was not yet deemed to be particularly important and the value of women not generally appreciated, it was possible for a woman to make a telling contribution to the life of the Church and society.

### **Feminine Theological Contributions**

If the nun Mina Hociotă was a crucial feminine figure in the war effort, there were also a few other women who made important contributions in the theological field proper. They are: Anca Manolache, Natalia Manolescu Dinu and Princess Ileana. The first two wrote their PhD theses respectively, under the supervision of Father Dumitru Stăniloae. He is the most important Romanian theologian of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the author, among others, of an important treaty on *Dogmatic Theology*.<sup>12</sup> Due to their competence in the academic field, these two women were instrumental in the movement towards ecumenical dialogue. Anca Manolache was active, for example, in different reunions and contributed to the Cernica meeting during the 1970s where she also met other important woman like Elisabeth Behr-Sigel. Their interests in these conversations emanated from Christological and Sacramental concerns as understood in the Orthodox tradition. The third, Princess Ileana, become a nun in the last years of her life. She is credited with the construction of a Romanian Orthodox Monastery and with a treatise on the Angels as presented in the Holy Scriptures. We will now try to present the essential aspects of the life and activity of each of these women.

### **Anca Manolache**

Anca Manolache lived between 1923 and 2013<sup>13</sup> and was, as already mentioned, a woman with deep theological concerns. After defending a PhD. thesis in theology, she published studies and articles in the journals of the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. 1-3, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodox Române, București, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Nicoleta Pălimaru, *Portret de teolog. Anca Manolache în dialog cu Nicoleta Pălimaru*, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2003. Cf. <https://www.crestinortodox.ro/editoriale/admiratie-144349.html>, accessed 12. 11. 2020.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example: Anca Manolache „Cunoașterea ocultă – o falsificare a cunoașterii adevărului”, in *Studii Teologice* 6 (1954), no. 3-4, p. 174-188; Anca Manolache „Un capitol de anghelologie”, in *Studii Teologice* 7 (1955), no. 1-2, p. 122-136; Anca Manolache, *Problema feminină în Biserica lui Hristos – un capitol de antropologie creștină*, Editura Mitropoliei Banatului, Timișoara, 1994; Anca Manolache, *Pași spre mântuire – eseuri și studii teologice*,

When one looks at the life of a woman who bequeathed to posterity rich texts still in use today for creating bridges between spiritualities and traditions, he or she may be tempted to think that it was a very linear one. This surely is not the case. Anca Manolache's views are very dynamic, having been influenced by many different experiences. Shortly after her death Radu Preda, who today is the parish priest of a Romanian community in Germany, wrote about these diverse influences as follows:

„She graduated in Letters, Law and Theology, was imprisoned for political reasons for six years for not betraying her friends, that is, for "omission of denunciation", Anca Manolache, as I met her after 1989, conquered you through the hot curiosity of a person who did not want to simply find out something, information, but to experience Someone. A suggestive detail: Father Anania, the future metropolitan of Cluj, was to hire Mrs. Manolache at the Biblical Institute, a moment she described as "the second release". Beyond the coordinates of a biography, the copy remains the force that a woman can make in the service of the Gospel. Even if, through constitutive Mariology, Orthodoxy has theologically integrated the issue of femininity, thus avoiding beating the fields of feminism, it is no less true that we have a deficit. It is ignored, for example, that the priesthood of many clerics would be impossible without the commitment of their wives, or that women are the real basis of faith communities. As for their sacrifice, they will certainly receive God's reward. That, on the part of men, would deserve, until then, admiration.”<sup>15</sup>

She wrote on topics as diverse as occultism and its deficiencies, apologetics<sup>16</sup> and angelology<sup>17</sup> and yet somehow managed to avoid the censorship of the communist regime. After 1989 she addressed the issue of women and their role in the Eastern Orthodox Church. In a way, she resembles other women from the ecumenical field whom she also knew, like Elisabeth Behr-Sigel.<sup>18</sup> She spoke

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Editura Saeculum I. O. Press, București, 2002; Anca Manolache, *Sfintele Taine în viața Bisericii*, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2004.

2004. The Holy Sacraments in the life of the Church. Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea Publishing House.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.crestinortodox.ro/editoriale/admiratie-144349.html>, accessed 12. 11. 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Anca Manolache „Cunoașterea ocultă – o falsificare a cunoașterii adevărului”, p. 174-188.

<sup>17</sup> Anca Manolache „Un capitol de anghelologie”, in *Studii Teologice* 7 (1955), no. 1-2, p. 122-136.

<sup>18</sup> Olga Lossky, *Vers le jour sans déclin. Une vie d'Elisabeth Behr-Sigel*.

about feminism and its relationship with the Christian tradition.<sup>19</sup> Published in the Metropolitan See from Timișoara in the Western part of Romania, with the blessing of a controversial but open-minded bishop named Nicolae Corneanu, the book unfortunately did not have the expected impact on readers, despite its innovative content. She approached the role of women from an anthropological perspective. Some of her ideas were surely influenced by her experience at the Cernica Pan-Orthodox conference that took place in 1974 where she encountered other female personalities involved in ecumenism.<sup>20</sup> Her lived experience of the Romanian Orthodox Church also undoubtedly shaped her ideas. Nevertheless, she always remained faithful to the doctrine of the Orthodox Church, while at the same time provoking debate about those elements that could change.

In 2004, Nicoleta Pălimaru, who published a book of interviews with her,<sup>21</sup> and posthumously it was published a book of her entitled *The Holy Sacraments in the Life of the Church*.<sup>22</sup> The book is in fact, an anthology of previously published studies and articles of theology, (specifically sacramentology). What is interesting here is the fact that in order to present the Orthodox point of view, Anca Manolache quotes sources from the Catholic and protestant traditions respectively, like Joachim Jeremias.<sup>23</sup> She often compares theological and historical content, not to challenge but to show how the context determined a certain direction of development for one or other sacrament. Therefore for example, after presenting the position of the Orthodox Church on Baptism and Chrismation, and using arguments from Byzantine authors like Nicholas Cabasilas, she shows that, compared with the Catholic understanding:

“The Orthodox Church has maintained the old traditional practice of concomitantly performing these two Sacraments. The Sacrament of Baptism chronologically and causally precedes, which is whole, complete, perfect in itself; but its consequence on the receiving subject is preserved in the Sacrament of Anointing.”<sup>24</sup>

Afterwards, she emphasizes the purifying dimension that the Chrismation has in the Orthodox tradition. Comparing it with other cultural approaches, she shows

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<sup>19</sup> Anca Manolache, *Problema feminină în Biserica lui Hristos – un capitol de antropologie creștină*.

<sup>20</sup> Cornel Coprean, *Dezvoltarea teologiei misionare prin conferințele misionare internaționale și consultațiile misionare interortodoxe*, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2019, p. 351.

<sup>21</sup> See: Nicoleta Pălimaru, *Portret de teolog. Anca Manolache în dialog cu Nicoleta Pălimaru*.

<sup>22</sup> Anca Manolache, *Sfintele Taine în viața Bisericii*.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20.

that the understanding of anointment as a purifying element can be found in almost all the revealed traditions and points to the fact that:

“The symbol of cleansing with oil is an old tradition in all the revealed religions; through its gift of penetrating all the fine tissues of the skin, it acquired the aspect of healing by softening the external hardness of the diseased body. The healing action of the body brought with it the idea of the soul’s healing, which the oil always carries in our ritual.”<sup>25</sup>

Baptism placed in the larger anthropological context and the common perception regarding the ancestral sin (Manolache 2004:30) is therefore emphasized too. The same thing happens also in the description of the Eucharist and its common perception in the main Christian traditions: the Catholic, the Orthodox and the Protestant ones.<sup>26</sup> The differences between these theological traditions are to be understood under the aspect of diversity rather than that of exclusivity. Using the text of the Scriptures as the basis of her ideas, she insists on the fact that each Christian community speaks about the relevance of the Eucharist and is it thus seen as the fundamental point of reference that underpins ecumenical discourse. For a woman who was writing during the communist period and who published her texts under a very strict censorship regime, she is a really pioneering and brave writer. She had the ability to approach important aspects of theology in an ecumenical tone, while simultaneously remaining faithful to her own Church’s teachings and yet without offending others. Sadly, this has not always been the case in the ecumenical arena by some Orthodox theologians. In this regard, she proves herself a real disciple of Father Dumitru Stăniloae. She understood his teaching and this is reflected in the theological works that the Romanian theologian published in that period, both in Romania and elsewhere.

### **Natalia Manolescu-Dinu**

Another important feminine voice of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was Natalia Manolescu Dinu, who lived between 1920 and 1992. She graduated in 1949 in the University of Bucharest from the faculty of philosophy. During her life she published different studies and articles in various journals in Romania and abroad. She also wrote books and edited others. One important book was dedicated to the saintly Orthodox bishop, Calinic from Cernica, who lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>27</sup> She also

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 40-41.

<sup>27</sup> Natalia Manolescu-Dinu, *Viața și activitatea Sfântului Calinic de la Cernica*, Editura Cuvântul Vieții, București, 2015.

left an interesting volume of memories<sup>28</sup> where she speaks about the main events that influenced her life as well as the genesis of some of her theological works.

It should also be noted that her work includes two important theology texts. One dedicated to the Holy Spirit and to the conception of the Eastern Orthodox Church, about Him and His work;<sup>29</sup> the other dedicated to Christ and the testimony offered by the Gospels about Him.<sup>30</sup> They are both works of great interdisciplinary value. Taught as works of spirituality, these two important texts also have relevance for dogmatic, Biblical and Patristic theology, due to the rich tapestry of references provided by the author.

Speaking about the one dedicated to Christ and his image as Savior according to the Gospels, Constantin Coman, who wrote the forward to it, emphasizes the fact that:

“The indisputable originality of the work consists in the theological-dogmatic commentary on the New Testament Biblical text. The exegete and the dogmatist meet happily in the same person. The book manages to overcome the unnatural distance between Biblical study and dogmatic study, imposed by a rather arbitrary division of theological fields, so that Biblical studies do not directly benefit from the contribution of systematic ones, nor the latter from the contribution of Biblical studies.”<sup>31</sup>

In order to offer a reconstruction of the image of Christ as it is emphasized by the Gospels, she presents every important episode from His preaching and tries to correlate it with the exegesis in order to offer a complex overview on how it was understood and received historically. At the same time, she has profound insights relating to dogmatic theology. For example, in the following fragment dedicated to baptism, a key anthropological claim is made:

“If baptism represents a crucial moment in the earthly existence of Christ, it is at the same time the prelude to the work of redemption of man and creation, because through this act the Savior foreshadows His sacrifice. By agreeing to sink into the Jordan, in solidarity with mankind who lay under the burden of sin, Christ buried Adam and thus began the building of a new man.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Natalia Manolescu-Dinu, *Memorii*, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Natalia Manolescu-Dinu, *Sfântul Duh în spiritualitatea Ortodoxă*, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2005.

<sup>30</sup> Natalia Manolescu-Dinu, *Iisus Hristos Mântuitorul în lumina Sfintelor Evanghelii*, Editura Bizantină, București, 2004.

<sup>31</sup> Constantin Coman, „Prefață”, in Anca Manolache, *Sfintele Taine în viața Bisericii*, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2004, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Natalia Manolescu-Dinu, *Iisus Hristos Mântuitorul în lumina Sfintelor Evanghelii*, p. 103.

The idea of the new man should not be understood in a political way, although that political theology has its value. In the Romanian context in which she wrote this was dangerous, since the regime tried to control what theologians could publish on political matters. However, here the renewal spoken of by Natalia Manolescu-Dinu refers to the interior change wrought by baptism in the soul of the one who believes. The text therefore not only underlines a fundamental aspect of the Eastern Orthodox theology, of which she is part, but also presents it in a way that is accepted by all the Christian traditions.

Sensitive aspects like eschatology are also emphasized in the context of Christ's work and preaching. Without being an expert on this topic, like Christian philosophers such as Berdiaev,<sup>33</sup> she still offers an interesting understanding of the idea of the Kingdom of God. This is obviously very important for Christians and represents the connection with eternity. She shows that:

"The Kingdom of God has an obvious eschatological character, because it will not take its final face until the end of history: this appeared especially in the parable of the tares and the net. It will not be fully realized until the next life - although the new eon is born and grows within the old one - when the whole creation will be reunited under the action of sanctifying grace."<sup>34</sup>

Her understanding of ecclesiology has as its point of departure the relationship that existed between Christ and the disciples. For this reason, in the presentation of Christ's kerygma, she insists on the way he interacts with them. In certain situations He makes them feel privileged, while at others He has to help them realise that this privilege means service of others. But she also underlined the fact that:

"What is absolutely essential and proper to the apostolic mission is the relationship between the apostles and Christ. Everything they will do and suffer will depend on Christ and for Him: "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake" (Matthew 10:22). All their ministry and sacrifice will have Him in mind ... This unique relationship, which defines the very notion of an apostle, is based on the boundless love that the apostles have for Christ."<sup>35</sup>

The attitude of Christ is therefore normative for the Apostles and for their ministry, and they are called to follow his example. The dynamics of the relationship that he had with the chosen ones is also important to see. He taught them and helped them to have a better understanding of His message and work.

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<sup>33</sup> Nikolas Berdiaev, *Essai d'autobiographie spirituelle*, Buchet-Castel, Paris, 1958, p. 38.

<sup>34</sup> Natalia Manolescu-Dinu, *Iisus Hristos Mântuitorul în lumina Sfințelor Evanghelii*, p. 260.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 264.

The parallels that the Romanian writer makes between the contemporary situation and the time of Christ are also interesting. The contemporary society represents a topic that is not beyond her reach. Whether she speaks about the work of the Spirit<sup>36</sup> or about the work of Christ, she always refers to the aspect of actuality. She insists on the fact that material progress, when divorced from spiritual progress, does not bring happiness to the people but in fact, suffering and pain. Comparing the contemporary situation with Israel at the time of Christ, she underlines the fact that:

“The situation of man today, who rejects faith in God, is similar in some respects to that of the world around the birth of the Savior. Despite material progress, he feels overwhelmed by anxiety and experiences with acute intensity the phenomenon of loneliness, the result of the rupture of the transcendent. Man is once again alone in a world that seems more and more foreign to him.”<sup>37</sup>.

Natalia Manolescu-Dinu is therefore an important Orthodox feminine voice in the Romanian Church of the 20th century. Offering a clear perspective, nurtured in her tradition, she was also well versed in ecumenical matters. These are emphasized in an interesting way in the synthesis of Christology and Pneumatology that she published during her life. Unfortunately, because of the fact that her work was not translated until today, and in a foreign language, means that she remains a personality with relevance for the Romanian context only. Thus, many people continue to accuse the Romanian Orthodox Church of not allowing the voices of women to be heard.

### **Abbess Alexandra (Princess Ileana)**

Another important personality of the Romanian scene who has benefited from various monographs<sup>38</sup> is Princess Ileana, who later become a nun and is also known as mother Alexandra. A very erudite woman and author of a precious volume of memories, the sister of King Charles the Second of Romania had an interesting and tumultuous life.<sup>39</sup> After the installation of the communist regime in Romania, she went into exile.

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<sup>36</sup> Natalia Manolescu-Dinu, *Sfântul Duh în spiritualitatea Ortodoxă*, p. 74.

<sup>37</sup> Natalia Manolescu-Dinu, *Iisus Hristos Mântuitorul în lumina Sfintelor Evanghelii*, p. 275.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example: Nicu Dumitrașcu, „Abbess Alexandra: The Princess of Love, Suffering and Compassion (An exercise of spiritual admiration)”, in *Studia Monastica* 59 (2017), no. 1, p. 197-212; B. Cooke, *Principesă și monahie – domnița Ileana – Maica Alexandra*, Editura Sophia, București, 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. <https://radiorenasterea.ro/principesa-ileana-2/>, accessed 12. 11. 2020.

In 1959, after the death of her daughter<sup>40</sup> and her husband, the archduke Stephen, she came closer of the Orthodox faith. In 1961, she retired to the abbey „Theotokos” from Bussy-en-Othe, following bishop Anthony Bloom’s advice. In 1967, she became a nun and left for the United States. There in Elwood City, Pennsylvania, she founded the first Romanian Orthodox Monastery in the United States.

As an abbess, she found time to write about and develop ecumenical relationships. She had a vast correspondence with many personalities of the time and published an interesting treatise dedicated to the angels and their presence in the Scriptures.<sup>41</sup> Published posthumously in her native language, the Romanian translator said in the foreword:

"This book by Mother Alexandra ('The Holy Angels') is an expression of her pure soul, a soul that has sought God throughout her life, led by the angel of childhood. Angels subject to God are seen only by those who are available, pure in heart, just as the heart of a child is pure."<sup>42</sup>

Begun before her entrance into the monastic life,<sup>43</sup> the book highlights the presence of angels in the pages of the Bible. It had a very pragmatic motivation, as she underlined in the beginning of the treatise:

"At the present moment, bookshelves in airports, shops, or other places where books are sold exhibit numerous volumes on satanic cults, but nowhere do we see anything about the holy angels, who are God's messengers and the heavenly correspondent of the emissaries of hell."<sup>44</sup>

Having a structure similar with a catechism, her book speaks about the how, according to the Scripture, the angels can be perceived. It also speaks about those characteristics that define their work and their presence in the Kingdom of God. Books like the Apocalypse, often avoided in the Orthodox tradition due to its rich symbolical content, are also discussed by the nun princess. She insists on the beauty of the descriptions from that text. She emphasizes the fact that in the symbolical sense of the text, the reality is also to be found:

"Nowhere is the story of the fall of Satan described more impressively than in the magnificent divine vision of St. John in the Book of Revelation. We must also not forget that St. John makes a symbolic account of the

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<sup>40</sup> Nicu Dumitrașcu, „Abbess Alexandra: The Princess of Love, Suffering and Compassion (An exercise of spiritual admiration)”, p. 198.

<sup>41</sup> Mother Alexandra, *Despre îngeri*, Editura Anastasia, București, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> Irineu Pop-Bistrițeanul, „Prefață”, in Mother Alexandra, *Despre îngeri*, Editura Anastasia, București, 2009, p. 13.

<sup>43</sup> Mother Alexandra, *Despre îngeri*, p. 15.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

heavenly war, which began long before the creation of the earth and in which the Church is still engaged."<sup>45</sup>

Divided into three parts, the book speaks about the angels, their presence and manifestation, in the Old Testament in the first part. In the second she discusses angels in relation to the New Testament, and in the final section she comments on how the Christian tradition has understood and perceived them. The actions of both good and bad angels are analyzed, both on the basis of the text of the Holy Scriptures and on one of the books from the first centuries of Christianity. Their presence ministering to Christ and their role as the ones who announce the Resurrection is also emphasized by her. This book dedicated to the celestial beings shows their relevance for the history of salvation. Mother Alexandra underlines the fact about them that:

"The angels announce the resurrection, as the news of Christ's birth was heard in their proclamation:" For, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people "(Luke 2:10); now, of course, the message brings more joy and is better understood: "He is risen ... go quickly and tell the apostles!" (Matthew 28: 6-7). All the time, the angels surrounded the Lord on earth, even if their presence was not always visible, but in the glorious hours they appeared to those who deserved to see them."<sup>46</sup>

There are many other important aspects that can be found in the princess's work dedicated to the Angels. The value of her treatise is proved by the fact that it is still used today, both in Romania and abroad. The fact that it was written in English like her biography, makes it easy to read and understand to a global audience, adding to her renown. For this reason, it must surely be said that she is the most visible feminine theological Orthodox Romanian presence from the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the West.

## **Conclusion**

As we have tried to show here, although there are still many things to do in order to make women's voices better heard in the Romanian Orthodox Church, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were a few pioneers who showed that the women are not totally neglected. Mother Mina Hociotă, who was not a theologian but a woman who helped the wounded soldiers from the battlefield and almost lost her life for this reason. She promoted Christian universal values like mercy by her actions more than by any writings. Anca Manolache and Natalia Manoilescu-Dinu, like Elisabeth Behr-Sigel and Myrrha Lot-Borodine in France, remind us that women are more than capable of contributing in valuable ways to academic and

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<sup>45</sup> Mother Alexandra, *Despre îngeri*, p. 29.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 150.

theological discussions. Together with them, mother Alexandra brought together the administrative skills of a nun who could build a monastery in the United States. Her commitment to the study of the Sacred Scriptures resulted in an interesting treatise dedicated to the angels and the way the Bible presents them. Prior to the end of the Communist period, there was another important women, a historian of literature and literary critic, namely Zoe Dumitrescu Buşulenga.<sup>47</sup> Attracted by Orthodoxy, she decided to become a nun in the Moldavian lands even though she was a relative of the couple Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu. Although she never produced theological writings,<sup>48</sup> she remained after her profession. Her decision to join the monastic life is important and says many things about the way the Eastern Orthodox Church in Romania managed to attract people. In a society which is still in the process of transformation after the events of 1989 like the Romanian one, having those examples is important and may contribute to a future development of a category of theological feminine voices too.

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<sup>47</sup> Zoe Dumitrescu Buşulenga, *Alte „Pagini engleze”*, Editura Universal Dalsi, Bucureşti, 2001; Zoe Dumitrescu Buşulenga, *Contemporanii mei – portrete*, Editura Niculescu, Bucureşti, 2008; Zoe Dumitrescu Buşulenga, *Eminescu*, Editura Nicodim Caligraful, Putna, 2015.

<sup>48</sup> Only a few biographies dedicated to some contemporary theological personalities like: Zoe Dumitrescu Buşulenga, *Arhimandritul Roman Braga*, Editura Doxologia, Iaşi, 2013 and a translation of the *Song of Songs*, realized together with Ioan Alexandru; Zoe Dumitrescu Buşulenga, Ioan Alexandru, *Cântarea Cântărilor*, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, Bucureşti, 1977.

# **“Orthodox Churches in Times of Crisis”: Western Perceptions and Eastern Church Policy in the Time of National Socialism**

Prof. Dr. Andreas Müller<sup>1</sup>

**Summary:** This article investigates Western perceptions on Eastern Church in the time of National Socialism. The author investigates firstly the issue of Orthodox and national identity in general. The particular case investigated by the author is a declaration of loyalty made by Mount Athos to Adolf Hitler, after that part of Greece was occupied by Germany. An individual petition has been done by Slavonic monasteries.

**Keywords:** Western perceptions on Eastern Church, German Reich, National Socialism, Church Policy, Mount Athos

The current crisis in the east of Europe is hard to understand for western observers. In view of the fact that wars and conflicts in the post-modern era are always in part wars of propaganda, people in Germany find it difficult to understand, let alone assess, the course of conflict in the Crimea and in eastern Ukraine.

I feel also unable to assess what is happening in the east of Europe right now. The current role of the Orthodox Churches there can hardly be realistically evaluated. In my home town of Kiel an appeal was published recently, warning against the cultivation of one-sided, particularly anti-Russian stereotypes. Even though it seemed to me that this appeal in itself meant taking a side in the conflict, which is why I did not sign it, its cause is still a good one: We urgently need to take a close look at what is really going on.

To understand processes, a look at history is often helpful. In the following I would like to historically approach the distinction or the interaction of church and nation. In particular I will deal with the question of how Orthodox and national

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Dr. Andreas Müller Theologische Fakultät, Leibnizstr. 4, 24118 Kiel. Email AMueller@kg.uni-kiel.de

identity correlated in a time of crisis in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By way of example I will focus on Mount Athos in the time of National Socialism. Mount Athos is a particularly interesting phenomenon within the Orthodox countries, because people from various nations meet there to live in a monkish, more or less transnational community. But before I focus on Mount Athos in a time of crisis, let me make a few historical introductory remarks.

### **Orthodoxy and national identity**

No lesser person than Adolf von Harnack offered a general overview on “*What is Christianity?*” at the threshold of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In his series of lectures thus entitled, held in 1899 and 1900, he discusses what he calls “Greek Catholicism” alongside the Roman Catholic and the Protestant traditions. As you know, this Cultural Protestant from Berlin almost totally rejected Orthodoxy, the Greek Catholicism, since in his view they were characterised only by traditionalism and ritualism. He made two exceptions: He praised their former successful struggle against paganism and the close link between Orthodoxy and national culture. Thus, he says verbatim in *What is Christianity?* about these two seemingly laudable points:

“Secondly, this Church managed to effect such a fusion with the individual nations which it drew into its bosom that religion and church became to them national palladia, nay, palladia pure and simple. Go amongst Greeks, Russians, Armenians, etc., and you will everywhere find that religion and nationality are inseparable, and the one element exists only in and alongside of the other. Men of these nationalities will, if need be, suffer themselves be cut in pieces for their religion. This is no mere consequence of the pressure exercised by the hostile power of Mohammedanism; the Russians are not subject to this pressure. Nor is it only — shall I say — in the Moscow press that we can see what a firm and intimate connexion exists between Church and nation in these peoples, in spite of “sects” which are not wanting here either; to convince ourselves of it we must read—to take an instance at random—Tolstoi’s *Village Tales*. They bring before the reader a really touching picture of the deep influence of the Church, with its message of the Eternal, of self-sacrifice, of sympathy and fraternity, on the national mind. That the clergy stand low in the social scale, and frequently encounter contempt, must not delude us into supposing that as the representatives of the Church they do not occupy an incomparably high station. In Eastern Europe the monastic ideal is deeply rooted in the national soul.”<sup>2</sup>

Orthodoxy as the palladium of a nation, as a central element of an ethnic culture, is one side of the coin. On the other side the nation is also an essential element of individual Orthodox groups or even politicians who seem to lean towards Orthodoxy. As recently as during the Second World War did the Romanian Minister for People’s

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<sup>2</sup> Adolf von Harnack, *What is Christianity?* G.P. Putnam’s Sons, New York, 1908, p. 109.

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Culture, Ion Petrovici (1882-1972), who leaned towards nationalism and fascism, call Romania a “paladin of the cross”<sup>3</sup>. However, in this case the specific issue is not so much the struggle between ethnicities, but rather the struggle of Orthodoxy, respectively of an Orthodox country, against “Bolshevism”. To this end, Patriarch Nicodim of Romania (Munteanu, 1864-1948) called for a struggle against the enemies in the east in 1941. Thus the country’s borders were to be extended and the Russians to be liberated from Bolshevism. It says verbatim in a pastoral letter of the time:

“Clerics and Orthodox people, God himself stands at the vanguard of the armies of the just war... Rest assured that very soon we will celebrate the magnificent victory in a greater and lovelier country, furthermore, in gratitude of God, who is always our lord and father. We pray to him for the health of our state leader General Antonescu, the strong and pure soul purified by suffering, and for the health and fortunate governance of H.M. King Michael I. I bless your struggle, your suffering, your work, your patience... Be worthy of the sublime call of history, which set us on this holy soil as the only and true guardians of this area.”<sup>4</sup>

Especially in times when nation states developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the close link of Orthodox church and nation for the benefit of individual nations clearly emerged. Thus, for instance, Bishop Germanos of Old Patras (1771-1826) is still remembered in Greece today as an important freedom fighter for the Greek nation.

As we know, the emergence of national states in the Balkans in that time did, however, result in the establishment of numerous new autocephalous churches. The 19<sup>th</sup> century is a time of intense arguments about their recognition by their respective mother churches, most often the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople/Istanbul. In areas still belonging to the latter, the newly awakened nationalism in the Orthodox environment also caused developments, some of which were rather regrettable.

On Mount Athos, to which we are now turning, this was the phenomenon of phyletism, that is, an overly intense connection between Orthodox and national identity.<sup>5</sup> Ethnic Greeks, still dominant in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, felt threatened by Russian patronisation and accordingly defended themselves, sometimes very strongly. The dominance of the Slavonic communities of monks on Mount Athos, however, only started to decline as a consequence of the October Revolution of 1917. The conquest of northern Greece in the Balkan Wars in 1912 and the consolidation of the legal

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. the report by the Romanian Synod dated December 2, 1942, in: EZA 5/201.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the undated pastoral letter by Patriarch Nicodem, conveyed on August 11, 1941, in: EZA 5/201, sheet 2.

<sup>5</sup> On phyletism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century cf., most recently, Nicholas Fennell, *The Russians on Mount Athos*, Oxford et al., 2001. As early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century there is an exhaustive report on phyletism on the Holy Mountain: Philipp Meyer, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der neueren Geschichte und des gegenwärtigen Zustandes der Athos-Klöster*, in: ZKG 11 (1890), p. 395-435; 539-576.

situation on Mount Athos by the Greek government in the year 1926 fixed the ethnic situation until the present time. Only three non-Greek monasteries are allowed, namely a Bulgarian, a Russian and a Serb one. All monks on Mount Athos receive a Greek passport. Such regulations were not at all in the interest of the populations of Slavonic origin on the Holy Mountain. Although a Western observer would assume that monks in particular do mentally transcend ethnic boundaries, there were conflicts *in ethnicis* on Mount Athos again and again in the subsequent time. During the time of the National Socialist occupation of Greece between 1941 and 1944, these conflicts flared up again in a remarkable way. I will describe these conflicts in the following to point out how strongly, and sometimes disturbingly, ethnicity became the palladium even of monastic groups.

### **The Declaration of Loyalty to Adolf Hitler**

On April 6, 1941, the German Wehrmacht had invaded Greece, and occupied it together with Italian and Bulgarian troops until October 1944.<sup>6</sup> The area around Thessaloniki and thus Mount Athos belonged to the area controlled by German troops.<sup>7</sup> Thrace, down to the Strymon, was under the control of the Bulgarian military.<sup>8</sup> The Bulgarians even sought to lift the status of autonomy of Mount Athos and to occupy the Holy Mountain with their military in May.<sup>9</sup> As we will see more distinctly, this caused resentment among the non-Slavonic monks. Possibly the declaration of loyalty sent by the Athos monasteries to Hitler personally, which we will look at in more detail, must be seen against this menacingly looming background.

Since April 29, 1941, Mount Athos was definitely controlled by the “Deutsche Wehrmacht”.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, Field Headquarters 808 in Thessaloniki had the exclusive right to issue entry permits for the Holy Mountain. There was a small military police unit consisting of Greek gendarmes and German policemen, as well as a (weather)

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. inter alia Hagen Fleischer, *Im Kreuzschatten der Mächte. Griechenland 1941-1944 (Okkupation - Resistance – Kollaboration)* I+II, Frankfurt a.M. et al. 1986 (=Studien zur Geschichte Südosteuropas 2); Heinz A. Richter, *Griechenland 1940-1950. Die Zeit der Bürgerkriege*, Mainz/ Ruppolding 2012 (= Peleus 59), particularly. p. 74-132.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. inter alia the memorandum by Dr Wilhelm Nöldeke (1889-1971) dated July 16, 1941, in: PA AA R 98804.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Werner Ekschmitt, *Berg Athos. Geschichte, Leben und Kultur der griechischen Mönchsrepublik*, Freiburg i.B. 1994 (= Herder Spektrum 4321), p. 167.

<sup>9</sup> Ekschmitt, *Athos* (see footnote 7), p. 167, points out that the Bulgarians wanted control over Mount Athos too, which the monks sought to prevent. See in more detail: Vaïos Kalogrias, *Okkupation, Widerstand und Kollaboration in Makedonien. 1941-1944*, Ruppolding 2008 (= Peleus 39), p. 105 et seq.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. about this and the following: Kalogrias, *Makedonien* (as footnote 8), p. 106.

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observation point of the German air force on the Holy Mountain.<sup>11</sup> The soldiers occasionally supported the monks. It seems that they had no serious conflicts with them. For the Germans Mount Athos was interesting not so much from a military, but rather from a cultural, respectively scientific, point of view.<sup>12</sup>

The Athos monks soon reacted to the new political situation. On April 13/26, 1941, there had been an extraordinary, doubly-manned Holy Assembly (Synaxis) which set up a petition to Hitler. Apparently, a German officer had advised the monks to turn to the new regime in this way.<sup>13</sup> In the petition the Athos monasteries asked the new government to assume a function of protective power as it used to be held by the Byzantine emperors.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore they wanted a maintenance of the *status quo*, as fixed by the Greek government in the so-called *Katastatikos Chartis* in 1926. The authors emphasize that since the 9<sup>th</sup> century (sic!) monks of various Orthodox peoples lived together in “wonderful harmony” on the Holy Mountain. In the modern age, they said, the way they lived together was governed in particular by the Treaty of Berlin of 1878, which stated: “The monks of Mount Athos, of whatever country they may be natives, shall be maintained in their former possessions and advantages, and shall enjoy, without any exceptions, complete equality of rights and prerogatives.”<sup>15</sup> The monks’ commitment to the further existence of the Holy Mountain should, as is strikingly strongly emphasised, still be possible in the future “independently of their origin and ethnicity”.<sup>16</sup> With this letter the Athos monasteries not only tried to get the new occupying power to include the Holy Mountain into their system of governance in the traditional way. They also wanted the Greek-dominated *status quo* to be continued, protecting them from a new flourishing of Slavonic groups on Mount Athos.

Ultimately the monasteries did not achieve an assumption of this function of protective power. Following a long internal discussion within German government circles<sup>17</sup>, Adolf Hitler personally decided in early October 1941 that the monasteries

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<sup>11</sup> The weather journal can be found in BArch RL 28.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Kalogrias, Makedonien (as footnote 8), p. 106.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Kalogrias, Makedonien (as footnote 8), p. 106.

<sup>14</sup> Ekschmitt, Athos (as footnote 7), p. 168, sees the imminent Bulgarian occupation of Mount Athos as a cause for the letter. This cannot be explicitly read from the letter, quoted in the following, but appears quite likely, cf. Kalogrias, Makedonien (as footnote 8), p. 106.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in the letter of the Athos monks to Hitler dated April 13/26, 1941, in PA AA R 98804.

<sup>16</sup> Letter of the Athos monks to Hitler dated April 13/26, 1941, in PA AA R 98804.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. a multitude of letters in PA AA R 98804.

were not to be granted any special protection by the government until further notice, arguing that such protection was generally guaranteed under occupation law.<sup>18</sup>

Not only the Greek-dominated Synaxis of the monasteries sought protection of their ethnic interests, dominated by the Greeks, with Adolf Hitler. Also the Slavonic monasteries – with the exception of the Serbs – show a tendency to gain national benefit from the new occupation situation in their own way.

### **The individual petition of the Slavonic monasteries**

The Slavonic monasteries of Panteleimon and Zographou, which had signed the petition in April, filed another one in Sofia in June that had a different focus. In this petition they tried to defend themselves against the codified Greek domination of Mount Athos.<sup>19</sup> The letter had been handed over by the monks Vasiliy and Vladimir to Professor Herbert W Duda at the German Scientific Institute in Sofia, who forwarded it to the German Legation there on June 20, 1941. He places particular emphasis on the wish of the monks to have a standing delegate or legate of the German occupiers on Mount Athos.<sup>20</sup> Possibly the purpose of establishing such a legate was to break the Greek organisation of the secular supervision on the Holy Mountain. With the petition the Slavonic monasteries not only tried to win the occupying power - which at least was in coalition with Bulgaria – as a protective power, but also to effect a new organisational order of Mount Athos. Thus, they tried to nationalistically capitalise on the new situation caused by the war for the benefit of their monasteries. The argument made in the document is cleverly put forward in that it first describes the situation achieved through the war as a way of overcoming the injustices of the Treaty of Versailles – thus clearly echoing the resentment by National Socialist Germany. In the wake of the Balkan wars in 1912 and the Treaty of Versailles, the traditional, international character of Mount Athos had been compromised, it said, even though not only had a free settlement of Orthodox Christians of all nations been allowed on Mount Athos, but at times more than half the monasteries had been populated by Bulgarians, Russians and Georgians. The Treaty of Berlin of 1878 – again cited here – had guaranteed equal rights for monks of all nations in article 62. Only with the victory of Greece in 1912 did the situation change drastically: “Under the new Greek

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<sup>18</sup> According to a memorandum dated October 1, 1941, the decision was taken immediately at the beginning of the month or slightly earlier, cf. PA AA R 98804.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. the copy of the “Petition der Athos-Kloester Sograph und Pantelejmon an die Achsenmächte, überreicht in Sofia im Juli 1941“, in: BArchNS 15/639, sheet. 95-101. The German Legation in Sofia forwarded the petition on July 16, 1941, to the German Foreign Ministry, cf. the cover letter by the Legation, in: PA AA R 98804.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the letter by Herbert Wilhelm Duda (1900-1975) to the Legation in Sofia dated June 20, 1941, in: PA AA R 98804. The report was forwarded to the German Foreign Ministry on June 25, 1941.

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political regime a systematic restriction of the rights of the non-Greek monasteries on Mount Athos began with the objective of slowly annihilating them. Instead of granting Mount Athos a corresponding international position in view of the different nationalities of the monks that live there, the creators of the Peace of Versailles acknowledged that Athos belonged to Greece, namely by the Treaty of Sèvres of 1920.<sup>21</sup> Ultimately the alleged aim was to “legally” suffocate the non-Greek communities of monks on Mount Athos. Accordingly, the number of the Bulgarian brotherhood had decreased from 200 to 70 and the number of the Russian brotherhood from 600 to 270 between the years 1920 and 1941. The admission of new members to the Slavonic monasteries had been systematically restricted by Greek legislation, it was claimed.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore the petition complains about the restriction of non-Greek Orthodox pilgrims, the confiscation of rural estates of the monasteries outside Mount Athos, the establishment of a Greek governor in 1926 and finally the reduction of the duty-free import of goods.<sup>23</sup> With reference to the decrease in numbers the monasteries do not mention the changed political situation in Russia, though, nor the fact that the confiscations and the restriction of the duty-free exchange of goods hit the Greek monasteries as well. Rather, they raise the general demand that the complaints brought forward be taken into consideration “when drawing up the conditions of a peace which will conclude this war through the creation of the new legal order of this world”.<sup>24</sup> Being disenfranchised by the creators of the Treaty of Versailles, the two monasteries specifically ask that “a representative of the military occupational administration of the Axis powers be appointed on Athos, imposing on this representative not only the duties of the forcibly established Greek political governor, whose actions hitherto have only been pernicious and terroristic, but entrusting him with the task of re-establishing the century-old rights and privileges of the non-Greek monasteries on Athos, - rights that have been violated by the Greek government in obvious breach of the cited international treaties.”<sup>25</sup> The monasteries see this as a first step, which lets them patiently wait for the day “when the creators of the coming new

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<sup>21</sup> Petition der Athos-Kloester Sograph und Pantelejmon an die Achsenmaechte, überreicht in Sofia im Juli 1941, in: BArchNS 15/639, sheet 97 et seq.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, sheet 98.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, sheet 99 et seq.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, sheet 100.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, sheet 100. In a letter by the German Legation in Sofia to the German Foreign Ministry dated September 19, 1941, in: PA AA R 98804, the former points out that the abbots had asked for a German liaison to Mount Athos to avoid an appropriation by the Italians, who were guided by Catholic interests.

order in the world will do away with the rape and the system of infringements, whose victims we have been since the Greek government extended its power over Athos.”<sup>26</sup>

Similar attempts were made from the Romanian side, too. Thus, Eugen Gerstenmaier reports about an encounter with Professor [Nichifor] Grainic (1889-1972), who in 1941 pointed out the strong support of Mount Athos by the Romanians. Since as much as four fifths of the Athonite real estate had been acquired through Romanian foundations, he argued, Romania had quite an interest in the reorganisation of Mount Athos.<sup>27</sup> What he probably had in mind was also a strengthening of the political rights of the Romanian Athos monks, who in accordance with the *Katastatikos Chartis* of 1926 were not allowed to run a monastery of their own. Hence Gerstenmaier recommended not to respond to the one-sided petition of the Slavonic monasteries, since the other ethnicities would have to be taken into consideration accordingly.

The demand for the appointment of a representative of the military occupational administration had been reported in the files before. On April 25, 1941, Archimandrite Grigol (in the files more frequently called Gregor) Peradze (1899-1942)<sup>28</sup> turned to the Reich Ministry for Church Affairs. In his letter the author emphasizes the characterisation of Mount Athos by the Georgian tradition, respectively by the Georgian monasticism, which had been ousted from the Holy Mountain by the Greeks since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, though. The art treasures, he urged, should by all means be saved for science by a trip of a Georgian with German aid and support. For a better protection of the interests of the Georgians, Peradze also suggests to let another monastic mediator alongside the German governor on Mount Athos run interference between the German administration and the monastic leaders of Mount Athos. So as not to annoy the Ecumenical Patriarchate among others, this mediator should have sympathies for the Germans as well for the Greeks. The description of the job envisaged by Peradze is such that it is practically a perfect fit for himself:

“Generally it is necessary, also for the reputation of German culture, that an Orthodox monk of the rank of an Archimandrite be sent to the Holy Mountain (the highest rank for the Holy Mountain, since legally the bishops do not have any power there at all) alongside the German Governor (during the Turkish time, the Governor of the Holy Mountain was always an unmarried person, in consideration of the ancient

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<sup>26</sup> Petition der Athos-Kloester Sograph und Pantelejmon an die Achsenmächte, überreicht in Sofia im Juli 1941, in: BArchNS 15/639, sheet 101.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Eugen Gerstenmaier's report about a journey by order of the Department for Cultural Politics of the German Foreign Ministry from September 2 to 22, 1941, in: PA AA R 98804, here sheet 16.

<sup>28</sup> On Grigul Peradze cf. most recently Christian Weise: Peradze, Grigol/Gregor, in: BBKL 17 (2000), col. 1064-1069.

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Byzantine and monkish laws governing thereon; anyway the Turks acknowledged the autonomy and independent internal constitution of the Holy Mountain), who is fluid in German and sympathetic to the Germans. This Archimandrite shall be under the jurisdiction of the ecumenical Patriarch, and so as not to unnecessarily irritate the Greeks, he should by no means belong to the peoples which actively or passively support the German campaign in Greece (Romanians, Bulgarians and partly Orthodox Albanians.)”<sup>29</sup> In his letter Peradze warns against an overly great influence of the Italians in Greece, who would only “weaken, humiliate” and “annihilate” the Orthodox church in its centre.<sup>30</sup> In his letter the theologian expressly suggests the appointment of himself as the Archimandrite in the role of a mediator, but without success. Ultimately he was murdered on December 6, 1942, at the concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

**Petitions to the occupiers about an inter-ethnic conflict solution**

Other intra-Orthodox tensions on the background of ethnicity also frequently occurred during the German occupation of Greece. They were based on national conflicts in northern Greece, among other things. As mentioned above, the German occupiers had left the administration of the north-eastern Greek occupied area to their Bulgarian allies. For the Athos monasteries as well as for the Greek Orthodox population as a whole, the consequences were in part disastrous. Part of the background of this may have been the so-called “Bulgarian schism”. The ecclesiastical Bulgarian independence had been declared by the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1872, whereas it was not acknowledged by the Greek side until 1945. This goes for the Ecumenical Patriarchate as well as for the Orthodox Church of Greece. The unresolved question of autocephaly of the Bulgarian Church was probably one reason why the Greek Archbishop Damaskinos hoped for help by the German occupiers against the Bulgarians. At least it says in a report by the plenipotentiary of the German Reich in Athens of September 1941 with regard to a visit by Eugen Gerstenmaier to the Archbishop: “Dr Gerstenmaier reports that the Archbishop hopes and begs for the help of the German Reich particularly against the oppressions of the Greek Orthodoxy by the Bulgarian Episcopate.”<sup>31</sup>

The tensions between the Greeks and the Bulgarians had consequences for Mount Athos, too, in this case very specific ones: They can be found in the petitions to the National Socialist regime. Thus the Greek Athos monastery of Vatopedi suffered

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<sup>29</sup> Letter by Grigul Peradze to the Reich Ministry for Church Affairs dated April 25, 1941, in: BArch R 5101/23175, sheet 31.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, sheet 31.

<sup>31</sup> Report by the plenipotentiary of the Reich for Greece to the German Foreign Ministry dated September 29, 1941, in: EZA: 517/52.

from the Bulgarian occupation of Thrace. Since the 14<sup>th</sup> century the monastery had held the fishery rights in Lake Bourou near Porto-Lago, which the Bulgarians had challenged in 1941 under the occupation. Hence the monks of the monastery turned to the plenipotentiary of the German Reich in Athens on September 10, 1941, “invoking the traditional German culture, German science, and the historic mission of the German Reich”, and asked for protection of their rights.<sup>32</sup> After the matter had been referred to the German Legation in Sofia, the Royal Bulgarian Foreign Ministry responded in the negative. The response made reference to the situation in the years 1912 to 1919 during which the area had also been under Bulgarian jurisdiction, arguing that during that time Vatopedi had not applied for the fishery rights, either.<sup>33</sup>

The monastery was informed accordingly on June 18, 1942.<sup>34</sup> Since both Germany and Bulgaria were part of the Axis powers, the German occupational administration did not support the interests of the Greek monastery any further.

### **Conclusion**

If you look at the history of Mount Athos in the time of National Socialist occupation, some points become clear which appear to be of general interest.

1. As a result of the emergence of national states in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Orthodox churches increasingly saw themselves as a palladium of the nation. The emergence of national churches is clear evidence of this. In their turn they massively campaigned for national matters. This resulted in a pronounced phyletism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

2. Even monks, who pursue the ideal of a quasi-angelic life, were by no means free from phyletistic thinking. The history of Mount Athos in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century bears clear witness of this. Traditionally, people of different ethnicities lived together here. Although there had been occasional conflicts between them before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was at this time that phyletism broke out to the full.

3. The petition by the Athos monasteries of 1941 to Adolf Hitler does not only show the (supposed) Orthodox ideal of a symphony of state and church. Rather, the Synaxis on Mount Athos also tried to uphold national proportional representation through the new occupying power.

4. The Slavonic monasteries on Mount Athos did not shy away from making a “pact with the devil” to push for their national interests. At any rate they sought to

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. the letter by the Athos monastery of Vatopedi to the plenipotentiary of the German Reich in Athens dated September 10, 1941, in: PA AA R 98804.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. the letter by the Royal Bulgarian Foreign Ministry to the German Legation in Sofia dated May 16, 1942, in: PA AA R 98804.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. the letter by Ignatios Vatopedinos dated June 18, 1942, to the plenipotentiary of the German Reich in Athens, in: PA AA R 98804.

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have their national interests appreciated, be it even through cooperation with the National Socialist occupiers.

5. Mount Athos is a good example of how the common Orthodox identity was fatally set aside by the implementation of nationalist thinking particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The example of fishery rights in Lake Bourou shows that ethnic tensions could even have disastrous economic consequences.

As we take a look at the conflicts about nationalism in the Orthodox monks' communities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the question arises whether they are not in contradiction to the Pauline demand that Christianity should be a transethnic community (Gal 3: 26). At any rate, it is problematic when ecclesiastic and monasterial communities make pacts with political systems even like that of National Socialism for reasons of national or even nationalist interests. The history of Mount Athos may still be a warning example today, even though no serious consequences of the monks' actions were to be observed at the time, due to the restraint of the National Socialist rulers.

# PATRISTICA

# PATRISTICS

## Omiliile pascale LXXXII și LXXXIII ale Sfântului Petru Chrysologul

Asist. Dr. Dragoș Boicu<sup>1</sup>

### I

#### Abstract:

Among the approximately 190 homilies of St. Peter Chrysologus, a group of 12 sermons [LXXIII-LXXXIV] is dedicated to the Lord's Resurrection, representing one of the most important collections on this subject of a Christian author of the "golden age" of patristic literature. From these 12 Pascal homilies we render in Romanian translation the sermons based on Mark's Gospel, chapter 16 (LXXXII and LXXXIII).

#### Keywords:

Pascal homily, Peter Chrysologus, Ravenna, Latin liturgical tradition

### I

Cu alt prilej<sup>2</sup> menționez că, între cele circa 190 de omilii ale Sfântului Petru Chrysologul (†450), există un grupaj de 12 predici [LXXIII-LXXXIV] dedicat praznicului Învierii, și care reprezintă una dintre cele mai importante colecții pe această temă a unui autor creștin din „epoca de aur” a literaturii patristice.

Dacă am încerca să stabilim o relație între aceste 12 piese omiletice și cele 11 pericope ale Învierii lecturate până astăzi la Utrenia Duminicilor nu vom reuși întrucât

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<sup>1</sup> Dragoș Boicu, Asistent la Facultatea de Teologie „Andrei Șaguna” din cadrul Universității „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu. E-mail: dragos.boicu@ulbsibiu.ro

<sup>2</sup> Dragoș Boicu, „Omiliile pascale LXXIII, LXXIV, LXXV, LXXVI, LXXVII, LXXX ale Sfântului Petru Chrysologul”, în RT 2/2020, p. 184-205.

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șase dintre cuvântările pascale (LXXXIII, LXXXIV, LXXXV, LXXXVI, LXXXVII, LXXX) sunt construite în jurul capitolului 28 al Evangheliei de la Matei. În ceea ce privește restul omiliilor se poate observa că ele urmăresc pericope delimitate ușor diferit față de ceea ce găsim astăzi în Lecționarul Catolic ori în uzul Bisericii Răsăritene. Celelalte cuvântări pascale ale Sfântului Petru se distribuie după cum urmează:

Sermo LXXXVIII	In 21, 4-8
Sermo LXXXIX	Lc 24, 1-13
Sermo LXXXI	Lc 24, 36-41
Sermo LXXXII	Mc 16, 1-12
Sermo LXXXIII	Mc 16, 14-18
Sermo LXXXIV	In 20, 19-28

Din această împărțire am putea deduce că episcopul Ravenei are un plan destul de sistematic de abordare omiletică a Evangheliilor Învierii, dar și că o parte din tâlcuirile sale la aceste pericope pascale s-au pierdut.

În cele ce urmează ne vom concentra asupra omiliilor în care este tâlcuit capitolul 16 din Evanghelia după Marcu. În mod clar există o continuitate între cele două piese care au fost rostite de Sfântul Petru Chrysologul la rând în două zile sau două duminici consecutive. Trebuie evidențiat, din nou, faptul că textele episcopului de Ravenna sunt adaptate capacității creștinilor de a se concentra sau de a urmări întreaga cuvântare. Din acest motiv, în momentul în care observă rumoare sau oboseală își curmă, uneori chiar abrupt, predica, anunțând continuarea temei la o dată ulterioară.

Totuși, ca și cazul omiliilor pascale la Matei și, așa cum rezultă din tabelul de mai sus, chiar și în privința celorlalte Evanghelii, Sfântul Petru își propune de la bun început abordarea eșalonată a capitolelor dedicate Învierii, în serii consecutive. Potrivit lui Franco Sottocornola atât omilia LXXXIX (§1), cât și LXXXII (§1), indică ordinea în care Chrysologul predica în Săptămâna Luminată: mai întâi pericopele despre Înviere de la Matei, apoi de la Marcu și apoi Luca, încheind cel mai probabil cu Ioan<sup>3</sup>. Este foarte posibil ca cel puțin două seturi din omiliile păstrate să fi fost rostite consecutiv în aceeași săptămână. Astfel, dacă omilia LXXXV a fost rostită cel mai probabil în Duminica Învierii<sup>4</sup>, iar omilia LXXXVI în ziua următoare, atunci în a treia zi de Paști venea rândul pericopei de la Marcu 16, 1-12, prilejuind rostirea omiliei LXXXII<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Franco Sottocornola, *L'anno liturgico nei sermoni di Pietro Crisologo: ricerca storico-critica sulla liturgia d Ravenna antica*, Centro studi e ricerche sulla antica provincia ecclesiastica ravennate, 1973, p. 87

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 85.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 172-173, n. 13.

Un indiciu suplimentar al acestei succesiuni este tema dominantă: motivul celor două Marii care a fost dezvoltat în omiliile LXXV (§3) și LXXVI (§1) și care este reluat și în tâlcuirea pericopei de la Marcu (LXXXII, §7). De aceea și Alejandro Olivar consideră foarte posibilă ca aceasta cuvântare să fi fost rostită în ziua următoare, respectiv marțea din Săptămâna Luminată<sup>6</sup>.

Ediția critică a acestor texte i-o datorăm tot lui Alejandro Olivar, care le-a editat alături de celelalte omilii ale Sfântului Petru Chrysologul în prestigioasa colecție *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*<sup>7</sup>. Ar mai trebui precizat că omiliile LXXXII și LXXXIII împreună cu celelalte predici la Înviere s-au bucurat de traduceri integrale sau parțiale în germană<sup>8</sup>, engleză<sup>9</sup>, italiană<sup>10</sup> și franceză<sup>11</sup>.

### Sermo LXXXII

Autorul își propune să continue seria de lecturi mateiene cu pericopa de la Marcu, capitolul 16, 1-12 și deplânge neputința apropiaților lui Iisus de a înțelege adevărata miză a sacrificiului Său de bună voie, menit să deschidă iadul și pună capăt stăpânirii morții (§1). Femeile mironosițe nu reușesc să vadă dincolo de tristețea firească a doliului și, din acest motiv, nu sesizează miracolul din dimineața Învierii: un răsărit prematur prin care soarele recuperează orele de lumină pierdute în Vinerea Mare (§2). Piatra de la mormânt are și o valoare simbolică prefigurând învârtosarea inimilor și încetșarea privirilor care nu văd limpede puterea Mântuitorului (§3), iar vederea îngerului dă mărturie despre existența omului după învierea de obște, arătând că „învierea nu cunoaște bătrânețe și nici desăvârșirea veșnică nu acceptă vârste” (§4). Însuși veșmântul de lumină vestește caracterul nepieritor și nestricăcios al unei lumi care nu are nimic în comun cu coruptibilitatea și devenirea în timp (§5). Condiția pământască nu le îngăduie mironosițelor să accepte vederea și cuvintele îngerului și

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<sup>6</sup> Alejandro Olivar, *Los Sermones de San Pedro Crisologo. Estudio critico*, Abadia de Montserrat, 1962, p. 265-266, 277.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Chrysologus, *Collectio Sermonum*, edit. Alejandro Olivar, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, vol. 24, 24A, 24B. Turnhout, Brepols, 1975.

<sup>8</sup> *Des heiligen Petrus Chrysologus Erzbischofs von Ravenna ausgewählte Predigten*, aus dem Lateinischen übers. von G. Böhmer. (Bibliothek der Kirchenväter, 1. Reihe, Band 43) München, 1923.

<sup>9</sup> St. Peter Chrysologus, *Selected Sermons*, Volume 3, Translated by William B. Palardy, St. John's Seminary School of Theology, Brighton, Massachusetts, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 2005.

<sup>10</sup> *Opere di San Pietro Crisologo. Sermoni / 2* [63-124], edit. Gabriele Banterle, Biblioteca Ambrosiana/Citta Nuova Editrice, Milano / Roma, 1997, p. 94-167.

<sup>11</sup> Pierre Chrysologue, *Le signe des signes. Sermons sur la Passion et la Résurrection*. Introduction, traduction, notes et index par Marie Steffann (Les Pères dans la foi, 96), Migne, Paris, 2007, 179 p.

de teamă ezită să împărtășească mesajul primit. Doar Maria Magdalena, tocmai pentru că prefigurează acum Biserica, iese la propovăduire (§6), dar fără a fi luată în seamă de apostoli. La fel sunt ignorați ceilalți doi ucenici cărora Hristos li se arată „în alt chip”. Interesant este accentul pus pe sintagma *in alter vultu*, unde forma sau asemănarea chipului (effigies) nu se referă la dimensiunea cantitativă, ci la una calitativă: cei doi ucenici eșuează să recunoască fața Mântuitorului nu din cauza desfigurării în urma suferinței și torturii, ci din pricina transfigurării sau pnevmatizării care definește acum trăsăturile fizionomice ale lui Hristos (§7). Tâlcuirea se încheie cu anunțarea unei continuări într-una din zilele ce urmează (§8).

### **Sermo LXXXIII**

După ce abordează aparenta contradicție dintre drama Patimilor Mântuitorului și atitudinea apostolilor enunțată de evanghelistul Marcu (§1), autorul evidențiază disperarea de care erau cuprinși Apostolii, motiv pentru care Hristos cel Înviat îi mustră la arătarea Sa (§2). Foarte fin se face tranziția de la izolarea ucenicilor în spatele ușilor încuiate la misiunea ce li se încredințează de către Mântuitorul prin cuvintele „Mergeți în toată lumea și propovăduiți”. Dar și mai impresionantă este antiteza creată între necredința discipolilor în fața evidenței și credința celor ce-l primesc și îl mărturisesc pe Hristos doar ca urmare a predicii acestor ucenici deznădăjduiți (§3). Vorbind despre „cel ce va crede”, Sfântul Petru găsește potrivit să facă un scurt rezumat doctrinar, punctând elementele necesare pe care un creștin trebuie să le creadă, respectiv să le mărturisească. Astfel se reiau bună parte din explicațiile oferite în Omiliile la Crez (LVI-LXIIa), dar într-o manieră mult mai concentrată insistând mai mult asupra triadologiei. Celelalte articole ale Crezului Apostolic sunt abia atinse (§4). În finalul cuvântării sunt evidențiate semnele vizibile ale credinței care vor întări și mai mult propovăduirea lui Hristos în lume (§5).

Scurt și la obiect, Sfântul Petru Chrysologul reușește în aceste două predici să facă o prezentare a arătărilor Mântuitorului așa cum sunt ele descrise de Sfântul Evanghelist Marcu. Deși nu este străin de profunzimea pe care o putem intui în spatele unor metafore lapidare, episcopul Ravennei avansează rapid prin textul Scripturii fără a stăruii și a dezvolta imagini sau alegorii alambicate. Ritmul oarecum alert cu care se succed explicațiile creează o stare de tensiune în sufletul auditoriului, dar mai ales una de vioiciune – poate cea mai adecvată dispoziție pe care o pot avea creștinii care serbează Praznicul Învierii.

II

**Omilia LXXXII: a noua despre Învierea Domnului<sup>12</sup>**

1. De vreme ce Sfântul Matei ne-a arătat deja pentru izbăvirea noastră cele ce aflate despre învierea Domnului, să ascultăm astăzi și ceea ce ne spune fericitul Marcu. *Și după ce a trecut, zice, ziua sâmbetei, Maria Magdalena și Maria lui Iacov și Salomeea au cumpărat miresme ca venind să-L ungă* (Mc 16, 1). În această pericopă femeile aleargă cu devoțiune feminină care [se grăbesc] să aducă la mormânt miruri celui mort, iar nu credință celui viu. Femeie, Hristos a primit moartea ca să moară moartea. Întrucât Hristos este ucis, a omorât ceea ce-i omora pe toți. Hristos a intrat în mormânt ca să deschidă iadul. Deci dezlegând legea tartarului și distrugând închisoarea iadului, și lichidând însăși puterea morții, acum Hristos nu trebuie să fie uns ca un mort, ci adorat ca un biruitor.

2. Femeile stau treze toată noaptea, priveghează, rămân fără somn, intră în cele întunecate pe când zorile se ivesc: de unde se vede că ele poartă lumina slabă a inimii nu mai mică decât a trupului. *Și dis-de-dimineață, zice, au venit la mormânt când deja răsărea soarele*. Dacă (era) dis-de-dimineață, cum răsărea deja soarele? Astfel, evanghelistul nu știe ce zicea? Evanghelistul știe ceea ce zicea, dar cel care nu a aflat nu știe ce să audă. Această referire nu este expresia unei greșeli, ci a adevărului și nu este vreo scăpare a cuvântării omenеști, ci descoperă adevărul ceresc al întâmplării. Spusese: *Și s-a făcut întuneric de la ora a șasea până la ora a noua* (Mc 15, 33). Deci soarele se ascunsese în ceasul în care Domnul a pățimit, (dar) se ivește cu strălucire mai înainte de vreme când înviază Domnul și cel ce pierise cu Ziditorul său, și și-a stins însăși strălucirea sa la amiază, răsare (acum) împreună cu Făcătorul său, răsare înainte de zori biruind întunericul. Dis-de dimineață, pentru că atunci soarele, care răsărise ca să facă dimineață și care fugea dinaintea nopții, acum vine mai înainte ca să pună noaptea pe fugă, ca noaptea să-i dea înapoi ceasurile de lumină pe care frica patimilor Domnului le-a cuprins.

3. *Ziceau, spune, una către alta: cine ne va prăvăli nouă piatra de la ușa mormântului?* (Mc 16, 3). De la ușa mormântului sau a inimii? De la mormânt sau de pe ochi? Femeilor, inima (vă) este încuiată, ochii (vi) sunt închiși și de aceea nu vedeți slava mormântului deschis, vărsați mirul acum nu pe trupul Domnului, ci în candela inimii voastre dacă doriți să vedeți, ca prin lumina credinței să stea la vedere, ceea ce este închis de bezna necredinței.

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<sup>12</sup> Textul folosit pentru traducere este cel al ediției critice stabilite de către Alejandro Olivar în CCL 24A, și corectat de Gabriele Banterle în ediția *Opere di San Pietro Crisologo. Sermoni* / 2 [63-124], p. 94-140. De această dată am urmărit însă mult mai atent și varianta publicată de J.P. Migne în PL 52: 430-435.

4. Și ridicându-și ochii, zice, *au văzut că piatra fusese răsturnată, căci era foarte mare* (Mc 16, 4). Cu adevărat mare și foarte mare și mai mare acum în calitate<sup>13</sup> decât în formă, dacă este în stare și să acopere și să închidă trupul Ziditorului lumii. Și intrând în mormânt, *au văzut un tânăr șezând în partea dreaptă, îmbrăcat în veșmânt alb* (Mc 16, 5). Au intrat în mormânt ca împreună-îngropate cu Hristos, să învieze împreună cu Hristos din mormânt. Iar aceasta a împlinit zisa Apostolului: *Îngropați fiind împreună cu El prin botez, în care ați și înviați* (Col. 2, 12). Ele văd un tânăr ca să se distingă vârsta învierii noastre. Văd un tânăr pentru că învierea nu cunoaște bătrânețe și nici desăvârșirea veșnică nu acceptă vârste. Omul când nu știe că se naște, nu știe că moare, și când nu știe că se naște și moare nici vârsta nu primește micșorări, nici nu are nevoie de creșteri. *Au văzut un tânăr șezând în partea dreaptă*, pentru că învierea nu primește parte stângă<sup>14</sup>. Căci, zice, *Domnul a cunoscut căile care sunt drepte* (Pilde 4, 28). Și atunci va pune pe cei dreپți de-a dreapta Sa (Mt 25, 33). Rugați-vă fraților, ca și noi să murim păcatelor, să fim îngropați pentru ceremoniile vremelnice ca să înviem în veșnicie în Hristos, și așezați de-a dreapta să ne învrednicim a auzi: *Veniți, binecuvântații Tatălui meu, primiți împărăția care a fost pregătită pentru voi de la întemeierea lumii* (Mt 25, 34).

5. *Îmbrăcat în veșmânt alb*. Acest veșmânt nu (e) din lână muritoare, ci din puterea (dătătoare) de viață, strălucind de lumina cerească nu de culoarea pământească, (fiind) strălucitoare prin darul Ziditorului, nu din meșteșugul țesătorului, cum spune profetul: *Cel ce se îmbracă cu lumina precum cu o haină* (Ps 103, 2). Și despre dreپți (zice): *Atunci vor străluci dreپții ca soarele* (Mt 13, 43). Cei pământești sunt îmbrăcați cu veșminte pământești și de aceea precum strălucesc prin noutate, așa se ponosesc prin vechime. De fapt cele cerești sunt îmbrăcate în veșmânt de lumină cerească și sunt lipsite de mizeria pământească și nici nu sunt uzate vreodată de vechime, nici nu sunt întunecate de vreo murdărie, ci învierea va da veșminte care sunt îmbrăcate o dată spre lumina veșnică.

6. Și acelea, zice, *ieșind din mormânt au fugit căci le cuprinsese pe ele frică și cutremur* (Mc 16, 8). Îngerul șade în mormânt pentru că se încredințează [de miracol] din natura lui cerească, (dar) femeile fug de la mormânt pentru că sunt tulburate prin condiția pământească. Cel ce nu poate să moară nu știe să se teamă de mormânt, iar femeile tremură de cele întâmplare și se înspăimântă de mormânt precum muritorii (se tem) de moarte. De aceea ele nu spun nimănui aceasta. *Și n-au spus nimănui nimic* (Mc 16, 8). Pentru că femeilor le e dat să asculte, nu să vorbească; le este dat să fie învățate, nu să învețe (pe alții), cum spune Apostolul: *femeile să tacă în Biserică* (1 Co 14, 34). În fine, aceeași Marie merge după aceea și vestește, dar acum nu simbolizează

<sup>13</sup> Meritum – lit. serviciu prestat, răsplată, vină.

<sup>14</sup> Termenul latin pentru partea stângă – *sinister* – are și conotație morală, referindu-se la slăbiciune, răutate sau păcat.

femeia, ci Biserica. Precum mai devreme ca femeie tace, acum ca Biserică vestește și vorbește.

7. După aceea, zice, *s-a arătat la doi dintre ei care erau pe cale* (Mc 16, 12). De ce nu (S-a arătat) la trei? De ce nu la patru, ci la doi? Pentru că se indică aici faptul că credința în înviere trebuie propovăduită celor două popoare, adică neamurilor și iudeilor. De aceea, precum am spus este demonstrat că Biserica era astfel preînchipuită fie în cele două femei<sup>15</sup>, fie în cele două popoare. *S-a arătat în alt chip* (Mc 16, 12). Nimeni să nu creadă că Hristos își schimbase forma chipului Său prin înviere, ca cel ce era însuși rănit și ar fi avut trăsăturile schimbate<sup>16</sup>. Ci chipul<sup>17</sup> este schimbat de vreme ce e făcut din muritor nemuritor, și din stricăcios nestricăcios, dar aceasta ar fi o schimbare de substanță, nu o schimbare de persoană, iar chipul nu a pierdut însușirile care îl fac recunoscut<sup>18</sup>, ci a dobândit slava.

8. Și pentru ca predica să nu evite, ori să treacă în graba ei peste întrebări, vom afla ce urmează prin descoperirea dumnezeiască în predica următoare.

### Omilia LXXXIII: a zecea despre Învierea Domnului

1. Astăzi fericitul evanghelist a relatat astfel că apostolii se îngrijeau de masă chiar în timpul răstignirii, dornici de mâncăruri, ocupați cu ospetele, uitând de patima Domnului. *Pe când cei unsprezece ședeau la masă*, zice, *li S-a arătat Domnul* (Mc 16, 14). Unde stăteau la masă? Domnul (este) la groapă, (și) slujitorii sunt deja la masă? Aceasta este credința slujitorilor? Aceasta (este) dragostea ucenicilor? [Aceasta (este) ardoarea lui Petru?]<sup>19</sup> Aceasta este iubirea lui Ioan care era rezemat chiar la pieptul lui Hristos? Aceasta este dragostea dobândită după atâta timp, atâtea daruri, atâtea puteri, încât în chiar momentul pătimirii, încă fiind cald trupul mort și proaspătă îngroparea, când vrăjmașii se bucurau și întreaga Iudee batjocorea, ucenicii prânzeau în desfătarea divanelor<sup>20</sup> de ospăț și cu toată încântarea șederii la masă? La moartea lui Moise sunt de față îngeri, Dumnezeu însuși se îngrijește de mormânt, taberele evreiești se opresc,

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<sup>15</sup> A se vedea mai pe larg în Omiliile LXXIV-LXXVII din seria „Omiliile pascale LXXIII, LXXIV, LXXV, LXXVI, LXXVII, LXXX ale Sfântului Petru Chrysologul”, p. 194, 196, 198.

<sup>16</sup> Alter esset in vultu – lit. ar fi fost altul la chip.

<sup>17</sup> Mutatur effigies – schimbarea formei/chipului are desigur în vedere o transfigurare sub aspect calitativ

<sup>18</sup> Notitiam – lit. cunoașterea.

<sup>19</sup> Adaos prezent în ediția publicată de J.P. Migne, PL 52: 433A

<sup>20</sup> Sigma – canapea sau divan în forma de Σ stilizat, folosit în timpul ospetelor

își curmă calea, este îndurată cumplită oprire în deșert, a fost plăns treizeci<sup>21</sup> de zile și îngroparea slujitorului este cinstită cu îndelungul ritual de jelire; iar Hristos, cu adevărat singurul Dumnezeu, Făcătorul lucrurilor, Răscumpărătorul tuturor, după aceea patimă nefericită, după moarte și încă moarte pe cruce, nu mai merită nici măcar după trei zile lacrimile ucenicilor? Pământul se cutremură, iadul se tulbură, pietrele se despică, mormintele se deschid, soarele fuge, ziua se sfârșește, totul devine noapte, și doar ucenicii ospătează pe divan înalt, în adunare într-o deplină tihnă, netulburați în plăceri. Și aceasta fraților, a găsit astfel Învățătorul Însuși întors din cele mai de jos ale pământului.

2. Deci, *pe când cei unsprezece ședeau la masă, li S-a arătat Domnul [și I-a monstrat pentru necredința și împietrirea inimii lor, căci n-au crezut pe cei ce-L văzuseră înviat]*<sup>22</sup>. Ce vom zice la acestea, credinciosule Petre, preadevotatele Petre? *Stând ei la masă*. Oare se ospătau? Fraților, această (stare) nu era de întins la masă, ci de zăcut la pământ (în suferință), nici întâlnirea aceea nu era de sărbătoare, ci era o adunare îndoliată. Acolo pâinea nu era a bucuriei, ci a tristeții; acolo cupele erau amestecate cu fierea crucii nu cu dulceața vinului. *Erau, zice, închiși de frica iudeilor (In 20, 19)*. Dacă le era frică, dacă erau închiși, cu siguranță nu se ospătau. Și dacă nu se ospătau, aceea nu era casă, ci temniță; aceea nu era masă, ci mormânt. Atunci suferința patimilor Domnului a trecut asupra ucenicilor și întreaga sulită a durerii fusese împlântată nu doar în coastele lor, ci chiar și în inimi. Atunci mâinile și picioarele le erau ținute de culele tristeții; atunci li s-a dat să bea oțet și tot atunci au băut fierea amărăciunii evreiești; atunci soarele a pierit pentru ei și ziua a fugit; atunci mințile și sufletelor lor erau cuprinse de noaptea cea mai adâncă; atunci prea sălbatica furtună de gânduri i-a izbit de stâncile relei-credințe în naufragiul credinței; atunci deznădejea care este cea mai rea dintre toate relele și care vine mereu ultima împotriva, i-a risipit pe ei în locuri de îngropare. Astfel, precum am spus, Domnul nu îi găsește pe ei ospătând la masă, nici chefuind, ci zăcând la pământ, îngropați: și din acest motiv le reproșează necredința lor, că atât crezuseră disperării (lor) încât nu vor crede în învierea prezisă de Domnul, nu vor crede vestirii de la slujitorii (minunii) și nu mai rămăsese în ei pic de credință și pic de mântuire, ci morți pentru veac, îngropați pentru lume, toți credeau că acea casă le era deja mormânt.

3. Drept aceea, văzându-i pe ei Domnul că ieșiseră din lume, i-a chemat înapoi spre lume, și îi trimite în lume, zicând: *Mergeți în toată lumea și propovăduiți Evanghelia la toată făptura (Mc 16, 15)*. Veniți în lume ca cei care socotiți acum să rămâneți toți într-o locuință, vedeți că toată lumea vi se supune. *Veniți în toată lumea*

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<sup>21</sup> În ediția critică a lui A. Olivar se impune varianta quadraginta (patruzeci), dar textul din Deuteronom precizează clar că au fost doar treizeci (triginta) de zile de doliu la moartea lui Moise, așa cum găsim și în ediția publicată de J.P. Migne.

<sup>22</sup> Adaos prezent în ediția publicată de J.P. Migne, PL 52: 433B.

și propovăduiți *Evangelia la toată făptura*. Aceasta înseamnă să fiți speranță pentru toți voi care ați fost pentru voi înșivă (pricină de) deznădejde; și vedeți atunci cât de mare a fost necredința voastră atunci, când veți vedea că lumea crede prin ascultarea (propovăduirii) voastre, (a celor) care nu ați putut să credeți vederii voastre și veți ști cât de mare este învârtoșarea inimii voastre atunci, când veți înțelege că în toată lumea, fără a Mă fi văzut, cele mai sălbatice neamuri Mă mărturisesc pe Mine, pe Care voi M-ați tăgăduit (deși) Mă aflu în fața ochilor voștri. Veți vedea (oameni) risipiți pe pământ, izolați în insule, agățați de stânci, retrași în singurătate, magi neștiutori, greci certăreți, romani pricepuți<sup>23</sup>, care caută doar prin credință credința, pe care voi ați căutat-o pipăind cu mâna și cu degetul rănilor Mele. Dar întrucât vă trimit pe voi martori ai patimii Mele, ai morții Mele, ai învierii Mele, v-am îngăduit să cercetați mai departe aceste [răni], numai ca ezitarea voastră să fie întărire pentru cei care vor crede în propovăduirea voastră<sup>24</sup>.

4. *Cel ce va crede, zice, și se va boteza se va mântui* (Mc 16, 16). Fraților, ceea ce este sufletul pentru trup, aceea este credința pentru botez. De aceea cel ce s-a născut din colimvitră, trăiește din credință: *dreptul, zice, din credință va fi viu* (Rm 1, 17). Moare deci tot cel ce va fi fără credință. Cel ce va crede [este cel ce crede] că Treimea este un singur Dumnezeu, că în Tatăl și în Fiul și în Sfântul Duh este o singură demnitate în deplină egalitate, că dumnezeirea este distinctă în Treime, nu este amestecată în unitate, ci este una în dumnezeire și întreită în persoane; că Dumnezeu este numele Treimii; că Tatăl și Fiul nu sunt înțeleși într-un raport ierarhic<sup>25</sup>, ci sunt prețuiți în [relația lor de] iubire; că Sfântul Duh nu este considerat mai mult sau mai puțin inferior, nici că este socotit mai mult sau mai puțin exterior, că dumnezeirea nu are părți exterioare<sup>26</sup>. [Crede] că Hristos s-a făcut om în așa fel ca să rămână ceea ce este Dumnezeu, și a murit astfel încât să învieze prin moartea Sa pe morții tuturor veacurilor; că El nu a înviat pentru Sine, ci pentru noi; că ne-a purtat pe noi în cer, când s-a ridicat El la cer; că stă [de-a dreapta Tatălui] cu autoritate să judece, nu pentru a se odihni de osteneală; că va veni spre mustrare, nu doar într-un loc, Cel care este pretutindeni, și nu ca să ocupe lumea Sa Cel care deține toată lumea, ci ca lumea să se învrednicească de acum mereu de vederea propriului Ziditor. Să creadă omul în iertarea păcatelor, pentru că patria cerească [oricât] ar fi de întinsă nu-l încapă pe păcătos, (dar) nici să nu deznădăjduiască omul din pricina mulțimii păcatelor sale, căci

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<sup>23</sup> Epitetele *queruli* și *periti*, atribuite grecilor și romanilor, reprezintă un topos frecvent întâlnit în literatura latină.

<sup>24</sup> Vobis credituri sunt – lit. vă vor crede vouă.

<sup>25</sup> Ordo,-inis – lit. rang, clasă. Trimitere clară la orice formă de subordinaționism.

<sup>26</sup> Quia nescit exteriora divinitas. Exterioritatea la care se referă aici Sfântul Petru pare să facă trimitere la învățătura pnevmatomahă potrivit căreia Duhul este considerat o putere impersonală, superioară naturii angelice, dar situată în afara dumnezeirii.

dacă este vreun păcat pe care Domnul nu-l poate ierta, atunci nu e atotputernic. Să creadă și în învierea trupului ca omul să fie el însuși, ca cel care păcătuiește să primească el însuși [care înviază]<sup>27</sup> pedeapsa, iar cel care lucrează (să ia) răsplata. Să creadă în viața veșnică ca cea de-a doua moarte să nu mai aibă loc<sup>28</sup>.

5. Iar cea mai mare dovadă a credinței, fraților, este (faptul) că sunt izgoniți din trupurile omenești demonii, adică vechii dușmani; că dintr-o singură gură este vărsată cuvântarea diferită a limbilor; că șerpii atinși în (numele lui) Hristos își pierd veninul lor; că prin (puterea lui) Hristos cupele otrăvite fiind băute nu reușesc să vatăme; că bolile trupurilor sunt alungate la atingerea celor ce îl propovăduiesc pe Hristos. Zice: *Celor ce vor crede, le vor urma aceste semne: în numele Meu, demoni vor izgoni, în limbi noi vor grăi, șerpi vor lua în mână și chiar ceva dătător de moarte de vor bea nu-i va vătăma, peste cei bolnavi își vor pune mâinile și se vor face sănătoși* (Mc 16, 17-18). Prin urmare, omule, fi-ți ție tămăduitor prin credință, ca să nu fi silit să te dai pe seama doctorilor străini și să cumperi foarte scump ceea ce ai deja gratuit. Rugați-vă, fraților, ca să simțim și acum leacul credinței și așezați în așteptarea lui Hristos să lăudăm venirea Lui, netulburați de conștiința noastră.

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<sup>27</sup> Adaos prezent în ediția publicată de J.P. Migne, *PL* 52: 435C.

<sup>28</sup> Sunt reluate principalele teme ale Simbolului de credință pe care Sfântul Petru Chrysologul în lămurește mai pe larg în grupajul de Omilii LVI-LXIIa. A se vedea și Dragoș Boicu, „Trei omilii (LX-LXII) ale Sfântului Petru Chrysologul despre Crezul Apostolic”, în *RT* 4/2020, p. 208-227.

# ACTUALITATEA BISERICĂȘI ECUMENICĂ

## CHURCH AND ECUMENICAL NEWS

### **The New Faith and Order Paper No. 226: Cultivate and Care. An Ecumenical Theology of Justice for and within Creation – Ecumenical Response Contributing to Visible Unity. An Orthodox Perspective**

Pr. Conf. Dr. Habil Daniel BUDA

#### **Summary:**

This paper aims to offer a brief introduction to the part IV of the Faith and Order Paper No. 226, entitled *Cultivate and Care. An Ecumenical Theology of Justice for and within Creation* and to formulate some comments from an Orthodox perspective. This paper continues and concludes the analysis of the document *Cultivate and Care* which has been published in the previous issue of *Revista Teologica* (1, 2021) under the title *The New Faith and Order Paper No. 226: Cultivate and Care. An Ecumenical Theology of Justice for and within Creation – Introduction and Commentaries on its “urgent environmental concerns” and “theological perspectives” from an Orthodox Perspective* which analysed the first three parts of the document.

#### **Keywords:**

World Council of Churches; Faith and Order; Ecology; Theology of Creation; God’s creation; environmental justice; visible unity.

#### **The Structure of *Cultivate and Care***

Faith and Order new document *Cultivate and Care. An Ecumenical Theology of Justice for and within Creation*<sup>1</sup> contains an Introduction and four chapters. In the *Introduction*, there are three references to previous ecumenical texts on the same theme

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<sup>1</sup> Faith and Order Papers No. 226, WCC Geneva Publications, 2022.

of cultivating and caring the environment. As the *Introduction*<sup>2</sup> of this paper stated, the starting point for this new Faith and Order paper were three other ecumenical documents: two issued by WCC and a third one which has a dominating interfaith character. The first one was the document *Come and see*<sup>3</sup> which affirms that human behaviour vis-à-vis environment is a "fundamental importance for all existence and identity."<sup>4</sup> A common journey towards unity can be only "in the context of journeying toward the unity of the church within creation."<sup>5</sup> The second document to which the *Introduction* of this text makes a reference is the *Unity Statement* of the 10<sup>th</sup> WCC Assembly which acknowledged that we as humanity are facing "threats to the balance of life, a growing ecological crisis and the effects of climate change."<sup>6</sup> The third one is a document issued in 2014 by interfaith initiative, entitled *Climate, Faith and Hope: Faith Traditions Together for a Common Europe*. In this document, people of different faith stated: "we stand together to express deep concern for the consequences of climate change on the earth and its people."

Part II with the title *Urgent Environmental Concerns*<sup>7</sup> highlights the urgent environmental concerns which are, among others: tensions between implementing policies of climate justice and financial interests; unjust sharing of the ecological burden between countries and different social categories; unhealthy food production which is consumed by the poor etc. Part III with the title *Theological Perspectives*<sup>8</sup> deals with theological aspects of this Faith and Order document. The first four paragraphs contain a review of creation as a theological theme in the World Council of Churches. Ten further paragraphs introduce other "relevant theological perspectives."

### **Ecumenical Response Contributing to Visible Unity**

Part IV of the document is entitled *Ecumenical Response Contributing to Visible Unity*. It contains eleven paragraphs<sup>9</sup> and concentrate on formulating an ecumenical response to the issue of creation which could contribute to visible unity. Such a response involves economic, ecologic and cultural aspects, not only theological. Paragraph 28 ends with a call to a "realistic approach" in this complex matter.

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<sup>2</sup> Introduction, p. 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> Come and See. A Theological Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, Faith and Order Paper No 224, WCC Publications, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, Parag. 22.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, Parag. 25.

<sup>6</sup> He title of the so-called "unity statement" of Busan Assembly is "God's Gift and Call to Unity – And our Commitment. It is available online <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/adopted-documents-statements/unity-statement>.

<sup>7</sup> p. 6-10.

<sup>8</sup> p. 11-18.

<sup>9</sup> Paragraphs 28-38.

Paragraph 29 underlines the responsibility of the Christian community “to sense God’s healing, reconciling activity in the world. As regarding WCC activity, involvement in WCC’s pilgrimage of justice and peace is indicated as the right activity to be involved for promoting environmental work. This responsibility and action is part of the response to Christ’s call to be “light of the world” and “salt of earth” (Mt. 5: 13-14). The influence that churches should claim in public sphere is explained as the following: “Such an influence in public life is possible because in their essential nature, our churches are communities of formation in and practice of Christian discipleship. In each church, the word of God is proclaimed, people are called to faith and conversion, their new life in Christ is celebrated in worship, lifelong formation is provided in Gospel values, and a life of active discipleship is fostered.”<sup>10</sup>

Christian education and formation is called to look for “new ways of looking at the relation between human beings with God and with God’s Creation.” A “misused anthropocentrism” which “has led to the attitude that humans are free to do with nature whatever they want” is described and condemned. The text makes reference to the leading role designated by the Creator to the human being as a crown of his creation. He was asked to give names to other creatures and to carry for the garden of creation. However, “this position should not be misinterpreted as a licence to exploit and destroy nature.” Moreover, “this ecological reorientation may require a change in mentality and the cultivation of virtues such as humility, temperance, justice, mercy, and love, which lead Christians to recognize that the goal of creation is the glory of God, not the glory of human beings. A more contemplative view of the goodness and interrelation of all creatures reflects that wisdom that is promoted in the scriptures (see for example Ps. 104, Prov. 8: 22-31, and Col. 1: 15’20).”<sup>11</sup>

The very view of progress and fulfilment that governed economic and cultural life since the industrial revolution needs to be challenged. Progress does not mean “unlimited technological and industrial advance in search of ever-increasing profits.” On the contrary, “true progress needs to be seen in terms of what serves the integral development, life, and dignity of human beings, and their proper place within God’s creation. Progress does not mean unlimited economic expansion but rather developments that contribute to an environment and a better quality of life.”<sup>12</sup>

Consumerism is unmasked and described as a “psychological pollution at the roots of so much environmental degradation.” As true happiness from a Christian perspective does not mean “an unlimited increase of possessions but in being in spiritual harmony with God.” Harmony of this kind will “call for setting limits on our consumption and so help to diminish that self-centred culture of instant gratification which plagues our

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<sup>10</sup> Paragraph 29, p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> Paragraph 30, p. 21.

<sup>12</sup> Paragraph 32, p. 21.

societies today.” Such a Christian formation encourages a lifestyle aimed to heal the environmental degradation. As an example of an appropriate lifestyle is presented the practice of fasting with bibliographical indications of St. Simeon the New Theologian.<sup>13</sup>

The next paragraph speaks about a “Christian ecological formation” which begins “in the setting of the family, and must continue throughout life.” Liturgical worship is mentioned as a “frequent occasion” for the Christian community to offer praise to God’s majesty. Preaching offers occasion for reaffirming “respect and care for the environment are important aspect and care for the environment are important aspects of the thanksgiving we owe to the Lord.”<sup>14</sup> Training of church leaders, seminarians and other pastoral ministries is absolutely necessary. The same ministry of guidance and encouragement is provided by global Christian communions for their member churches. Cooperation between different ecumenical partners is also needed for promoting environmental justice “as a way of participating in the WCC’s pilgrimage of justice and peace.”<sup>15</sup>

Ecumenical formation for promoting and implementing environmental justice is considered as not being enough. Churches are called to follow the example set in the Scriptures. They are called to recognize “that human sin, individual and collective, takes its toll on the environment, and must be exposed and denounced.” Two Biblical examples of prophetic lamentations about the destruction of the nature are given: Jer. 9: 12 and Hos. 4:3. They led to a call for repentance. The reality of ecological devastation needs to be recognized as a sin and “must lead to action to promote structural change within our communities and in the public forum. In addition, all churches can strongly encourage their members to participate in prayer offered throughout the world each year during the Day of Prayer for Protection of the Environment.”<sup>16</sup> This Day is an initiative of the Orthodox Churches and it is endorsed by WCC and the Roman-Catholic Church.

For a proper environmental engagement, some internal changes, i. e. in the life of our churches, are necessary. Some churches might be themselves involved in the abuse of the environment, either “by inaction (or) by squandering natural resources.” Another fundamental aspect mentioned in this paragraph is whether theologies of different churches “have fostered disregard of interrelationship and interdependence with creation or have failed to uphold its integrity and tend to its flourishing.”<sup>17</sup> Finally, several ways of ecumenical and inter-church cooperation are mentioned or indicated: “Congregations can and have taken significant steps to evaluate their ecological impact and to reduce any harmful effects. In addition, local, regional, and ecumenical groupings of

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<sup>13</sup> See footnote 22, p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> Paragraph 33, p. 22.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> Footnote 34, p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> Footnote 35, p. 23.

communities need to find ways to collaborate and join forces in ecological initiatives, such as the use of various forms of energy. Groupings of various Christian communities are in a position to assess the environmental needs of their particular region, play their own part in protecting creation, and call upon local political and economic authorities to make the changes that their local situation requires.”<sup>18</sup>

Initiatives at local and regional level are very important. However, “since the devastation of the environment is affecting the entire globe, it calls for global consensus and commitment.” As they are many Christians who play significant and decisive roles in finance, industry, political life, they are called to bring the values they believe in and confess “into public square, where they can be heard and acted upon.”<sup>19</sup> Some concrete examples are formulated: “planning a sustainable and diversified agriculture, developing renewable and less polluting forms of energy, encouraging a more efficient use of energy, promoting a better management of marine and forest resources, and ensuring universal access to drinking water.”<sup>20</sup>

Also, other forms of environmental justice, including inter-religious dialogue at all levels are encouraged. Several WCC initiatives and activities are mentioned: “WCC has been and should continue to be actively engaged with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its various Conferences of the Parties (COPs).”<sup>21</sup>

As there are many alarming reports regarding the catastrophic situation of the environmental situation on the earth, the document warns for not losing hope. Important and effective steps could be taken and many steps have been already done in the direction of environmental justice. There are many examples of collaboration “in caring the earth, motivated precisely out of faith in God the creator, redeemer, and sanctifier. . . . Such a journey can also increase our sense of being one in Christ and move us to take further steps toward that unity for which Jesus prayed.”<sup>22</sup>

Environmental justice is considered “a value in itself.” Its universal value is underlined once again, along with its inter-religious dimension. “The ecological crisis is a human crisis that has and will continue to affect all of us, regardless of our religious convictions.” The Christian faith “affirms both that the universe is God’s good creation and that the community of those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, that is the community of the Church, is called by God to care for that creation which one day

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> Footnote 36, p. 23-24.

<sup>20</sup> This is a quotation from the *Laudatio Si* ([https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)) the second encyclical letter of Pope Francis, in which he criticizes consumerism and irresponsible development and proposes concrete steps for the protection of God’s creation.

<sup>21</sup> Paragraph 36, p. 24.

<sup>22</sup> Footnote 37, p. 25.

be recapitulated in Christ, as in Ephesians 1: 10, and presented to the Father in the eschatological kingdom inaugurated by Christ's incarnation, ministry, death and resurrection."<sup>23</sup> This summary is defined as "theological and ecclesiological foundations for Christian involvement in protecting the environment."

Other two concluding sentences are: "Christian efforts for the reconciliation of human beings with God and with creation would be hypocritical as long as the churches acquiesce serenely in their state of division. Such division too, just as the abuse of creation, is contrary to the will of our Lord." Finally, the document concludes with a quotation from the Unity Statement issued in the WCC Busan Assembly: "As prophetic sign the Church's vocation is to show forth the life that God wills for the whole creation. We are hardly a credible sign as long as our ecclesial divisions, which spring from fundamental disagreements in faith, remain. Only as Christians are being reconciled and renewed by God's Spirit will the Church bear authentic witness to the possibility of reconciled life for all people, for all creation."<sup>24</sup>

The conclusion of the document contains four paragraphs. The first paragraph is an affirmation of the importance of a theology of justice within and for creation formulated in *Come and See*, paragraph 11: "The care or abuse of God's earth and its resources is not merely one justice issue to be set alongside other justice concerns. Rather, reverence for God's creation is of foundational importance for all existence and identity. Justice is how we as humans and as Christians live in the web of life in reciprocity with all human beings, other creatures, and the rest of creation. In anticipation of the fullness of the reign of God, all of creation groans because of the threats to justice and well-being – threats that are especially present among marginalized communities and endangered environments."<sup>25</sup>

As paragraph 40 is just a summary presentation of the text *Cultivate and Care*, paragraph 41 contains again a quotation of the Busan Unity Statement on dignity which God has bestowed upon us in relation with creation: "As we read the Scriptures together, under the guidance of the Spirit, our eyes are opened to the place of the community of God's people within creation. Men and women are created in the image and likeness of God and given the responsibility to care for life (Gen. 1:27–28)."<sup>26</sup>

The final paragraph is in fact a prayer, taken from the same Unity Statement from Busan: "We turn to God, the source of all life, and we pray: O God of life, lead us to justice and peace, that suffering people may discover hope; the scarred world find healing; and divided churches become visibly one, through the one who

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<sup>23</sup> Footnote 38, p. 25.

<sup>24</sup> Footnote 38, p. 25-26.

<sup>25</sup> Paragraph 39, p. 26.

<sup>26</sup> Paragraph 41, p. 27.

prayed for us, and in whom we are one Body, your Son, Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit, is worthy to be praised, one God, now and forever. Amen.”<sup>27</sup>

### **Some final remarks and comments**

After his presentation, one may conclude with the following ideas:

(1) There is a strong connection between anthropology and ecology. Basic Christian anthropologic elements are engaged to underline human responsibility for God's creation. Also, a “misused anthropology” which might lead to a improper use of creation is rejected;

(2) The document tries to define a Christian definition of progress which avoids wild exploitation of natural resources, creates injustice and enables the human being to destroy the nature. Fasting and an ascetic attitude towards creation is proposed;

(3) Actions of concrete character are proposed for the protection of the nature. Church, inter-church and inter-religious initiatives are encouraged at all levels: local, regional and international. Cooperation of churches and religious organizations with international organizations and any other kind of cooperation and initiatives for the protection of the entire creation is encouraged.

(4) *Cultivate and Care* is a coherent text which makes use of some Biblical and patristic knowledge and therefore is attractive for the Orthodox too.

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<sup>27</sup> Paragraph 42, p. 27.

## RECENZII ȘI NOTIȚE BIBLIOGRAFICE

### BOOK REVIEWS

**Wilhelm Baum / Dietmar W. Winkler, *Biserica asiriană a Răsăritului. O scurtă istorie a creștinismului siro-oriental*, Seria Historia christiana, Editura Doxologia, Iași, 2020, 264 p., ISBN: 978-606-666-945-0.**

Cunoscuta Editură Doxologia de la Iași ne surprinde în mod deosebit de plăcut publicând în limba română o lucrare de referință pentru cunoașterea unei forme de creștinism care s-a dezvoltat în afara granițelor Imperiului Roman, respectiv ale Imperiului Bizantin. Volumul teologului și istoricului Wilhelm Baum și al profesorului de patrologie și istorie bisericească Dietmar W. Winkler de la Universitatea din Salzburg, Austria, intitulat *Biserica asiriană a Răsăritului. O scurtă istorie a creștinismului siro-oriental* oferă publicului nu doar o prezentare istorică a unei alte ramuri a creștinismului, cea siriacă, adeseori și pe nedrept uitată, ci valorizează tradiția creștinismului siriac și din perspectivă dogmatică, liturgică și pastoral-misionară.

Încă dintru început, Dietmar W. Winkler problematizează încadrarea creștinismului siriac în categoriile desemnate prin termenii „nestorian”, respectiv „monofizit” (p.13u.). Unele afirmații, cum ar fi aceea că „Nestorie însuși nu a fost un <<nestorian>>” (p. 15) pot părea provocatoare, însă lectura izvoarelor este cea mai în măsură să clarifice problema, iar aceasta pare să indice faptul că între nestorianism așa cum a fost el înțeles în istoria dogmelor și intențiile teologice ale lui Nestorie există o diferență considerabilă (p. 15). Seria precizărilor terminologice aduse de autor nu se limitează însă la clarificarea raportului dintre creștinismul siriac și nestorianism, respectiv monofizitism, ci se extinde asupra tuturor apelativelor folosite pentru desemnarea acestei Biserici, indicând originea, vechimea și gradul lor de congruență cu realitățile din teren. Astfel aflăm, de exemplu, că „referirea la etnia vechiului Orient, prin termenul <<asiriană>>, își are originea în influența misionarilor anglicani din cea de-a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea” (p. 14), nefiind așadar de sorginte istorică.

În continuare, lucrarea este structurată după principiul cronologic, capitolele fiind dedicate, pe rând, epocii sasanide (p. 17-58), epocii arabilor (p. 59-106), epocii mongolilor (p. 107-138), epocii otomanilor (p. 139-164) și respectiv secolului XX (p. 165-194). Capitolul dedicat epocii sasanide tratează pe larg și controversele hristologice ale timpului, respectiv luările de poziție din cadrul creștinismului sirian, în special cele ale școlii teologice de la Edessa (p. 33u.) și ale celei de la Nisibis (p. 40u.). Capitolul ce tratează epoca arabilor abordează și o serie de probleme asociate întâlnirilor interreligioase, cum ar

fi primele contacte cu islamul (p. 59u.), misiunea spre China (p. 64u.), în India (p. 70u.) sau în Asia Centrală (p. 94u.).

Capitolul dedicat epocii otomanilor analizează în amănunt și problema unirii cu Roma, nu puține la număr, care au loc începând de la jumătatea secolului al XVI-lea. Autorul acestui capitol, Wilhelm Baum, dovedește aici o reală capacitate de a privi realitățile istorice cu distanțare științifică, relatând și elementele mai puțin favorabile Bisericii Catolice și oferind astfel o bază credibilă pentru înțelegerea fenomenelor încadrate în propriul lor context (p. 140u). Interdependența dintre religios și politic apare aici în prim plan. Și mai puternic este scos în evidență impactul asupra religiosului al factorilor politici și sociali în capitolul dedicat secolului XX, în care evenimentele din jurul primului război mondial și schimbările ordinii politice care au urmat acestuia sunt factorul decisiv (p. 166u.).

Ultimul capitol este dedicat limbilor în care au fost redactate textele creștinismului siriac și literaturilor care s-au dezvoltat în cadrul acestuia. Aflăm de aici că, alături de literatura de limbă siriacă, în acest perimetru, respectiv în extensiunile sale de tip misionar rămase din punct de vedere spiritual și intelectual sub influența lui, se dezvoltă și o literatură iraniană, una chineză, una uigură și una turcă (p. 204u.). Capitolul este redactat cu minuțiozitate, oferind o imagine completă a surselor teologice existente în aceste limbi, în conformitate cu stadiul actual al cunoașterii. De dragul completitudinii, cei doi autori ai cărții recurg și la ajutorul colegului lor Manfred Hutter, profesor de studii religioase comparate la Universitatea din Bonn, Germania, valorificând competențele sale în domeniul literaturii iraniene.

Lucrarea, apărută sub îngrijirea lui Dragoș Mîrșanu, cu binecuvântarea ÎPS Teofan, beneficiază de o traducere excelentă în limba română și de utile adnotări explicative, amândouă realizate de Andrei Macar, doctorand la Universitatea din Göttingen, Germania. Datorită efortului lor, cititorul român are șansa de a ține în mâini o introducere completă, dar accesibilă, în cea de-a treia ramură istorică importantă a creștinismului, alături de Ortodoxia de factură bizantină și de creștinismul latin, și de a înțelege mai bine particularitățile uneori exotice ale creștinismului siro-oriental.

**Lect. Dr. habil. Alina Pătru**

**Christiane Frey/ Uwe Hebekus/ David Martyn (ed.), *Säkularisierung. Grundlagentexte zur Theoriegeschichte*, Seria Wissenschaft, Editura Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2020, 765 p., ISBN: 978-3-518-29803-9.**

Acest volum este structurat sub forma unui compendiu care recompune, prin intermediul unor texte reprezentative, istoria intelectuală a reflecțiilor dedicate fenomenului secularizării în spațiul cultural european în perioada modernă (i.e. de după reforma protestantă). Textele alese, organizate după criterii tematic-cronologice, au apărut într-un interval temporar deschis de lucrarea lui Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) *Von weltlicher Obrigkeit, wie weit man ihr Gehorsam schuldig sei* din anul 1523 și încheiat de lucrări precum cea a lui Massimo Cacciari, *Gegen die Melasse des Dialogischen*, a lui

Roberto Eposito, *Gegen die neue politische Theologie* și a lui Giorgio Agamben, *Der Kapitalismus als Religion*, toate trei datând din anul 2017. Există și două excepții de la acest cadru temporal, și anume un fragment din lucrarea Fericitului Augustin (354 – 430) *Vom Gottesstaat* (413 – 426) și unul din tratatul lui Dante Alighieri (1265 – 1321) *Monarhia* (aprox. 1316).

Această istorie intelectuală a conceptului de secularizare prin texte este împărțită în patru secțiuni, fiecare dintre acestea fiind precedată de câte o introducere care surprinde specificul discursului despre secularizare al autorilor cuprinși în respectiva secțiune. Aceste secțiuni – 1. Weltlichkeiten (Chestiuni lumești), 2. Programme, 3. (Kritische) Verwicklungen (Implicații și complicații critice), 4. Aktuelle Positionen (Poziii actuale) – sunt precedate la rândul lor de câte o introducere substanțială. În cele ce urmează voi selecta trei texte pentru a explica felul în care a fost înțeles, în diferite etape ale istoriei culturii europene, fenomenul și conceptul de secularizare.

Astfel, introducerea (p. 11-31) trasează cadrul semantic al conceptului de secularizare, identificând principalele sensuri pe care acesta le-a primit în perioada de timp avută în vedere de editorii volumului; în acest sens secularizarea se referă la procesul de separare a statului de Biserică, la scăderea rolului social al religiei și la „desvrăjirea lumii” determinată de progresele făcute de știință și tehnică în perioada modernă (p. 16u.). Diferențierea sferei religiosului de cea a politicului a fost teoretizată de Luther în lucrarea amintită (p. 67-72) în încercarea de a rezolva o dilemă pe care o aveau creștinii din vremea lui și care nu este străină nici creștinilor practicanți din zilele noastre: cum ar trebui să se raporteze un creștin, care este în același timp și membru al Bisericii și cetățean statului, față de autoritatea statală și față de legile pe care le emite aceasta. Soluția avansată de Luther se bazează pe introducerea unei diferențieri clare între două dimensiuni ale persoanei umane: dimensiunea interioară și cea exterioară sau publică/socială. Astfel, omul este obligat să se supună ordinii publice create de stat prin legile sale și în același timp trebuie să se supună poruncilor divine care îl conduc pe om spre împărăția lui Dumnezeu. Omul aparține astfel în același timp și împărăției Cezarului și celei a lui Dumnezeu. Luther atrage atenția că funcțiile celor două împărății nu trebuie confundate: legile statului nu pot înlocui poruncile divine și funcția lor de mijloace de mântuire a omului (p. 71-72).

În lucrarea *Die Grundsätze des Säkularismus (Principiile fundamentale ale secularismului)* (p.369-375) din anul 1859, George Jacob Holyoake (1817 – 1906) propune o concepție asupra persoanei umane care neagă orice rol pe care religiosul ar putea să îl joace în existența individulă și colectiv-socială a persoanei umane. Secularismul pretinde astfel că starea de bine a omului poate și trebuie să fie atinsă exclusiv prin mijloace materiale și pe baza unui Weltanschauung utilitarist și a unei morale pragmatice, independente de concepția morală creștină sau teistă în general (p. 369). Locul principiilor teiste este luat de pozitivism și știință (p. 370), iar în ceea ce privește morala, Holyoake subliniază că, potrivit secularismului, „binele este ceea ce se află în concordanță cu adevărul, onoarea, dreptatea și iubirea” (p. 371). În definitiv secularismul se reduce la următoarele precepte: bunătatea este sfințenie, natura este călăuză, rațiunea este autoritatea, serviciul este obligație și materialismul este sprijinul/ajutorul (p. 375).

O altă dimensiune a fenomenului secularizării și implicit o nouă valență semantică a conceptului aferent este cea de religie seculară. Această sintagmă se referă la diferite

fenomene sociale, politice sau economice care au o structură și un tip de funcționalitate similare sistemelor religioase. În acest sens compendiul prezintă, printre altele, un fragment din studiul lui Walter Benjamin (1892 – 1940) *Kapitalismus als Religion* (Capitalismul ca religie) (p. 430-432) din 1921. După Benjamin capitalismul are structura unei religii și poate fi privit ca un fenomen religios pentru că acesta slujește rezolvării aceluiași temeri, chinuri, neliniști cărora le oferă soluții și religiile cunoscute (p. 430). Capitalismul este o variantă de religie cultică în cadrul căreia orice activitate umană are sens doar în măsura în care se află în relație directă cu acest cult. Nu există o „dogmatică” specială sau vreo „teologie”, ci doar un utilitarism care determină toate acțiunile din cadrul sistemului capitalist (430f). În această cheie de interpretare a capitalismului ca religie, bancnotele emise de diferite state au aceeași funcțiune în cadrul capitalismului ca imaginile sfinte din diferitele religii (p. 432).

Celelalte texte reunite în volum așează accente noi și ilustrează astfel atât bogăția de sensuri cu care a fost investit conceptul de secularizare de-a lungul timpului, cât și evoluția mentalului occidental în privința valorizării ideii de secularitate. Volumul este un instrument de lucru foarte util pentru teologi, sociologi sau istorici, pentru că oferă cartografierea unui „teritoriu” cultural care altfel, dată fiind complexitatea sa, ar fi foarte greu de abordat de cineva care dorește să se înțieze în problematica fenomenului secularizării.

**Lect. Dr. habil. Alina Pătru**

**Shalom E. Holtz, *Praying legally*, Brown Judaic Studies 364, Providence, Rhode Island, 2019, ISBN: 978-1946527394.**

Plecând de la observațiile lui Moshe Greenberg<sup>1</sup> despre afinitatea rugăciunilor biblice pentru limbajul juridic antic, Holtz oferă o analiză temeinică a rugăciunilor de cerere din Cartea Psalmilor și a conceptelor juridice pe care acestea se fundamentează. Teza principală a autorului este că, în Israelul antic, oamenii își formulau rugăciunile după modelul pledoariilor de tribunal. Sau, altfel spus, omul percepe relația sa cu Dumnezeu prin analogie cu lumea juridică. Deși nu este exclus ca unele rugăciuni să își fi avut, măcar tangențial, originea (*Sitz im Leben*) în „sala de judecată”<sup>2</sup>, Holtz afirmă că contextul legal este folosit metaforic de cel care se roagă. „Tribunalul” reprezintă așadar domeniul sursă, prin care omul își imaginează relația cu Dumnezeu atunci când se roagă. În mod evident, Holtz apelează la terminologia teoriei metaforelor cognitive, deși nu o folosește consecvent ca metodă. Demersul său este cel al „analogiei sociale” dintre lumea legală și rugăciune.

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<sup>1</sup> Moshe Greenberg, *Biblical Prose Prayer as a Window to the Popular Religion of Ancient Israel*. Taubman Lectures in Jewish Studies. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

<sup>2</sup> Sala de judecată, respectiv tribunalul sunt noțiuni neexistente în Israelul antic. La fel ca și alți cercetători, Holtz face apel la această terminologie, fără de care „analogia socială” ar fi greu de înțeles pentru către cititori.

Holtz și-a dedicat ani de zile cercetării asupra textelor legale mesopotamiene, iar acest lucru a influențat pozitiv investigația sa asupra psalmilor. Întrucât textele legale din Israelul antic sunt extrem de restrânse pentru a putea fi utilizate metodic, Holtz apelează frecvent la texte asiriene și neo-babiloniene în analiza rugăciunilor biblice.

În capitolul 1, Holtz abordează terminologia rugăciunilor, precizând că noțiuni fundamentale precum *ṭapillâ* (rugăciune) sau *hitpallêl* (a se ruga) au utilizare juridică. *Ṭapillâ* reprezintă plângerea sau pledoaria apărării la judecată. Holtz citește astfel Ps 109,7<sup>3</sup>: „Când se va judeca, fie ca el să iasă că a greșit; și fie ca pledoaria sa (*ṭepillah*) să nu își atingă scopul.” (p. 19). Holtz oferă și exemple din literatura rabinică și afirmă că aceeași bivalență semantică se observă și în akkadiană și hittită.

După această analiză terminologică, Holtz discută în capitolul 2 analogia dintre reclamația sau chemarea în judecată și unele rugăciuni. Autorul oferă exemple din literatura akkadiană, în care cel care se roagă apelează la judecata divină, sau își susține nevinovăția în fața acuzelor altor oameni, sau mărturisește că a greșit. Prezumția că Dumnezeu judecă cauza celor sărmani, fiind izbăvitorul acestora, este frecventă în psalmi, îndeosebi în lamentațiile individuale (Ps 9-10; 25, 140).

Holtz dedică capitolul 3 asocierilor dintre mărturisirea legală, negarea acuzațiilor și contracararea acestora. Autorul acceptă parțial teza lui Lambert<sup>4</sup> despre mărturisirea păcatelor ca un fel de convenție socială în lumea antică israelită, însă vede confesiunea psalmistului drept o modalitate de a pune capăt propriilor suferințelor (p. 69). Aspectul legal este implicat și aici, căci omul care se roagă își privește suferința ca pe o pedeapsă pentru păcate. Analiza rafinată a autorului asupra confesiunii este convingătoare și demnă de apreciat. Psalmii 26 și 131 conțin discursuri ale psalmistului prin care neagă acuzațiile ce i se aduc, apelând și la jurământ. Rugăciunea este alcătuită ca o pledoarie eficace, căci din punct de vedere legal, inocența presupune absolvirea de acuzații. Holtz consideră că acuzarea lui Dumnezeu în Ps 44 și 22 are în spate tot metafora judecății (p. 82-84). Personal, consider că psalmistul se postează mai degrabă în relația fiu-tată, care conferă suficientă intimitate pentru a formula acuze.

Rugăciunea ca loc al întâlnirii omului cu Dumnezeu este tema abordată în capitolul 4. Holtz susține că noțiunea apropierii de Dumnezeu – din Ps 65, 102, 119 sau Iona 2 – urmează matricea audiențelor legale (p. 95-107). Descrierile antropomorfe despre Dumnezeu, Care „aude” și „vede”, sunt dezvoltate din analogia audienței. Numeroasele exemple pe care Holtz le oferă din surse neo-babiloniene întăresc argumentația sa.

Concluziile investigației sunt introduse de Holtz sub forma unei întrebări: „De ce să te rogi în termeni legali” („Why pray legally?”, p. 127-134). Limbajul metaforic al tribunalului reprezintă o modalitate constantă și dinamică pentru a exprima legătura între omul antic și sfera divină. Prin metafore, omul antic descrie întâlnirea sa cu forțe care îl copleșesc. Metafora îmblânzește aceste forțe (p. 128). Când rugăciunea apelează la metafora judecății, ea încetează să fie cerșire, devenind o oportunitate a celui care se roagă

<sup>3</sup> Ps 108, 6 în ediția sinodală a Bibliei.

<sup>4</sup> David A. Lambert, *How Repentance Became Biblical: Judaism, Christianity, and the Interpretation of Scripture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

de a fi auzit, ba chiar de a pleda convingător în fața lui Dumnezeu. Concepând rugăciunea ca pledoarie, omul a înțeles că prin intermediul rugăciunii se va face dreptate.

Prin investigația asupra rugăciunii din perspectivă juridică, Shalom Holtz a adus o contribuție valoroasă pentru interpretarea Psalmilor. Nădăjduiesc că rigurozitatea investigației sale și rafinamentul său teologic vor primi binemeritata apreciere din partea cercetătorilor.

**Pr. Conf. Dr. Constantin Oancea**

**Italo Calvino, *Lecții americane. Șase propuneri pentru următorul mileniu*, (Biblioteca Italiana), Editura Humanitas, București, 2018, trad. Oana Boșca-Mălin, prefată de Laura Di Nicola, 215 p., ISBN: 978-973-50-6277-4.**

În 1926 a fost inaugurată scria de *Poetry Lectures* la Harvard University, denumite în onoarea lui Charles Eliot Norton, renumit critic al operei lui Dante. Adresându-se unui vast public de studenți, profesori și cercetători americani, inițiativa a fost onorată de-a lungul vremii de personalități din mediul cultural internațional cum ar fi T.S. Eliot, Igor Stravinsky, Jorge Luis Borges, Octavio Paz, Leonard Bernstein, Nortrop Frye ș.a.

Pentru anul academic 1985-1986 invitat a fost pentru prima oară un italian, Italo Calvino (1923-1985). Cunoscut publicului românesc mai ales în calitatea sa de prozator<sup>5</sup>, acesta a fost deopotrivă editor, jurnalist și critic literar.

Cartea la care ne referim în continuare, recent tradusă în limba română și cuprinzând varianta lăsată de autor, chiar manteea morții survenite în urma unei hemoragii cerebrale, în noaptea dintre 18 și 19 septembrie 1985, ne dezvăluie în special această ultimă a sa calitate, cea de critic literar. Mai exact, Italo Calvino se vădește a fi unul dintre marii maeștrii ai intertextualității din secolul XX. Astfel, suntem aici purtați într-un veritabil tur prin istoria literaturii occidentale<sup>6</sup>, prodominând însă, în chip firesc, reprezentanții culturii italiene: de la Ovidiu la Eugenio Montale, de la Lucrețiu la Guido Cavalcanti, de la Boccaccio la Emily Dickinson, de la Dante Alighieri la Paul Valery, de la William Shakespeare la Cyrano de Bergerac, de la Jonathan Swift la Giacomo Leopardi, de la Barbey d'Aurevilly la Franz Kafka, de la Petrarca la Washington Irving, de la Thomas de Quincey la Galileo Galilei, de la Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli la Jorge Luis Borges, de la

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<sup>5</sup> Italo Calvino, *Cărarea cuiburilor de păianjen*, trad. Oana Boșca-Mălin, Editura Alfa, București, 2012; Idem, *Ultimul vine corbul*, trad. Oana Boșca-Mălin, Editura Alfa, București, 2015; Idem, *Străbunii noștri: Viconte tăiat în două, Baronul din copaci, Cavalerul inexistent*, trad. Despina Mladoveanu, Editura Univers, București, 1574; Idem, *Cosmicomicării. T-indice zero*, trad. Sanda Șora, Editura Univers, București, 1970; Idem, *Castelul destinelor încrucișate*, trad. Eugen Uricariu, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2002; Idem, *Dacă într-o noapte de iarnă un călător*, trad. Anca Giurescu, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2005; Idem, *Palomar*, trad. Geo Vasile, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Vezi și Harold Bloom, *Canonul occidental*, trad. Delia Ungureanu, Editura Art, București, 2018.

Robert Musil la Roland Barthes, de la Flaubert la Paolo Zellini, de la Stephane Mallarme la William Carlos Williams, de la Marianne Moore la Eugenio Montale, de la Francis Ponge la Leonardo da Vinci, de la Sfântul Ignațiu de Loyola la Douglas R. Hofstadter, de la Jean Starobinski la Balzac, de la Carlo Emilio Gadda la Marcel Proust, de la Goethe la Hans Blumenberg, de la Raymond Queneau<sup>7</sup> la Thomas Mann, de la Alfred Jarry la Dostoievski, de la Georges Perec la Miguel de Cervantes, de la Daniel Defoe la Denis Diderot, de la Herman Melville la Walter Benjamin, de la Joseph Conrad la Italo Svevo, de la Samuel Aeckett la Cesare Pavese<sup>8</sup>. Iar lista nu este defel exhaustivă; cititorul va pune ușor recunoaște și adăuga alte nume, cum ar fi Hoffmann, Gogol, Nerval, Hawthorne, Poe, Turgheniev sau Henry James. Iarăși, firești sunt dese trimeri ale lui Italo Calvino la propriile sale scrieri, totul subsumându-se unui țel care, la prima vedere, nu este ușor identificabil în uriașa rețea de scriitori și teme literare.

Un prim indiciu ajutător este oferit de o primă variantă a discursului de deschidere (la care mai apoi a renunțat), și unde dorește să se prezinte publicului mai ales ca scriitor *italian*: „...o caracteristică a literaturii italiene este să considere într-un unic context cultural toate activitățile artistice, motiv pentru care pentru noi este cât se poate de firesc ca, în definiția dată seriei Norton *Poetry Lecturers*, termenul *poetry* să fie înțeles în sens extensiv, astfel încât să cuprindă inclusiv muzica și artele vizuale; după cum este absolut firesc ca scriitorul de *fiction* să se refere în același discurs la poezia în versuri și la roman, dat fiind că, în cultura noastră literară, separarea și specializarea celor două forme de exprimare și a relativelor reflecții critice sunt mai puțin accentuate decât în alte culturi”<sup>9</sup>.

Un al doilea indiciu îl oferă chiar dubletul calității sale de *scriitor* italian. Titlul ales pentru ciclul de conferințe este, astfel, revelator: *Six Memos for the Next Millenium*<sup>10</sup>. În

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<sup>7</sup> Într-o vizită făcută în 1968 la Paris, Calvino îl va frecventa pe Queneau și prin el va lua legătura cu grupul înființat de Alfred Jarry de la College de Pataphysique, *Oulipo* (*Ouvroir de litterature potentielle*). Chiar în anul în care va primi, din partea statului francez, Legiunea de Onoare, Italo Calvino va publica ampla culegere de opere a lui Queneau purtând titlul „Semne, cifre și litere” (1981). De altfel, în anul morții el va lucra asiduu la traducerea unei altei lucrări a lui Queneau, *La chant de Styrene*.

<sup>8</sup> Între Cesare Pavese și Italo Calvino va exista o strânsă prietenie, primul fiind cel care la încurajat și susținut să publice primul său volum, „Cărarea cuiburilor de păianjen” (1946). Sinuciderea lui Pavese, la 27 august 1950, îl va afecta profund pe Calvino, ca de altfel pe întreaga comunitate artistico-literară italiană. Abia după zece ani Italo Calvino va avea tăria să se refere la relația cu Pavese și influența exercitată asupra sa – și nu numai – pe plan literar și moral. În ceea ce privește angoasele lui Pavese, ele transpar din jurnalul său: Cesare Pavese, *Meseria de a trăi. Jurnal 1935-1950*, trad. Florin Chirițescu, Editura Allfa, București, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Italo Calvino, *Lecții americane*, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Așa se găsește el scris cu stiloul, cu majuscule de-o șchioapă, pe spatele copertei de la Norton 1, adică a primului blocnotes. După cum mărturisea soția lui Italo Calvino, Esther, acesta a reușit ca în numai opt luni să fabrice un veritabil laborator de scheme, note și lecturi ce se întindeau pe cinci blocnotesuri de format A4. Într-un final, ele vor fi închegate într-un singur document bătut la mașină, lăsat pe birou „în perfectă ordine,

opinia unuia dintre editorii lui Italo Calvino, Mario Borenghi, *memos* înseamnă „*notiță, pro-memoria*, și desemnează, printre altele, foile adezive adunate în mici blocuri, de obicei colorate, care se găsesc în toate birourile, post-it-uri, cum le cunoaștem noi, în ideea de a alătura unor considerații de mare profunzime un ton colocvial, mai degajat și mai familiar”<sup>11</sup>.

Înainte de a sugera (cel mai probabilul) țel principal al prelegerilor, ne mai oprim puțin și asupra titlurilor pe care le aveau acestea: 1) *Lejeritatea (Lightness)*, 2) *Rapiditate (Quickness)*, 3) *Exactitate (Exactitude)*, 4) *Vizibilitate (Visibility)* și 5) *Multiplicitate (Multiplicity)*. Despre ultima conferință planificată, care lipsește din documentul final, se știe doar că purta titlul *Coerență (Consistency)* și trebuia să se refere la lucrarea *Bartleby* de Herman Melville<sup>12</sup>.

Așa după cum sublinia și autoarea prefeței, Laura di Nicola (profesoară de literatura italiană contemporană la Universitatea „Sapienza” din Roma), Italo Calvino a văzut în moul mileniu ce se prefigura începutul a ceva nou, excepțional, în care să fie plasate reflecții asupra destinului, funcției, valorii literaturii și cărții. Interogația aceasta nu doar că era privită ca ceva necesar și profund actual, ci îmbrăca o fațetă multiplă de alte întrebări secundare interconectate: „Dar cum putem spera să ne salvăm în ceea ce este mai fragil?”; „Este oare legitim să extrapolez în discursul științific o imagine a lumii care să corespundă dorințelor mele?”; „De ce simt eu oare dorința de a apăra valori care multora li s-ar putea părea evidente?”; „De unde «plouă» imaginile în fantezie?”; „În care dintre cele două curente definite de Starobinski trebuie să plasez ideea mea de imaginație?”; „Această întrebare atrage după sine o alta: care va fi viitorul imaginației individuale în ceea ce este îndeobște numit «civilizația imaginii»?”; „Oare puterea de a evoca imagini în absență va continua să se dezvolte într-o umanitate tot mai inundată de potopul imaginilor prefabricate?”; „Cum pot imaginarul individual și experiența individuală să se extindă dincolo de acea limită?”; „Va fi oare posibilă o literatură fantastică a anilor 2000, în condițiile unei inflații constante de imagini prefabricate?”; „Cine suntem noi, cine e fiecare dintre noi, dacă nu o combinație de experiențe, de informații, de lecturi, de imaginații?”. Calvino atinge înseși rădăcinile cunoașterii și ale existenței, dar fără a ajunge la nicio concluzie: „Să se fi împletit prea multe fire în discursul meu? De care dintre ele trebuie să trag ca să apuc concluzia?”; „Trebuie oare s-o apuc pe acest drum? Dar concluzia care mă așteaptă nu va fi ea poate prea evidentă?”<sup>13</sup>

Valoarea scrierii lui Italo Calvino posedă o dublă dimensiune: pe de o parte, una individuală, ce reflectă reflecțiile specifice sufletului autorului, iar pe de altă parte, una universală, „care se proiectează dincolo de literatură, către granițele cunoașterii, ale existenței, ale istoriei, tinzând către un permanent altundeva, căruia însuși caracterul său incomplet îi conferă valoare, o ramificată căutare fără final, urmărirea unei nevoi-plăcere, a

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fiecare conferință îndosariată într-o folie transparentă, întregul document pus într-o mapă tare de carton, gata de a fi pus în valiză”. Vezi *Ibidem*, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Herman Melville, *Bartleby. O povestire de pe Wall Street*, trad. Petre Solomon, Humanitas, București, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Italo Calvino, *Lecții americane*, p. 14-15.

unei dorințe de cunoaștere, poate a unui vis: a citi toate cărțile din lume, iar în ele – fiecare dintre lumile posibile”.<sup>14</sup>

De reținut este că funcția primordială a literaturii este, înainte de toate, una morală: „încrederea mea în *viitorul literaturii* constă în a ști că există lucruri pe care doar literatura le poate oferi, cu mijloacele sale specifice”.<sup>15</sup> În nici un caz nu avem de-a face cu o negare a posibilităților expresive, cognitive și imaginative pe care le posedă intrinsec literatura. În același timp însă, „Calvino exprimă o coerență riguroasă, o morală profundă, un angajament etic, o limpezine a cunoașterii, care tind spre un ideal de perfecțiune, de frumusețe, de armonie, de puritate morală. Posibilitățile *expresive* ale literaturii se explică în jurul reflecțiilor pe care Calvino le face despre valoarea cuvântului. Tensiunea către indicibil, urmărirea obsesivă a cuvântului „necesar, unic, dens, concis, memorabil”, căutarea răbdătoare a expresiei verbale, „a frazei în care fiecare cuvânt este de neînlocuit”, a „împreunării de usnete și de concepte mai eficace și mai dense de semnificație” conotează căutarea stilistică a unei valori morale, în apărarea acelei atât de răspândite „epidemii de ciumă” care vlăguiește forța de cunoaștere, care „tinde să aplatizeze expresia la nivelul formulelor celor mai generice, mai anonime, mai abstracte, să dilueze semnificațiile, să niveleze vârfurile expresive, să stingă orice scânteie care izbucnește din ciocnirea cuvintelor cu noi circumstanțe”.<sup>16</sup>

Înainte și după cuvânt se află *imaginația*, partea vizuală a fanteziei, care coexistă cu raționalitatea inventivă. Toate conferințele sunt traversate de imagini, de simboluri, de alegorii, de embleme, de o înaltă putere imaginativă. Printre embleme, asocieri între „figuri incongruente și enigmatice”, Calvino identifică cristalul și flacăra („două forme de frumusețe perfectă de care privirea nu poate desprinde, două moduri de creștere în timp, de manifestare a materiei, două simboluri morale, două absoluturi, două categorii de a clasifica fapte, și idei, și stiluri, și sentimente”); crabul și fluturele („două forme animale bizare și simetrice, care stabilesc între ele o surprinzătoare armonie”). Calvino urmărește versurile și pasajele cele mai frumoase din creația poeților și a prozatorilor și alcătuiește o paletă din imagini ale frumuseții literare i ale perfecțiunii stilistice („La încheierea celor zece ani, Chaung-Tzu apucă pensula și într-o clipă, cu un singur gest, desenă un crab, cel mai desăvârșit crab care fusese văzut vreodată”).<sup>17</sup>

Perspectiva pe care o îmbrățișează Italo Calvino este una holistică. Experiențele, pasiunea, căutarea într-o cunoaștere extind literatura dincolo de granițele sale, spre știință, filozofie, antropologie, etnologie, mitologie: „Marea provocare a literaturii este să știe să țeasă laolaltă diferitele domenii ale cunoașterii și diferitele coduri într-o viziune multiplă, fațetată a lumii”. Principiul care guvernează este cel al unității în diversitate, căci, în fața riscului unei aplatizări, „într-o crustă uniformă și omogenă, funcția literaturii o reprezintă comunicarea între entități diferite tocmai în virtutea diversității lor, fără să le mascheze diferența, ci, dimpotrivă, exaltându-i-o”. În același timp, literatura posedă un profund caracter antinomic, fapt care necesită o permanentă confruntare și adaptare la

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15-16.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 16.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 16-17.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 17-18.

instrumentele ordinii morale și raționale. O oscilație permanentă, care se traduce într-o urmărire perpetuă a realității și opusului ei: universalul/singularul (care se declină în conceptele întreg/parte, enciclopedie/nimic, ceilalți/eu); memoria și uitarea; melancolia și umorul. Astfel, valorile înseși se plasează într-un raport de complementaritate cu propriul opus: lejeritate/greutate; rapiditate/lentoare; exactitate/vag; vizibilitate/opacitate; multiplicitate/singularitate.<sup>18</sup>

„Literatura servește la a se cunoaște pe sine (eu/ceilalți)” – aceasta era convingerea lui Calvino. Funcția maeutică a literaturii reprezintă forța centrifugă a tuturor experiențelor sale literare, jurnalistice, editoriale ș.a.m.d., căci toate acestea nu reprezintă altceva decât un exercițiu neîntrerupt și constant de *a gândi lumea*, în care lectura și scriitura se topesc și se con-topesc.<sup>19</sup>

Elementele autobiografice sunt mai mult decât evidente în scrierea lui Calvino. Însăși selecția autorilor reflectă favoriții săi din literatura universală. Discursul este marcat de lejeritate și în același timp de coerență a exprimării. Înainte de toate, actul creator narativ se vedește a fi un neîncetat exercițiu de (auto)cunoaștere, după propria mărturisire a autorului: „de când am citit această explicație despre opoziția și complementaritatea dintre Mercur și Vulcan, am început să înțeleg ceva ce înainte doar intuiam confuz: ceva despre mine, despre cum sunt și cum aș vrea să fiu, despre cum scriu și cum aș putea să scriu”. Perpetua interogație a sinelui ridică problema identității autorului operei, care tocmai prin acest proces își vedește dorințele extatice. Autorul se exprimă în acest sens: „ce bine ar fi să fie posibilă o operă concepută în afara sinelui, o operă care să ne permită să ieșim din perspectiva limitată a unui eu individual, nu numai pentru a putea intra în alte eu-uri similare cu al nostru, ci pentru a-l face să binecuvânteze pe cel ce nu are cuvânt, pasărea care se așează pe marginea strășinii, copacul primăvara și copacul toamna, piatra, cimentul, plasticul...”.<sup>20</sup>

Scriitorul se află în căutarea a ceea ce semnifică poetica proprie. De-a lungul celor cinci prelegeri sunt presărate din loc în loc trăsăturile caracteristice a operei sale de *fiction*: într-o parte se afirmă lejeritatea – „am căutat să reduc din greutatea ba a figurilor umane, ba a corpurilor cerești, ba a orașelor; și mai ales, am încercat să reduc din greutatea structurilor povestirii și a limbajului”; în altă parte regăsim căutarea conciziei pentru a obține „maximum de eficacitate narativă și de sugestie poetică”; urmează predilecția pentru formele scurte, care conferă „evidență narativă ideilor abstracte de spațiu și de timp”; în același timp compozițiile sunt marcate și de densitate; în fine, exactitatea este determinantă, pe de o parte, pentru „reducerea evenimentelor contingente la scheme abstracte cu care să se poate operațiuni și demonstra”, iar pe de altă parte, pentru „constrângerea cuvintelor pentru a reda cu maximă precizie aspectele sensibile ale lucrurilor”.

Laura Dinicola afirmă că, în cursul prelegerilor, Calvino reconstruiește un alt eu autobiografic, *cititorul*, cel care poate este adevăratul protagonist. Acesta inițiază un intens și pasionat dialog cu clasicii literaturii atât de necesari în viața omului. Rezultatul? „O

<sup>18</sup> Vezi *Ibidem*, p. 17-18.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20-21.

operă despre iubirea și pasiunea pentru lectură, pentru literatură, o reflecție despre raportul cu clasicii, hrană necesară imaginației, moralei individuale, cunoașterii, dar și obiect de cercetare, interpretare, analiză...”<sup>21</sup>

Influența prelegerilor publicate de Italo Calvino a fost una majoră. Din titlul în engleză conceput de Calvino se inspiră, într-un fel, și cel pe care Umberto Eco, cel de-al doilea scriitor italian invitat, în anul academic 1992-1993, îl va da conferințelor sale americane: *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (*Șase plimbări prin pădurea narativă*)<sup>22</sup>, un omagiu adus lui Calvino, care începe chiar cu o evocare a prietenului său: „Aș dori să încep amintindu-l pe Italo Calvino, care trebuia să țină acum opt ani, tot în acest loc, cele șase Norton Lectures ale sale, dar a apucat să scrie numai cinci dintre ele și ne-a părăsit înainte de a-și începe șederea la Harvard University. Nu-l pomenesc pe Calvino doar din motive de prietenie, ci pentru că aceste conferințe pe care le voi ține vor fi în mare parte dedicate situației cititorului în textele narative, iar acestei prezențe a cititorului în narațiune îi este dedicată una dintre cărțile cele mai frumoase ale lui Calvino, *Dacă într-o noapte de iarnă un călător*”.

În anul următor, 1993-1994, un alt italian, compozitorul Luciano Berio, va ține și el șase lecții, publicate postum de Talia Peker Berio. Subtitlul reia expresia aleasă de Esther Calvino: *Un ricordo per il futuro. Lezioni americane (O amintire pentru viitor. Lecții americane)*. Prin urmare, legăturile dintre cei trei Norton Lecturers italieni, Calvino, Eco și Berio, sunt foarte strânse, mergând până la referirile intertextuale prezente în conferințele lor americane.<sup>23</sup>

Sperăm că cititorul va remarca, în urma lecturii acestei cărți, bogăția și profunzimea scrierii lui Italo Calvino, remarcând în același timp funcția prin excelență etică pe care trebuie să o aibă creația literară, opera de ficțiune. În fapt, avem aici de a face cu o pledoarie subtilă privind relația intrinsecă dintre credință și imaginație, dintre religie și literatură. Dar acesta este un subiect de reflecție asupra căruia vom reveni.

**Conf. Univ. Dr. Daniela Preda**  
**Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu**

**Ramona Besoiu, *Impactul religiozității asupra calității vieții tinerilor în contextul social actual*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2020, 313 p. ISBN 978-606-37-0775-9.**

Într-un context social tot mai dinamic și imprevizibil când se impune o reevaluare a vechilor paradigme socio-religioase pentru a răspunde provocărilor apărute ca efecte secundare ale valului pandemic, volumul alcătuit de Dr. Ramona Besoiu oferă o foarte interesantă și inedită perspectivă asupra raporturilor dintre nivelul de religiozitate al

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<sup>21</sup> Vezi *Ibidem*, p. 23.

<sup>22</sup> Umberto Eco, *Șase plimbări prin pădurea narativă*, trad. rom. Ștefania Mincu, Pontica, Constanța, 1997, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Italo Calvino, *Lecții americane*, p. 12.

tinerilor și calitatea vieții lor. Este vorba de cercetarea doctorală desfășurată de autoare în intervalul 2014-2017 în cadrul școlii doctorale de sociologie a Facultății de Sociologie și Asistență Socială, Universitatea București, sub îndrumarea domnului profesor Dumitru Batâr.

Această investigație este menită să contribuie la înțelegerea rolului pe care îl joacă religia în viața tinerilor prin intermediul măsurării propriilor lor percepții și evaluări privind bunăstarea, în diferite domenii ale vieții lor. Dar pentru că operează cu termeni precum *religiozitate* și *calitatea vieții*, investigația atinge inevitabil observații specifice mai multor discipline, precum: filosofie, psihologie, antropologie, sociologie, teologie, economie, medicină, ceea ce reprezintă o provocare în plus în demersul de investigare a religiozității juvenile și a bunăstării subiective a tinerilor, respectiv de identificare și de analiză a eventualelor raporturi de interrelaționare dintre acestea.

Pentru a clarifica aspectele teoretice, autoarea realizează în prima parte a lucrării (capitolele 1-3) o intensă și sintetică incursiune în istoria conceptelor (religie, religiozitate, fericire, calitatea vieții, bunăstare subiectivă), rezumând principalele curente de gândire în abordarea acestor tematici. Trece în revistă perspectivele sociologice asupra conceptelor și modul în care poate fi abordată concret problema măsurării religiozității și a bunăstării subiective. De asemenea sunt subliniate și dificultățile pe care de „cuantificare” întâmpinate în cercetările anterioare.

Astfel, primul capitol reunește sub titlul generic „Religia și religiozitatea” (p. 15-69) teme precum originea sentimentului religios, perspective asupra religiei, abordări ale religiozității, socializarea religioasă, multidimensionalitatea conceptului de religiozitate, tipologii ale religiozității juvenile, precum și criterii în măsurarea religiozității.

Cel de-al doilea capitol, intitulat „Calitatea vieții” (p. 70-105), stăruie asupra conceptului în sine de calitate a vieții, dar și asupra bunăstării subiective, fiind evidențiat indicatorii de măsurare a calității vieții. Întrucât există atâția factori subiectivi este foarte dificilă identificarea unui tipar care să asigure predictibilitate în raportul dintre gradul de religiozitate și bunăstare subiectivă, ceea ce se dovedește o nouă provocare pentru o astfel de cercetare.

Ultimul capitol al acestei prime părți este denumit „Participarea tinerilor la viața religioasă” (p. 106-148) și este rezervat particularităților acestui segment social, începând cu definirea „tinereții” și delimitarea unui interval de vârstă în care poate fi încadrată și încheind cu religiozitatea tinerilor din România. Desigur sunt aduse în atenție măsurarea religiozității juvenile și dificultățile întâmpinate în acest proces. Toate aceste sunt conjugate cu punctarea unor aspecte ale religiozității juvenile în contextul social actual, realități de netăgăduit ale vieții sociale, cum ar fi:

a) procesul individualizării ce presupune refuzul determinărilor instituționale în alegeri în viață și construcția reflexivă a identității și

b) postmodernismul care favorizează un super-liberalism, un mai mare pluralism, o mai mare toleranță și deschidere către dreptul de a fi diferit.

„Pornind de la aspectele religiozității, putem trasa anumite cadre în care să clasificăm tipologii ale religiozității tinerilor. Acestea ar putea fi: tipul tânărului religios bine definit, tipul tânărului religios nedefinit, tipul tânărului nereligios, tipul tânărului fundamentalist

religios, tipul tânărului agnostic sau ateu” (p. 131-132). Toate aceste tipologii sunt apoi descrise sumar ca posibile etaloane pentru următoarea secțiune.

Astfel încheiată, prima parte servește drept suport teoretic în care este ancorată cercetarea empirică, și pe baza acestui suport este dezvoltat modelul conceptual din cea de-a doua parte a volumului, alcătuită doar din capitolul 4. Senzația structurării asimetrice a lucrării este rapid disipată de îndată ce parcurgi acest ultim capitol, intitulat „Religiozitatea tinerilor și bunăstarea subiectivă” (p. 149-275), care este de departe miezul cercetării, punctul de greutate către care conduc observațiile preliminare și în același timp le contrabalansează.

Aici este descrisă metodologia de cercetare utilizată pentru investigarea religiozității și a calității vieții tinerilor și pentru verificarea ipotezelor. Capitolul mai cuprinde și modelul conceptual, ipotezele cercetării, domeniile de măsurare și scalele utilizate pentru testarea empirică a constructelor și variabilelor, descrierea eșantionului, a instrumentelor de cercetare, a modului de colectare a datelor și a planului de analiză a acestora.

Evident, partea cea mai așteptată și, de asemenea, cea mai importantă o reprezintă analiza și interpretarea datelor colectate pe bază de chestionar de la un număr de 642 de tineri din mai multe județe, cu vârste cuprinse între 15 și 30 ani. O parte dintre aceștia au fost intervievați, urmărindu-se obținerea de informații orale, răspunsuri specifice la întrebări provocate în mod direct și indirect și observarea comportamentelor nonverbale ale subiecților. Foarte importantă este componența multiethnică (români, maghiari, germani, romi) și pluriconfesională (ortodocși, romano-catolici, greco-catolici, reformați, evanghelici, baptiști, penticostali, adventiști) a eșantionului, precum și preponderența intervievaților de sex feminin.

Analiza distribuției tinerilor în funcție de autoaprecierea religiozității lor relevă faptul că tinerii își apreciază religiozitatea în mod diferit, încadrându-se în categoriile: tânărul religios-bisericesc, tânărul religios-autonom, tânărul indiferent-religios, tânărul nereligios. Procentul celor care cred în existența lui Dumnezeu așa cum reiese din tabelul încrucișat între credința în Dumnezeu și vârstă, respectiv apartenența de gen este și el surprinzător. Sunt analizate participarea la cultul divin public și la cel particular, frecvența rugăciunii, a meditației sau a lecturii textelor sacre sau duhovnicești, practicarea postului și a spovedaniei. Un alt set de indicatori este reprezentat de participarea la pelerinaje, la activitățile comunității religioase, angajarea în discuții cu subiect religios. Surprize apar în analiza motivației care îi determină pe tineri să frecventeze biserica, să postească, să se identifice cu o anumită formă de credință.

Ca urmare a cercetării asidue autoarea ajunge la o serie de rezultate, rezumate astfel în secțiunea concluziilor finale:

- „1. Pentru tineri religia este importantă în viață, dând sens vieții lor;
2. Tinerii practică religia atât la nivel individual, cât și colectiv;
3. Tinerii trăiesc după anumite valori, între acestea și religiozitate existând o puternică corelaționare;
4. Tinerii se simt liberi în determinarea propriei religiozități;
5. Tendința de neafiliere dogmatică și instituțională la o confesiune sau Biserică este frecvent întâlnită în rândul tinerilor;

6. Se identifică noi forme de trăire și practicare a religiozității și noi mijloace de catehizare (site-uri web, disciplina religiei în școală, ofertă variată de posturi și emisiuni de radio și televiziune cu conținut religios, organizarea de conferințe, întâlniri, excursii, tabere cu specific religios etc.);

7. Grupărilor și organizațiilor religioase de tineret le revine rolul principal în socializarea religioasă a tinerilor, în formarea conștiințelor colective precum și un rol important de control și suport social” (p. 278).

În ceea ce privește rolul religiozității juvenile în determinarea unui nivel ridicat al bunăstării subiective, acesta se cere încă nuanțat și cercetat în amănunțite investigații interdisciplinare. Totuși autoarea afirmă: „Concluzia generală a cercetării este că religiozitatea (dimensiunea practică, socială și a consecințelor ei asupra vieții) are un impact pozitiv asupra bunăstării subiective a tinerilor” (p. 280).

În eventualitatea în care după prezenta criză epidemiologică dimensiunea socială a vieții religioase ar putea reveni la „normal”, investigația doamnei Ramona Besoiu ar trebui să devină un reper important pentru instituțiile și asociațiile religioase pentru reevaluarea modului în care sunt percepute nevoile religioase ale tinerilor – descoperind realele lor nevoi. În lumina rezultatelor acestei cercetări devine evident cât de necesară este înțelegerea motivației tinerilor în asumarea unei identități spirituale, și, cel mai important, provoacă la regândirea „strategiilor misionare”.

**Asist. Dr. Dragoș Boicu**

## Authors

David O. **BROWN**, Research Fellow, Affiliation: Queen's University Belfast, Contact: Queen's University Belfast, University Road, Belfast, BT7 1NN, United Kingdom; Email: david.brown@qub.ac.uk

Dragoş **BOICU**, asisstant at Orthodox Theological Faculty „Andrei Şaguna,” „Lucian Blaga” University, Sibiu, Romania; E-mail: dragosbcu@yahoo.com

Pr. Dr. Daniel **BUDA**, Jun. Prof. at Orthodox Theological Faculty „Andrei Şaguna,” „Lucian Blaga” University, Sibiu, Romania and research fellow at the Faculty of Theology and Religion, Pretoria University, South Africa; E-mail: daniel.buda@ulbsibiu.ro

Alexandru **HERCIU** Colonel, professor, Alexandru **HERCIU**, Doctor of Science Land Forces Department/Command verificat and Staff Faculty/ “Carol I<sup>st</sup>” National Defence University, Bucharest; Email: herciu\_alexandru12@yahoo.ro

Iuliu-Marius **MORARIU**, PhD. (Protos. Maxim) „Ioan Lupaş” Centre, Faculty of the Orthodox Theology, „Babeş-Bolyai” University from Cluj-Napoca, Romania Angelicum Pontifical University, Rome, University of Pretoria, South Africa; Email: iuliu.morariu@ubbcluj.ro

Andreas **MÜLLER**. Prof. Dr., profesor for Church History at the Theological Facultz, Universitz of Kiel, Germany, Leibnizstr. 4, 24118 Kiel; Email AMueller@kg.uni-kiel.de

**Constantin OANCEA**, Jun. Prof. at Orthodox Theological Faculty „Andrei Şaguna,” „Lucian Blaga” University, Sibiu, Romania; Email: constantin.oancea@ulbsibiu.ro

Mrs. Alina **PĂTRU**, PhD Habil., lecturer at Orthodox Theological Faculty „Andrei Şaguna,” „Lucian Blaga” University, Sibiu, Romania; Email: alina.patru@ulbsibiu.ro

Mrs. Daniela **PREDA** Jun. Prof. Dr. at the Facultz of Philology, „Lucian Blaga” University, Sibiu, Romania; Email: daniela.preda@ulbsibiu.ro

Ionuţ **VLĂDESCU**, PhD candidate The Faculty of Orthodox Theology – Oradea University; Email: ionut772002@yahoo.com