THEOLOGIA ORTHODOXA

STUDIA
UNIVERSITATIS BABEŞ-BOLYAI
THEOLOGIA ORTHODOXA

Thematic Issue: Religion, Digitalization, Artificial Intelligence

Guest Editor: Liviu VIDICAN-MANCI

CONTENTS

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

THEOLOGY AND CULTURE

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

BOOK REVIEWS

THEOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGY

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS?
ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVES ON THEOLOGY,
SPIRITUALITY, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY

DORU COSTACHE[1]

ABSTRACT. This paper considers whether Orthodox theology and spirituality can interact with science and technology peacefully and creatively. The issue lies with the popular assumption that the Orthodox follow the early Christians who, supposedly, opposed science and technology. However, traditionally, the early Christians approached human resourcefulness with discernment and wisely. It goes the same for two modern Orthodox theologians, Pelikan and Stăniloae. I consider the scriptural stories of the Fall and the Tower of Babel, showing what they mean for the way theology, spirituality, science, and technology intersect. Then I introduce the anonymous *Letter to Diognetus* and Maximus the Confessor's *Book of Difficulties*, especially the parts about the creative coexistence of the four areas; I demonstrate that these sources do not consider them strange bedfellows. These sources show how to read the two scriptural stories and suggest ways out of current impasses. The paper contends that the lessons drawn from these texts lead to a mature Orthodox understanding of current challenges related to scientific and technological advance.

Keywords: discernment, patristic tradition, science, spirituality, technology, theology

   In this essay I challenge the assumption, popular among Orthodox Christians today, that spirituality, theology, science, and technology cannot be reconciled. I do not intend to examine this assumption in detail; it is fairly well known; the sources mentioned in what follows provide a nuanced understanding of the situation and the wider spectrum of traditionalist views. My aim is to

---

[1] Senior Lecturer in Patristic Studies, St Cyril's Coptic Orthodox Theological College/ Sydney College of Divinity, dcostache@stcyrils.edu.au

show that important elements from within the Orthodox tradition do not support this assumption and, in fact, contradict it. I contend that there is compelling evidence within this tradition that theology, spirituality, science, and technology make for a very good company.

There is a widespread view that Orthodox Christianity is by default conservative and, as such, that it must oppose rational thinking, science, and technology wholesale, while it seeks refuge in the known and in pseudosciences such as creationism. So understood, it would be as fundamentalist as its western counterparts.[2] Truth be told, since the failure of several Orthodox Churches to adopt the revised calendar in the early twentieth century,[3] some circles began to display increasing uneasiness about the scientific culture of our age and its technological incarnations. The numerous references to technological progress in the documents of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016) show that, indeed, there is a problem with the Orthodox perception

---

[2] The literature studying this phenomenon is abundant and ever-growing. For pertinent analyses, see for example Alexei Bodrov, "Problems and Perspectives of the Science-and-Religion Dialogue in Russia," *Transdisciplinarity in Science and Religion* 6 (2009): 211–16; John Hedley Brooke, "Modern Christianity," in *Science and Religion around the World*, ed. John Hedley Brooke and Ronald L. Numbers (Oxford University Press, 2011), 92–119; Dimitry Kiryanov, "Evolution and Orthodox Theology in Russia: An Uneasy Way to the Dialogue," in *Orthodox Christianity and Modern Science: Tensions, Ambiguities, Potential*, ed. Vasilios N. Makrides and Gayle Woloschak, Science and Orthodox Christianity 1 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2019), 226–28; Christopher C. Knight, "Natural Theology and the Eastern Orthodox Tradition," in *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*, ed. Russell Re Manning (Oxford University Press, 2013), 213–226; Mark A. Noll, "Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism," in *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction*, ed. Gary Ferngren (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 271–75; Ronald L. Numbers, "Scientific creationism and intelligent design," in *The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion*, ed. Peter Harrison (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 127–36, 139–44; idem, *Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design*, expanded edn (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2006); idem, "Creationism since 1859," in *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction*, ed. Gary Ferngren (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 279–87; Kostas Tampakis, "Orthodoxy and Science in the Greek State, 1830–1939," *Almagest* 8:2 (2017): 143–47; George Theokritoff, "Evolution and Eastern (Orthodox) Christianity," *Transdisciplinary Studies* 1 (2011): 185–90.

[3] See Doru Costache, "Orthodoxy and Science: Insights from the Holy and Great Council," *The Ecumenical Review* 72:3 (2020): 398; idem, "The Orthodox Doctrine of Creation in the Age of Science," *Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies* 2:1 (2019): 45–46; idem, "One Description, Multiple Interpretations Suggesting a Way Out of the Current Impasse," forthcoming in *Eastern Orthodoxy and the Sciences: Theological, Philosophical, Scientific and Historical Aspects of the Dialogue*, ed. Christopher Knight and Alexei Nesteruk, Science and Orthodox Christianity 2 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2021); Ioan Macri, "Considerații despre calcularea datei Paștelui," *Transdisciplinarity in Science and Religion* 1 (2007): 157–58; Efthymios Nicolaidis, Eudoxie Delli, Nikolaos Livanos, Kostas Tampakis, and George Vlahakis, "Science and Orthodox Christianity: An Overview," *Isis* 107:3 (2016): 562–63, 565; Tampakis, "Orthodoxy and Science," 148.

of science and its applications.[4] The phenomenon is evident across the post-to-talitarian societies of Eastern Europe,[5] but is neither exclusive to the Orthodox milieus nor unique to that region. Concretely, the Orthodox circles in question believe that the monastic tradition and the ecclesiastical tradition more broadly are against science and technology.[6] Acting upon this perception, Orthodox apologists operating in the wasteland of the internet oppose the 5G network, vaccines, identity biochips, biotechnologies, and the artificial intelligence, while displaying an obvious taste for "apocalyptic" conspiracy theories. The fact that uncontested monastic authorities such as Maximus the Confessor in the seventh century, John Damascene in the eighth, and Gregory Palamas in the fourteenth acknowledged the autonomy and the importance of research and innovation[7] bears no significance for them. A slightly more educated variant of the above trend is lending support to creationism, which Seraphim Rose and his followers mistake for a traditional stance. In the name of this supposed tradition, they reject contemporary science.[8] But these forms of opposition represent only the tip of the iceberg. These reservations about science and technology must not be taken separately from the broader phenomenon. Specifically, these circles are inherently against all things western and modern, science and technology being the hallmarks of western civilisation. The situation has not escaped the attention of scholars.[9] And this is not all there is to it. Behind their hostile attitude

---

[4] See Costache, "Orthodoxy and Science," 401–402, 403–404.

[5] See Marijan Sunjic, "Social Aspects of the Science-Religion Dialogue in Post-Totalitarian Societies," *Transdisciplinarity in Science and Religion* 2 (2007): 278–80, 284–85, 289–90.

[6] See on this Nicolaidis et al., "Science and Orthodox Christianity," 552–53, 554, 556–57.

[7] See Doru Costache, "Maximus the Confessor and John Damascene's cosmology," in *The T&T Clark Handbook of Christian Theology and the Modern Sciences*, ed. John Slattery (Bloomsbury/ T&T Clark, 2020), 86–87, 90–91; idem, "Queen of the Sciences? Theology and Natural Knowledge in St Gregory Palamas' *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*," *Transdisciplinarity in Science and Religion* 3 (2008): 31–35, 36–40; Nicolaidis et al., "Science and Orthodox Christianity," 545, 552–53.

[8] The classical illustration of this trend is the book of Seraphim Rose, *Genesis, Creation and Early Man: The Orthodox Christian Vision* (Platina, CA: Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2000). For brief treatments of Rose's position and his supporters, see Knight, "Natural Theology," 223–24 and Theokritoff, "Evolution and Eastern (Orthodox) Christianity," 185–86, 188, 197.

[9] Increasing attention is given to Orthodox anti-modernism and anti-westernism. See John Chryssavgis, *Toward the Holy and Great Council: Retrieving a Culture of Conciliarity and Communion*, Faith Matters (New York: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, 2016), 23–25; Costache, "Doctrine of Creation," 43–45, 47, 50; George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou, eds., *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Thought (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013); Pantelis Kalatzidis, "Concluding Remarks," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 60:1-2 (2016): 283–84, 295–97; Knight, "Natural Theology," 213, 223–24; Andrew Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology* (London: SPCK, 2013), 74–78; Vasilios N. Makrides, "Orthodox Anti–Westernism Today: A Hindrance to European Integration?"

hides the suspicion that all things modern and western either corrupt the purity of the faith or promote atheistic agendas.[10]

The superficiality of this assessment of western civilisation is obvious, but the emotions associated with it run high and cannot be overlooked. It is this emotional charge that prompted the Council to clarify that neither scientific research nor technological advancement are detrimental to the Orthodox faith and devotion.[11] The sciences, we read in one of the Council's documents, are "a gift from God to humanity" and "beneficial for humankind," as well as fully autonomous in their undertakings.[12] Accordingly, we read in another conciliar document, the church must not be taken as harbouring "conservatism [and as being] incompatible with the advancement of civilisation."[13] Being consistent with the available research into ancient, medieval, and contemporary positions,[14]

International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church 9:3 (2009): 209–24; Teresa Obolevitch, "Faith and Science in the Thought of Khomiakov," in *Alexei Khomiakov: The Mystery of Sobornost'*, ed. Artur Mrówczyński-Van Allen, Teresa Obolevitch, and Paweł Rojek (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019), 26–28.

[10] See Costache, "One Description"; Kiryanov, "Evolution and Orthodox Theology," 230–31; Tampakis, "Orthodoxy and Science," 146–50.

[11] See Costache, "Orthodoxy and Science," 401–402, 406–407.

[12] "The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World," F11–12 (https://www.holycouncil.org/-/mission-orthodox-church-todays-world, accessed 10 July 2020).

[13] "Encyclical," 5.10 (https://www.holycouncil.org/-/encyclical-holy-council, accessed 10 July 2020). See also ibid., 6.17, where the document openly rejects fundamentalism.

[14] See Doru Costache, "A Theology of the World: Dumitru Stăniloae, the Traditional Worldview, and Contemporary Cosmology," in *Orthodox Christianity and Modern Science: Tensions, Ambiguities, Potential*, ed. Vasilios N. Makrides and Gayle Woloschak, Science and Orthodox Christianity 1 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2019), 205–22; Pantelis Kalaitzidis, "New Wine into Old Wineskins?: Orthodox Theology of Mission Facing the Challenges of a Global World," in *Theological Education and Theology of Life: Transforming Christian Leadership in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Atola Longkumer, Po Ho Huang, and Uta Andrée, Regnum Studies in Mission (Oxford: Regnum, 2016), 119–47; Christopher C. Knight, "Science and Theology: What Does It Mean to Speak of a 'Dialogue'?" *Transdisciplinary Studies* 1 (2011): 25–38; idem, *The God of Nature: Incarnation and Contemporary Science*, Theology and the Sciences (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2007); Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 183–84, 241; Andrew Louth, "The Six Days of Creation According to the Greek Fathers," in *Reading Genesis after Darwin*, ed. Stephen C. Barton and David Wilkinson (Oxford University Press, 2009), 39–55; John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 132–34; Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person*, trans. Norman Russell, Contemporary Greek Theologians 5 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987), 93–104; Alexei V. Nesteruk, *The Sense of the Universe: Philosophical Explication of Theological Commitment in Modern Cosmology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015); Basarab Nicolescu and Magda Stavinschi, eds., *Science and Orthodoxy: A Necessary Dialogue* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2006); Obolevitch, "Faith and Science," 29–31; Elizabeth Theokritoff, "Creator and Creation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*,

these statements offer important clarifications about the mainstream Orthodox view. Nevertheless, until the Council's decisions reach far and wide, it would be too optimistic to expect an impact of the relevant research beyond its cogent readers. Against this backdrop, the sense that the Orthodox cannot reconcile theology, spirituality, science, and technology is difficult to ignore. My interest, here, is in presenting aspects of the Orthodox tradition which illustrate the deep historical roots of the position the Council advocates.

Scriptural Grounds: the Fall and the Tower of Babel

One might suppose that from a certain viewpoint the opposition to bridging theology and science, and spirituality and technology draws on the *prima facie* meaning of two scriptural stories: the Fall and the Tower. As we read in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve preferred free thinking to being obedient to divine wisdom. In turn, Genesis 11 introduces the ambitions of people who, having grown overconfident in their scientific and technological skill, wished to build the Tower of Babel. Both endeavours utterly displeased God and were duly punished. As the believers who subscribe to the views outlined above take these stories at face value, they infer from them that rational thinking, science, and technology are irreconcilable with faith, theology, and spirituality. In short, these areas are strange bedfellows for them.

But the two scriptural passages are not so much about what people did as they are about *how* they did whatever they did. In other words, these wisdom stories draw attention to the spirit which motivates people's actions, not to their actual deeds. The protagonists of both stories failed neither because they reasoned nor because they built something. It is because they introduced a rift between faith and rational thinking, between theology and science, and between spirituality and technology. They reasoned without faith, enquired without heeding the divine wisdom, and built arrogantly, to make a name for themselves. As Maximus had it, they did everything "without God, before God, and not in God's way."[15] In turn, overall the early Christians—who are my main witnesses

---

ed. Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 63–77; Christos Yannaras, *Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology*, trans. Keith Schram (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 38–88. For a comprehensive catalogue of contributions to the Orthodox dialogue with the sciences, see the website of Project Science and Orthodoxy around the World (http://k2.altsol.gr/archive/search, accessed 10 July 2020).

[15] δίχα Θεοῦ καί πρὸ Θεοῦ καὶ οὐ κατὰ Θεόν. *Difficulty* 10.28.60.7–8, in *Maximos the Confessor: On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, 2 vols., ed. Nicholas Constas, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2014), 1:246. My translation.

in what follows—thought and acted very differently. They were convinced that faith and reason, theology and science, as well as spirituality and technology must cooperate for the sake of humankind's flourishing and in view of a hopeful future.[16] That this is how they understood the two scriptural narratives will become clear soon. Either way, we should not confuse mainstream Orthodox tradition with fundamentalism. And while the Holy and Great Council corroborates this conclusion,[17] there are more reasons for endorsing it, both ancient and modern. To these I must now turn.

Modern Orthodox Perspectives: J. Pelikan and D. Stăniloae

First, I draw on the views of two major twentieth century Orthodox theologians, Jaroslav Pelikan (d. 2006) and Dumitru Stăniloae (d. 1993). I subscribe to Pelikan's clarification that tradition and traditionalism are not the same. He described the tradition as "the living faith of the dead" and traditionalism as "the dead faith of the living."[18] Let's understand this distinction. One, the tradition, amounts to contemporary believers being faithful to the achievements of past generations, whose wisdom—not literal answers—they replicate in their own historical and cultural circumstances. The other, traditionalism, amounts to the systemic rejection of all novelty, development, and progress, in the name of past achievements. This distinction is based on Pelikan's profound familiarity with the early Christian experience, especially the patristic manner of engaging the available sciences, the philosophical ideas, and the cultural trends of late antiquity.[19] But his voice is not singular. Equally aware of the early Christian wisdom, Dumitru Stăniloae anticipated Pelikan's understanding when he prefaced his synthesis of Orthodox theology with the following words:

---

[16] See Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1968), 74–77, 97–98, 104–105; Bruce V. Foltz, *Byzantine Incursions on the Borders of Philosophy: Contesting the Boundaries of Nature, Art, and Religion* (Cham: Springer, 2019), 31–38; David C. Lindberg, "The fate of science in patristic and medieval Christendom," in *The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion*, ed. Peter Harrison (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 23–26; David Sutherland Wallace-Hadrill, *The Greek Patristic View of Nature* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press and Barns & Noble, 1968), 9–10, 37, 97–100, 122, 130.

[17] See also my conclusions in "Orthodoxy and Science," 407–408.

[18] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition: The 1983 Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), 65.

[19] See Jaroslav Pelikan, *What Has Athens to Do with Jerusalem?* Timaeus *and* Genesis *in Counterpoint*, Jerome Lectures 31 (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997); idem, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993).

> We endeavoured to understand the teaching of the Church in the spirit of the fathers, but also to understand it the way we believe that they would have understood it today. For they would have not ignored our time, the way they did not ignore their own.[20]

Stăniloae did not propose as clear a distinction as Pelikan's, at least not in a straightforward manner, but their perceptions are identical. What his words convey is that an authentically Orthodox discourse replicates the spirit of the tradition, not parrot old answers. And as he "endeavoured to understand the teaching of the Church in the spirit of the fathers" the way "they would have understood it today," it results that he did not favour outmoded cultures and idealisations of the past over contemporary issues. The fact of the matter is that his description of the cosmos appropriates the cosmology and the physics of our time, not the cosmography of late antiquity.[21] In this light, and if Pelikan and Stăniloae's perceptions express a majority view—and the references provided above show that they do—then Orthodox Christianity is neither traditionalist nor fundamentalist nor anachronistic. Instead, it welcomes new articulations of its traditional wisdom in regard to different historical and cultural circumstances. There is nothing new in this approach. The contemporary Orthodox thinkers who endeavour to reframe the message of the early and Byzantine Christians in the idioms of our age—including scientific—faithfully replicate the great achievements of the revered past. Indeed, they walk in the footsteps of the early Christian theologians who translated the Gospel from Aramaic into spoken languages and who redrafted the scriptural doctrine of creation—free of its mythological attire—in categories borrowed from Hellenistic cosmography and physics.[22]

---

[20] "Ne-am silit să înțelegem învățătura Bisericii în spiritul părinților, dar în același timp să o înțelegem așa cum credem că ar fi înțeles-o ei astăzi. Căci ei n-ar fi făcut abstracție de timpul nostru, așa cum n-au făcut de al lor." Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia dogmatică ortodoxă*, three vols, third edition (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2003; first edition 1978), 1:6. My translation.

[21] See e.g. Stăniloae, *Teologia*, 1:374–90. See also Costache, "A Theology of the World," 206–207, 209–10, 214–15. Earlier, Lossky (*Mystical Theology*, 183–84) expressed the same view.

[22] See Andrew Louth, "Basil and the Greek Fathers on Creation in the *Hexaemeron*," in *The T&T Clark Handbook of Christian Theology and the Modern Sciences*, ed. John P. Slattery (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2020), 67; Efthymios Nicolaidis, *Science and Eastern Orthodoxy: From the Greek Fathers to the Age of Globalization*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 9–11.

Patristic Wisdom

Second, and related, while it is true that the early Christians manifested prudence towards the scientific culture of their time, their overall approach was positive.[23] What prompted their prudent attitude was, by and large, the hijacking of science for nonscientific purposes, such as astrology and divination.[24] Another important reason for their reluctance was the misuse of scientific theories for advancing atheistic agendas. Accordingly, the early Christian authors refuted science's ideological sidetracking, not the scientific endeavour as such. Basil of Caesarea (fourth century), for example, who was committed to establishing the theological representation of reality, did not debate the validity of the ancient scientific views of the universe. While he was aware of various competing theories, he abstained from contributing to the debates. In his words, "since . . . they overthrow one another, we do not have to do anything to discredit their (theories)."[25] Nevertheless, he refuted the atheistic iteration of scientific ideas regarding cosmogony and the atomic theory.[26] He unequivocally affirmed that "the creation of the sky and the earth must be conveyed not as having happened spontaneously, as some imagined, but as having their cause from God."[27] In the same vein, he ascribed the confusions of ancient physicists about the nature of reality to their theological ignorance.[28] It follows that he

---

[23] See Peter Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 39–42; David C. Lindberg, "Early Christian Attitudes toward Nature" and "Medieval Science and Religion," in *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction*, ed. Gary B. Ferngren (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 49–50, 60; Alexei V. Nesteruk, *Light from the East: Theology, Science, and the Eastern Orthodox Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 13–40; Nicolaidis, *Science and Orthodoxy*, 1–39.

[24] See John F. Callahan, "Greek Philosophy and the Cappadocian Cosmology," *Dumbarton Oakes Papers* 12 (1958): 52–53; Tim Hegedus, *Early Christianity and Ancient Astrology*, Patristic Studies 6 (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 30–31, 35–36, 44, 113, 127, 159, 356, 360; Nicolaidis, *Science and Orthodoxy*, 5, 37.

[25] ὥστε ἡμῖν μηδὲν ἔργον εἶναι τὰ ἐκείνων ἐλέγχειν· ἀρκοῦσι γὰρ ἀλλήλοις πρὸς τὴν οἰκείαν ἀνατροπήν. *Hexaemeron* 1.2.8–9, in *Basile de Césarée: Homélies sur l'hexaéméron*, ed. Stanislas Giet, Sources chrétiennes 26 (Paris: Cerf, 1949). My translation.

[26] Doru Costache, "Christian Worldview: Understandings from St Basil the Great," in *Cappadocian Legacy: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Doru Costache and Philip Kariatlis (Sydney: St Andrew's Orthodox Press, 2013), 103–106. Nicolaidis, *Science and Orthodoxy*, 11–12.

[27] Οὐρανοῦ γὰρ καὶ γῆς ποίησις παραδίδοσθαι μέλλει, οὐκ αὐτομάτως συνενεχθεῖσα, ὥς τινες ἐφαντάσθησαν, παρὰ δὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ τὴν αἰτίαν λαβοῦσα. *Hexaemeron* 1.1.3–5. My translation. His older contemporary, Athanasius, had taken the same position. See Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 2, in *Athanasius: Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, ed. Robert W. Thomson, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

[28] See *Hexaemeron* 1.2.11–12.

discerned between scientific undertakings, which he respected, and the misalliance between the sciences and ideologies such as atheism, which he rejected. Illustrations of this discernment abound in the patristic literature.[29]

Discernment, indeed, is what determined the early Christians to rely on the scientific culture of their age both for describing the world and for practical purposes. For example, they decided to celebrate Easter in relation to the March equinox and Christmas in relation to the December solstice, as the astronomers calculated these dates of the calendar.[30] Contemporary research informs us that a great many patristic writings as well as works from the Byzantine middle ages display the same open attitude to science and technology.[31] It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that when the Byzantines introduced the use of cutlery at meals in the eighth century—especially the spoons—fairly quickly the church adapted these objects for the distribution of holy communion.[32] We might be tempted to disregard this example as not meaning much, but we must know that, while at the time many voices opposed this innovation, the mainstream church went on with it. This is a clear proof of Christian openness to novelty, invention, and innovation. It goes the same for many other innovations which Orthodox Christians adopted, such as the gradual replacement of scriptural material by medieval poetry in the services, the implementation of new architectural and ornamental solutions for the temples, and the evolution of

---

[29] See Costache, "Maximus and John," 88, 90–91; idem, "Doctrine of Creation," 50, 52; idem, "Christian Gnosis: From Clement the Alexandrian to John Damascene," in *The Gnostic World*, ed. Garry W. Trompf, Gunner B. Mikkelsen, and Jay Johnston, Routledge Worlds (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 261, 262–63, 268–69; idem, "Christian Worldview," 103–106; idem, "One Description"; Valerie Karras, "Science and the Cappadocians: Orthodoxy and Science in the Fourth Century," in *Science and the Eastern Orthodox Church*, ed. Daniel Buxhoeveden and Gayle Woloschack (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 31–39.

[30] Hegedus, *Early Christianity*, 62; Macri, "Considerații," 156–57.

[31] See Callahan, "Greek Philosophy," 51–52; Costache, "Doctrine of Creation," 49–62; idem, "Christian Worldview," 98–103; idem, "Making Sense of the World: Theology and Science in St Gregory of Nyssa's *An Apology for the Hexaemeron*," *Phronema* 28:1 (2013): 3–14; idem, "The Other Path in Science, Theology and Spirituality: Pondering a Fourteenth Century Byzantine Model," *Transdisciplinary Studies* 1 (2011): 43–51; Charlotte Köckert, *Christliche Kosmologie und kaiserzeitliche Philosophie: Die Auslegung des Schöpfungsberichtes bei Origenes, Basilius und Gregor von Nyssa vor dem Hintergrund kaiserzeitlicher Timaeus-Interpretationen*, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 56 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 223–526; Nicolaidis, *Science and Orthodoxy*, 5, 37, 55–105; Apostolos Spanos, "Was innovation unwanted in Byzantium?" in *Wanted: Byzantium; The Desire for a Lost Empire*, ed. Ingela Nilsson and Paul Stephenson, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis: Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 15 (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2014), 50–53.

[32] See Robert F. Taft, "Byzantine Communion Spoons: A Review of the Evidence," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 50 (1996): 209–38.

13

liturgical vestments. Not all of these might refer to science and technology, but they paint the complex picture of a church tradition which for centuries remained immune to traditionalism.

To return to my scriptural examples, in the light of the above, the stories of the Fall and the Tower could have ended much better than they did—well, if their protagonists adopted the early Christian discernment and flexible outlook. In short, it is these and other reasons that encourage me to affirm that conservatism, fundamentalism, and related attitudes have no traditional roots.

Two Illustrations: *Diognetus* and Maximus' *Difficulties*

In what follows, I focus upon two early Christian examples, seeking to illustrate the way our forebears in the faith were thinking. My first witness is an anonymous work, *Letter to Diognetus*, possibly written in the second half of the second century. My second witness is one of the greatest Byzantine theologians, Maximus the Confessor, who lived in the seventh century. Chapter 41 of his *Book of Difficulties* is relevant here. I deliberately chose these examples, from ages wide apart, to show the tradition's progress in terms of representing the world and the activity of believers in it. As we shall see below, an obvious progression can be observed from the generous worldview of *Diognetus* to Maximus' detailed map of reality, also from the former's idea of benevolent habitation of the world to the latter's clearer sense that the Christian experience accommodates spirituality and technology, theology and science. While progress and change over long historical periods are expected, these two sources also denote continuity within the same tradition. Specifically, although differently, both tell the same story—that Christians are not supposed to dismiss rational thinking, philosophy, science, and technology wholesale, in the name of faith, spirituality, and theology.

Turning to *Diognetus*, first of all it would be useful to remember that this short treatise was written in an era when Christianity was illicit in the Roman Empire. Believers were persecuted, many being killed for their convictions. This surely explains the misgivings of their coreligionists about what they called "the world," by which they meant the empire itself, as well as ancient culture and civilisation, including science and technology. One might understand their prudence, or the fear some of them experienced. That said, the anonymous learned Christian who authored *Diognetus* thought otherwise.[33] As we read, while Christians are

---

[33] In what follows, I draw on my article, "Christianity and the World in the *Letter to Diognetus*: Inferences for Contemporary Christian Experience," *Phronema* 27:1 (2012): 29–50.

"not of the world"—namely, they live by other principles—they are not absent from it either. "Christians live in the world."[34] The sense of their immanence transpires through the following passage:

> Christians do not differ from the rest of people in regards to land, or language, or their habits. For nowhere do they dwell in cities of their own, nor do they employ some unusual language, nor do they practice a strange lifestyle.[35]

In other words, Christians mingle with people of other convictions, sharing in the everyday rhythms of their neighbours. They do not exhibit differences and do not seek conflicts. They neither reject "the world" nor despise its means. In terms of culture and civilisation, the author's position conveys two things. First, Christians differ from other people by their high moral standards. For example, they cultivate virtue and compassion,[36] displaying an ethical behaviour or, as the author has it, exceeding all expectations and norms.[37] Second, and immediately relevant to my purposes, Christians do not oppose progress, rational thinking, philosophy, and science. No wonder *Diognetus* makes recourse to the available sciences in order to describe God's creation. The following passage proves it abundantly by cataloguing the cosmic regions known to the ancients. These are:

> The skies and things celestial, the earth and the earthly things, the sea and things aquatic, (as well as) fire, air, the abyss, (in other words,) things on high, things in the depths, things in between.[38]

In the process of making the inventory of the universe, or mapping the cosmos, the passage refers to the fundamental elements known at the time—earth, water, air, and fire—which correspond to the province of contemporary quantum physics. The macrocosm and the microcosm feature together as the

---

[34] *Diognetus* 6.3, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 2, ed. Bart D. Ehrman, Loeb Classical Library 25 (Cambridge, MA, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[35] Χριστιανοὶ γὰρ οὔτε γῇ οὔτε φωνῇ οὔτε ἔθεσι διακεκριμένοι τῶν λοιπῶν εἰσιν ἀνθρώπων. Οὔτε γάρ που πόλεις ἰδίας κατοικοῦσιν οὔτε διαλέκτῳ τινὶ παρηλλαγμένῃ χρῶνται οὔτε βίον παράσημον ἀσκοῦσιν. *Diognetus* 5.1–2. My translation. See also Henri-Irénée Marrou, "Commentaire," in *À Diognète*, ed. H.-I. Marrou, Sources chrétiennes 33 (Paris: Cerf, 1951), 119, 133–34; Georges Florovsky, *Christianity and Culture*, Collected Works 2 (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1974), 69.

[36] *Diognetus* 5.11; 10.6.

[37] *Diognetus* 5.10.

[38] οὐρανοὶ καὶ τὰ ἐν οὐρανοῖς, γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν τῇ γῇ, θάλασσα καὶ τὰ ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ, πῦρ, ἀήρ, ἄβυσσος, τὰ ἐν ὕψεσι, τὰ ἐν βάθεσι, τὰ ἐν τῷ μεταξύ. *Diognetus* 7.2. My translation.

open field of divine providence, for it is God's very Logos who "organises, defines, and connects all things."[39] Leaving aside the theology of the passage, what matters is that even without writing a cosmological treatise the author managed to squeeze in this text the entire ancient worldview. As far as I know, scholars have not examined this side of the letter yet.[40] Either way, the author shows that the early Christians were not afraid to convey their message in the cultural idiom of their time. My points about the celebration of Easter and Christmas established by way of astronomical criteria prove that the author's position was not singular. So does, too, the approach of the later theologians mentioned before. It follows that the early Christians were open to the scientific culture of their time, to which they turned in order to understand the universe and to organise their lives better. On this note, I jump several centuries ahead, to my second witness of the tradition, Maximus the Confessor.

Maximus' *Book of Difficulties* is a lengthy treatise written in the form of answers to a series of questions he received from two of his friends. These questions refer to enigmatic passages from Gregory the Theologian (fourth century) and Dionysius the Areopagite (early sixth century), whose works were assiduously read and much disputed at the time. Relevant here is *Difficulty* 41, a chapter where Maximus interprets Gregory's saying "the natures undergo renewal and God becomes a human being." He does so by drawing a map of the universe,[41] which I usually call a theory or a narrative of everything.[42] The chapter outlines five layers of reality, each containing two aspects or poles. Every second aspect of each layer shelters a narrower layer within itself. His map can therefore be represented as a series of five concentric circles, looking like the layers of an onion.[43] Here is the relevant passage:

---

[39] ᾧ πάντα διατέτακται καὶ διώρισται καὶ ὑποτέτακται. Ibid. My translation.

[40] For a detailed analysis of *Diognetus*' cosmological discourse, see chapter one in my forthcoming book, *Humankind and the Cosmos: Early Christian Representations*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021).

[41] Doru Costache, "Mapping Reality within the Experience of Holiness," in *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, ed. Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil (Oxford University Press, 2015), 379–85.

[42] See Costache, "Mapping Reality," 378; idem, "Seeking Out the Antecedents of the Maximian Theory of Everything: St Gregory the Theologian's *Oration* 38", *Cappadocian Legacy: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Doru Costache and Philip Kariatlis (Sydney: St Andrew's Orthodox Press, 2013), 226–29.

[43] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Brian E. Daley (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 173–76, 199–200; Paul M. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World*, Christian Theology in Context (Oxford University Press, 2016), 127–28; Costache, "Maximus and John," 85–86; idem, "Mapping Reality," 379, 390; Joshua Lollar, *To See into the Life of Things: The Contemplation of Nature in Maximus the Confessor*, Monothéismes et Philosophie (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013),

> The saints say that the reality of all the beings that are subject to be-
> coming bears within itself five divisions. The first . . . separates the entire
> created nature . . . from the uncreated nature . . . The second is that by which
> the entire being that has received existence from God through creation is
> divided into intelligible and sensible. The third is that by which the sen-
> sible being is divided into sky and earth. The fourth is that by which the
> earth is divided into paradise and the inhabited land. And the fifth is that
> by which the human being, like a comprehensive workshop of everything
> and which mediates physically between the edges of all polarities . . . is
> divided into male and female.[44]

The largest circle is the ultimate division of reality, between the created
and the uncreated, or between God and the universe. The narrowest layer is the
anthropological one—the gender division—comprising maleness and female-
ness. The other three circles contain the visible and invisible universe in its en-
tirety, then only the visible universe, divided into sky and the earth, and finally
the earthly domain, divided into paradise and the inhabited land. This sche-
matic representation might not be the most detailed description of reality—for
example the earthly biosphere is not mentioned—but it still is an impressive way
of looking at things. Equally impressive is the cultural dimension of this narra-
tive, as generous as *Diognetus*' compass. To this dimension I must now turn.

Maximus' theory of everything combines a range of cultural and disci-
plinary perspectives, doctrinal, scriptural, metaphysical, and scientific.[45] The
first and the broadest circle, referring to God and the creation, draws on theo-
logical convictions anchored in scriptural wisdom (Genesis 1:1). The second cir-
cle, in turn, referring to the visible—or sensible—and the invisible—or intelli-
gible—aspects of the creation, marks the supreme division of reality in Plato

---

308–16; Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 106–108; Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford University Press, 2008), 82-3.

[44] ἅγιοί φασιν πέντε διαιρέσεσι διειλῆφθαι τήν πάντων τῶν γεγονότων ὑπόστασιν· ὧν πρώτην μέν . . . εἶναι τήν διαιροῦσαν τῆς ἀκτίστου φύσεως τήν κτιστήν καθόλου φύσιν . . . Δευτέραν δέ, καθ' ἣν ἡ διά κτίσεως τό εἶναι λαβοῦσα σύμπασα φύσις ὑπό Θεοῦ διαιρεῖται εἰς νοητά καί αἰσθητά. Τρίτην, καθ' ἣν ἡ αἰσθητὴ φύσις διαιρεῖται εἰς οὐρανόν καί γῆν. Τετάρτην δέ, καθ' ἣν ἡ γῆ διαιρεῖται εἰς παράδεισον καί οἰκουμένην, καί πέμπτην, καθ' ἣν ὁ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν, ὥσπερ τι τῶν ὅλων συνεκτικώτατον ἐργαστήριον, καί πᾶσι τοῖς κατὰ πᾶσαν διαίρεσιν ἄκροις δ' ἑαυτοῦ φυσικῶς μεσιτεύων . . . διαιρεῖται εἰς ἄρσεν καί θῆλυ. *Difficulty* 41.2.5–24. My translation.

[45] In what follows I draw on Costache, "Maximus and John," 86–87; idem, "Mapping Reality," 380–81. See also Gayle Woloschack, "The Broad Science–Religion Dialogue: Maximus, Augustine, and Others," in *Science and the Eastern Orthodox Church*, ed. Daniel Buxhoeveden and Gayle Woloschack (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 136–39.

and his successors. Obviously, Maximus considered the ontological gap between God and the creation more radical than the metaphysical one between the universe's visible and invisible layers. Next, the third circle refers to the visible universe by itself in the physical terms of Aristotelian cosmography: the astronomical sky and the sublunary, earthly domain. The last two circles, located on earth, are again scriptural. They are the polarity between the paradise of Genesis 2 and the inhabited land of Genesis 3, together with the gender division of Genesis 1, respectively. Thus, Maximus' theologically and scripturally anchored worldview nestles within itself the Platonic cosmos, which, in turn, includes the Aristotelian universe, which, finally, shelters the scriptural depiction of earthly realities. It shows that various perspectives—theological, scriptural, philosophical, and scientific—can be brought together without doing violence to their competences and boundaries. Echoes of Basil's discernment resonate here with clarity.

Within Maximus' narrative, the Aristotelian universe does not dissolve into the Platonic one which nestles it; instead, it becomes wider in the framework of an ampler perspective. Likewise, the Platonic cosmos does not dissipate in the background of the scriptural worldview which cradles it; instead, it acquires depth and breadth. As such, Maximus' representation of reality bridges scriptural wisdom, Platonic philosophy, and the Aristotelian science. It does so without replacing one of them by any others, and without dulling their contours. Whether we consider his map of reality sufficiently comprehensive or not, what matters is that it remains a successful example of bridging different views of reality without either reductionism or forcing them into artificial agreements. The mode of thinking discernible behind his narrative is transdisciplinary, layered and inclusive.[46]

Furthermore, if we pay closer attention to the fourth circle—which includes the paradise and the inhabited land—other important nuances come to the fore. While the words paradise and inhabited land are undoubtedly scriptural, their function in Maximus' theory of everything is no less metaphorical. There is a long cultural history behind understanding the paradise as an image of the spiritual life—namely, transformative ascesis and contemplation—which does not include the aid of technological means.[47] As a monk, Maximus was very much

---

[46] See Costache, "Maximus and John," 87; idem, "The Transdisciplinary Carats of Patristic Byzantine Tradition," *Transdisciplinary Journal of Engineering & Science* 4 (2013): 94–95, 98–99; Knight, "Natural Theology," 221; Lollar, *To See into the Life of Things*, 311–12; Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 26, 33, 67, 79, 81–92.

[47] See Doru Costache, "John Moschus on Asceticism and the Environment," *Colloquium* 48:1 (2016): 22–28; idem "Adam's Holiness in the Alexandrine and Athonite Traditions," in *Alexandrian Legacy: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Doru Costache, Philip Kariatlis, and Mario Baghos (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 324, 327–40.

aware of this traditional interpretation. Actually, and again drawing on Gregory the Theologian, he was of the view that the paradisal life is free of technology, or arts and crafts.[48] In turn, the inhabited land stands for culture and civilisation, science and technology. What interests us, here, is that the theory postulates the possibility for the two spheres, spiritual and technological, to become "one earth" by way of humankind adopting an appropriate lifestyle.[49] Maximus does not explain what this lifestyle is about, but one can assume that it harmonises personal spirituality and the use of tools and devices. Thus, it could be a matter of prioritising spirituality over technology, personal formation over external proficiency. It could also refer to interpreting such human activities as scientific enquiry and technological invention through the lens of the spiritual criteria. People would therefore make use of tools and instruments—in short, of technology—but would not surrender the reins of their freedom to any machines. By gathering together the paradise and the inhabited land, Maximus conveys a powerful message, namely, that science, technology, theology, and spirituality can peacefully and creatively coexist and interact; that they are not strange bedfellows.

Conclusions

Against this backdrop, while the two writings differ in terms of their form and the details they offer, the anonymous *Letter to Diognetus* and Maximus' *Difficulty* 41 converge into depicting Christianity as open to science and technology. For them, to be traditional does not mean to be anachronistic, conservative, and fundamentalist. From the vantage point of this traditional lens, the scriptural stories of the Fall and the Tower do not signify Christianity's wholesale aversion to rational thinking, philosophy, science, and technology. Instead, they refer to people's failure to bridge theology and science, spirituality and technology, faith and rational thinking—a failure caused by people giving preference to rational thinking, science, and technology. Scripture points out that this failure, exponentially multiplied in history, is not without consequences for humankind's flourishing and the world's wellbeing. But there is another side to this story. In the light of the two illustrations discussed in the foregoing, the Orthodox tradition shows that humankind's development entails both sides, inner and outer, theological and scientific, spiritual and technological, moral and rational. These patristic examples are not isolated voices. In an influential book,

---

[48] Maximus, *Difficulty* 45.5.1–11. See Gregory the Theologian, *Oration on Pascha* 8 (PG 36, 632C).
[49] *Difficulty* 41.4.1–5.

Panayiotis Nellas wrote a beautiful tribute to the many early Christian theologians—above all John Chrysostom (fourth century), from whom he abundantly quoted—who praised humankind's scientific progress and technological prowess.[50]

The above analysis substantiates my initial contention, that there is nothing within the Orthodox Christian tradition to prevent it from being open to "the world," with its progress, its rational thinking, philosophy, science, and technology. And while new challenges are ever emerging—of late regarding the fields of biotechnology, the artificial intelligence, and transhumanism—the positions discussed above lead the contemporary Christians faithful to the patristic tradition towards discerning, balanced, and creative approaches, free of bias and fear. It is against this backdrop that, for a better common future, in short, the Orthodox must harmonise theology, science, technology, and spirituality. It is thus, and looking forward to the paradisal city of the age to come (Revelation 21–22), that they can safely erect a tower in the middle of the garden, contributing to a better future for themselves and for the world we share with many others.

Acknowledgments

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Athanasius: Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione, edited by Robert W. Thomson. Oxford Early Christian Texts. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

Balthasar, Hans Urs von. *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*. Translated by Brian E. Daley. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003.

Basile de Césarée: Homélies sur l'hexaéméron, edited by Stanislas Giet. Sources chrétiennes 26. Paris: Cerf, 1949.

Blowers, Paul M. *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World*. Christian Theology in Context. Oxford University Press, 2016.

---

[50] *Deification in Christ*, 98, 100. In the same vein, see Costache, "Transdisciplinary Carats," 99–102; Knight, "Natural Theology," 216; Louth, "The Six Days of Creation," 39–55; Nicolaidis, *Science and Orthodoxy*, 8–12.

Bodrov, Alexei. "Problems and Perspectives of the Science-and-Religion Dialogue in Russia." *Transdisciplinarity in Science and Religion* 6 (2009): 211–16.

Brooke, John Hedley. "Modern Christianity." In *Science and Religion around the World*, ed. John Hedley Brooke and Ronald L. Numbers, 92–119. Oxford University Press, 2011.

Callahan, John F. "Greek Philosophy and the Cappadocian Cosmology." *Dumbarton Oakes Papers* 12 (1958): 30–57.

Chadwick, Henry. *The Early Church*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1968.

Chryssavgis, John. *Toward the Holy and Great Council: Retrieving a Culture of Conciliarity and Communion*. Faith Matters. New York: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, 2016.

Costache, Doru. *Humankind and the Cosmos: Early Christian Representations*. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae. Leiden and Boston: Brill, forthcoming 2021.

Costache, Doru. "One Description, Multiple Interpretations Suggesting a Way Out of the Current Impasse." Forthcoming in *Eastern Orthodoxy and the Sciences: Theological, Philosophical, Scientific and Historical Aspects of the Dialogue*. Edited by Christopher Knight and Alexei Nesteruk. Science and Orthodox Christianity 2. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2020.

Costache, Doru. "Maximus the Confessor and John Damascene's cosmology." In *The T&T Clark Handbook of Christian Theology and the Modern Sciences*, edited by John Slattery, 81–91. Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2020.

Costache, Doru. "Orthodoxy and Science: Insights from the Holy and Great Council." *The Ecumenical Review* 72:3 (2020): 396–408.

Costache, Doru. "Christian Gnosis: From Clement the Alexandrian to John Damascene." In *The Gnostic World*, edited by Garry W. Trompf, Gunner B. Mikkelsen, and Jay Johnston, 259–70. Routledge Worlds. London and New York: Routledge, 2019.

Costache, Doru. "A Theology of the World: Dumitru Stăniloae, the Traditional Worldview, and Contemporary Cosmology." In *Orthodox Christianity and Modern Science: Tensions, Ambiguities, Potential*, edited by Vasilios N. Makrides and Gayle Woloschak, 205–22. Science and Orthodox Christianity 1. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2019.

Costache, Doru. "The Orthodox Doctrine of Creation in the Age of Science." *Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies* 2:1 (2019): 43–64.

Costache, Doru. "John Moschus on Asceticism and the Environment." *Colloquium* 48:1 (2016):21–34.

Costache, Doru. "Mapping Reality within the Experience of Holiness." In *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, edited by Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, 378–96. Oxford University Press, 2015.

Costache, Doru. "Adam's Holiness in the Alexandrine and Athonite Traditions." In *Alexandrian Legacy: A Critical Appraisal*, edited by Doru Costache, Philip Kariatlis and Mario Baghos, 322–68. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.

Costache, Doru. "The Transdisciplinary Carats of Patristic Byzantine Tradition." *Transdisciplinary Journal of Engineering & Science* 4 (2013): 131–40.

Costache, Doru. "Seeking Out the Antecedents of the Maximian Theory of Everything: St Gregory the Theologian's *Oration* 38." In *Cappadocian Legacy: A Critical Appraisal*, edited by Doru Costache and Philip Kariatlis, 225–41. Sydney: St Andrew's Orthodox Press, 2013.

Costache, Doru. "Christian Worldview: Understandings from St Basil the Great." In *Cappadocian Legacy: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Doru Costache and Philip Kariatlis, 97–126. Sydney: St Andrew's Orthodox Press, 2013.

Costache, Doru. "Making Sense of the World: Theology and Science in St Gregory of Nyssa's *An Apology for the Hexaemeron*." *Phronema* 28:1 (2013): 1–28.

Costache, Doru. "Christianity and the World in the *Letter to Diognetus*: Inferences for Contemporary Christian Experience." *Phronema* 27:1 (2012): 29–50.

Costache, Doru. "The Other Path in Science, Theology and Spirituality: Pondering a Fourteenth Century Byzantine Model." *Transdisciplinary Studies* 1 (2011): 39–54.

Costache, Doru. "Queen of the Sciences? Theology and Natural Knowledge in St Gregory Palamas' *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*." *Transdisciplinarity in Science and Religion* 3 (2008): 27–46.

Demacopoulos, George E. and Aristotle Papanikolaou, eds. *Orthodox Constructions of the West*. Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Thought. New York: Fordham University Press, 2013.

Florovsky, Georges. *Christianity and Culture*. Collected Works 2. Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1974.

Foltz, Bruce V. *Byzantine Incursions on the Borders of Philosophy: Contesting the Boundaries of Nature, Art, and Religion*. Cham: Springer, 2019.

Harrison, Peter. *The Territories of Science and Religion*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Hegedus, Tim. *Early Christianity and Ancient Astrology*. Patristic Studies 6. New York: Peter Lang, 2007.

Kalatzidis, Pantelis. "Concluding Remarks." *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 60:1–2 (2016): 279–97.

Kalaitzidis, Pantelis. "New Wine into Old Wineskins?: Orthodox Theology of Mission Facing the Challenges of a Global World." In *Theological Education and Theology of Life: Transforming Christian Leadership in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Atola Longkumer, Po Ho Huang, and Uta Andrée, 119–47. Regnum Studies in Mission. Oxford: Regnum, 2016.

Karras, Valerie. "Science and the Cappadocians: Orthodoxy and Science in the Fourth Century." In *Science and the Eastern Orthodox Church*, ed. Daniel Buxhoeveden and Gayle Woloschack, 29–40. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016.

Kiryanov, Dimitry. "Evolution and Orthodox Theology in Russia: An Uneasy Way to the Dialogue." In *Orthodox Christianity and Modern Science: Tensions, Ambiguities, Potential*, edited by Vasilios N. Makrides and Gayle Woloschak, 223–35. Science and Orthodox Christianity 1. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2019.

Knight, Christopher C. "Science and Theology: What Does It Mean to Speak of a 'Dialogue'?" *Transdisciplinary Studies* 1 (2011): 25–38.

Knight, Christopher C. "Natural Theology and the Eastern Orthodox Tradition." In *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*, edited by Russell Re Manning, 213–26. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Knight, Christopher C. *The God of Nature: Incarnation and Contemporary Science*. Theology and the Sciences. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2007.

Köckert, Charlotte. *Christliche Kosmologie und kaiserzeitliche Philosophie: Die Auslegung des Schöpfungsberichtes bei Origenes, Basilius und Gregor von Nyssa vor dem Hintergrund kaiserzeitlicher Timaeus-Interpretationen*. Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 56. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009.

Lindberg, David C. "The fate of science in patristic and medieval Christendom." In *The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion*, edited by Peter Harrison, 23–26. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Lindberg, David C. "Early Christian Attitudes toward Nature." In *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction*, edited by Gary B. Ferngren, 47–56. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

Lindberg, David C. "Medieval Science and Religion." In *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction*, edited by Gary B. Ferngren, 57–72. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

Lollar, Joshua. *To See into the Life of Things: The Contemplation of Nature in Maximus the Confessor*. Monothéismes et Philosophie. Turnhout: Brepols, 2013.

Lossky, Vladimir. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002.

Louth, Andrew. "Basil and the Greek Fathers on Creation in the *Hexaemeron*." In *The T&T Clark Handbook of Christian Theology and the Modern Sciences*, 67–79. Edited by John P. Slattery. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2020.

Louth, Andrew. *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*. London: SPCK, 2013.

Louth, Andrew. "The Six Days of Creation According to the Greek Fathers." In *Reading Genesis after Darwin*, edited by Stephen C. Barton and David Wilkinson, 39–55. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Macri, Ioan. "Consideraţii despre calcularea datei Paştelui." *Transdisciplinarity in Science and Religion* 1 (2007): 153–60.

Makrides, Vasilios N. "Orthodox Anti–Westernism Today: A Hindrance to European Integration?" *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 9:3 (2009): 209–24.

Marrou, Henri-Irénée. "Commentaire." In *À Diognète*, edited by H.-I. Marrou, 87–268. Sources chrétiennes 33. Paris: Cerf, 1951.

Maximos the Confessor: On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua, 2 vols., edited by Nicholas Constas. Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2014.

Meyendorff, John. *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1979.

Nellas, Panayiotis. *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person*. Translated by Norman Russell. Contemporary Greek Theologians 5. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987.

Nesteruk, Alexei V. *The Sense of the Universe: Philosophical Explication of Theological Commitment in Modern Cosmology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015.

Nesteruk, Alexei V. *Light from the East: Theology, Science, and the Eastern Orthodox Tradition*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003.

Nicolaidis, Efthymios, Eudoxie Delli, Nikolaos Livanos, Kostas Tampakis, and George Vlahakis, "Science and Orthodox Christianity: An Overview." *Isis* 107:3 (2016): 542–66.

Nicolaidis, Efthymios. *Science and Eastern Orthodoxy: From the Greek Fathers to the Age of Globalization*, translated by Susan Emanuel. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011.

Nicolescu, Basarab and Magda Stavinschi, eds. *Science and Orthodoxy: A Necessary Dialogue*. Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2006.

Noll, Mark A. "Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism." In *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction*, edited by Gary Ferngren, 261–76. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

Numbers, Ronald L. "Scientific creationism and intelligent design." In *The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion*, edited by Peter Harrison, 127–47. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Numbers, Ronald L. *Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design*, expanded ed. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Numbers, Ronald L. "Creationism since 1859." In *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction*, edited by Gary Ferngren, 277–88. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

Obolevitch, Teresa. "Faith and Science in the Thought of Khomiakov." In *Alexei Khomiakov: The Mystery of Sobornost'*, ed. Artur Mrówczyński-Van Allen, Teresa Obolevitch, and Paweł Rojek, 25–36. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *What Has Athens to Do with Jerusalem?* Timaeus *and* Genesis *in Counterpoint*. Jerome Lectures 31. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Vindication of Tradition: The 1983 Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984.

Project Science and Orthodoxy around the World. http://k2.altsol.gr/archive/search (accessed 10 July 2020).

Spanos, Apostolos. "Was innovation unwanted in Byzantium?" In *Wanted: Byzantium; The Desire for a Lost Empire*, ed. Ingela Nilsson and Paul Stephenson, 43–56. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis: Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 15. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2014.

Stăniloae, Dumitru. *Teologia dogmatică ortodoxă*, three vols, third edition. București: Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2003 (first edition 1978).

Sunjic, Marijan. "Social Aspects of the Science-Religion Dialogue in Post-Totalitarian Societies." *Transdisciplinarity in Science and Religion* 2 (2007): 277–92.

Taft, Robert F. "Byzantine Communion Spoons: A Review of the Evidence." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 50 (1996): 209–38.

Tampakis, Kostas. "Orthodoxy and Science in the Greek State, 1830–1939." *Almagest* 8:2 (2017): 137–57.

The Apostolic Fathers, vol. 2, edited by Bart D. Ehrman. Loeb Classical Library 25. Cambridge, MA, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2003.

The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church. "The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World." https://www.holycouncil.org/-/mission-orthodox-church-todays-world (accessed 10 July 2020).

The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church. "Encyclical." https://www.holy-council.org/-/encyclical-holy-council (accessed 10 July 2020).

Theokritoff, Elizabeth. "Creator and Creation." In *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, edited by ed. Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff, 63–77. Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Theokritoff, George. "Evolution and Eastern (Orthodox) Christianity." *Transdisciplinary Studies* 1 (2011): 185–203.

Tollefsen, Torstein Theodor. *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*. Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford University Press, 2008.

Wallace-Hadrill, David Sutherland. *The Greek Patristic View of Nature*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press and Barns & Noble, 1968.

Woloschack, Gayle. "The Broad Science–Religion Dialogue: Maximus, Augustine, and Others." In *Science and the Eastern Orthodox Church*, ed. Daniel Buxhoeveden and Gayle Woloschack, 133–40. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016.

Yannaras, Christos. *Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology*, translated by Keith Schram. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991.

PERSONHOOD REVISITED:
IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMANOIDS

BASSAM NASSIF[1]

ABSTRACT. Technological innovations in Artificial Intelligence have reached a state where human-like robotics are endowed with rich personality and cognitive intelligence, able to engage emotionally and deeply with people. This progress in developing humanoids opens the way for a robot to obtain not just human, but superhuman attributes, such as omniscience and omnipotence, autonomy and self-awareness, freedom and interpersonality. On the other hand, this futurist situation could be considered as a possible threat to Christian anthropology, since it reaches a creation having the likeness of humanity that seem to retain a sense of personhood. This paper attempts to confront these challenges facing Christian theology today through first, revisiting Christian anthropology and the Patristic views on personhood, which look at a human being as an unfathomable mystery. Second, it presents the implications of this theology upon the arguments that consider humanoids as persons, showing that this postmodern issue is not just a crisis in anthropology, but also has its roots in a crisis in knowledge. Finally, this paper affirms that Christians are called to embrace science and technological progress. This can be done when rationalism is led by the intellect, the spiritual cognitive center of humankind. In doing so, humankind reaches epignosis, the correct or divine knowledge, the gift of true perception, or right discernment, which surpasses all rational human knowledge and algorithms, and directs all technological powers to God's glory.

Keywords: Orthodox Church, Patristics, Artificial Intelligence, Humanoids, Personhood, Christian Anthropology, Divine Knowledge

---

[1] Rev. Assist. Prof. of Pastoral Theology and Marital Counseling at the St. John of Damascus Institute of Theology, University of Balamand, bassam.nassif@balamand.edu.lb

Technology in itself is necessary to life and provides many facilities
(St. Basil the Great, *The Longer Rules*, PG 31, 1017B).

For a man is not merely whosoever has hands and feet of a man, nor whosoever is rational only, but whosoever practices piety and virtue with boldness (St. John Chrysostom, *Instructions to Catechumens,* PG 49: 232).

The most important problem for the Orthodox theology of tomorrow will be to reconcile the cosmic vision of the Fathers with a vision which grows out of the results of the natural sciences (Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Theology and the Church*, p. 224).

Partakers of the Divine nature (NKJV, 2 Pet. 1:4).

Introduction

From "Johnny Five", the first fictional robot to become a US citizen in the 1986 movie "Short Circuit," dreamt up by comic science fiction screen writers Steven Seth Wilson and Brent Maddock, to "Sophia" the female-looking humanoid who was granted a Saudi Arabian citizenship, developed by the Hong Kong-based company Hanson Robotics in 2016, the world is crossing boundaries and moving faster than ever before. Hanson states that the purpose of their Artificial Intelligence (AI) robotics is to "simulate human personalities, have meaningful interactions with people and evolve from those interactions."[2] These human-like robots are "endowed with rich personality and holistic cognitive AI… able to engage emotionally and deeply with people. They can maintain eye contact, recognize faces, understand speech, hold natural conversations, and learn and develop through experience."[3]

Artificial Intelligence brings in a new breakthrough in scientific progress. This progress in developing humanoids opens the way for a robot to obtain not just human, but superhuman attributes in knowledge, such as omniscience and omnipotence, autonomy and self-awareness, freedom and interpersonality. On the other hand, the contemporary human life with its increased individualization and social conflict makes humans feel psychologically lacking social and legal rights, blurring their self-identity and weakening their freedom and distinctiveness. Humans oftentimes feel as a "non-person."[4] The advent of this scientific development is inciting theologians to offer a series of reflections about AI's development and its implications.

---

[2] Hanson Robotics Website: www.hansonrobotics.com.

[3] Hanson Robotics Website: www.hansonrobotics.com/hanson-robots/

[4] Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality.* Contemporary Greek Theologians Series, book 3 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 19.

Indeed, AI supports healthcare using robotics in surgery for better precision than human hands. People with neurological conditions are able, through AI technologies, to control phones and computers with their brain. Maybe this advance will help elderly care issues and cure dementia. In this context, is it acceptable to consider these powerful inventions as possible tools in the service of human Christian salvation? What are the risks associated with the use of these ever-growing popular technologies? Will robots become more intelligent than humans? Does AI have a potential to solve even the problem of death?[5]

In addition, possessing this technology gives nations and companies authority and power over widely different fields of human life and production. Do humanoids,[6] who are becoming more autonomous, interactive or adaptable, have a sense of responsibility, or do they lead to "the Frankenstein narrative in which technology turns against its human creators and threatens their existence"?[7] In an ideological regime, how could humanoids be controlled for the good of humanity? Can this new, futurist situation be considered "the greatest threat to Christian theology since Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*"?[8] More specifically, can these technological advances reach a point close to the creation of a likeness to human personhood, leading to the reconstruction of Christian anthropology?

In fact, various writers bring to the fore essential arguments related to Christian anthropology, in an effort to integrate humanoids in the anthropological definitions. [9] They discuss the human body and creation, and three futurist concepts: "embodiment, sociality, and situatedness." They also present the importance of intellection as a defining common trait for both humans and humanoids. They ponder upon the "Christianization" of humanoid robots, their initiation into the Christian teaching, and even the consideration of the possibility of a robot coming to be in the image of God.[10]

---

[5] Derek Schuurman overviews optimistic predictions about the capabilities of AI, in his article "Artificial Intelligence: Discerning a Christian Response," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, vol. 71, no. 2, (2019), 75-82.

[6] Sophia by Hanson Robotics and Erica by Hiroshi Ishiguro are perhaps the most famous humanoid "celebrities." Sophia has a female face that can display emotions. She speaks English, makes jokes, and can hold a reasonably intelligent conversation with Sophia.

[7] Schuurman, 77.

[8] Jonathan Merritt, *The Atlantic*, Feb 3, 2017. https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2017/02/artificial-intelligence-christianity/515463/. Accessed 9 September 2020.

[9] Amy Michelle DeBaets, *The Robot as Person: Robotic Futurism and A Theology of Human Ethical Responsibility among Humanoid Machines,* PhD Thesis, (Emory University, 2012), 50-104. http://holden.library.emory.edu/ark:/25593/bp.4jb. Accessed 30 August 2020.

[10] DeBaets, *The Robot as Person*, 137-142, 213-221.

Thus, the underpinning fear emanating from this threat is reconstructing the "traditional" understanding of the knowledge about the human being and human existence. Scientists are searching into the prospects of transhumanism, and of living forever by changing the bases of what it means to be human. Hence, the challenges facing humans today are defined by St. Sophrony of Essex as follows: "The contemporary spiritual, theological problem concerns the person."[11] It is an era of a crisis in understanding anthropology.

In an in-depth article about anthropology and Artificial Intelligence, Scott Hawley identifies various challenges, one of which is "the unavoidable human tendency to anthropomorphize, which yields a cognitive bias that can manifest in ways such as projecting moral agency and/or patiency toward machine intelligences… [T]he over-identification of human attributes with AI is likely to evolve."[12] Thus, these challenges facing Christian theology today are not about atheism or about dogmatic definitions against heresies. In view of this "unavoidable human tendency" and the state that it could lead to, how would Christian anthropology respond to these challenges? Can this "over-identification of human attributes" reach the level of human repentance and discernment in knowledge? The defying challenge is to present in a convincing way the precepts of Christian anthropology in a postmodern world which is skeptical about everything, including the human composite.

Confronting these questions today necessitates to primarily revisit Christian anthropology, returning to first principles and the pristine theology of personhood as taught by the Holy Fathers, the voice of the Orthodox Church's Tradition. Thus, in the following, we will first present Christian anthropology, then discuss the challenges of AI based on the precepts of this anthropology.

Christian Anthropology

Christian anthropology and its vision of personhood describe the very nature and purpose of human existence. Yet, the human being is a paradoxical, wondrous mystery, since the human heart "is deep" (NKJV, Ps. 64: 6). This mystery cannot be sufficiently and exhaustively understood and described. For this reason, the emphasis in Christian anthropology is on direct lived experience, rather than on abstract ideas and speculative modelling. The Patristic writings present the human creation not as philosophical ideas and theories. These writings arise

---

[11] Nicholas Sakharov, *I Love, Therefore I Am: The Theological Legacy of Archimandrite Sophrony* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 66.

[12] Scott H. Hawley, "Challenges for an Ontology of Artificial Intelligence," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith,* vol. 71, no. 2 (2019), 90.

from profound experiential knowledge of the depth of human nature and their communion with the mystery of the Divine. The Fathers have acquired this knowledge through their ascetical life of prayer, purification, and contemplation. They have been careful to avoid the danger of a rational schernatization of this image.

Thus, Christian anthropology is embodied as a shared composite of the little narratives of countless men and women, married and unmarried alike, informed by the experience of living in the Christian Tradition. Together, these local mediated experiences of people from different ethnic identities, lifestyle choices, and age groups, reflect one single Light. This Light is seen as a mysterious halo, an inexplicable crown of light rays, often depicted in iconography. The living, undeniable witness of their lives is the continuous assurance of those who choose, even in our postmodern age, to be engaged in this path of eternal life, and be transformed by God, filled by love and light.

The subjective experience of having a conscious inner potential, a thirst for encountering the infinite, and a desire to be in communion with this "Other" is felt in human life and ultimately on the deathbed. It is about facing the undeniable and unavoidable reality of death.[13] The human being is the only creature who can contemplate his or her bodily mortality. This reality generates an end-of-life crisis, especially in facing one's unavoidable mortal suffering. On the deathbed, one confronts unresolved existential questions about human nature, not merely shattered bones and feathers, but as an infinite spiritual reality and a spiritual communion with the "Unknown Other." In fact, Christ's death opened the door of paradise to the thief on the Cross and reestablished this lost communion with the Divine.[14] This divine communion is, for the Orthodox Church, what fulfills one's search for the meaning of creation and existence. In this regard, the created *anthropos* is teleologically inclined to "both see and experience the splendor [ἀπαύγασμα] of God."[15]

This face-to-face encounter with the Truth defines human anthropology: I am a person (ἄνθρωπος) made out of the dust of the ground and slime of the earth, and uniquely honored by God to receive His breath of life (*nephesh* - ψυχή), as a vital divine force, which became, according to St. John Chrysostom,

---

[13] Interestingly, Heidegger, in his work *Being and Time*, defines the human way of being as a being-toward-death (*Sein-zum-Tode*).

[14] Jack Khalil, "An Interpretation of Rom 3:21–26 within Its Proper Context," *Participation, Justification and Conversion* (in collaboration), edited by Athanasios Despotis, WUNT II 440, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2017), 221, 236-7.

[15] *On Theophany, Oration* 38, NPNF 207: 348; PG 36:323A. In opposing the Gnostics who view matter as evil, St. Irenaeus of Lyon spoke about the totality of the human being, in *Adversus Haereses* 5:6.1. As a bodily being, the human acts as one united entity of body and soul, and righteous acts are "performed in bodies" in *Adversus Haereses* 2:29.2.

"the origin of the soul's being".[16] I am created *in* God's own sublimely glorious and honored image (κατ᾽ εἰκόνα Θεοῦ), given self-consciousness, identity, freedom, and self-restraint, and living according to His likeness (καθ᾽ ὁμοίωσιν).

According to the Christian revelation, the term found in the creation narrative of Genesis, "το κατ' εικόνα" (that which is according to or in the image of), describes the core of being "human." Adam is μικρόθεος by virtue of being created in God's image. Being "in the image" calls for response and responsibility towards both God and the human community." In this regard, humans are endowed, through this image, from the beginning, with the faculties of freedom of will and sovereignty, or self-determination (αὐτεξούσιος) in order "to rule over everything upon earth," as St. Irenaeus of Lyon affirms.[17] This gift of freedom gives each human being the independent ability to choose a direction for his or her mode of existence, to walk voluntarily on the path of deification, and the unconstrained free choice to live in virtue. Deification is a gift available to all humans, after the Incarnation, Resurrection, and Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, the foundation or starting point for Christian anthropology is Christ, the God-Man; it is a Christocentric anthropology.[18] Christ, by His incarnation, united the created and uncreated.

Adam, being a composite of both material and immaterial elements of the cosmos, has been allocated the role of both μικρόκοσμος and μακρόκοσμος. St. Maximus the Confessor emphasizes the role given to humans as mediators between the seen and unseen, material and spiritual, presence and the absence, and as microcosms.[19] Due to their work as mediators and their responsibility to exercise dominion over all creation (Gen. 1:28), human beings have direct

---

[16] St. John Chrysostom on the book of Genesis, Homily 12, Hill 2010: 167; PG 53:103.

[17] *Adversus Haereses* 4.37.1, ANF 1:518; PG 7:1085. Interestingly, the Postmodern philosopher Jacques Derrida, in his book *The Beast and the Sovereign*, critically looks upon sovereignty as a "devouring" tool," since it is linked to the dehumanized beast. In his poststructuralist, political theory, the sovereign constructs the beast, in order to attack it. Then, it endeavors to extinguish it in order to hide this cruel reality.

[18] Defining the creation of the human being in the image of the Uncreated God is a very critical issue for what it means to be human. This manner of creation is contrary to the views of nineteenth century philosophy or classical paganism, which projects on pagan divinities human attributes, as Ludwig Feuerbach claims: "Religion knows nothing of anthropomorphisms – anthropomorphisms are not anthropomorphisms to it. The essence of religion is precisely that it regards the attributes of God as the being of God... Subjectively, religion is emotion; objectively also, emotion is to it an attribute of the Divine Being." From his book, *Essence of Christianity*, trans. Marian Evans (London: Trubner and co. Ludgate Hill, 1884), 25. The material anthropology of postmodernism muses on the idea that human beings exist "in the image and likeness of the universe," thus bound by the limits of time and space. Khalil, "An Interpretation of Rom 3:21–26 within Its Proper Context," 226.

[19] St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 41, PG 91:1305BC.

responsibility to care for creation as stewards (οἰκονόμοι) (1 Pet. 4:10) by maintaining its integrity and by perfecting it in opening it up to God through their own pursuit to live in the likeness of God.[20] They are called to a cosmic, "royal priesthood" (NKJV, 1 Pet. 2:9), offering the world to God and bestowing God's blessing on the world. This task of mediation is a human "priestly vocation" rooted in the very *logos* of human nature, as said in the Anaphora of Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom: "Thine own of Thine own, we offer to Thee, in behalf of all, and for all." Thus, any technological progress is looked upon through this prospect.

Being created in the image as λογικός (rational, logical, or reasonable), according to the Cappadocian Fathers and St. John of Damascus, is more than just being intelligent (νοερών). Etymologically, λογῐκός points to the active participation of humans in the Logos (λόγος). Being λογῐκός means participating in the Logos, the Word of God, a relational capacity for communicating with one another and with God.

St. John the Damascene explains that the inbreathing describes a gift of communion, being ontologically connected in a relationship of fellowship with God, knowing Him and participating in the divine glory.[21] This "ability of knowing God" and of "living in communion with Him" opens the way for another principle found in the Genesis' Creation account: "according to the likeness" (καθ' ὁμοίωσιν).[22] This principle is a dynamic continuous *turning* (ἀποστρέφω) towards God through disposing one's will to do the works of virtue. It is also responding to God's love and using the gift of freedom and self-determination, to fulfill all the divinely installed potential in the created human being.

Thus, God has given the created human being all the faculties to realize and achieve this end. He or she can freely opt to use these faculties in an abnormal direction, or counter-nature. Nature by its faculties has a movement,

---

[20] Christian anthropology sees the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary as the prototype and supreme example of what it means to be a human being, a steward of creation, where the perfect synergy between her human will and the Divine grace fulfilled the goal of deification. "Mary co-operates with the economy" (*Adversus Haereses* 3.11.7; PG 7/1:953B).

[21] St. John of Damascus, *On the Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, NPNF 209: 309-310; PG 94:920B.

[22] While offering a patristic synthesis on the various interpretations about the attributes of creation in the image of God, Vladimir Lossky explains that this image of God in man is given these various interpretations: "... in the sovereign dignity of man, in his lordship over the terrestrial world; sometimes it is sought in his spiritual nature, in the soul, or in the principle, ruling [ἡγεμονικὸν] part of his being, in the mind [νοῦς], in the higher faculties such as the intellect, the reason [λόγος], or in the freedom proper to man, the faculty of inner determination [αὐτεξούσία], by virtue of which man is the true author of his actions. Sometimes the image of God is identified with a particular quality of the soul, its simplicity or its immortality, or else it is described as the ability of knowing God, of living in communion with Him, with the possibility of sharing the divine being or with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the soul..." From the book, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (London: James Clarke, 1957), 115-116.

or an orientation, toward God, and to the project of deification, but human beings have the power, in their free-will, to follow this movement, or go against it. The human nature remains unchanged, only the orientation of human energies is either with or against nature. For example, there is a capacity of love within human nature. It is not, however, nature that loves, but the person who loves. Also, the human faculties are the same as well, but the *orientation* of the movement of these faculties, such as the intelligence, memory, etc., changes: they are operated toward God or against God. This is the human choice. Memory is oriented to remember the good or to deliberate on the bad; desire is oriented to love God or to love oneself egoistically; and energy is deployed to combat sins in pursuit of holiness or to create enmity.

Being created according to His likeness is obtaining the eternal potential to grow, and having the unquenched thirst and deep longing to fully realize this spiritual life as communion with God. Human beings have the potential of fulfilling this likeness through their cooperation with God's grace and communion with God, in freely choosing to live a virtuous life, to become "partakers of the divine nature" (NKJV, 2 Pet. 1:4), to be "transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (NKJV, 2 Cor. 3:18), and receive deification. This human's constant, free, and dynamic growth in love and virtue toward deification is what constitutes the greatness of man and the ineffable beauty of the way God created humanity.[23]

Regarding knowledge, the Fathers thought of reason, mind or intellect (*nous*),[24] as more than the reasoning brain that regulates human social connection with oneself and one's environment and the central nervous system, or the DNA or cellular memory (DNA), which determines a human organism. Both the brain and the DNA are well known scientific subjects of study. However, the intellect is the moral insight, perception reasoning, discernment, and freedom of choice, and the organ through which one receives the revelation from God. The intellect is a central cognitive center for the human being's soul, as the brain is the cognitive center for the body. It is the place of communion between the created human being and God's uncreated energy.[25]

---

[23] Panagiotis Nellas emphasizes this point on the deification of man as follows: "[T]he true greatness of man is not found in his being the highest biological existence, a 'rational' or 'political' animal, but in his being a 'deified animal,' in the fact that he constitutes a created existence 'which has received the command to become a god.'" In the book, *Deification in Christ. Orthodox perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person*, trans. Norman Russell of Zöon Theoumenon, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987), 30.

[24] According to Fr Andrew Louth, "*Nous*, then, is more like an organ of mystical union than anything suggested by our words 'mind' or 'intellect.'" In his book, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), xv-xvi.

[25] Fr. George D. Metallinos, *The Way, an Introduction to the Orthodox Faith* (Kalambpaka: St. Stephen's Holy Monastery, Holy Meteora, 2013), 108-109.

Revisiting Christian anthropology leads to a reemphasis that the human being remains a deep mystery of Creation, a noetic existence known only by the Creator, and discovered solely through an ontological relationship of the human with the authentic Truth. This Truth is Love, Freedom, Incarnation, and Participation.

Implications on Artificial Intelligence

First, discussion about anthropology is today based less on a theological, and more on a sociological view. This latter has different precepts and goals. It views human personhood as the interaction of a combined product of several causal human capacities, such as volition, emotion, identity and virtue formation, all residing in the body, but mostly in the brain. It incorporates the physical, emotional, and ethical patterns and practices that shape how persons think and act in the world. In other words, this sociological anthropology defines a person as "a conscious, reflexive, embodied, self-transcending center of subjective experience, durable identity, moral commitment, and social communication who – as the efficient cause of his or her own responsible actions and interactions – exercises complex capacities for agency and inter-subjectivity in order to develop and sustain his or her own incommunicable self in loving relationships with other personal selves and with the nonpersonal world."[26] However, in Christian anthropology, the inbreathing of God makes each human a person, and the Holy Spirit in Pentecost opens the way for human deification. Therefore, the epistemological approach of Christian anthropology is not philosophical or sociological, but rather sacramental. The human being is a mystical being, a holy sacrament or a ***mysterion***, a priest of creation, an icon, and a place for the Divine Presence and Theophany.[27]

Also, Christian anthropology reveals a glimpse of the mystery of human being since its complexities are inherent in its composite. First, it points that the human bodies are not simply complex biochemical, or algorithmic, machines. The human body is rather a temple of the Holy Spirit, that God created and where God is glorified. In addition, the holistic view of the human being considers both the body (σῶμα) and the soul (ψυχή) as integral parts of humankind, both having equal dignity and sacredness. This holistic view denies the existence of

---

[26] Christian Smith, *What is a Person? Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 61.

[27] Lars Thunberg. *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 127-140; Nikolaos Loudovikos. *A Eucharistic Ontology: Maximus the Confessor's Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010), 36-42.

any form of religious dualisms, such as body-mind, material-spirit, etc. The fact that the human being is made of a synthetic body and soul, and in his or her totality is a holistic, psychosomatic **total union**, denies the ideas of material reductionism and secular naturalism.[28]

Since the breath of God makes Adam a living being, and breathing in the face of someone, means transmitting to the other "something very inwardly yours, your own self-consciousness or your spirit,"[29] human beings have an important dimension unfound in any other living organism: communion with the Divine. Fr. Stăniloae describes the inbreathing as installing an ontological reality, which is the relational dimension and the potential of Human-Divine communion and dialogue in the created being: "Herein lies the image in its wholeness… The spiritual breathing of God produces an ontological spiritual breathing of man, namely, the spiritual soul, which has its roots within the biological organism and is in conscious dialogue with God and with its fellow human beings."[30] This ontological breathing gives man the aptitude of knowing, or rather of experiencing, the power of God, while living "in the likeness" of God. Thus, the importance of spirituality within the life of the Orthodox Christian faithful, without which there no meaning to earthly life. The ultimate fulfillment of this spiritual life is the human participation in the Light of the eternal glory of the Risen Christ, holiness, theosis (θέωσις), deification by Divine Grace, or union with God in Divine love. Therefore, human life finds its ultimate fulfilment beyond death, in the eternal boundless communion of "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" that constitutes the Kingdom of God (Rom. 14:17). However, an alternative kind of spirituality is being hewn. This novel, soul-denying spirituality has embraced an anti-ascetic, relative, private, individualistic, sentimental spirituality, and has an objective of feeling-good and being self-content and self-aware, and of finding meaning, transcendence, and connectedness within oneself.

Since there is this dimension of human-divine communion, the quality of life ought to be principally founded on the sanctity of life, a sanctity drawn from this Divinity, the Holy Trinity (Mat. 5:48, Rom. 5:5, 1 Cor. 12:3).[31] This

---

[28] The Church has condemned in various councils (Council of Gangra held in 340 (Canons 1, 4, 9, 10), Apostolic Canons (Canons 5, 51), and Quinisext Council held in 692 (Canon 13)) all attempts to deform the holistic view of the human being.

[29] Christos Yannaras, *Elements of Faith. An Introduction to Orthodox Theology*, trans. Keith Schram (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 54-55.

[30] Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, *Volume Two, The World: Creation and Deification*, trans. and ed. Ioan Ionita and Robert Barriger (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2000), 84-85.

[31] A godhead based on Artificial Intelligence (AI) is developed through computer hardware and software.

communion is not just an encounter but a sharing of the deep self (including rationality, emotionality, creativity), and a rejuvenation, for the Christian is a new creation in Christ. In the sharing of human suffering on the Holy Cross, which is a great Divine mystery as well, Christ opened the way for humans to a communion of real existential love, compassion and mercy. Embodied humanoids cannot fathom the deep mystery of this Divine communion, since they do not carry within the breath of God, as it is solely given to humankind, once and forever. Thus, they may be able to provide a sort of companionship and friendship to human beings, but since this communal and interpersonally relational living is not drawn upon the image of Christ, it cannot be genuinely human.[32]

In Christian anthropology, the attainment of the noblest human virtues of goodness, love, mercy and justice requires the discipline (spiritual askesis) of continued repentance and total purification of life, the heart, the mind, and the soul. Humanoids carry the ability to correct themselves according to data and algorithms, but not according to Divine revelation, in which "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (NKJV, Gal.2:20). "Augmented humans" are taught to work in harmony with technology and machine intelligence to expand and enrich life and the human potential. However, humanoids are in the line of thought of Darwin's sketch: being guided solely by nature. Thus, they can be genetically predisposed to intense sexual appetite, or made liable to alluring behavior through their physical seductive appearance. Humanoids are preprogrammed. Robots as Chatbots, with superhuman abilities, can possibly get their teaching knowledge not from the Bible and the Holy Fathers, but from seemingly, and not genuinely, Christian sources.

Human language is one example of the complexities inherent in elements of speech such as metaphors and similes, which robots are limited in using, despite becoming increasingly sophisticated, responsive, and more "natural."

In terms of logic and thought, the human mind (not intelligence) moves spirally, for it is brought up to the new level by each dialectic identity, which one psychologically experiences as a jump. Artificial intelligence, however, moves only in the human-defined space of formal logic, but not in the dialectic one that represents human thinking. Its conclusion is linear, but never cyclical, because in this case it would stop at the same time as it would begin to work, since it would somehow annul itself.

The greatest danger of artificial intelligence lies in imitating the idea of Descartes that human existence is through self-thinking. As a result, postmodern philosophical views towards the intellectually disabled do not see these people as

---

[32] DeBaets, *The Robot as Person,* 224-231.

"persons," because they are not able rationally to express themselves, thus, in their philosophical views, cannot retain a sense of personhood. In Christian anthropology, these people remain as persons, since the powers of their soul remain a potential within them, even if it is not manifested through the action of the body.[33]

Human consciousness is much more than solving problems extraneous to itself. The consciousness of the modern man is so much defined by the technical values, that every choice that a person makes is according to the technological compass and is conditioned by technology, as humanoids act. The choice is no longer rooted in freedom and is necessarily reduced to technology. However, persons have free-will. This makes them capable of responsibility and of giving and receiving love.

The emphasis on the rationalization of society in the Enlightenment and modernity did not achieve liberation, happiness, and control. The mind, which is a human faculty, became a tool for inhumane activities and achievements. Many of these atrocious and massively inhumane events, unseen before in world history, were looked upon as products of modern rationalism and industrialization, making warfare in particular more brutal, deadly, and destructive. Many felt disillusioned and lost their belief in progress through rational thought. Their hope in having people think for themselves and discover truths through reason alone had been shattered. This reality was even manifested in the people's lives and level of maturity. They lost trust in rationalism and instead began to pursue logical positivism or empiricism empiricism, with a tendency towards "exclusive humanism" whereby subjectivity and relativity were slowly penetrating the humanistic fields.[34] This has precisely led to the creation of an apparition of the omnipotent, smartest ever, subject of "I" that thinks, despite that effectively there is no "I" anymore, but an animated object only. Human personhood defines existence by communion and love: "*amo ergo sum* -- I love therefore I am."[35]

In the best description of these new technological inventions, they are called "artificial." Metaphorically speaking, Robotic human-likeness is some kind of "revenge of 'non-I' object over 'I' subject, a turnover of 'I' supremacy into the domination of 'non-I'."[36] In his book *Simulacra and Simulation*, French sociologist Jean Baudrillard suggests that this present era of postmodernity is that of the

---

[33] St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, 29:6, NPNF 205: 420; PG 44:237.

[34] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 19, 27.

[35] Sakharov, *I Love, Therefore I Am*, 16.

[36] Aleksandar Petrović, "Middle Ages and Artificial Intelligence," *Dictionary of Technology and Electronic Personality in Orthodoxy and Artificial Intelligence. Dictionary of Technology and a Double Logos: A Contribution to the Dialog between Science and Religion*, ed. Aleksandar Petrović and Aleksandra Stefanović (Athens: Institute of Historical Research, National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2019), 52.

beginning of the era of hyper-reality in which modern electronic mass media and the consumer society blurs the distinction between image and reality, leading to the fragmentation of reality and the loss of meaning. Baudrillard projects that simulation is playing a wide role in human societies and perception. He characterizes the social reality in the postmodern era as one of hyperreality. After all, isn't the fall a social occurrence?

One of the most critical virtue of humankind is that of discernment or good judgement: *diakrisis* (διάκρισις). This virtue helps humans make critical ethical decisions. *Diakrisis* is a spiritual gift through which one discerns the inner states. It is a gift which pertains to the pure nous. St. John Cassian (Philokalia I) writes: "Discrimination [discernment] is no small virtue, but one of the most important gifts of the Holy Spirit ... [it is] ... nothing worldly or insignificant. It is the greatest gift of God's graces ... the ability to discriminate between spirits that enter into him and to asses them accurately." Thus, *diakrisis* helps one regard with much respect and approval whatever is holistically beneficial for the physical, mental and spiritual harmony of the human being for the glory of God and the sanctification of the life. Since *diakrisis* carries much of the Christian ethical decisions, artificial intelligence devoid of *diakrisis* in the Christian sense becomes the biggest challenge posed before ethics, since it makes the world reduced to the abstract "I" and its reflections in technological mirrors, and decisions are made at the expense of the common good. "Technology is therefore everything that a selfhood is no longer and cannot be. It is like a mirror of Dorian Gray in which we are getting better while we actually disappear admiring our image."[37]

Conclusion

The anthropological crisis has its roots in the degradation of knowledge. This degradation is uncovered in the first incident of human temptation, falling into vanity and self-deception, as it is described in the book of Genesis: "Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (NKJV, Gen. 3: 4). Certainly, when the first human being, having the image of God the Creator and His Light, freely chose to accept this malicious call to be another "god," dark clouds overshadowed his inner vision of true knowledge. As a result of this confusion, created humans turned into a miserable creature filled with diseases and death, annihilating in dust (Gen. 3:11). This state of the fall led to the degradation concerning the knowledge about what it is to be truly human,

---

[37] *Ibid.*

and to the failure in distinguishing between the created (the universe and humankind) and uncreated (God), and between essence and energies.

Technology appeared after the fall. Hence, even though science and all technological progress could lead to a better living conditions, they will always be limited because human beings are limited by their fallen condition. Scientists have the power and authority to use earthly tools in helping Creation. However, they would eventually reach the boundaries of "unknowability" where the Mystery of God begins. Scientists, who acquire the knowledge of the heart, can have, while working within their God-given mandate, the discernment to control and subdue human inventions, rather than to be subdued and controlled by them.

In his study of St. Basil the Great, the blessed Elder Aimilianos of Simonopetra presents *two* principles concerning the assessment and control of technological progress: first, their use in restraint, according to the basic and necessary need, and second, spiritual vigilance which "arms people so that they can stave off the disastrous effects of the technological society."[38] The ultimate human mission is summarized by the blessed Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, who affirms that "man through his science is not merely the passive spectator of the causal processes of the cosmos, but can give shape to these processes actively."[39] Therefore, humans living in and for Christ are called to embrace technological progress and enlighten its path, since "we cannot understand nature and the meaning of science and technology without recognizing a higher human destiny, the calling of man to find his fulfillment in God."[40]

Anthropologically, the human mental reasoning, which is based on the brain, logical processes or syllogisms, reaches only scientific facts and figures or *gnosis* (γνῶσις), and leads to inventions in the form of images and information. When rationalism is content with its findings, it thinks of itself as reaching the "full" knowledge by its own power. In this way, sole "rationalism" which is anthropocentric reaches the summit of self-justification and pride, the cause of the fall. However, when rationalism is led by the *nous*, the spiritual cognitive center, the human being filled with the Grace of God reaches *epignosis* (ἐπίγνωσις), the correct or divine knowledge, true perception, or right discernment, which surpasses sole rationality. As St. Gregory Palamas affirms in his life and teachings, human beings in Christ are called to be filled with the spiritual, mystical

---

[38] Archimandrite Aimilianos, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Simonos Petras. "Orthodox Spirituality and the Technological Revolution." *Spiritual Instruction and Discourses, Vol I: The Authentic Seal* (Ormylia Publishing, Holy Cenobium of the Annunciation of the Mother of God, Ormylia, Halkidiki, Greece, 1999), 351-352.

[39] Dumitru Stăniloae, *Theology and the Church*, trans. by Robert Barringer (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), 224.

[40] *Ibid.*, 225.

knowledge and to experience the communion and union with God.[41] Attaining this degree of knowledge, the rules of nature are surpassed. The testimonies of thousands of luminary saints and charismatic spiritual elders, both ancient and contemporary, are the standing proofs of this long tradition in acquiring this *epignosis*.[42]

The Creator did not abandon His creation, but as a loving Father sent His only begotten Son to enlighten man again with the light of true knowledge, bringing healing and salvation by the illuminating grace of the Holy Spirit. The call of God for people is repent, since repentance leads to true knowledge, to the gate of the human heart. Acquiring this knowledge leads humans to be *fully* human, and to manage in *diakrisis* all scientific progress and technological achievements, including their use of humanoids, fulfilling their role as "mediators." The words of St. Gregory the Theologian summarize it all in inciting the humans to listen to the voice of God, to conform freely to the Divine likeness, and to be enlightened and regenerated, in order to "become what we once were."[43]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archimandrite Aimilianos, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Simonos Petras. "Orthodox Spirituality and the Technological Revolution." *Spiritual Instruction and Discourses, Vol I: The Authentic Seal.* Ormylia, Halkidiki, Greece: Ormylia Publishing, Holy Cenobium of the Annunciation of the Mother of God, 1999: 343-352

John Chrysostom. *Homilies in Genesis*. *Fathers of the Church*. Translated by Robert C. Hill, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, vol. 74, 2010; vol. 82, 2001.

Ιωάννης ο Χρυσόστομος, Αγιος . "Εις την Γένεσιν [Homilies on Genesis]." *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 53, cols 21-580 and vol. 54, cols. 385-619, edited by Jacques Paul Migne, Paris: Biblothecae Cleri Universe, 1862.

John of Damascus. "An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith." *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Series 2, vol. 09, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995: 1b-101b.

---

[41] *Triads* 2. 36. St. Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, ed. John Meyendorff (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 19, 31, 83.

[42] One contemporary example is St. Porphyrios of Kavsokalyvia, who had, according to thousands of testimonies, the special charisma of Divine grace to recognize the truth of meanings, the depths of human thoughts hidden in one's sub-consciousness, and describe things hidden deep in time and place. The power of his charisma cannot even come close to any powerful humanoid or futurist robotic dream.

[43] Orations 39, *On the Holy Lights*, II.7; *Discours 38-41*, Sources Chrétiennes, vol. 358, intro. Claudio Moreschini, trad. P. Gallay (Paris, Cerf, 1990), 152; NPNF 207: 352.

Ἰωάννης ο Δαμασκηνό, Ὅσιος. ""Ἔκδοσις ἀκριβὴς τῆς ὀρθοδόξου Πίστεως [Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith]." *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 94, cols. 517-1228, edited by Jacques Paul Migne, Paris: Biblothecae Cleri Universe, 1864.

DeBaets, Amy Michelle. The *Robot as Person: Robotic Futurism and A Theology of Human Ethical Responsibility among Humanoid Machines*, PhD Thesis Emory University, 2012. http://holden.library.emory.edu/ark:/25593/bp.4jb. Accessed 30 August 2020.

Feuerbach, Ludwig. *Essence of Christianity*. Translated by Marian Evans. London: Trubner and co. Ludgate Hill, 1884.

Gregory of Nyssa. "On the Making of Man." *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. 05, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995: 386-428.

Γριγόριος Νύσσης, Αγιος. "Περί τῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου γενέσεως καί εἰς τό κατ εἰκόνα καί καθ' ὁμοίωσιν, [On the Making of Man]." *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 44, cols. 125-256, edited by Jacques Paul Migne, Paris: Biblothecae Cleri Universe, 1863.

Gregory Palamas. *The Triads*. Edited by John Meyendorff, New York: Paulist Press, 1983.

Gregory of Nazianzus. "Orations." *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. 7, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980: 185-477.

Grégoire de Nazianze. *Discours 38-41*. Sources Chrétiennes n° 358. Introduction, texte critique et notes par Claudio Moreschini, traduction par P. Gallay, Paris, Cerf, 1990.

Γρηγόριος ο Θεολόγος, Αγιος. "Λόγος [Orations 1-18]." *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 35, cols. 395-1043, edited by Jacques Paul Migne, Paris: Biblothecae Cleri Universe, 1857.

Hawley, Scott H. "Challenges for an Ontology of Artificial Intelligence." *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith,* 71.2, 2019: 83-93.

Irenaeus of Lyon. "Against Heresies," *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, vol. 1, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994: 315-567.

Ειρηναίος Λυώνος, Αγιος.. "Κατά *Αιρέσεων [Adversus Haereses*]." *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 7/1, cols. 844-1224, edited by Jacques Paul Migne, Paris: Biblothecae Cleri Universe, 1857.

Khalil, Jack, "An Interpretation of Rom 3:21–26 within Its Proper Context." *Participation, Justification and Conversion*. Edited by Athanasios Despotis, WUNT II 440, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2017, 201-241.

Lossky, Vladimir. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. London: James Clarke, 1957.

Loudovikos, Nikolaos. *A Eucharistic Ontology: Maximus the Confessor's Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity*. Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010.

Louth, Andrew. *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.

Μάξιμος ο Ομολογητής, Οσιος. "Περί διαφόρων ἀποριῶν τῶν ἀγίων Διονυσίου καί Γρηγορίου πρός Θωμᾶν τόν ἠγιασμένον [Ambigua ad Joannem, ad Thomam]." *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 91, cols. 1033-1417, edited by Jacques Paul Migne, Paris: Biblothecae Cleri Universe, 1865.

Merritt, Jonathan. *The Atlantic*, Feb 3, 2017. https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2017/02/artificial-intelligence-christianity/515463/. Accessed 9 September 2020.

Metallinos, Protopresbyter Fr. George D. *The Way, an Introduction to the Orthodox Faith* (Kalambpaka: St. Stephen's Holy Monastery, Holy Meteora, 2013.

Nellas, Panayiotis. *Deification in Christ. Orthodox perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person*. Translated by N. Russell of Zöon Theoumenon, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987.

Petrović, Aleksandar. "Middle Ages and Artificial Intelligence." *Orthodoxy and Artificial Intelligence. Dictionary of Technology and a Double Logos: A Contribution to the Dialog between Science and Religion.* Edited by Aleksandar Petrović and Aleksandra Stefanović. Athens, Greece: Institute of Historical Research, National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2019: 37-60.

Sakharov, Nicholas V. *I Love, Therefore I Am: The Theological Legacy of Archimandrite Sophrony.* Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002.

Schuurman, Derek C. "Artificial Intelligence: Discerning a Christian Response." *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 71.2, 2019: 75-82.

Smith, Christian. *What is a Person? Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Stăniloae, Dumitru. *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, *Volume Two, The World: Creation and Deification*. Translated and edited by Ioan Ionita and Robert Barriger. Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2000.

_____. *Theology and the Church*. Translated by Robert Barringer. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980.

Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Thunberg, Lars. *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor.* Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985.

Yannaras, Christos. *The Freedom of Morality*. Contemporary Greek Theologians Series. Book 3. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984.

_____. *Elements of Faith. An Introduction to Orthodox Theology*. Translated by Keith Schram, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES DURING CORONAVIRUS TIMES – THE SAPLINGS OF A NEW GNOSTICISM INSIDE THE CHURCH

IOSIF BENA[1]

ABSTRACT. Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, we have been bombarded with a constant stream of conspiracy theories and fake news regarding the coronavirus, vaccines, 5G radiation, microchips. Some of these theories have circulated only inside fringe communities on the internet, but most have been transmitted very intensely amongst the faithful, and some have made it up to the highest levels of the Church hierarchy.

The question we would like to address in this article is why do Christians succumb and are so likely to transmit to others such statements, whose falsity is blatantly obvious to anybody with a very basic high-school physics education. It is our opinion that this pro-conspiracy attitude is the syndrome of a very incomplete catechization and of a resurgence of gnostic heretical thinking, encouraged by the new social media communication tools.

We will begin with a brief review of Gnosticism, of what made it so popular at the beginning of the Christian era, and of what brought about its demise. We will then show that the same mechanism that was at work in the Gnostic thinking responsible for the propagation and acceptance of conspiracy theories.

Keywords: Gnosticism, Conspiracy Theories

Gnosticism

The first two centuries after Christ were characterized by the antiquity equivalent of globalization. The centuries before were characterized by wars and by bloodshed and were periods when, with a few lucky exceptions, most of the people were concerned chiefly with survival. However, during the Pax

---

[1] Rev. PhD (Physics), Institut de physique théorique, Université Paris-Saclay, CEA, CNRS, L'Orme des Merisiers, 91191 Gif-sur-Yvette, France, iosif.bena@cea.fr

Romana[2] period that commenced during the reign of Augustus[3], this changed, and with a few exceptions, the citizenry of the Roman Empire enjoyed a long period of peace[4].

This period witnessed enhanced commercial links between provinces, which exposed Roman citizens to a large number of previously-unknown products and activities. In particular, on the religious front, a very large number of religions that originated outside the culture of the Roman empire began competing for believers. Furthermore, the increased communication between various regions of the Roman empire brought about new pandemic diseases, the most well-known of which are the Antonine plague and the plague of Cyprian[5].

This abundance of new religions, new customs, and new unusual events that the Pax-Romana and its subsequent disturbances brought about was not without consequence for the typical inhabitant of the Roman empire. This typical inhabitant had been used to a much more restricted set of customs and religions, most of the time linked directly to the city where he lived. This new plethora of gods and customs was quite destabilizing for old beliefs and worldviews. Indeed, one can argue that the amount of brainpower needed to incorporate and synthesize all this new information was larger than what a typical person could accommodate. However, humans always have the urge to incorporate and synthesize information to form a coherent world view. This is part of our essence as humans.

Given this abundant amount of new information available in the new events, religions, and customs, there were three possible ways in which a normal human, that has a built-in yearning for a coherent worldview, could behave. The first was to retract into what can be labeled as *localism*: reject anything new and foreign, and stick to old religions, customs and products. While this choice was self-consistent, the problem was that adopting it deprived the person of exposure to the marketplace of products and ideas, and hence did not encourage

---

[2] Adrian Goldsworthy, *Pax Romana* (London: Orion Publishing Co, 2017).

[3] Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford; Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1995).

[4] *The wisdom of Egypt: Jewish, early Christian, and gnostic essays in honour of Gerard P. Luttikhuizen*, Ancient Judaism & early Christianity, Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 59 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2005). Boris Mouravieff, *Gnosis: Study and Commentaries on the Esoteric Tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy*, ed. Robin Amis (Newburyport, Mass; Robertsbridge: Praxis Institute Press, 1993). Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, „Gnosticismul. Apariţie, concepte, organizare, clasificări şi influenţe", *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Theologia Orthodoxa*, nr. 1 (2007): 229–52.

[5] Frederick F. Cartwright şi Michael Biddiss, *Disease and History. From Ancient Ties to Covid-19*, 4th ed (London: Lume Books, 2020).

his intellectual, commercial or philosophical flourishing. Furthermore, plague and political instability could not be stopped by city walls, so for many this option was not very feasible.

The second choice was to form a coherent worldview that incorporated all the new information, but dismissed most of it as harmful and soul-damaging. This was more or less the position adopted by Christians, who argued that all the new gods and new religions, together with all the old gods of the Roman pantheon were just demons whose aim was to fool humans. The solution was to reject them off-hand, and to worship the One God who made heaven and earth. This rejection differs from *localism* in that it was exclusionary only on the religious front, but was universalist and all-accepting in the other areas. In Saint Paul's words (Philippians 4:8 (NKJV), Christians accepted *"whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report … any virtue … anything praiseworthy"* but saw all these things as given by God.

Christians took a similar approach to the negative events that shattered the pax romana. They viewed plagues and civil unrest both as a punishment for humanity's sins, and as an opportunity *"to shine forth as servants of the One True God: to rejoice, and to embrace the benefit of the occasion; that in thus bravely showing forth our faith, and by suffering endured, going forward to Christ by the narrow way that Christ trod, we may receive the reward of His life and faith according to His own judgment!"*[6]

The third choice was to incorporate all this new information in a coherent worldview by modifying it and by adding to it a unifying narrative. This was the essence of Gnosticism, which tried to create a consistent hierarchy that incorporated all the gods, semi-gods, angels, spirits, and other super-natural beings. Of course, Gnostic Christians had God the Father at the top of this hierarchy, while non-Christian Gnostics had other deities[7].

Gnosticism was supposed to be a hidden knowledge, which was revealed only to the elected few[8]. Gnosticism had two advantages. First, as we have explained above, it gave its adherent a consistent way dealing with all the new

---

[6] Cyprian, *De Mortalitate*. Transl. Ernest Wallis, c. 1885. Online at *Christian Classics Ethereal Library* (https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf05.iv.v.vii.html)

[7] Henry Charles Puech, *En quête de la gnose*, (Paris : Gallimard, 1978).

[8] *See* the case of cathars in Middle Ages. Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee, A study of the Christian Dualist Heresy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Liviu Vidican-Manci, "Erezia cathară în literatura de specialitate din România. Studiu istorico-critic, (The catharism in the Romanian Historiogrophy)", *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai Theologia Ortodoxa*, nr.2 (2009): 41-50.

information he received, all the new religions and customs he encountered, all the new gods, all the political instability, all the plagues, by simply putting them in a certain place inside this hierarchy. This satisfies the need to process, categorize and store new information that all humans have.

The second advantage is that it gave its adherents a very self-flattering opinion of themselves, especially when comparing themselves to the *common* people who did not share the secret gnostic view of the world. Indeed, what is more flattering than to believe that one was chosen to receive some mystical and secret information of which the large majority of the population was not aware, and which allowed one to see the world in a completely new way, which made perfect sense.

There were three problems with gnostic belief. The first was that it was false. Not only false, but not even logically self-consistent[9], as it allowed any individual Gnostic teacher to add his own teachings and embellishments, and to expand freely on the Gnostic canon, which soon became out-of-control. The second was that as a world-view it had a damaging effect on those who believed in it. Indeed, if one believes the world to be imbued with thousands of layers of supernatural beings, which affect every layer of reality, then the influence one particular person can have on his life and his surrounding is becoming minimal.

Indeed, if people who believe that all good things and all bad things in life are controlled by outside forces, the tend to put much less effort in improving their lot in life, and in improving the life of those around them. Such people have a much higher probability of failing in life, especially in the tough environment of late antiquity.

The third is that there was a discrepancy between the exalted belief of gnostic believers, as enlightened special people who were revealed things that were not accessible to common people, and their increasingly deteriorating lot in life. This was not a problem for the gnostic believers who were independently wealthy, and who could afford to believe whatever they wanted, with little effect on their well-being. However, for the common believer in the gnostic narrative, whose way of viewing the world led to an increased probability of social failure, the contrast between the belief in one's superiority brought about by gnostic revelation and the deteriorating material situation was most likely a source of severe psychological discomfort.

---

9 There exist in contrast many self-consistent belief systems that are false. Self-consistent is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a belief system to be true.

In time, Gnosticism faded away. However, it is interesting to note that, unlike other heresies, it did not fade away because of imperial persecutions or because of some decision of a Church council. As we have argued in this chapter, it did so because of its lack of internal self-consistency and because the psychological comfort it provided by merging all existing beliefs into one framework had a side effect in a very toxic view of reality.

Modern Gnosticism: Conspiracy Theories

Much like Late Antiquity, the present period is characterized by an increased exposure to multiple cultures, religions, customs and tools, as well as accompanying epidemics and social disruption. We can communicate instantly with any person from the other end of the earth, we have access to more books than anybody else who lived more than thirty years ago, and we are constantly exposed to news of all catastrophes and of all amazing things, from wars in Burkina Faso to crocodiles with two heads.

The human brain does not have the capacity of processing this huge amount of information. For most of their history men lived in small communities, had access to information about at most a few hundred other men, and were largely unconcerned about what was happening more than a few hundred kilometers away. Given this flood of new information and unusual events, we find ourselves in a similar situation to that of Late Antiquity.

Much like then, there are three ways in which people tend to cope with these problems. First, there are those who want to close themselves, close boundaries, and close access to outside information. This *bunker mentality* is driven by the desire to retreat to safety, into one's culture, tribe or social group. In the past decade or so an increasing number of people have been renouncing mass and social media, sometimes retreating away from big cities into a pastoral lifestyle. However, this phenomenon is clearly economically unsustainable, and will remain marginal. Living without information can be crippling and, moreover, viruses and bacteria do not respect national and local boundaries especially during pandemics. So isolation and escapism offer serious limitations and rather limited benefits.

The second way is that of religious people, who view everything that happens as allowed by God to happen, most often with a grander purpose. Furthermore, since in Christianity the relation between God and the faithful is patterned on the parent-children paradigm (and not on the master-slave paradigm as in other religions), the Christians tend to see all these events as a manifestation of God's love for them, as allowed by God for their ultimate good,

even if that good cannot be perceived at the time. In the Old Testament this is best illustrated in the story of Job, which the Christians see as the prototype for Christ's life and suffering. The prayers in times of disease that one finds in the Book of Needs[10] similarly illustrate this balancing of human incomprehension and complete trust in God's fatherly mercy and love.

The third way is the Gnostic way: faced with an overwhelming reality, people reprocess it in a grand unified framework that is easy to work with and into which all incoming information can be neatly fit, regardless of how complicated this information is. This is manifested in our days by the belief in conspiracy theories. This belief has exactly the same two advantages and the same three disadvantages as the Much like the Gnostic beliefs discussed in the previous chapter.

The first advantage is that it satisfies the need to process, and categorize new information, by forcingly fitting it into an overarching narrative. There are many ways in which this can be done with the coronavirus epidemics, which depend on the background of the population amongst which the conspiracy theory spreads.

For example, if the overarching narrative is the China-versus-West struggle, the coronavirus was engineered in Chinese labs for the purpose of destroying the West, or was engineered in Western labs and planted in China for the purpose of crippling its economy. On the other hand, if the overarching narrative is the elites-versus-liberty struggle, the coronavirus was created and paid for by Bill Gates or George Soros for the purpose of getting everybody to accept the vaccine which will contain a microchip or nanoparticles that will allow the elites to control all the freedom-loving people. This is the version of the coronavirus conspiracy that has appeared for example in the May 16'th 2020 communiqué of the Holy Synod of the Moldavian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate[11] which warns the faithful against *"micro-chipping the population by a vaccine that would introduce in their bodies nanoparticles which interact with 5G radiation and allow men to be controlled at a distance."*

A related but distinct narrative is that of capitalism and new technologies as the source of all evil. In the conspiracy theories that fit this narrative, the coronavirus was created by 5G radiation[12], and its purpose is to reduce the

---

[10] *Molitfelnic*, (Bucureşti: EIBMBOR, 2019)

[11] Communiqué of the Synod of the Moldavian Orthodox Church regarding the legality of eventual compulsory vaccination as a result of the SARS-COVID-19 virus (May 19, 2020). *(Adresarea privind legalitatea unei eventuale vaccinari obligatorii ca efect al virusului SARS-COVID-19) https://mitropolia.md/in-cadrul-lucrarilor-sinodului-bom-au-fost-semnate-doua-adresari-importante-catre-autoritatile-statului/.*

[12] A film promoting this theory was spread among the faithful by perhaps the most well-known and media-prominent nun in the whole Romanian Orthodox Church.

world population. Similarly, there are theories that the future vaccines, created by big-Pharma profit-loving companies are not safe and will be used to kill innocent people for the purpose of increasing the profit of these companies while in the same time reducing world population. A related conspiracy was promoted by the Romanian Academy, which in its August 27 2020 communiqué stated that 5G technology will create an "ocean of radiation" that is dangerous for health and can cause cancer. This communiqué has since been withdrawn.

Of course, once one accepts a narrative for one of these conspiracy theories, all new information about the pandemics is neatly fitted inside this narrative. Wearing a mask was not a very discussed topic at the beginning of the pandemics, so there was no need to fit this into existing conspiracy frameworks. However, as soon as wearing a mask became a public topic, people started to embed it inside their favorite narrative. The mask conspiracy theories that fit in the "elites-versus-liberty" narrative are for example that the small metal bar that one uses to put the mask around the nose is a 5G antenna, whose purpose is to focus 5G radiation and control the microchip that will be implanted in us via the vaccine. Another mask conspiracy theory, that fits into the "western culture versus its enemies" narrative is that the mask is an Islamic symbol of submission and depersonalization, like a burqa, imposed on us by elites who want to replace Christianity with Islam. Yet another mask conspiracy theory, that fits better in the "technology is evil" narrative, is that the plastics used in the mask contain petrochemical substances or nylon microparticles that affect the lungs, or that the mask will reduce brain oxygen levels and kill neurons, making those who wear it become "like a vegetable."[13]

The second advantage of conspiracy theories, again similar to that of Gnostic beliefs, is that they give one the impression of superiority and special election. People who believe in conspiracies view themselves as paragons of liberty, the bulk of the population as obedient sheep, who are willing to sacrifice their freedom to the government because they believe in a lie. In addition, they feel an urge to convert as many other people as possible to their point of view, by bombarding them with conspiracy messages and videos. This urge is quasi-religious, and is similar to the urge of religious people to convert others to their religion.

The disadvantages of conspiracy belief are again almost identical to the disadvantages of Gnostic religion. The first is of course that it is false. As anybody with an elementary physics education can ascertain, 5G radiation cannot produce cancer-inducing mutations, cannot penetrate more than a few

---

[13] One of the most well known Romanian hieromonks from Mount Athos promoted this theory in a video that was widely shared among the faithful.

millimeters inside the body, and it can only heat up the skin, much like a warm bath. Furthermore, a microchip must contain billions of atoms, and hence cannot be nanometer-sized. Moreover, whenever a microchip that controls any cell in the brain will be invented, it will need electricity to function, which one cannot get from inside the human body. Similar arguments can be made about the mask conspiracy theories.

Unfortunately, the falsity of conspiracy beliefs can have net disadvantages for those who accept them. Somebody who believes the coronavirus does not exist will not protect himself and will not go to the hospital when infected, and thus has a much higher chance of dying than others. Similarly, somebody who believes the vaccine contains 5G-controlled microchips will not accept vaccination. If a significant part of society accepts these beliefs and refuses vaccination, this will unnecessarily prolong the duration of the epidemics, and will cause many un-necessary deaths. The best example of such behavior happened in Nigeria, where in 2003 certain tribal leaders convinced their peoples to refuse the polio vaccination because of conspiracy theories that the polio vaccine gives rise to AIDS[14]. This vaccination would have eradicated polio in the entire world. This refusal allowed polio to survive in Africa until August 2020, and to spread to several other countries, like Pakistan, where it is still endemic. Thus, the widespread belief in the conspiracy theory is indirectly responsible for the several hundred thousand children who died of polio between 2003 and 2020.

The second disadvantage of conspiracy beliefs is that by ascribing everything that happens to external all-powerful sources, like "the elites" or "Bill Gates" or "the Americans," conspiracy theories rob their believers of all drive to act for their own improvement or for the improvement of their community. Let's take for example a student who believes that access to all academic positions is controlled by the Masonry or by Opus Dei. Such a student will believe he has no chance to obtain a position, and hence will not be motivated to work hard to reach the level of competence he needs to successfully compete for such a position. The net result is that his competence will be low and he will fail, which will only reinforce his belief in the conspiracy scenario. This is called "confirmation bias" in psychological language. Thus, believing in conspiracy theories can drive one into a downwards spiral of laziness, resentment and despair, and almost but ensures his failure in everything they do.

---

[14] Ayodele Samuel Jegede, „What Led to the Nigerian Boycott of the Polio Vaccination Campaign?", PLoS Med. 2007 Mar; 4(3): e73. doi: 10.1371/journal.pmed.0040073

As a side note, conspiracy beliefs are very common in many sub-cultures that have a hard time improving their lot. For example, many in minority and immigrant sub-cultures believe that all the gates of social achievement are closed for them and only open for the majority; smaller countries that neighbor big ones who believe all evil comes from the big neighbor; ex-colonized countries believe that the world is skewed in favor of their ex-colonizers, etc. It is commonly claimed that these peoples and cultures adopt conspiracy beliefs because of their inferior results when compared to others. However, the dynamics is not linear, but circular (resembling a dragon eating its tail): conspiracy beliefs lead to downward spirals, which result in failure, which results in more conspiracy beliefs.

This leads to the third negative consequence of conspiracy belief, which is the stark contrast between the flattering way in which its adherents view themselves, as enlightened men who understand the deep mysteries of reality, and their deteriorating lot in life brought about by the type of downward spirals described above. This contrast does not affect so much those who are independently wealthy, but rather those in the middle and lower echelons of society, who have a lot to lose by the continual failing brought about by seeing life a in conspiratorial way. Needless to say, this contrast can be the cause of severe psychological distress.

The way out: the Christian solution

In Late Antiquity, Orthodox Christianity supplanted Gnostic belief. Theology aside, one clear reason for this was that Christianity provided its adherents a much more consistent and a much more fruitful worldview than Gnosticism. Indeed, Christianity did not view reality as controlled by multiple layers of angelic supernatural power, with men at the lowest level, but rather viewed Men as made in the image and likeness of God, endowed by Him with rationality. This rationality gives men the power to rule Creation, and to understand how Creation functions.

Many scholars argue that it precisely for this reason that science appeared in Christian societies, despite the fact that they were less developed technologically than, for example, the Chinese empire. It is only upon accepting the Christian view of man, as gifted with rationality by a God who does not want us to be slaves but sons (Rm, 14-17), that one starts trying to systematize and rationalize one's understanding of nature. And it is this systematization and rationalization that forms the foundation of the scientific approach.

Hence, the Christian understanding of the place of man inside Creation is beneficial for Christians, not only because it is theologically correct, but also because it empowers them to understand and transform the world around them. This makes Christians active and responsible. This is in contrast with Gnosticism, and to other religions where man's lot is life is passive, either because of predetermined or because it is seen to be at the whim of all-powerful deities whose relationship with men is that of masters to slaves, and not that of parents to children.

As we have argued in the previous chapters, both Gnosticism and conspiracy theories are ultimately based on the negation of man's rationality and active role in relationship to his life. The difference is that instead of viewing the world as controlled by myriads of orders of independent super-natural entities, conspiracy theories view the world as controlled by Bill Gates or the Masonry or George Soros. However, both viewpoints discourage men from trying to improve their lot in life and from trying to change the world for the better, transforming them from active into passive agents.

Unfortunately, in the age of the Internet it is much easier to make men abandon their rationality by using carefully crafted media products that induce fear and strong emotions. Roughly-speaking, humans have two brain systems: one can be thought as the "rational" brain and the other can be though of as the "fight-or-flight" or "reptilian" brain. The later is a more ancient system, and is present in most animals as well, unlike the "rational" brain, which is unique to humans. These emotion-inducing media products activate the "reptilian" brain and short-circuit the rational brain. This has two consequences: the first is the need of the person who accepted the message to send it to as many people as possible. This is a common fight-or-flight reaction, which is found also in animals that warn the other members of their species when a danger is present. This reaction is responsible for the wide sharing of the theories that become "viral."

The second consequence is that once the rational brain is bypassed, humans can accept even the most absurd theories. The reason for this is that the reptilian brain does not care about the notion of "truth" – it only cares about the immediate survival. An example of this is the fact that people get adrenaline spikes and the urge to flee when they see a statue of a tiger in an Australian bush. Even if rationally we know that tigers do not live in Australia, the brain completely ignores this information, and switches immediately into survival "fight-or-flight" mode.

Hence, people who accept to be manipulated into activating their irrational "fight-or-flight" mode are willingly abandoning their God-given rationality, and choose to let themselves led into a false understanding of reality. From a Christian perspective, this abandoning of rationality is a rejection of God's gift and thus constitutes sinful behavior.

There are several solutions for Christians to avoid this. The first is to stop consuming audio or video media where conspiracy information is presented[15]. The second is to avoid switching into the irrational, to closely observe one's emotions and constantly ask oneself whether the material being watched is triggering them. This requires a bit more spiritual maturity, but learning it is within one's reach. The third is to reject any information that breeds suspicion. In the Journal of Happiness, Father Nicolae Steinhardt argues that the main characteristic of a gentleman is the absence of suspicion, and argues that, in this respect, he sees Christ as the ultimate gentleman. Christians who fall into conspiracy beliefs, who are suspicious of everything that happens, fail to resemble their Master in this very important aspect.

Thus, both Gnosticism and conspiracy beliefs are based on fear and suspicion, combined with a misguided belief that one has a superior understanding of the world, but little power to change it or himself. For many people this leads to lack of motivation followed by inaction followed by failure, which then strengthens these beliefs. Needless to say, Christians must avoid by all means these harmful self-reinforcing false beliefs, and should seek to guard their God-given rationality and accept reality as God chooses to let it unfold. It is thus that Christians cultivate their discernment (διάκρισις), which the Fathers considered as the highest of all virtues.

Acknowledgments

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cartwright F., Frederick, şi Michael Biddiss. *Disease and History. From Ancient Ties to Covid-19*. 4th ed. London: Lume Books, 2020.
Goodman, Martin. *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire*. Oxford; Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1995.

---

[15] If one is concerned that he will miss important information, one possibility is to only use written material; reading is processed through the rational brain, and hence the risk of activating the fight-or-flight mechanism is lower than for visual or audio information.

Mouravieff, Boris. *Gnosis: Study and Commentaries on the Esoteric Tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy*. Ediție de Robin Amis. Newburyport, Mass; Robertsbridge: Praxis Institute Press., 1993.

Puech, Henry Charles. *En quête de la gnose*. Paris: Gallimard, 1978.

Rotaru, Ioan-Gheorghe. „Gnosticismul. Apariție, concepte, organizare, clasificări și influențe". *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, Theologia Orthodoxa*, nr. 1 (2007): 229–52.

Runciman, Steven. *The Medieval Manichee, A study of the Christian Dualist Heresy*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1982.;

Stathakopoulos, Dionysios Ch. *Famine and pestilence in the late Roman and early Byzantine empire: a systematic survey of subsistence crises and epidemics*. Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman monographs 9. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004.

Vidican-Manci, Liviu. "Erezia cathară în literatura de specialitate din România. Studiu istorico-critic, (The catharism in the Romanian Historiogrophy)", *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai Theologia Ortodoxa*, nr.2 (2009): 41-50.

The wisdom of Egypt: Jewish, early Christian, and gnostic essays in honour of Gerard P. Luttikhuizen. Ancient Judaism & early Christianity, Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 59. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2005.

Jegede, Ayodele Samuel. „What Led to the Nigerian Boycott of the Polio Vaccination Campaign?", PLoS Med. 2007 Mar; 4(3): e73. doi: 10.1371/journal.pmed. 0040073

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

RESTRUCTURING REGARDING THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL SKILLS IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

CONSTANTIN CUCOŞ[1]

ABSTRACT. The teaching authority of the religious education teacher is reflected positively in the students', parents' and community's view of the discipline. It takes time to win it, it is formed, it is practiced in accordance with the content values, the methodological demands, and the various challenges (informatic, technical, cultural, social etc.). Its quality and performance is highly important and revolves positively and negatively around the way in which it is valued, symbolized, accepted as a subject. In this article, we want to emphasise the importance and the dynamics of this skills reference, focusing on recent pedagogic, cultural, social development.

Keywords: religious education teacher, teacher training, training device, teaching skill.

Introduction

Every teaching act involves the reporting, acquisition and activation of certain specific skills for fulfilling the mission. Many of these dimensions are observed or practiced in the early stages of one's training: the bachelor's degree, the master's degree, and even more throughout the continuous training or the actual practicing of this profession. In this skill reference we include both the general skills of all teaching staff, regardless of their subject, but also specific aspects regarding the status and the values of one particular subject, which is, in this case, the religious education.

---

[1] Professor PhD, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, director of the Department for Teacher Training at the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi, cucos@uaic.ro

The psychopedagogical skills focus on the conduct created by given elements, stable and long-lasting, as well as on their dimensions that can be won, changed or opened. The type of these skills is continuously shifting, expanding, covering more, being more specific, but also as hierarchy, position, ranking in an order of priority. The restructuration of this set of skills is due to the pressure imposed by the changes in society and culture, but also by the "object of education', the child's dynamic personality, the formal and informal context of education, the new connections regarding the involvement of educational factors.

1. Dilemmas and questions regarding teacher training

The Romanian University represents the main institution whose purpose is the initial and continuous training of the teaching staff. The quality of the training received by graduates/teachers is disputed or is proven to be scarce. This reality needs to be taken in, evaluated and overcome. There are various causes of the above-mentioned scarcity: the faulty organisation or the instability of the teacher training programme (institutional scarcity), a weak awareness of the importance of the psychopedagogical training from those who would become teachers (conduct scarcity), the precariousness of the entry system and the promotion monitoring system (scarcity of values) etc.

Several points of view state that teaching is yet to be defined, that experiments are still made in the field, while theories and actual training experiences are being tested. There are still many questions without an answer[2]:

- How are professional teachers different from the occasional ones (such as the parents)?

- What kind of qualifications – theoretical, practical – should someone who identifies and is known as a teacher must have?

- What training structure - and from which level – should the future teacher follow in order to achieve the acquisition of the specific skills?

- What difficulties could come up in this process and how could these be overcome?

- Which are the training strategies and policies that are most adequate and what dynamic should they follow to ensure a good teacher training?

Moreover, several dilemmas regarding teacher training, highlighted a long time ago, are not yet understood, leading to a series of confusions on a planning and praxeological perspective, such as:

---

[2] Ştefan Costea, *Profesiunea didactică în societatea cunoaşterii. Studii şi reflecţii despre educaţie* (Omagiu profesorului Miron Ionescu) (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2003).

1. Which is the proportion between the academic training (specialised) and the psychopedagogical training; how much does the teacher have to be specialised on the teaching subject and how much is he or she prepared for the passing on of knowledge (or, eventually, generates it, builds together with the opinionmakers)?

2. Which is the proportion between knowing a specific field and knowing the connected or even farther fields, so that one can create inter-disciplinary or transdisciplinary teaching connections with the aim of developing transversal skills for pupils?

3. How well-prepared should the teachers be for working with children or teenagers and how well-trained should they be to connect with other adults (parents, colleagues etc.).

4. What types of aptitudes need to be formed in the initial training phase and what skills can be achieved in the continuous training?

Furthermore, with respect to the specific teacher-training means, answers are sought for the following questions: a) Through what kinds of institutional-organisational means is the teacher training insured? (The actual model, through the two levels of the pedagogic module; the Teaching Master's; the Faculty of Educational Sciences; Autonomous or regional Institutes/Centres etc) b) In which disciplinary manner? (Mono-disciplinary; inter or pluri-disciplinary (how many disciplinary ways?); c) What chronological structure? (Simultaneously, academic and psychopedagogical; successively (academic/3 years + psychopedagogical/ 1-2 years + practical/1 year); c) What curricular content? Which is the rapport between the academic subject and the group of teaching and psychopedagogical subjects; which is the rapport between the theoretical subjects and the pedagogical practice; What does their succession look like in the educational framework).

Regarding the religious education teacher, he or she is trained in the theological faculties, and follows a monodisciplinary teaching path, sometimes in connection with language and literature, but the path can also extend to history, geography, social studies or combined with farther subjects, if the law allows it.

2. Teaching competence and authority – a crisis?

On the larger scale of the general authority relativization and questioning, teacher status seems to have been going down. Although the teacher used to be perceived as a real apostle of the community, nowadays he or she is put under a lot of pressure, which could be symbolic, ideological, perceptual or even related to status, professional or financial. The teaching staff, once defined, worshipped

and enviable, as it was a point of great value in the society and its ethos, have become a subject of criticism for the recipients of the teaching process (students, parents), but also for those who supervise, monitor and benefit from their activity (mass media, stakeholders, local authorities etc.)

The knowledge society, beyond the ease of access and the democratisation of knowledge, brings several perverse effects. One of these consists in the questioning and erosion of the epistemic authority, of the expertise acknowledgement on the creation and management of cognitive systems, of our specialisation in creating activities by using the science we acquired. The illusion that everyone is good at doing everything surfaces, making us think that we can become experts overnight, that we no longer need to have people who validate or focus a certain area of knowledge and action. Almost everyone believes that they are good at politics, education, health, soul, technical stuff. It is alright to have opinions about one topic or another, but it is completely different to be an expert who has the know-how to evaluate the facts.

The perversity has gone beyond one expected: some use these techno-social opportunities to declaim abilities appropriated illegally. Through an autotelic procedure, the media creates and credits skills based on frequency, insistently, through some "voices" whose power derives from the system they have entered. The premises of training are no longer important, nor is the creation of a background for the assessing authority but is the power and magnitude of a voice. The expertise is no longer the result of an already shown activity, put the premise of quality to be summoned or determined. It is no longer the corollary of a socially instituted acknowledgement, but the begging of a type of individuality that wants to stand out.

Today's virtual environment, the transparency and the immediate urge of passing on information brings about this crisis of authority. In former times, few people had access to information as it was hard to get, nowadays we see that it is limitless and accessible. Criticism lacks the developing dynamics, such as the extension and opening towards knowledge. Such an inconsistency can lead either to a deleterious use of the information, or to a trivialisation of the cognitive sphere. We know too well that a value is defined through rarity too, and its rate is also increased by a certain dearth or tension of search and discovery. In such a world with no demarcation, we can assist to some short-circuits or a generalised "noise" in which we do not know what one is capable of or must do. In the current "cyber-sphere" "anyone" can become "someone": a writer or a poet, a guru, a politician, and of course, a teacher…

The ebb presented above comes to fruition in various ways: making education inferior, by not allocating enough money (the problem is not new and no further details are necessary), which makes this profession less and less appealing; the education process is unstable and unpredictable, due laws that

are constantly changing, in opposition with one another (the teachers are overwhelmed about what they have to do, what is their purpose and which authority should they listen to); the troublesome intrusion, in management, of political figures who discourage skilfulness (at least to intermediate authorities or of Ministry); the pressure and involvement of the unaware parents; students' more and more demanding behaviour; transparency, 'hunting', the excessive promotion and generalization of certain teachers' moral slippages; the lack, denial or infringement of some minimal rules of teaching; the admission and training of certain individuals who lack the needed abilities.

If before, authority was a quality given *ab initio*, obtained and acknowledged naturally, intuitively, today it is a value that is permanently being negotiated or is built through certain conventions and procedures. The formality and bureaucratisation of skills went farther than one imagined. The status of the teacher is no longer a given, but it is permanently adjusted through prescriptions that are made on short notice. Almost everything has to be turned into procedures, written as rules and regulations, through algorithms that have to be followed. The teachers, like any other civil servant, and irrespective of the fact that they work with children who are six years old or with mature students, have to pay attention to regulations before they pay attention to people, to check the methodology before doing anything else, to focus on abstract notions before focusing on real things. Our authority being overthrown is no longer based on factors that are subjective or unplanned, but by a system's ambition to delegitimize us of our attributes or natural responsibilities. The decline of the teachers' status is also the result brought about by a generalised entrepreneurship that unifies and forces us to lose personality. The school starts to resemble any economic organization, with strict regulations, with maximised profit and no loss.

The depreciation can unfortunately reach pathological dimensions, by questioning the security, including the physical one, of the teacher. Verbal abuse, insults, bullying in the virtual environment or even physical attacks – beyond or in school etc. have become more and more common. These realities require the regulations to be reconsidered or the implementation of new means of solidarity in order to prevent and defend teachers' rights.

If we, as a society, appointed the teachers to be in charge of our children's education (through clear, valid, transparent procedures) then we should respect their teaching, processing and functioning autonomy. As in case-law, "immovability" must prevail here as well. We cannot disregard the idea of praxiological authority or professional expertise, including in Paideia. "Regardless of our expectancies, we cannot avoid the temporal reality and our talents' indisputable limitations. We become prosperous because we become specialised and we develop formal and informal mechanisms and practices that allow us to trust each other when it

comes to the fields we are specialised in"[3]. After a rigorous process of selecting and attributing the "job" (here are many things that must be improved), we have to trust them. The principle of trust, based on a complied responsibility, is the one that will fix this lack of authority, which we believe is temporarily installed. We must redefine skills, as parents, as teachers, as pupils, as students, as stakeholders. The taking in and practising of a teacher's skills is done simultaneously, while defining the skills of other educational factors. If we do not accept these attributes, with their purpose and status, then the "fuss" about statuses and roles will have increased. A system will work only when each will act based on their skill.

3. What is the teaching competence

For about a century we have heard about the need of focusing the Romanian education system on skill and performance at every level of training. We are not interested in the amount of knowledge that the student or teacher has, but what they are able to do with it, the way in which they apply the science they know and what strategies they use to activate and preserve the knowledge. Competence refers to that desirable behaviour that teachers and students must reach after being included in a training program. It is "designed" sort of abstractly, theoretically, as it is a projection that mature individuals seek to achieve. It is a set of traits that form a conduct that at the moment is left aside, although there is hope that one day it will be contained within. Performance refers to what students or teachers are actually doing. This conduct is an existing competence embodied and turned into act. It is clear that a competence is more valuable than a visible performance, as it is its "ideal" announcement. Performance is real, is tangible, whereas the competence is the projection, anticipation. Through reference to a competence we can observe what students/teachers had to do and through reference to performance we find out what they actually did.

Some believe that what is evaluated are not the behaviours, but their products. We do not assess competences, but "visible" traces of these competences[4], which are performances. The attempt to separate a product from the process of making that product can lead to praxiological aporias, as well as of methodological, epistemological and axiological ones. Firstly, due to the fact that we cannot understand or measure the product in a "pure" form, we are unable to separate it from the means that lead to the product. Secondly, because the possibility of

---

[3] Tom Nichols, *Sfârșitul competenței. Discreditarea experților și campania împotriva cunoașterii tradiționale.* (Iași: Polirom, 2019), 28.

[4] Genevieve Mayer, *De ce și cum evaluăm* (Iași: Polirom, 2000), 47.

doing something and the actual doing are not always relevant in the teaching process, the assessment also has a predictive power, anticipating desirable conduct (I do things better when I know that I will be controlled or assessed). Thirdly, the instruments for the measurement of the two realities (products and processes) are different, uncorrelated, implying distinct benchmarks in report to the specific character of the aspects evaluated (actions and qualities). Skill and performance are dynamic and continuous realities, hard to measure. When can we say that someone has painting skills? Or teaching skills? What is the threshold where we can call one's talent to paint or teach? Every skill is somehow virtual, poli-functional and open. It also involves an invisible or "mysterious" aspect. It can be a cultural product or the result of an opinion, depiction or personal "conquest". Teachers, in reference to their students but also to their capacity, sometimes count on working theories, representations, approximation of competencies having as referential a possible materialization of competence. As Perrenoud writes, competence is a matter of conformism and habit[5]. We cannot certify that a competence has been fully acquired and turned into a permanent performance. The times to come can change the level and capacity of performing.

Returning to teaching competence, it can be described in two ways:

a) on a larger scale – as the capacity of an educator to decide over a teaching problem by knowing in depth the law and determining the teaching circumstances.

b) on a narrow scale – as a person's ability to fulfil, at a certain level of performance, all the task required for the teaching profession.

The concept of "teaching competency" tends to be used nowadays as a middle, general professional standard, often specified by the law, and which a person must achieve while doing teaching related tasks, so that the society is safe from having unprepared individuals for the job. It is a form of delegation of attributes based on conventions, procedures and clear rules that are redrawn from time to time.

Even though teaching has a social, cultural and historical dimension, - extremely powerful and handed down through traditions, intuition and other representations, which does not imply just the activation of knowledge and skills, but also of attitudes, values, ethos, calling, talent, currently there is a strong tendency of formalization, "technologization" and "procedure-making", by initializing the process of making and describing professional standards,

---

[5] Philippe Perrenoud, *L'évaluation des élèves, De la fabrication de l'excellence a la regulation des apprentissages. Entre deux logiques* (Paris, Bruxelles: De Boeck Universite, 1998), 49.

more and more precise, focused, algorithmicised and "mechanised"[6]. For instance, E. Păun[7] sees the professionalization of the teaching staff as a process of creating a set of abilities and competences in a given field, based on the acquisition of a set of knowledge (in theory and practice), process deductively controlled by a model of that job". Professionalization involves several different cumulative stages: a) the delineation of professional identity through the creation of professional standards in the system; b) the authorisation of teaching in the society through material or symbolic support (financial aid, resource allotment, increases in salaries; c) structuring objective assessment systems that states and monitors professional progress, focused on real, measurable skills, that do not lead to perverse effects. With the standards of competences, often mentioned, other concepts can also be highlighted. Professor Nicolae Mitrofan promotes a connected term, that of teaching aptitude, which focuses on basic structures, fundaments of personality and that refer on "complex psychological system, that relies on a certain level of organization and functioning of the psychical functions – formed as a system and internalized operations, genetically created following the external pattern of the educational activity – and support the efficient behaviour of the teacher through adaptive operationalization of its entire personality[8]". Of course, such a "starting" structure allows adjustments, but in accordance with certain possibilities or predispositions that exist in the in-depth structure of the personality.

In some Romanian specialists' opinion, concerned about the setting up of teaching standards[9], the fact that a professional standard has a complex structure, with at least five elements or dimensions is brought up.

- the kind of activities people expect the teacher to do (mentioning the type of necessary activities).
- the standards these activities must meet in order to be perceived as raising at the required level of quality accepted by the society (description of activities).
- the reason why these actions are necessary (the reason for doing them).

---

[6] *See* Roxana Criu, *Competenţă şi calitate. Repere ale evaluării profesorului*, (Iaşi: Editura Universităţii „Al. I. Cuza", 2013).

[7] Emil Păun, „Profesionalizarea activităţii didactice" în *Standarde profesionale pentru profesia didactică* ed. by Lucia Gliga, Ministerul Educaţiei şi Cercetării, Consiliul Naţional pentru pregătirea profesorilor (Sibiu: Editura POLSIB SA., 2002).

[8] Nicolae Mitrofan, *Aptitudinea pedagogică*, (Bucureşti: Editura Academiei, 1988), 56.

[9] Lucia Gliga, ed., *Standarde profesionale pentru profesia didactică,* Ministerul Educaţiei şi Cercetării, Consiliul Naţional pentru pregătirea profesorilor (Sibiu: Editura POLSIB SA.,2002) Sibiu.

• the criteria used for evaluating the quality of the demanded activities (behaviour that can be observed and measured and that highlights the success of the activities, at a socially accepted level of quality).

• how the required activities will be appreciated (means of assessment used).

We have to admit that a model of teaching must refer to standardizable dimensions (that can be observed, measured and assessed), as well as to the conducts that are not standardizable, but open, creative (personalized, contextualized etc.). In the first category we can include "technical" skills, of methodology and that can be programmed, which can be learned (about the pedagogic analysis of content, school documentation, assessment procedures etc.), and the second category can include the capacity to rapport with the student, with the class, with their parents or with the management staff, the argumentative-discursive style, or aptitudes that cannot be fully measured, but have an impact through grace, talent, calling. For example, the teaching call can have a formal dimension, required by status and the fulfilment of some skills (through professionalization, validation, certification), but also a real dimension through actual performances, individual, shown through everyday practice (through giving, availability, love for the children).

With technology becoming more and more important for fulfilling educational scopes, more and more authors connect the teachers' teaching skill with their ability to integrate these aids in the teaching process. Teachers' relation with technology is changing, is contextual, but an excessive use is to be avoided. "More often than not, teaching staff have an unproductive dichotomous perspective: either they do not use technology, or they believe that it could replace their job as a teacher. None of these perspectives is correct: not using technology means not benefiting from the extra value that this can bring to the lesson. Relying only on technology in the teaching process can lead to superficial work from the teacher; on the contrary, teachers must think about age-appropriate psychology, how to enforce motivation, to establish objectives and how to adjust the models to the class, and only then to think about how technology can help these aspects"[10]. After all, "digital teaching – does not refer to technology, but to teaching", meaning all those means that relate to creative intuition, grace, balance, intelligent moderation.

---

[10] Ion Ovidiu Pânişoară, *Procesul de învăţământ în perspectiva digitalizări,* In Ciprian Ceobanu, Constantin Cucoş, Olimpius Istrate, Ion Ovidiu Pânişoară eds., *Educaţia digitală* (Iaşi: Editura Polirom, 2020).

4. The competence standard specific for the religious education teacher

What does it mean to be skilled in training and teaching others? Which are the generic competences required by this noble job (and call)? What dynamic should the set of abilities have, considering the evolution of the trainee, whose personality becomes more complex, as well as the worrying incitement, of different intensity, that arouse from a social cultural context.

Of course, these abilities can be emphasised through psychological testing, or by testing knowledge (unfortunately, not practiced in our case, through a transparent, institutionalised and based on merit selection). If the two types of predispositions are easily perceivable, morality, intra-psychical coherence, pro-social conduct etc. are more difficult to measure and estimate, but become, as seen in practice, the real test and even "the Achilles' heel" of the Paideia work.

Focusing on the religious education teacher, the general skills are:

a) Scientific, academic skill. Good religious education teachers must have a vast scientific knowledge of the field they represent – the doctrinaire-cult specific character of the religion represented, the categories and principles of theological knowledge, the evolution and dynamic of religious phenomenology etc., to be updated in terms of new and relevant information of the subject taught.

b) Teaching, psychopedagogical skill. Religious education teachers are not just someone who is epistemologically able or who generates a specific knowledge, but also someone who is capable of communicating his knowledge, who processes and interprets it. This means knowing to choose, prepare and explain knowledge, to count on and make the most out of a child's practical and religious experience, even on an integrating intradisciplinary path[11], so that these become permissive, understandable, an asset to be shared.

c) Psychological relational skill. Teaching involves opening and permeability towards one's self, helping and counselling the students in both a didactic way as well as in an emotional, motivational, developmental, correctional and projective way. The teacher does not only communicate, but turns oneself into a model of understanding, socialization and affability. Creating a communication environment, to stimulate students to positively connect supports the appreciation of others, it increases one's own dignity, while also turning into a factor for making learning maximal and efficient.

---

[11] Louis-Leon Christians, *Philosophie ou religion à l'école publique,* In *Religions, morales et philosophie à l'école: comment penser ensemble*, (Louvain: Presses universitaires de Louvain, 2004), 15-23.

d) Collaborative and creating partnerships skill. Teaching is more than an individual process, as it involves cooperation with other trainers, dialogue or negotiation with various partners involved in the teaching activity. A good teacher also activates other training factors, like the family, the church, local institutions, different associations and joints them with the school's efforts to achieve the school's cultural objectives.

e) Knowing and including new information technologies in teaching skill. Informational technologies have a direct impact over the teaching process (for students and teachers likewise) and must be turned into direct or complementary means of acquiring and transmitting experience. The Cyberspace has many complicated spiritual threats and can become an educogenous "field" that has to be explored for teaching purposes, as a source of knowledge, as an aid in transmitting and denoting the values. Even more new beneficial perspectives arouse when it comes to delivering religious lessons/activities on informatic platforms, as well as for the integration of digital teaching support.

f) Self-reflexive, critical skill, **regarding** *one's own teaching activity*. The authentic teacher must monitor the teaching activity, to develop meta-cognitive resources so that the teaching path improves. At the same time, he becomes responsible of his own professional evolution, that has to be in a logical permanent development.

g) Conflict management skill. Religious education teachers act on a socio-cultural stage that is more and more complicated, more tense, where he must prevent and improve the conflicts, fights, adversities, based on different spiritual origins, that can appear between various stakeholders (students, parents, managers, colleagues etc.). Thus, religious education teachers, even though they are part of a cult, in our case Christian-Orthodox, can become a mediator, counsellor for stability and credibility.

h) The skill of communicating efficiently (with parents, mass media, school administration, local administration, etc.). The psycho-social context can become a challenging one, which will force the religious education teachers to be explicit, intelligent and responsible towards their own status, objective, professional identity. They must show credibility, positivity and ethos to those around them, to defend epistemological and axiological dignity of their subject, to exert their rights and obligations in full knowledge of the facts.

If we focus on specific competences for religious education, we have to focus on the following:

a) *Teachers' value competence, through their own behaviour as models.* Religious education teachers have to assume the status of delegate from the religious community they represent, and that will carry a system of specific

values; they no longer represent themselves but become the representatives of a spiritual mark, showing to the successors what the predecessors or the contemporaries have created, validated, credited: spiritual ideas and views, expressive forms, significant experiences, desirable behaviour at a given time. The example of self becomes a reference point as is proposes, through contagion, values that are not just claimed, but also interiorized, incorporated, experienced.

1. ***Valorization and teaching integration of children' s proximal experience.*** Religious education teachers have to start with children's concrete ways, from their psycho-genetic or cultural repertory, from opportunities or deficits, from more or less relevant, authentic spiritual circumstances or experiences. Students have different religious pre-acquisitions, as these depend on the families, groups or society they come from. Moreover, the integrating and interdisciplinary perspective, in relation to knowledge, culture, practice has to be taken as a teaching principle. The student must be seen as a partner and has to be valued and integrated in the teaching exercise[12]. Such "anchors" have to be taken into consideration in order to connect students to the religious education curriculum. This does not exclude a filter for values, a personalization, inclusively in relation to the curricular documents (approved curricula and school manuals etc.). Like any other teacher, they can choose and show casuistry, examples, relevant events for their objectives.

b) ***Fidelity and correlation with the fundamental principles and axioms that defined the religion they represent***. Given the fact that the organization and the Religious education curriculum is defined under a certain religious confession (Christian Orthodox in our case) become an apologist or missionary of our religion, activating, contextualizing and emphasising the appropriate values of belief. Religious education teachers are not just information broadcasters, as they have to become a "believer", who lives and preaches the values he teaches. Just like the physics teacher, for instance, when they teach a certain theory (for example the theory of relativity), pleads and suggests that the theory mentioned is valid, the religious education teacher has to show a visible attachment, through what he says and does, towards the values transmitted.

c) ***Patience and empathy for students/ increasing and maturing faith***. Such a subject involves elements of knowledge (historical, religious, of value, of behaviour) on the one hand, and of attitude, values, belief, on the other hand. If the dimension of knowledge is carried by the content of the subject and subdued to validation through clear docimology practices, the attitude and

---

[12] *See* Henri Derroitte, *Donner cours de Religion Catholique, Comprendre le Programme du Secondair,* (Bruxelles: Editions De Boeck et Lumen Vitae, 2009), 143-156.

values depend on the choice of the trainee. The ambition, through this subject, to make rapid changes (eventually through marks) is counterproductive and naïve. Thus, action should be taken as our Saviour Jesus Christ teaches us: *"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me". (Rev. 3:20).* The "seed" of faith has to be given now, but the "sprouting" and "growth" can come later, as the teacher is a benevolent companion and facilitator on this path.

Conclusions

Surely, the skills reference above mentioned allows multiplications, specifications and reordering with the possible evolution and the actual teaching situations. It cannot be activated all at once, but through a permanent and constant commitment of the religious education teacher, through self-monitorization, strategic adjustment and a will for improvement. These skills must allow measurement, assessment and a recognition of their levels, through certain objective indicators and not to generate perverse effects (chasing certifications, points, credits). Lastly, it is important the impact that these skills have, their effect, whether direct or indirect, immediate or apart, on the ones being educated. After all, the religious education teacher's skill is a variable that is transmitted and lies permanently in what the student knows, becomes or is at a certain time. The skill's viability stands not in what the teacher shows that has at a certain point (through certificates, documents, folders), but through the effects that this has, in time and throughout time, on the former students. The teacher – in general as well as the religious education one in particular – works on the long run and even in reference to forever: "the seed" of knowledge etc. can give crops not necessarily in a concrete, quantifiable and immediate way but in a diffused, non-measurable and distant in time manner.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Christians, Louis-Leon. *Philosophie ou religion à l'école publique. In Religions, morales et philosophie à l'école: comment penser ensemble*, 15-23. Louvain : Presses universitaires de Louvain, 2004.

Costea, Ștefan. *Profesiunea didactică în societatea cunoașterii. Studii și reflecții despre educație* (Omagiu profesorului Miron Ionescu). Cluj-Napoca: Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2003.

Criu, Roxana. *Competență și calitate. Repere ale evaluării profesorului*. Iași: Editura Universității „Al. I. Cuza", 2013.

Derroitte, Henri. *Donner cours de Religion Catholique, Comprendre le Programme du Secondaire.* Bruxelles: Editions De Boeck et Lumen Vitae, 2009.

Gliga, Lucia ed. *Standarde profesionale pentru profesia didactică*. Ministerul Educației și Cercetării, Consiliul Național pentru pregătirea profesorilor. Sibiu: Editura POLSIB SA., 2002.

Mayer, Genevieve. *De ce și cum evaluăm*. Iași: Editura Polirom, 2000.

Mitrofan, Nicolae. *Aptitudinea pedagogică*. București: Editura Academiei, 1988.

Nichols, Tom. *Sfârșitul competenței. Discreditarea experților și campania împotriva cunoașterii tradiționale*. Iași: Editura Polirom, 2019.

Pânișoară, Ion Ovidiu. *Procesul de învățământ în perspectiva digitalizări,* in *Educația digital*, edited by Ciprian Ceobanu, Constantin Cucoș, Olimpius Istrate, Ion OvidiuPânișoară. Iași: Editura Polirom, 2020.

Păun, Emil. „Profesionalizarea activității didactice" in *Standarde profesionale pentru profesia didactică* edited by Lucia Gliga, Ministerul Educației și Cercetării. Consiliul Național pentru pregătirea profesorilor. Sibiu: Editura POLSIB SA., 2002.

Perrenoud, Philippe. *L'évaluation des élèves, De la fabrication de l'excellence à la régulation des apprentissages. Entre deux logiques.* Bruxelles, Paris: De Boeck Université, 1998.

THE ORTHODOX RELIGIOUS PUBLICATIONS IN ROMANIA FROM THE CLASSICAL PRINTING TO ONLINE EDITIONS

NICOLAE DASCĂLU[1]

ABSTRACT. A research on the rise and decline of the Romanian Orthodox religious media in the last 30 years cannot ignore the paradigm shifts caused by the emergence of new information and communication technologies and the global Internet network. The theological and spiritual contents do not instantly adapt to technological innovations and, therefore, the printing press remains a space for reflection in religious communication, between the opportunities and risks of rapid change.

The transition of religious publications from print editions to online editions is necessary. However, by virtue of spiritual discernment, it requires a balance between tradition and renewal. This balance is kept due to three elements: the respect for the heritage of the printed sacred culture, the pastoral care for the older generations and the awareness of the responsibility for the unaltered transmission of the spiritual content of faith to the generation of digital natives.

Keywords: Internet, newspapers, online edition, print edition, religious media

Preliminary observations

A threat of loss of importance or even disappearance of already existing means of communication has been manifested in each stage of improvement of communication forms and effectiveness. Subsequently, in the twentieth century, the radio, the cinema, and the television overshadowed the print media, and at the beginning of the new millennium the digital networks tend to agglutinate in the virtual space texts, sounds and images, in a structure that incorporates previous forms of communication.

---

[1] Rev. Phd, Patriarchal adviser, Head of *Lumina* Publications, nicolaedascalu@yahoo.com

Nevertheless, just as the codex manuscripts and the medieval chronicles survived long after Gutenberg's invention was widely spread, the Internet has not yet made obsolete the print media, the radio, or the television. The digitization of communication has led to media convergence. Each of the traditional, classical means of communication has developed its power of transmission by appropriating the compatible features of the new technologies (electronic editions of printed books and newspapers, digital printing, digital radios and televisions accessible on smart phones and smart devices, virtual libraries, etc.).

Further on, we will focus on the transformations that our religious publications have gone through in the last decade of the previous century and in the first two decades of the 21st century, under the pressure of paradigm shifts in information and communication technologies.

Tradition, rebirth and renewal in the Romanian Orthodox religious media

In the common history of the Romanian media, the publications edited by the Church-affiliated people represent a significant category, both in terms of longevity and consistency, and in terms of number and diversity of content. Titles such as *Telegraful Român*, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, *Candela*, *Biserica şi Şcoala*, *Revista Teologică*, *Renaşterea*, *Foaia Diecezană* are renowned not only in the theological field, but also in connected areas such as literature, history, pedagogy or cultural anthropology. Following the 45 years-long communist dictatorship, there was a real rebirth of religious publications in Romania.

The development of the Orthodox religious media was a double layered one, spanning between tradition and renewal[2]. On the one hand, publications, which had functioned in the interwar period and had suspended their activity at the establishment of the communist regime, were reactivated. On the other hand, new periodicals have been launched, especially in the newly established church centres or in the theological faculties and seminaries. The Orthodox media has continuously developed in the last three decades, with the intensification of the Church's cultural-missionary and social-philanthropic activities in society. The increase in number of theological institutions and the introduction of Religious Education in schools have stimulated the diversification of the religious media.

---

[2] Nicolae Dascălu, "Evoluția presei ortodoxe în spațiul de limbă română", in *Mass media din România după 30 de ani* (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2020), 155-162.

The diocesan centres, the parishes and the monasteries, the educational institutions and some cultural associations and organizations have adopted in their activities print media tools: official bulletins, academic journals of theology and interdisciplinary dialogue, and journals addressing different categories of believers.

Thus, new series of old magazines reappeared: *Renaşterea* in Cluj-Napoca, Legea *Românească* in Oradea, *Foaia Diecezană* in Caransebeş, *Biserica şi Şcoala* şi *Calea mântuirii* in Arad, *Candela* in Suceava, *Renaşterea* in Râmnicu Vâlcea, *Revista teologică* in Sibiu, *Luminătorul* in Chişinău. *Telegraful Român*, the oldest Romanian publication, which had been continuously printed in Sibiu, since 1853.

There are other new publications released after 1990. Some of them are still published nowadays; others have been discontinued after an ephemeral existence. In Iaşi, the publication *Cuvânt şi Suflet* was first published in March 1990 while, in 1992, *Candela Moldovei*, the official bulletin of the Metropolitan Church of Moldova and Bucovina appeared for the first time. *Călăuza ortodoxă* was first published in the form of a newspaper in Galaţi in March 1990. Later, this became an A4-sized religious magazine with an informative content. Other church centres have printed their own publications: *Învierea,* in Timisoara; *Candela*, in Suceava, *Tomisul ortodox*, in Constanţa, *Argeşul ortodox*, in Curtea de Argeş; *Glasul Adevărului*, in Buzău, *Bărăganul ortodox*, in Slobozia, *Cuvânt Bun*, in Tulcea, *Revista Ortodoxă*, in Giurgiu, *Credinţa strabuna*, in Alba Iulia, *Graiul Bisericii Noastre*, in Baia Mare, *Grai românesc*, in Miercurea Ciuc, *Praxis* and *Martyria* in Râmnicu Vâlcea is in print since 2014.

We must also mention here the journals published by the Romanian Orthodox dioceses in the diaspora, which increased the number of their communities every year, a direct consequence of mass migration. *Apostolia*, a monthly magazine of Orthodox spirituality and information, has been published in Paris since April 2008, in an A5 format, containing 64 colour pages, in two languages: Romanian and French. The Romanian Orthodox Metropolitanate of Germany, Central and Northern Europe has published *Deisis*, a magazine of Orthodox spirituality and culture, since 1995. The Orthodox Romanians from Scandinavia have had, since 2008, the diocesan magazine *Candela Nordului*, with pages in Romanian and English. The Romanian Orthodox Metropolitanate of the Americas publishes *Credinţa*, and in 2008 the diocesan publication *Altarul străbun* appeared in Australia. In the Romanian Orthodox diaspora, there are also numerous parishes that print publications addressed to local Orthodox communities, with bilingual editions.

The image of the Orthodox printed media in this period can be analysed from various perspectives: according to the content of the publications, the editors, the periodicity, the format and the target audience.

According to the content, the Orthodox publications between 1989 and 2019 can be grouped as follows:

1) *Official periodical publications of dioceses and publications of religious information*;
2) *Academic journals of theological studies and scientific research;*
3) *Journals of Orthodox spirituality and culture;*
4) *Publications for children and parents;*
5) *Parish and monastic publications;*
6) *Magazines of schools and Christian associations;*
7) *Journals of Christian attitude towards current social issues.*

The first group includes the central publications of the Romanian Patriarchate (*Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, *Vestitorul Ortodoxiei*, the *Ziarul Lumina* daily paper), but also diocesan bulletins (*Învierea*, *Bărăganul ortodox*, *Foaia Diecezană*,etc.).

Some magazines published by the metropolitan centres (*Glasul Bisericii*, *Teologie și Viață*, *Revista teologică*, *Mitropolia Olteniei, Altarul Banatului*) include information about the present state of the church and the theological education, making the transition to the latter category.

The theological and scientific research journals are developed through cooperation with Orthodox theological faculties throughout the country and through collaborations with academic institutions from abroad. In fact, *Studii teologice* is the journal of the faculties of theology in the Romanian Patriarchate, and *Ortodoxia*, throughout its pages promotes the inter-Orthodox and inter-confessional dialogue. *Studia Universitatis Babeș Bolyai* is published in Cluj-Napoca; other university centres in the country publish magazines that support the dialogues between religion, science and philosophy.

The following journals, *TABOR* in Cluj, *Deisis* in Germany and *Apostolia* in Paris, are the most representative publications among the Orthodox spirituality and culture journals.

The most famous publication for parents and children is *Chemarea credinței*, published in 1994 by the Institute for Biblical Studies and the Orthodox Mission of the Romanian Patriarchate. It is printed in 9000 copies and is distributed in schools and kindergartens. There are also several magazines for students in the country, written by teachers and educators, alongside parents and children.

Among the parish and monastic publications, some survive longer and are better integrated amongst the parishioners, others appear and disappear after short periods of time.

The students of theological seminaries and Orthodox high schools still preserve old traditions and edit printed publications, often combined with websites and social media pages. Among the publications of the Christian associations, we mention the *Oastea Domnului* magazine and the *Iisus Biruitorul* newspaper, published by the religious association "Oastea Domnului". *Timotheos*, an illustrated youth magazine, has been published since 1993 as a supplement to the *Iisus Biruitorul* newspaper.

The seventh group may include some initiatives of lay Orthodox intellectuals who want to contribute with their missionary zeal, inspired by militant monks, to a better public knowledge of the teachings of the Church and to propose a spiritual understanding of the problems of today's society. *Familia Ortodoxă*, *Lumea credinţei*, *Lumea Monahilor*, *Atitudini*, and *Conştiinţa* deal with topics such as family, migration, the Christian ethos in a consumerist and secularized society, the education of young people, the role of great clergy and others. Some of the editors motivate their journalistic approaches by the lack of combativeness of the official publications to the pressure that the contemporary society exerts on the mind, the consciousness and the will of the Orthodox believers.

From the perspective of periodicity, the range of publications in our country includes: annual almanac-type publications (published in Târgovişte, Buzău, Slobozia, Sibiu, Curtea de Argeş, Giurgiu), semi-annual, quarterly, bimonthly, monthly publications, including weekly periodicals, and, since 2005, a daily journal (*Ziarul Lumina*), with a weekly supplement (*Lumina de Duminică*).

The audience consists, for most publications, of the clergy and believers of the established authority that publishes the respective journals. The publications issued by the faculties of theology and by the theological seminaries have a limited target audience, made up of the community of teachers and students or pupils of the institution.

At the beginning of 2018, there were 322 Orthodox publications which represented about 10% of the total titles of newspapers and periodicals in Romania[3].

Press digitalisation, a global scale phenomenon

The fame of interwar newspapers, with morning, lunch and evening editions in the big cities, gradually diminished with the widespread use of the audio-visual in the consumer society. For a long time, the printed media took its

---

[3] *Catalogul mediatic orthodox – ediţia 2017* [The Orthodox Media Catalogue – 2017 edition] (Bucharest: Basilica, 2017); http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table, accessed on 1.11.2020.

decent place behind the radio and the television, assuming a hermeneutic function of events, according to the principle: the radio announces, the television shows, and the newspaper explains. At the same time, the periodicals have assumed a connecting role between the book and the new media, mainly through specialized journals and high academic competence. It was a return to the origins and a correction applied to the enthusiasm of the French poet Alfred de Lamartine who, in 1837, proclaimed the supremacy of the newspaper over the book: "the thought will spread all over the world with the speed of light, instantly conceived, instantly written and likewise understood. It will envelop the earth from one pole to the other - suddenly, instantly, burning with the fervour of the soul from which it first sprang. This will be the empire of the human word in all its fullness. The thought will not have time to ripen, to adjust in the form of a book - the book will arrive too late. The only possible book from now on is the newspaper[4]".

After a century and a half, these words seem more appropriate with the Internet than with the newspaper. The colonization of the entire communication space by computers connected in branched networks around the globe and in outer space has produced a paradigm shift in the functioning of traditional means of communication. At the crossroads of millennia, all major print media companies around the world have followed the model of the audio-visual companies and accessed the virtual space. At first, it was done only with the PDF projection of printed pages, later with online editions designed according to the canons of new communication technologies, different from the more classic ones of printed publications.

The number of unique visitors on the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* or *Le Monde* websites has far exceeded the number of readers of print editions. *L'Osservatore Romano*, *La Croix*, *Etudes* or *Christianity Today* and many other religious publications in the West follow the same direction. Studies conducted by the Central and Eastern European press show cohabitation between print and digital and a slower abandonment of traditional publications. In the interaction between the old media and the new technologies, there is a negotiation that causes changes in the operation of the former or, through hybridization, give rise to the latter: "The graphic presentation of the interactions between the media at the first point in time indicates that the media arena is controlled by the more established medium (A) when a new medium appears (B). This is the initial thesis of the dynamic process. At this point, two developments or antitheses may emerge: displacement of the older medium by the new one because of the functional equivalence between them

---

[4]Nicholas Carr, *Superficialii: Efectele Internetului asupra creierului uman* [The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains], translated by Dan Crăciun, (Bucharest: Publica, 2012), 153.

(in the upper portion of the model, medium A is displaced and disappears) or the creation of conditions suitable for the shared existence of the two media with little functional interchangeability. Nevertheless, the appearance of medium B may exert an influence on medium A and alter it, thereby enabling it to realize its unique nature and capability for survival. This option would modify A to A1, even though it is still the same technology. The synthesis stage develops if two media converge and create a new medium (A + B = C), representing another type of interaction between two given communication media with different characteristics and distinguishable literacy capabilities. Such media are characterized by their ability to perform multiple functions simultaneously and their convergence of traditional media and computer or Web literacy into a unified convergent literacy".[5]

This process takes place in all regions of the world and its speed of propagation is dependent on the performance of communication technologies in each country, but also on the social and cultural context.

Gains and Loses from switching from print to digital editions

As the centre of gravity of general and commercial publications from all parts of the world shifted from print to online, this has also influenced the religious periodicals of all Christian denominations. In the orthodox space, the case of the Greek magazine *Pemptousia* appers to be emblematic, since it gave up a long time ago its printed form and turned into a multilingual spirituality portal which incorporates text and both audio and video recordings, in multimedia constructions.

The benefits of switching from print to online are not at all negligible. Therefore, we should mention a greater visibility and accessibility of content, the possibility of indexing articles in international databases, the overcoming of language barriers through automatic translations of search engines and the reduction of production costs. The possibility to access the collections stored in the virtual space offers visitors not only contact with the latest publications but also with archives and libraries that can be consulted and evaluated directly, for free or at low prices.

The benefits of new technologies seem to establish the belief that the Internet will completely replace printing in the shortest possible time, while the books and periodicals printed on paper will soon become rarities and museum exhibits. Nevertheless, several analyses of the real effects of Internet use on the

---

[5] Hillel Nossek, Hanna Adoni & Galit Nimrod, „Is Print Really Dying? The State of Print Media Use in Europe",*International Journal of Communication* 9(2015), 368.

human mind have revealed differences between paper reading and screen reading, even if the producers of tablets and e-book readers invent new applications and devices that perfectly simulate book or newspaper pages. The problems are related to the risks of superficial reading, the disturbances of the processes of memorization, attention and concentration.

The connected person reads little6, motivated by the fact that the reading time is replaced by radio and television broadcasts, Internet surfing, messages and conversations on the smart phone. The two types of reading differ in duration, attention and concentration. Reading on paper is active, it requires participation and concentration on the part of the human being, while reading on the screen predisposes to passivity.

The text is received as an image on the screen; the computer favours the sense of sight to the detriment of reflexivity. *Homo sapiens* thus becomes *homo videns*[7], man changes from actor into spectator. In this regard, Nicholas Carr writes: "When a printed book - either a recently published academic work of history or a Victorian novel from two hundred years ago - is transferred to an electronic device connected to the Internet, it becomes something very similar to a website. Its words are shrouded in all the temptations of attention on the connected computer. Its links and other digital incentives propel the reader back and forth. The book loses what, in his old age, John Updike called its borders and dissolves into the vast and choppy waters of the Internet. The linearity of the printed book is shattered, along with the calm attention it induces in the reader. The high-tech features of devices such as the Kindle and Apple's new iPad may increase the likelihood that we will read e-books, but the way we read them will be very different from the way we read print editions"[8].

Even if one can skim through a book or a newspaper, reading on the screen is associated with the shape of the letter F, hurried, agitated and superficial, with memorization efficiency five times lower than reading texts printed on paper. Paradoxically, digital readers spend more time on pages, as their attention is always drawn to hypertext, cross-references, and the flow of messages that appear on the device in real time and require multitasking.

Jean-Claude Larchet points out that the democratization of content posting on popular or academic digital encyclopaedias (such as *wikipedia.org* or *academia.edu*), contributes to cultural and university levelling in the absence of any filters of competency and scientific authority[9].

---

6 Jean-Claude Larchet, *Malades des nouveaux médias* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 2016), 56-65.
7 Giovanni Sartori, *Homo videns:Imbecilizarea prin televiziune şi post-gândirea*[Homo videns: Televisione e Post-Pensiero], translated by Mihail Elin (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2005).
8Nicholas Carr, *Superficialii*, 147.
9 Jean-Claude Larchet, *Malades des nouveaux médias*, 53.

An extreme aspect of the immersive paradigm of the Internet is represented by the pseudo-religious manifestations of the idolatry of technologies, observed in the studies of the sociology of communication: "The widespread use of new technological artefacts in our everyday environments brought about two peculiar phenomena: the omnipresence of technology within the niche and a dramatic incrementation in the niche's predictive capacities. As a matter of fact, on the one hand we are surrounded by digital artefacts, accumulating an astonishing quantity of data and information of every kind, while, on the other hand, those same artefacts can interfere with our preferences and habits, as they continually monitor our behaviours. But these phenomena can be witnessed to take place in the digitized religious niche and could be responsible for interesting changes in our relationship with spirituality, especially after the massive advent of the Internet and the so-called Web 2.0 and its hunger for user generated content"[10].

The religious publications, between the nostalgia of the printing press and the network facilities

The information society has generalized its digitization processes in all areas of activity and, implicitly, in the use of media by religious denominations around the world. The number of Orthodox sites and pages in social networks, official or assumed by private initiatives, has increased exponentially. The radio and the television stations of the Romanian Orthodox Church have expanded their broadcasting area from the local to the global level, through the Internet[11].

As far as the printed media is concerned, a progressive evolution of 20 years was followed by a period of stagnation and, then, by a decline in editions and titles. Three directions have emerged:

a) The main religious magazines, *Ziarul Lumina*, the daily journal of the Romanian Patriarchate, and some traditional diocesan publications continue to have as main support the printed editions, but they are also open to the presence in digital media.

b) The academic theological journals published by the faculties of theology in partnership with the Church place the online editions in the foreground while the printed form remains in the background.

---

[10] Tommaso Bertolotti and Carolina Cinerari, „The Gospel according to Google: the future of religious niches and technological spirituality", *European Journal of Science and Technology*, February 2013, Vol. 9, no. 1, 42+43.

[11] Nicolae Dascalu (editor), *The Basilica Press Center: Ortodox Media Ministry in theEarly 3rd Millenium* (Bucharest: Basilica, 2014), 35-69.

c) A series of periodicals made by dioceses, parishes, educational units or Christian associations have ceased to appear in the print form and have given way to websites and pages in social networks, with the desire to establish interactive connections with the community members, especially with the younger generation. Nowadays, while undergoing the pandemic with the new coronavirus, the adoption of new communication technologies has shown their efficiency, far superior to printed publications.

It has become a reality that students and pupils use digital encyclopaedias and web resources as primary sources of documentation for their homework preparation and theological research papers, before consulting books and magazines in traditional libraries.

Conclusions

Everywhere around the world, the supremacy of digital media that dominates modern communication leaves less and less room for printed culture. The digitization of old libraries, the emergence of e-books and online migrated publications is clear evidence to the irreversible path towards the decline of the Gutenberg galaxy.

For 500 years, Christianity has used the printing press in the work of cultivating the word of God, by using books of worship and spiritual teaching, but also periodicals, addressing new issues in society and interfaith debates and confrontations. The liturgical solemnities include readings and processions in which the Holy Gospel, in printed form, represents the connection between the visible and the invisible, the material and the spiritual.

The spiritual materiality of the religious books contributed, alongside the icons and other objects of worship, to the definition of the sacred space of encounter with God and the fellow men, in the light of faith. The religious newspapers and magazines are an extension in the secular space of the thinking sprung from the feelings and deeds of faithful people.

Our Church has remained faithful to the printed editions of Holy Scripture, books of worship, works of the Holy Fathers, books of prayer and spiritual-moral edification, in more than a conservative, traditionalist spirit, specific to Orthodoxy. Regarding the periodicals, the most important ones continue their printed editions. At the same time, publishers are aware that to address the millennials, the generation of digital natives, the minimum requirement is to post content in PDF format in the virtual space.

In any transition, the balance between tradition and technological renewal represents an expression of spiritual discernment. It remains essential that, by moving from the linear, hierarchical world of the books and the printed periodicals to the universe of ubiquitous connectivity and proximity of the Internet, we do not lose the spiritual content of our salvation in Christ.

REFERENCES

Bertolotti, Tommaso and Cinerari, Carolina. „The Gospel according to Google: the future of religious niches and technological spirituality", *European Journal of Science and Technology*, February 2013, Vol. 9, no. 1, 41-53.

Carr, Nicholas. *Superficialii: Efectele Internetului asupra creierului uman* [The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains], translated by Dan Crăciun, (Bucharest: Publica, 2012).

Dascalu, Nicolae (editor). *Catalogul mediatic orthodox – ediția 2017* [The Orthodox Media Catalogue – 2017 edition] (Bucharest: Basilica, 2017);

Dascalu, Nicolae (editor). *The Basilica Press Center: Ortodox Media Ministry in the Early 3rd Millenium* (Bucharest: Basilica, 2014).

Larchet, Jean-Claude. *Malades des nouveaux médias* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 2016).

Nossek, Hillel, Adoni, Hanna & Nimrod, Galit. „ Is Print Really Dying? The State of Print Media Use in Europe", International *Journal of Communication* 9 (2015), 365-385.

Petcu, Marian (coord.). *Mass media din România după 30 de ani* [Mass media in Romania after 30 years] (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2020).

Sartori, Giovanni. *Homovidens:Imbecilizarea prin televiziune şi post-gândirea* [Homo videns: Televisione e Post-Pensiero], translated by Mihail Elin (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2005).

Websites of the Romanian Publications, accessed in November 2020.

COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNION:
A PSYCHOLOGICAL AND THEOLOGICAL APPROACH
OF RELIGIOUS SUBJECT IN A DIGITAL WORLD

CONSTANTIN NECULA[1], DANIELA DUMULESCU[2]

ABSTRACT. The *digital land* brings a new subject to debate about the most appropriate framework to guide religion expression in online settings to promote the Church tradition mission and to build a spiritual identity in a world of crisis. In the last months, there were many voices telling that Orthodox Church in Romania has a communication problem. In order to understand the process of communication of the Church in the digital era, we need to underlie this process in the psychology and sociology of communication theories. Therefore, our analysis is an attempt to better understand the challenges derived from the communication of religious subject in a context saturated by media influence over social iconology of the Church and over spiritual communion and identity. We discuss different perspectives on framing information, on the relation between the Church mission as public communicator and media agenda. Finally, we identify some positive aspects of re-thinking communication process in order to increase the Church capacity of building a powerful strategy for social messages and educating communities in the culture of Truth. Moreover, the success of moral communication means opening a dynamic pastoral program incorporating psycho-sociological aspects of communication.

Keywords: religious subject, communication, communion, cognitive processing of messages, Orthodox Church

In the process of synthetizing the communication-entertainment tension built in media system, Neil Postman begins by comparing the two literal roots of democratic communication: The manifest-book – *1984* (George Orwell[3]) and

terrifying *New brave world* (Aldous Huxley[4]). Both have a common prophecy about the world we will live in. Postman conclude that Orwell insist we will be defeated by a force outside us, and Huxley explain that we don't need a Big Brother in order to sell our autonomy, our maturity and history. He thought that people will love oppression, adore technologies which cancel the human critical thinking ability. Regarding the public discourse, Postman wrote that: Orwell was afraid of the ones that will forbid the books. Huxley was afraid that there will be no reason to forbid them, because there will be no one to read them. Orwell was afraid about the ones that will deprive us of information. Huxley was afraid about the ones will give us so much information that we will be thrown in passivity and selfishness. Orwell was afraid that the truth will be hidden. Huxley was afraid the truth will be drowned in an ocean of irrelevance. Orwell was afraid we will become a captive culture. Huxley was afraid we will become a trivial culture, preoccupated about *feelings, orgy centrifugal bumble puppy– (...) Orwell was afraid we will be destroyed about what we hate. Huxley was afraid we will be destroyed about what we love.* "[5]. From this point of view, a psychosocial perspective on media and digital media exposure of religious subjects, may bring a valuable understanding of actual pastoral challenges derived from the specificity of communication in digital era. More, both media and religion are trying to build a bridge between interior and exterior worlds, addressing topics strongly connected with personal and cultural values and identity.

The *digital land* brings a new subject to debate about the most appropriate framework to guide religion expression in online settings on order to promote the Church tradition mission and to build a spiritual identity in a world of crisis. Recently, Hadden and Cowan proposed a model of analyzing religion in online which refers to all aspects which "invites the visitor to participate in the religious dimension of life via the Web; liturgy, prayer, ritual, meditation, and homiletics come together and function with the e-space itself acting as church, temple, synagogue, mosque, and grove"[6].

In the last months, there were many voices telling that Orthodox Church in Romania has a communication problem. But how is that problem conceptualized or defined? In order to understand the process of communication of the Church in the digital era, we need to underlie this process in the psychology and sociology of communication theories.

---

[4] Aldous Huxley, *Minunata lume nouă* (Polirom 2011). For his philosophical conception see the volume *Filosofia perenă* (Polirom, 2020) 422 p.

[5] Neil Postman, *Distracția care ne omoară. Discursul public în epoca televizorului* (Anacronic, 2016), 13-14.

[6] For more information see Hadden, Jeffrey K. and Douglas E. Cowan. 2000a. "The Promised Land or Electronic Chaos? Toward volume 21 (2002) no. 2 – 33, Understanding Religion on the Internet." In Hadden and Cowan 2000b: 3-21.

First, the sociology of communication establishes the theoretical framework underlying this statement[7]. Second, from a psychological point of view, we need to analyze the aim of media communication starting from cognitive processing theories investigating people's judgement of messages under conditions of uncertainty. This approach is emphasizing the importance of heuristics in interpreting the meaning of message and, consequently, the importance of message frame and reframe. For example, the way the information is presented and the number of exposures to the same information, can affect the way people respond emotionally to it.[8]

If we admit the interdisciplinarity of communication and information, the questions we can address is: Does the Church is having a real communication problem or there are only some impossible theoretical standards of communication imposed by media? Does the Church is having a communication problem, or it is exactly the opposite – it is defending communion and spiritual identity so easy altered in a digital world? In their study, Tilley and Zukowski, concluded that today's digitalization is frequently focused on individualism, relativism, human self-sufficiency, which alter social and religious communion. Therefore, the significance of theological presence in a digital world is strongly related to keeping the communion and identity.[9]

More, the digital content shapes all human experiences through a multimodal language and heuristic strategies. From narratives and non-verbal communication to images, symbolic representation, the digital space is a meaning-making system which can also influence people's religious experiences and the way they define their identity. This is the reason why the presence of the Church on the internet is vital in order to keep activated in people's mind and souls the Jesus Christ message.

In the line with psychological and sociological transformation of communication in media over last years, we can synthetize some important aspects in order to better analyze the Orthodox Church communication as a case study[10]: the pragmatic thinking publicly induced as the end of the transcendence, the criticism of logocentrism expressed by replacing the meaningful symbols with empty images, the development of the individualism and the autonomy in

---

[7] Emmanuel Pedler, „*Tehnicile avansate de comunicare: niște instrumente fără mod de întrebuințare*", în vol. *Sociologia comunicării* (Cartea Românească, 2001), 42-65.

[8] Steven Sloman, „Two systems of reasoning, an update" in *Dual process theories of the social mind*, by Sherman, J., Gawronski, B., & Trope, Y. (Guilford Press, 2014), 69-79.

[9] Tilley and Zukowski, „Narrative and communication theology in a postliterate culture," *Catholic International,* 12(4) (November 2011) 5-11.

[10] We use a part of the research of Daniel Bougnoux, *Introduction aux sciences de la communication*, (Paris: La Decouverte, 2001), 4-5, 7-11.

producing the media messages through many different means linked to the new technologies (3D printing, social-media etc), producing the truth more through communication means than by confronting to the *real truth*, the permanent technical assessment of the effects of communication, the excessive attention payed to ratings, social media rich as the principal indicator of validation of the content. This aspect is closely related to fake-news phenomenon (fake-news)[11].

Regarding the Church communication on the Internet in the first months of COVID19 pandemic, there was an increasing interest in connecting to religious content online, trying to find the Church community and communion, expressing emotional and spiritual needs, exploring religious information, attending online Liturgy. It seems that, despite the physical distance, the Church succeeded to create a safe space of communication and to turn the Internet into an important tool for its mission.

In the same time, the agenda of online and offline media was constantly oriented through presenting negative news, to build their success on negative emotions, to promote fake-news or exaggerate the negative news, knowing that fear is stronger than good, especially if people are disoriented and they are losing faith. Despite this manipulatory agenda, the Church had and has a clear and important mission in promoting the real Christian values. The main communication function of the religion is to conserve the Truth and contribute to a healthy cultural and spiritual identity, not to pay attention to all the hot topics of the press. If we analyze the value and purpose of communication from this point of view, the most important message of the Church remains The Liturgy and this institution proved in the time of COVID-19 pandemic that can transform the digital tools in useful means to promote its mission.

A false reception of Church communication during pandemic months, refers to its capacity to manipulate topics. Some are seen as topics only by what we used to call the hard core of press/media communication. To identify the issues born from such an approach, it is worth mentioning an author, Cristophe Carre, who developed an entire theory of acceptable manipulation[12]. Keeping in line with Dominique Chalvin's[13] positive core of manipulation, Carre draws a line of positive and ethical decency in positive manipulation. Marked by humaneness, honesty and effectiveness, the theory expresses the need to preserve trust and to avoid the construction of reality as a personal construction. It should be

---

[11] The concept of media ecology was developed by Eric McLuhan (the son of Marshall McLuhan), but was publicly assumed by Neil Postman (24 of november 1968 to a conference of english teachers in Madison, Wisconsin) and developed in the last ten years.

[12] Christophe Carre, *Arta manipulării elegante. Instrumente de persuasiune ale oamenilor oneşti* (Meteor Publishing, 2020), 76-98.

[13] Chalvin Dominique, *Du bon usage de la manipulation* (Paris: ESF, 2011).

noted that in setting manipulation as communication vice next to the Church's name you can very easily identify the chameleon effect of data interpretation (see for instance the series of interpretations with regards to pilgrimages) after a negative effect was constructed by priming the news. Rolling some pieces of news up to the point of forcing their integration in breaking-news is easily identifiable by someone versed in the construction of communication through the mirroring technique, such that one of the voices is minimized. From a cognitive psychology perspective, this case is reflecting the use of availability heuristics by presenting many times the same information in order to increase its credibility[14]. The Church has the sacred obligation of avoiding those types of *agendas*. Deviating communication towards propaganda or ideology becomes one of the factors of the communicational teardown of its structures[15]. Concordance with the truth becomes thus fundamental as the honesty of the communicator may flow over any attempt to hyperbolize the topic. Another aspect of media communication of the religious topic is the scandalous stitching together of sums of money – many of course documented, very many willfully exacerbated – to any effort towards the spiritual image of the Church. The cheapness of the manipulation can be brought out with a series of commentaries and photographs realized during the consecration of the People's Salvation Cathedral, one of the most attacked institutions of the Church in media. Not even online transmission and the graphic transparency of every 'iota' of expense could disperse at least some of the shadow of the manipulation of the topic. To buttress against everything, they called corruption of the church system, the press/media put forth their purity as emitters. It is worth however to note a statement by Timothy Snyder. Analyzing tyranny throughout 20 Lessons of the 20th century – especially it means of communicating the political – he proposes as the 10th Lesson: "*Believe in truth. Giving up facts means giving up freedom. If nothing is true, then no one can criticize those in power, because we have no basis to do so. If nothing is true, then everything is a show, the fattest wallet pays for the most blinding lights.*[16]" To give in to the tyranny of information brought forth by fiat stems from the refusal to understand the difference between what you want to hear and what is really happening. It is an abandonment of reality to which take part, in full

---

[14] The availability heuristic is defined by Tversky and Kahneman in 1974 deals with how people's estimates of the value of truth of an information or of the probability of an event are influenced by how easily those come to mind (how 'available' they are in one's memory). See Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman „Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases*," Science*, vol. 185(4157) (September 1974) 1124–1131.

[15] We use the term as employed by Edward L. Bernays, „Noua Propagandă*"* and „Noii propagandişti*"* in *Propaganda*, ed. a II-a (Suceava: Alexandria Publishing House, 2017), 71-95.

[16] Timothy Snyder, *Despre tiranie. Douăzeci de lecţii ale secolului XX*, (Editura TREI, 2018), 87.

knowledge, many of those who make feeding on the news the sole method of becoming informed about issues of social reality. Directing news about the Church solely towards financial matters encroaches on the truth by the obvious cultivation of evident hostility towards verifiable reality, including presenting untruths – machinations or lies – as truths. Sustained by a hefty and iconic campaign, anti-church news expands on social communication channels also through the self-regulation mechanisms through which journals, sites, or television channels bring to the spotlight a series of falsehoods and proposing them as truths.

Thus, we touch on one of the most interesting life aspects in social communication: the morality of news. Of course, it is marked by the value of the interchange between the journalist and the news consumer, which proves the prevalence of the human factor in a matter which would fancy itself purely technical but touches upon a series of problems that are metaphysical in nature: the morality of anonymity (news by source), the morality of interpersonal communication. For the latter it is sufficient to exemplify by a series of chunks of publicity slipped between news of Covid-19 deaths. The efforts of the Church to create its own media communication mechanism (Basilica, Doxologia, Trinitas Radio-TV, Renașterea radio or Reîntregirea) were amply criticized by specialists in communication. For a while the accusation of the risk of communicational ghettoing was thrown, when in fact it was precisely a matter of opening up Church communication to the social realm. In tense moments of reporting, the construction of such emitters saved information and the informal balance of a society directed, it would seem, towards the self-destruction of its spiritual character[17]. Of course, it is not media communication that is the only means of blocking religious subjects.

Why is the religious topic socially communicable? The reasons are many. One of them is that demographic mathematics cannot be supplanted by manipulation. Or, a percentage of over 92% of the population which has an interest in faith, whichever that may be, provokes topics which are also fundamentally religious. Starting from 1971, in media culture, Bernard Voyenne warned that the right to information cannot rely on anything other than abiding by a positive and dynamic relationship between freedom and truth: they either save themselves together, or they lose themselves together; there is no freedom without truth and truth cannot be spread without freedom[18]. The Church must not publicly insist on preferential treatment in presenting news about its

---

[17] Process intuited a long time ago by Mons. Justo Mullor Garcia in the work *La Nueva Cristiandad. Apuntes para una teologia de nuestro tiempo* (Madrid: La Editorial Catolica, MCMLXVI), 155-200- following the relationship between freedom and truth, with the risks of losing faith from the structure of communicated truth.

[18] Bernard Voyenne*, Il diritto all'informazione* (Roma: Armando, 1971) 67.

activity but may insist on the idea that the producers of media products respect their own ethics, the human quality of their cultural investment in communication. Media man is not sacrosanct and cannot be a man of media if his work does not aim at mediating truth to the community. It is a simple rule, of communication logic, that of being critical with everything you communicate so as to communicate a truth that has no political and ideological alignment. Even people of the Church (bishops or priests, authorizing officers, project administrators or pastoral fund managers) and people who propose themselves as vectors of communication have the obligation to perform an effort of moral will: to inform so as to educate towards knowledge of the truth. If personal qualities are asked of the professionals of the Church, then media professionals cannot falsify a series of virtues connected to moral culture either. Morality is a freedom in the deepest sense of the content of freedom[19]. A noble and informed character, with a coherent literary and professional formation, with the moral gift of love and of giving in the service of communicating and mediating the truth gives meaning to professional responsibility[20]. For the communicator theologist the problem is synthesized by Karl Rahner, one of the most influential theologians and catholic thinkers. He writes about one of the rarest forms of conscience: sincerity, the courage to decide in favor of truth. Sometimes in spite of the system in which you are integrated.[21]

A final aspect of our analysis is concerned with the way in which the technological revolution marks religiously reflective news. Well before the accusations of those at Cambridge Analytica – ironically, by those who for years on end used precisely the information retrieved by them –, any political party or civic pressure group or advocacy group used and uses extensive analyses of data from technology and different methods of micro-targeting voters or pressure targets. The Big Five personality model or the five-factor model (FFM) or the OCEAN model (openness-conscientiousness-extraversion-agreeableness-neuroticism) proposed by psychologists Lewis Goldberg, Naomi Takemoto-Chock, Andrew Comrey and John M. Digman was refined across time by many researchers specializing in communication. Often times, however, openness to new experiences always seems to be in opposition to conscientiousness, and the extroverted increases in agreeableness but decreases in neuroticism[22]. Such is the way in which the image of Christianity was created in general. The man who unites

[19] Thomas Nagel, „Libertate. Moralitatea ca libertate" in *Perspectiva de nicăieri* (Ed. Vellant, 2009) 252-258.

[20] Pasquale Casillo, *La morale della Notizia. Notizia, giornalista e recettore a confronto negli strumenti della comunicazione sociale*, (Edizioni Paoline, 1974), 44-45.

[21] Karl Rahner, *Le virtu dell'annuncio*, coll. Saggi scelti, (Edizioni San Paolo, 2013) 53.

[22] More details in Hannah Fry, *Hello, World! Revoluția informatică și viitorul omenirii* (Corint Books, 2019) 62-67.

conscientiousness with communicational neuroticism cannot be trusted compared to the man who is open to the new, who is agreeable and extroverted in whom it would seem is stored the entire model of the future. When we say this, we say it having analyzed the news, either written or presented by the news outlets of big television channels, but also having analyzed the tonality in which these news are set on tapestry. Germany, over the same time interval, had a genuine policy of discouraging generalized neurotic fear mongering. Also, it is worth following the news blocks in Brazil between March-June 2020 with an increased traffic of religious information but also with adopting an aggressive editorial policy with regards to death and disease. It is the closest to the Romanian model of communication in times of pandemic. One of the biggest media offensives against the Church has as topic, for many years now, the idea that the Church has the tendency to cultivate fear among the faithful. Or, today, in September/October 2020, we are witnessing an increase in content to do with fear and fear mongering which have determined a series of behavioral changes[23]. Part of the pathological reactions to social communication concludes in major psychological problems such depression and phobia. The answer of the psyche to informational pressure is virtually always unexpected. All this time, the Church tried to balance the information and combat the induced fear by bringing hope and calm. The catechetical and homiletic effort – at their roots pastoral forms of communicating mediated truth to the Church servants, either ordained persons or laymen – can balance in a relaxed fashion the recently increased social tension[24]. The model proposed by the Church is recognized by specialists as being the creation of a context favoring information gathering based on two laws-Celine Alvarez[25] consigns as the first fundamental law of transmission that the human being cannot learn if he is not motivated. The second law regards the fundamental importance given to positive social dependencies. Human beings need to feel positively connected to others to complete their uniqueness and the universal human potential whose keeper each of us is. A good communicator is he who has understood the importance of human relationships in the process of education and learning, in the process of mediating truth which positively educates the societal.

---

[23] How important does in this context appear the work of Zygmunt Baumann, *Il demone della paura* (Editori Laterza, la Repubblica, 2014)136. For details regarding behavior see Dr. Mary Alken, *The Cyber Effect. Psihologia comportamentului uman în mediul online* (Ed. Niculescu, 2019) 399.

[24] See Pr. Constantin Necula, *Laicii și Biserica 2.0* in *Creștinismul Ortodox în veacul XXI – schițe pentru un portret* (coord. Marius VASILEANU), (București: Lumea Credinței 2020), 115-127.

[25] Celine Alvarez, „Crearea unui context favorabil Transmiterii," în vol*. Transmiterea. Despre ce ne aducem unii altora* (Editura Spandugino, 2018) 61-86. For your analysis, 64-66.

What solutions can the Church propose to benefit from a correct public presentation of religious topics? We insist on this target: religious topics. Not topics related to the Church, in the strictest sense of the concept. First of all, the Church must propose an analysis of the two syndromes which have been trying its communicators for many years: the syndrome of the Prophet Jonah and the syndrome of Daniel in the lion pit. The first denotes a falsely prophetic sufficiency of the Church which has in her midst people who believe that the truth they espouse is more important than God's love. Arrogance certainly does not give credence to the prophet. It is the case of Jonah who insists on destroying Nineveh so that he should not make a fool of himself. The Lord gives him the lesson of the bush in the desert, which provides shading, and which dries up. The difference between God's effort and man's usage of His work is outlined by the different meanings of repentance, as means of mediating God's mercy. At the opposite pole, Daniel's lesson. Fearful to a point, in the midst of his trials he discovers the power of God's care. He'd befriended the lion sent to attack him in the pit in which he'd been thrown after being accused by the king's advisors. He escaped through God's mercy[26]. A good communicator of the Church does not forget God's demeanor, does not force insincere answers, befriends "lions" easier than he befriends the political environment where he has to preach, with no deviation, God's commandments, His will. He has, encoded in the genes of theological communication, the truth according to which dogma does not sit not above love (St. Nectarie)[27]. The applicability of this principle in communicating with traditional and digital media products, presupposes a careful modelling of attitude in favor of communicating without affecting communion.

If we admit that when we talk of a contemporary crisis we are in fact talking of a crisis of man as such[28] then we understand that the mediation of truth in the plan of social communication is not just a matter of technique or of institutional model, but a matter of cultivating the knowledge and charisma necessary to balance current tension – informal and formal by developing programs which incorporates both theological and psycho-sociological aspects of communication. For the theological the message is the same. Our Lord Jesus Christ says it clearly. *For without Me ye can do nothing*! (John 15:5). To learn that in communication *we must decrease so that He may increase* (John 3:30) remains the most important point of moral equilibrium that we can propose in a digital era which is such in need of communion and transcendence.

---

[26] See vol. *Când animalele vorbesc cu sfinţii. Sinaxar al sfinţilor care au iubit animalele şi care au fost iubiţi de acestea* (Editura Renaşterea, 2014) 43-52.

[27] The practical application of this pastoral paradigm can be followed in the life of Saint John of Shanghai in vol. lui Bernard Le Caro, *Sfântul Ioan de Shanghai (1896-1966) şi vremea sa*, (Editura Renaşterea, 2015), chapter *La Shanghai*, pp. 45-82.

[28] Ernest Bernea*, Criza lumii moderne*, (Predania, 2011), 44-46.

REFERENCES

***, *Când animalele vorbesc cu sfinții. Sinaxar al sfinților care au iubit animalele și care au fost iubiți de acestea*, Editura Renaşterea, 2014.

Alken, Mary, *The Cyber Effect. Psihologia comportamentului uman în mediul online*, Ed. Niculescu, 2019.

Alvarez Celine. „Crearea unui context favorabil Transmiterii." in *Transmiterea. Despre ce ne aducem unii altora*, Ed. Spandugino, 2018.

Baumann Zygmunt, *Il demone della paura*, Editori Laterza, la Repubblica, 2014.

Bernays, Edward L., „Noua Propagandă" and „Noii propagandişti" in *Propaganda*, ed. a II-a 71-95. Suceava: Alexandria Publishing House, 2017.

Bougnoux, Daniel, *Introduction aux sciences de la communication*, Paris: La Decouverte, 2001.

Carre, Christophe, *Arta manipulării elegante. Instrumente de persuasiune ale oamenilor oneşti,* Meteor Publishing, 2020.

Casillo, Pasquale, *La morale della Notizia. Notizia, giornalista e recettore a confronto negli strumenti della comunicazione sociale*, Edizioni Paoline, 1974.

Chalvin, Dominique, *Du bon usage de la manipulation,* Paris: ESF, 2011.

Cowan, Douglas and Hadden Jeffrey, *The Promised Land or Electronic Chaos. Understanding Religion on the Internet* (2002).

Fry, Hannah, *Hello, World! Revoluția informatică și viitorul omenirii,* Corint Books, 2019.

Garcia, Justo, M, *La Nueva Cristiandad. Apuntes para una teologia de nuestro tiempo*, Madrid: La Editorial Catolica, MCMLXVI.

Huxley, Aldous, *Filosofia perenă*, Polirom, 2020.

Huxley, Aldous, *Minunata lume nouă*, Polirom, 2011.

Kahneman, Daniel and Tversky Amos, *Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases,* Science, vol. 185(4157) (September 1974).

Nagel, Thomas, *Perspectiva de nicăieri*, Ed. Vellant, 2009.

Necula, Constantin, *Creştinismul Ortodox în veacul XXI – schiţe pentru un portret*, Bucureşti: Lumea Credinţei, 2020.

Orwell, George, *Despre adevăr*, Polirom, 2020.

Orwell, George, *O mie nouă sute optezi şi patru*, Polirom, 2012.

Pedler, Emmanuel, *Sociologia comunicării*, Cartea Românescă, 2001.

Postman, Neil, *Distracţia care ne omoară. Discursul public în epoca televizorului*, Anacronic, 2016.

Rahner, Karl. *Le virtu dell'annuncio,* Edizioni San Paolo, 2013.

Sloman, Steven. "Two systems of reasoning, an update." in *Dual process theories of the social mind*, by Sherman, J., Gawronski, B., & Trope, Y., 69-79, Guilford Press, 2014.

Snyder, Timothy, *Despre tiranie. Douăzeci de lecţii ale secolului XX*, Editura Trei, 2018.

Tilley and Zukowski. "Narrative and communication theology in a postliterate culture," *Catholic International,* 12(4) (November 2011).

Voyenne, Bernard*, Il diritto all'informazione,* Roma: Armando, 1971.

IS THERE A NEED FOR THE CHURCH
TO OFFICIALLY ASSUME MOBILE APPLICATIONS?
CASE STUDY: ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
AND ANGLICAN CHURCH

LIVIU VIDICAN-MANCI[1], EMIL M. MĂRGINEAN[2]

ABSTRACT. Over the past years, there has been a significant increase in mobile applications with religious content. Whether we are talking about Holy Scriptures or the Quran, about liturgical or theological content, digital resources are made available by many interesting applications. The question is, are these applications accurate? How many of them are affiliated with Church institutions? How important would such an affiliation be? What is the situation in Romania, in the Romanian Orthodox Church? In the Romanian-Orthodox digital space there is an abundance of mobile applications, over 20, of which only one is institutionally affiliated. The presence in Romania of many mobile applications developed by private individuals that do not display the source of the liturgical and biblical text is a major concern for the accuracy and authenticity of the information presented. In the first study of this kind in the Romanian literature, we will analyze different examples in order to better understand the functionalities of these applications, but especially to confirm or reject our hypothesis that in the religious environment, an institutionally assumed application is more valuable for keeping the Church teaching unaltered, compared to an application which is the result of a private initiative or even a commercial project. Therefore, we compare the Romanian Orthodox applications with similar applications belonging to a Church that currently has the most complete panel of mobile applications. These are not only fully functional and officially assumed by the Anglican Church, but are constantly updated and maintained.

Keywords: mobile applications, Christian apps, digital media, Romanian Orthodox Church, Anglican Church

---

[1] Rev. and Assist. Prof. for Catechetic and Homiletic, Faculty of the Orthodox Theology, "Babeș-Bolyai", University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

[2] PhD, Faculty of the Orthodox Theology, "Babeș-Bolyai", University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Introduction

The recent years are characterized by communication, big data, speed and *multitasking*, in short, by *software* products empowering complex hardware devices. Their goal is to make everything more efficient, attractive and captivating through dissemination of data and accessibility. The political, economic and educational sectors are experiencing cascading revolutions due to the implementation of new technologies, facing a digital culture with a real impact on the consumers' behaviour[3]. However, the current era is not only an era of *homo economicus* or *homo politicus*, but also of *homo religiosus*. Therefore, all religions[4], but especially Christianity[5] try to adapt to this trend[6] by designing solutions for the new model of preaching the gospel[7], learning from failures, returning to older options, hoping that it will address a need of the younger generations, known as digital natives[8]. The efforts materialized in the form of sacred writings in digital format, websites which promote the life and the teaching of the Church, and especially in the form of mobile applications.

Whether we are talking about Holy Scriptures or the Quran, about liturgical or theological content, digital resources are made available by many interesting applications. The question is, are these applications accurate? How many of them are affiliated with Church institutions? How important would such an affiliation be? What is the situation in Romania, in the Romanian Orthodox Church, compared to one of the most "digitized" Christian Churches, the Anglican Church?

---

[3] See the most important studies related to the digital culture: Charlie Gere, *Digital Culture* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008); Luke Tredinnick, *Digital Information Culture: The individual and society in the digital age* (Oxford England: Chandos Publishing, 2008).

[4] Heidi A. Campbell, ed. *Digital religion. Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 1–21.

[5] Tim Hutchings, "Christianity and Digital Media," in *The Changing World Religion Map. Sacred places, Identities, Practices and Politics*, ed. Stanley D. Brunn (New York: Springer, 2015), 3811-3830.

[6] Renaud Laby, "Internet et la communication évangélique," in *Recherches 18.2* (Louvain-la-Neuve-Québec-Paris: Cahiers Internationaux de Théologie Pratique, 2017): 5–10.

[7] Liviu Vidican-Manci, *Propovăduirea Evangheliei în Era Digitală. Impactul catehezei și al predicii asupra „generației digitale" prin utilizarea noilor tehnologii ale informației și comunicării* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2020).

[8] See Mark Prensky, "Digital natives, digital immigrants," *On the Horizon* 9, no. 5 (2001): 1–6; Mark Prensky "Listen to the natives," *Educational Leadership* 63, no. 4 (2005): 8–13.

The objective of the study and methodology

The present study aims to carry out a technical-theological investigation of the most important applications for mobile devices, both in the Anglican Church and in the Romanian Orthodox Church. Based on this assessment, we intend: (i) to underline the importance of promoting Christian mobile applications at a Church institutional level; (ii) to compare the content and usability between the applications belonging to the two Churches mentioned earlier; (iii) to make an introductory step towards designing a metric for evaluating Christian mobile applications. In our approach we started from the critical analysis of Heidi A. Campbell[9] and the team of researchers from Texas A&M University, who provided a platform to evaluate how mobile application developers integrate religious content and make it available to end users. It is important to specify that in Romania, but also at international level, it appears that there is little interest for the organization and management of religious mobile applications. Consequently, the literature on the subject is not very rich. We want to make here a comparison with the applications of a Church that currently has the most complete panel of applications for young people[10]. These are not only fully functional and officially assumed by the Anglican Church, but are constantly updated and maintained. Related to this topic, in other two ongoing studies we try to compare the applications in the Romanian Orthodox, Protestant and Catholic digital space.

We will use the methodology validated through a pioneering doctoral research in this field, *net-theology*[11] but also the methodology proposed by the team led by Heidi Campbell for analyzing mobile applications[12]. Each application will be briefly described, then relevant data will be analyzed, i.e., the number of downloads, price, rating, etc. The technical description will help us understand the degree of attractiveness of these applications but also their purpose. This

---

[9] Heidi A. Campbell, Brian Altenhofen, Wendi Bellar, and Kyong James Cho, "There's a Religious App for That! A Framework for Studying Religious Mobile Applications," *Mobile Media & Communication* 2, no. 2 (May 2014): 154–72, https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157914520846.

[10] See the full list of applications available on the official website, Church House Publishing, accessed September 20, 2020, https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps.

[11] A mix of research methods based on quantitative and qualitative analysis. See Liviu Vidican-Manci, Propovăduirea Evangheliei în Era Digitală. Impactul catehezei şi al predicii asupra „generaţiei digitale" prin utilizarea noilor tehnologii ale informaţiei şi comunicării, (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2020): 166-171.

[12] See the sampling strategy that was adopted in our study, Heidi A. Campbell, Brian Altenhofen, Wendi Bellar, and Kyong James Cho, "There's a Religious App for That! A Framework for Studying Religious Mobile Applications," *Mobile Media & Communication* 2, no. 2 (May 2014): 157–159, https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157914520846.

description will be followed by a content analysis, this time focused on Romanian applications. We will analyze different examples to help us to better understand the functionalities of these applications, but especially to confirm or reject our hypothesis that an institutionally assumed application is more valuable for keeping the Church teaching unaltered, compared to an application which is the result of a private initiative or even a commercial project.

The Anglican applications included in this study (*n* = 8) are the following: Time to Pray (A.1), Daily Prayer (A.2), Common Worship Lectionary (A.3), Reflections for Daily Prayer (A.4), Reflections on the Psalms (A.5), Sunday Worship (A.6), Live Lent: Care for God's Creation (A.7), Thy Kingdom come (A.8). The Romanian Orthodox applications (*n* = 7) which were compared with the equivalent Anglican application are the following: *Carte de rugăciuni* (R.1), *Lumea ortodoxiei* (R.2), *Audio Ortodoxia* (R.3), *Viețile Sfinților* (R.4), *Psaltirea proorocului David* (R.5), *Calendar Ortodox* (CrestinOrtodox.ro) (R.6), *Texte Liturgice Ortodoxe* (R.7).

The study will have three parts: the description of the applications from the Anglican environment, the description and analysis of the applications from the Romanian Orthodox environment and conclusions.

Anglican applications

The Church House Publishing of the Anglican Church provides users (free of charge or by subscribing to paid plans) with a series of electronic tools designed to facilitate man's daily encounter with God. The most popular and used tools are the applications for mobile devices, professional and compatible with most existing devices on the market. Some of the applications require the purchase of an annual subscription which can cost between 2 and 13 GBP, but this subscription can be used on several devices and platforms at the same time (maximum 5). Applications can be grouped into two broad categories: general and specific. The general ones are intended to be used throughout the year, and the specific ones are dedicated to a certain liturgical period or to a campaign of the Church of England. Examples of specific applications from 2020 would be: *Live Lent: Care for God's Creation* or *Thy Kingdom Come*. From a technical point of view, the applications are built on a common template, thus contributing to an increasing usability and consistency. All of them have text enlargement options, and navigation is easy, being designed to be used with a minimum of effort. They do not contain advertisements or promotional materials, so that the usage is smooth and intuitive.

In the following section we will present the main mobile applications, specifying the functionalities they provide to end users, their content, as well as technical details regarding compatible devices and tariff plans.

General applications:

Time to Pray[13] (A.1)

The *Time to Pray* application is a brief version of the Book of Prayers that includes day and evening prayers from each day of the year, taking into account special liturgical periods. The application is professionally made, the color scheme used is very simple, based on purple, the color assumed by the Anglican Church in its digital projects, the characters used imitate the printed edition of the Book of Prayers, the font size can be enlarged or reduced, which makes it easier to read even in case of visual impairments. The contact section is well highlighted, including both the *credits*, the authorization of the text by the Church of England, the sources of the liturgical text, and the information related to copyright. In addition to the text itself, it also contains a guide for using the application, from both a technical and spiritual-practical perspective, highlighting the ways in which prayer should be prepared, psalms should be recited or daily passages should be chanted. The application is compatible with iPhone / iPad iOS 9.0+ and Android 5.1.1+ devices and it can be downloaded and used free of charge, without the need to pay a subscription.

Daily Prayer[14] (A.2)

Daily Prayer is a more extensive version of the *Time to Pray* application, which includes morning, evening and night prayers, as well as scripture passages, psalms, liturgical texts and calendar information about the memory of the day[15]. Users are able to listen to prayers online, in the form of a podcast with two episodes per day (prayer during the day and evening prayer), in an average length of 7-9 minutes each. Prayers are said by both men and women and the recordings don't have an exclusive narrator. The application is

---

[13] "Time to Pray", Church House Publishing, accessed September 22, 2020, https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/time-to-pray.

[14] "Daily Prayer", Church House Publishing, accessed September 22, 2020, https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/daily-prayer.

[15] The text used by *Daily Prayer* and *Time to Pray* is taken from three liturgical books of the Anglican Church: Church of England, *Common worship: daily prayer* (London: Church House, 2005); Church of England, *The Book of Common Prayer: 1662 version* (London: David Campbell, 1999); Church of England, *The Book of common prayer with the additions and deviations proposed in 1928* (Cambridge: University Press, 1960).

professionally made, the characters used imitate the printed edition of the Book of Prayers, the font size can be enlarged or reduced, which makes it easier to read even in case of visual impairments. Contact details and the help section can be found, just like in the case of the *Time to Pray*, in a special section of the menu. Using the free version of the application, texts can be accessed up to one month in advance, only online. In order to have offline access to the full text for the next 12 months an annual subscription of GBP 2.99 is required. The application is compatible with iPhone / iPad iOS 9.0+ and Android 5.1.1+ devices.

Common Worship Lectionary[16] (A.3)

The *Common Worship Lectionary* is the Church of England's official collection of Bible readings for each day of the year. The lectionary is authorized by the General Synod of the Church of England[17]. It includes pre- and post-Communion prayers, adapted to the respective date, as well as the ability for users to add notes. The font size can be enlarged or reduced, which makes it easier to read even in case of visual impairments. It also includes sharing capabilities, through which the biblical text can be shared with others using existing messaging applications. The application can be downloaded for free, but after an evaluation period of 14 days the user will have to buy an annual subscription to continue using the application. There are two types of subscription available: basic (4.99 GBP, Bible readings are only available online), and full (8.99 GBP, Bible readings are available even when the device is not connected to the Internet). The lectionary is compatible with mobile devices (iPhone or iPad with iOS 8.0+ and Android 5.1.1+) and desktop workstations (Windows 10 or 8.1 and Mac OS X 10.9 or later).

Reflections for Daily Prayer[18] (A.4)

Reflections for Daily Prayer is an application designed to complement the *Common Worship Lectionary* with the ability to provide daily meditations on Bible readings in text format. Contact details and the help section can be found, just like in the case of *Time to Pray* application, in a special section of the menu. The application can be downloaded for free, but after an evaluation

---

[16] "Common Worship Lectionary", Church House Publishing, accessed September 22, 2020, https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/lectionary.

[17] The text is approved by the General Synod pursuant to Canon B 2 of the Canons of the Church of England. The Scripture quotations are from The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1995 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

[18] "Reflections for Daily Prayer", Church House Publishing, accessed September 22, 2020, https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/reflections-for-daily-prayer.

period of 7 days the user will have to buy an annual (11.99 GBP) or monthly (1.99 GBP) subscription to continue using the application. The application is compatible with iOS / iPad iOS 9.0+, Android 5.1.1+ and Kindle Fire 5.0+ devices. The strong part of the application, from a homiletical point of view, is the collection of texts that focus on the interpretation of Holy Scripture.

Reflections on the Psalms[19] (A.5)

The *Reflections on the Psalms* application offers detailed comments on each of the 150 psalms, taken from the writings of contemporary authors and theologians. Each essay is accompanied by the biblical text and ends with a prayer, contributing to the contemplative reading of the psalms, in the spirit of prayer. The application can be downloaded by paying a one-time fee of 8.99 GBP and it is compatible with iPhone / iPad and Android 4.0+ devices. This application is also especially important in a homiletical and catechetical context. The carefully selected commentaries are a proof of the interest of the administrator of this application for the correct education of believers.

Sunday Worship[20] (A.6)

The *Sunday Worship* provides users with Bible readings, pre- and post-Communion (variable) prayers for each Sunday and holiday of the year, taking into account special liturgical periods[21]. It is useful, especially for those who have a ministry in the church, but also for all the faithful who want to reflect more deeply on the texts of the liturgical services they attend. The application can be downloaded for free, but after an evaluation period of 14 days the user will have to buy an annual subscription to continue using the application. There are two types of subscription available: basic (0.99 GBP, texts are only available online), and full (1.99 GBP, texts are available even when the device is not connected to the Internet).

---

[19] "Reflections on the Psalms", Church House Publishing, accessed September 22, 2020, https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/reflections-on-the-psalms.

[20] "Sunday Worship", Church House Publishing, accessed September 22, 2020, https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/sunday-worship.

[21] Bible references are to the New Revised Standard Version: *Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (New York: American Bible Society, 1989). References to the Psalms are to the Common Worship psalter, published in Church of England, *Common worship: daily prayer* (London: Church House, 2005).

Specific applications:

Live Lent: Care for God's Creation[22] (A.7)

The *Live Lent application: Care for God's Creation* was designed especially for the period of Lent, as a preparation for the celebration of God's redemption of the world in Christ the Savior. It is available in two versions: for adults and for children, with specific content for each of the 40 days of Lent. The first version contains daily Bible readings (focused on the book of Genesis) and short meditations on those texts. The second option includes a daily game / questionnaire, an interactive content that promotes environmental responsibility, short prayers and Bible readings. In addition to the text version, there are audio recordings for each day containing Bible readings and prayers.

Thy Kingdom Come[23] (A.8)

Thy Kingdom Come is a free application that facilitates praying during the period between the Ascension and Pentecost. It includes, for each of those days, morning, day, evening and night prayers in both text and audio format. This aims at an easier approach to prayer, wherever the person is, offering him or her the opportunity to customize the daily text of the service, being able to add prayers and Bible readings from other days. The application also contains reminders and notifications, helping the user to maintain a daily and constant schedule of prayer and reading.

The specificity of Romanian-Orthodox applications

As it can be seen from the above presentation, the Anglican Church has undertaken the mission to create and make available to its faithful a complete panel of applications, most of them in direct connection with the classical forms of living the faith: prayer books or interpretation of the scriptural text.

The *Basilica* application[24], the only one directly affiliated to the Romanian Patriarchate, was developed by the Basilica News Agency and it represents the version dedicated to mobile devices of the news agency website. Through a friendly interface, the news feed from the basilica.ro website is made available

---

[22] "Live Lent: Care for God's Creation", Church House Publishing, accessed September 22, 2020, https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/features/live-lent.

[23] "Thy Kingdom Come", Church House Publishing, accessed September 22, 2020, https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/thy-kingdom-come.

[24] https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ro.basilica.android

to end users, as well as a calendar with the saints of the day. The application is free and it is compatible with Android 4.1+ mobile devices. However, the content of this institutionally affiliated application is very limited and brings nothing more than the institution's website. In fact, it is an application intended for information distribution and not for offering valuable dogmatic content, catechetical or liturgical materials.

In the Romanian Orthosphere there is a complex suite of mobile applications. Among these, the most downloaded application for Android devices is *Biblioteca Orotodoxa - Acatiste Biblia Rugaciuni*, with over 100,000 users. This application is the only one in Romania that also offers a version for iOS devices. All other apps are only available for Android mobile devices. Another example is *Psaltirea Ortodoxă*, the product of BestProjects, which offers the text of the Psalms. The application is free, the drawback is the advertisements. Of course, by exploring the other projects developed by the same software developer[25], one will find over 45 applications from a wide range, from children's Bible stories, commercial radio stations and online music, to Quranic text and wallpapers from Islamic and Christian tradition. The niche that these developers have found is the religious market, and this shows us once again the urgent need for an institutional affiliation of the main religious mobile applications. For this study, *institutional* does not mean *monopoly*, but it means guaranteeing the quality of the religious message. Private projects and initiatives can be developed in the future.

The present study quantifies and analyzes other applications in Romanian that can be correlated with the functionalities of the applications in the Anglican Church. We will divide them in direct connection with their producer, i.e., applications created with the official support of a church institution (clerical staff) or completely private projects. This indexation led to the following results:

Other Romanian applications that offer similar functionalities to the Anglican ones are the following:

Created with the support of church institutions or clerical staff:

Hieromonk Ştefan Nuţescu, Cell of Annunciation, Lakkou Skete, Mount Athos, Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople:

- ○ Carte de rugăciuni[26]
- ○ Audio Ortodoxia[27]

---

[25] BestProjects, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020, https://play.google.com/store/apps/developer?id=BestProjects.

[26] 50,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ro.bocan.cartederugaciuni&hl=en.

[27] 10,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ro.bocan.audioortodoxia&hl=en.

- ○ Viețile Sfinților[28]
- ○ Psaltirea proorocului David[29]
- ○ Acatistier[30]

Hieromonk Petru Pruteanu, Cascais, Portugal, Moscow Patriarchate:

- ○ Texte Liturgice Ortodoxe[31]

Father Ioan-Tănase Chiș, Cluj-Napoca, România, Romanian Patriarchate:

- ○ Rugaciune[32]

Created by private individuals:

- ○ Biblioteca Orotodoxa - Acatiste Biblia Rugaciuni[33]
- ○ Rugăciuni Creştine Ortodoxe[34]
- ○ Rugăciuni puternice ortodoxe[35]
- ○ Rugaciuni AUDIO - Crestin Ortodox[36]
- ○ Rugăciuni[37]
- ○ Orthodox Prayers[38]
- ○ Acatiste si Paraclise[39]

---

[28] 10,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ro.bocan.vietilesfintilor&hl=en.

[29] 10,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ro.bocan.psaltireaprooroculuidavid&hl=en.

[30] 10,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ro.bocan.acatistier&hl=en.

[31] 5,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.nativescript.tlo2.

[32] 1,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.rugaciuneaudio.app.

[33] 100,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.geometerplus.zlibrary.ui.android. aplicatii.romanesti.

[34] 50,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.mobileromania.rugaciuni.

[35] 10,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.exceda.rugaciuni.

[36] 1,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.rugaciuni.crestineaudio.

[37] 1,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=qq.abc4apps.cro.

[38] 500+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cristian_slav.elements.prayersro.

[39] 5,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=qq.abc4apps.ap.

- o Rugăciuni audio[40]
- o Lumea Ortodoxiei - calendar ortodox, Biblia, cărţi[41]
- o Rugaciuni ortodoxe zilnice[42]
- o Rugaciuni Ortodoxe Romane[43]
- o Psaltirea Ortodoxă[44]
- o Calendar Ortodox[45]
- o Calendar Ortodox (CrestinOrtodox.ro)[46]
- o Psaltirea Audio[47]
- o Psaltirea Ortodoxă[48]

Description of similar applications in the Romanian digital space

In the following section we will select and analyze Romanian applications which are similar (in content) with each of the Anglican applications. There is no total overlap between the two groups of applications, so we will choose several Romanian applications that together manage to provide the same content as the Anglican applications.

Time to Pray

There is no equivalent in the Romanian mobile applications market that is so specific like *Time to Pray*. Among the Romanian applications that include most of the functionalities offered by *Time to Pray* are: *Carte de rugăciuni* and *Lumea Ortodoxiei*. Next, we will present a short description of these applications which appear in the Romanian Orthodox-Christian digital space.

---

[40] 10,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020,
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.RugaciuniAudio.PrediciDuhovnicesti.

[41] 50,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020,
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ro.lumea_ortodoxiei.app.

[42] 10,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020,
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.webradio.hosting_rugaciuni.ortodoxe.a001.

[43] 1,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020,
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.miapsspro.RugaciuniOrtodoxe.

[44] 10,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020,
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.mobileromania.psaltirea.

[45] 100,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020,
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=fusa.calendarortodox.

[46] 100,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020,
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ro.activesoft.crestinortodox.calendar.

[47] 10,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020,
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.PsaltireaAudio.

[48] 10,000+ installs, Google Play, accessed September 27, 2020,
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.mobileromania.psaltirea.

Carte de rugăciuni (R.1)

The application includes a collection of prayers in text format, using a friendly user interface, which imitates very well an Orthodox prayer book. Access does not require an Internet connection, and usability is increased due to functionalities like *search*, *bookmark*, *zoom in / out*. The application is compatible with Android 4.1+ devices, it can be downloaded for free, contains no advertisements, and was created with the blessing and support of Hieromonk Ştefan Nuţescu from the Cell of Annunciation, Lakkou Skete, Mount Athos. The source of the text is the Prayer Book edited by the Cell of Annunciation and spelling is greatly improved as the text is not the result of an OCR process.

Lumea ortodoxiei (R.2)

This application brings together a rich collection of Orthodox digital resources. The text module contains, among others, the Orthodox calendar, the text of the Holy Scriptures in several versions, prayers, akathists, lives of the saints (The Synaxarion), liturgical books, textbooks (The Philokalia, The Sayings of the Desert Fathers etc.), writings of the Holy Fathers, information about churches and monasteries. There is also an audio module where one can listen to various audio books and the Holy Scriptures, sermons and Orthodox radio stations. The video module allows watching TV shows, Orthodox films, as well as a live stream of the Romanian television Trinitas TV. Access to basic texts does not require an Internet connection, and the application can be downloaded free of charge, without advertisements. However, in some cases, due to the high complexity, the mix of audio / video / text leads to delays or interference with the other audio / video functions of the mobile device. The application is compatible with Android 4.0.3+ devices.

Daily Prayer

Compared to the previous application, *Daily Prayer* includes information about the memory of the day and daily psalms. In order to bring together all the equivalent functionalities, we will introduce three new applications: *Audio Ortodoxia, Vieţile Sfinţilor* and *Psaltirea proorocului David*.

Audio Ortodoxia (R.3)

This mobile application provides users with audio recordings of the following resources: New Testament, Psalms, Children's Bible, The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, Orthodox Catechism, Daily Prayers, The Synaxarion, Parables and Stories. The narrators are clerics, namely: Father Mircea Stoleriu, Hieromonk Ştefan Nuţescu and Father Adrian Maziliţa. Unfortunately, the application does not specify the source of the text for any of the audio recordings. It requires Internet access to play audio content, it is compatible with Android 5.0+ and

Android Auto devices and can be downloaded for free. The application contains no advertisements, and was created with the blessing of Hieromonk Ştefan Nuțescu from the Cell of Annunciation, Lakkou Skete, Mount Athos and with the support of Father Mircea Stoleriu from Iaşi.

Viețile Sfinților (R.4)

The application reproduces the text of the 12 volumes of "Viețile Sfinților" (The Lives of the Saints) published between 1991 and 1998 at the Publishing House of the Diocese of Roman and Huşi. Access to the text does not require an Internet connection and usability is increased due to the different tools like *search*, *save*, *zoom in / out*. The application is compatible with Android 4.1+ devices, can be downloaded for free, contains no ads, and was created with the blessing of Hieromonk Ştefan Nuțescu from the Cell of Annunciation, Lakkou Skete, Mount Athos. The author of the application clearly states that the text has been obtained by OCR scanning of the books and was checked using an automatic spell-checker. However, at a closer look, one could easily identify spelling errors and the use of English quotes instead of Romanian, but the overall quality of the text is good.

Psaltirea proorocului David (R.5)

The application contains the text of the psalms from the Orthodox translation of the Bible. It is compatible with Android 4.1+ devices, it can be downloaded for free, requires no internet connection, contains no advertisements, and was created with the blessing and support of Hieromonk Ştefan Nuțescu from the Cell of Annunciation, Lakkou Skete, Mount Athos. The source of the text is not clearly specified, it is not a Romanian translation of the Bible which is approved by the Holy Synod, but a private initiative of improving an existing Romanian text by comparing it with the Septuagint.

Common Worship Lectionary

The applications *Lumea Ortodoxiei* and *Calendar Ortodox (CrestinOrtodox.ro)* provide end users with daily Bible readings, adapted to the liturgical period, thus managing to include the equivalent content of the *Common Worship Lectionary*.

Calendar Ortodox (CrestinOrtodox.ro) (R.6)

The application provides information about the saints of the day, the memory of the day, the fasts of the year and the Orthodox Christian holidays, as well as the daily Bible readings (Gospel and Apostle). Navigation is easy and the text can be zoomed in or out, which makes it easier to read even in case of visual impairments. It is compatible with Android 2.2+ devices, it can be downloaded for free, requires an Internet connection and contains no advertisements. The

authors of the application are the coordinators of the crestinortodox.ro portal, a website which does not provide contact information and does not have any church affiliation. The disadvantages of this application are given by the lack of diacritics in the text, including in the biblical text, which adds a layer of ambiguity, the missing information related to the source of the biblical and patristic text used by the application, and, last but not least, the use of English quotes instead of Romanian.

Reflections for Daily Prayer

The applications *Lumea Ortodoxiei* and *Calendar Ortodox (CrestinOrtodox.ro)* provide users with daily Bible readings, but daily meditations on the biblical text is not included in any of the Romanian applications.

Reflections on the Psalms

None of the Romanian applications include daily meditations on psalms.

Sunday Worship

In order to follow the liturgical text on Sundays and holidays, users can access the following applications: *Lumea Ortodoxiei* and *Texte Liturgice Ortodoxe*.

Texte Liturgice Ortodoxe (R.7)

The application offers, in addition to the usual daily prayers, the service of Vespers, Matins and the text of the Divine Liturgy. It also contains selected services from Horologion, Menaion, Triodion, Pentecostarion, and texts from the Book of Needs. However, the text is a general one, which does not take into account the celebrations that have special services and prayers. Navigation is difficult because of the lack of search tools, text being available only as a picture. The application is compatible with Android 4.2+ devices, it can be downloaded for free, does not require an Internet connection and does not contain advertisements. The text was reviewed by Hieromonk Petru Pruteanu, but there is no clear affiliation of the application to any church institution. The disadvantages of this application are given by: the lack of specification of the edition of the liturgical book from which the text is used, the presence of spelling errors caused by OCR scanning of the text and the lack of proofreading.

Having the above descriptions of the Anglican applications and of the equivalents from the Romanian-Orthodox digital space, further on, in *Table 1* we will present, in a comparative manner, their most important technical characteristics. The data is public, obtained from the Google Play Store, and refers only to the Android version of these applications.

Table 1. Technical characteristics of the mobile applications
included in this study

Id	Installs	Rating	Operating system	Updated	Permissions	Price	Contact information
A.1	10,000+	4.6	4.0+	March 16, 2020	Photos / Media / Files Storage	-	Official: https://aimermedia.com
R.1	50,000+	4.9	4.1+	August 27, 2020	-	-	Individual developer: vbocan, Timiş
R.2	50,000+	5.0	4.0.3+	September 11, 2020	Location	-	Anonymous website: http://lumea-ortodoxiei.ro/
R.3	10,000+	4.9	5.0+	August 27, 2020	-	-	Individual developer: vbocan, Timiş
A.2	50,000+	4.7	4.0+	March 27, 2020	Photos / Media / Files Storage	2.99 GBP / year	Official: https://aimermedia.com
R.4	10,000+	4.9	4.1+	September 8, 2020	-	-	Individual developer: vbocan, Timiş
R.5	10,000+	5.0	4.1+	August 27, 2020	-	-	Individual developer: vbocan, Timiş
A.3	10,000+	4.0	4.1+	September 9, 2020	Identity Contacts/Photos/ Media / Files	4.99 GBP or 8.99 GBP / year	Official: https://aimermedia.com
R.6	100,000+	4.3	2.2+	October 23, 2017	-	-	Anonymous website: https://www.crestin ortodox.ro/
A.6	10,000+	4.5	4.0+	October 2, 2019	Photos / Media / Files Storage	0.99 GBP or 1.99 GBP / year	Official: https://aimermedia.com
R.7	5,000+	4.9	4.2+	October 9, 2019	Photos / Media / Files	-	Software company: http://bitvice.ro/

Conclusions

Our study pointed out that the most downloaded application for Android devices is *Biblioteca Orotodoxa - Acatiste Biblia Rugaciuni*, with over 100,000 installs. A large number of users show interest in prayer and the text of the Holy Scriptures. However, the developers are not very interested in small details. The spelling error in the title *Biblioteca Orotodoxa - Acatiste Biblia Rugaciuni* speaks for itself about the amateurism that underlies many of these applications, as well as the lack of coordination at church institutional level in the field of digital media. Another example is *Psaltirea Ortodoxă*, which includes a section

of advertisements that scrolls automatically while reading the biblical text, which greatly reduces the purpose of such a media initiative, disturbing the users during prayer and meditation.

Through this analysis of mobile applications in the Anglican and Orthodox (Romanian-speaking) environment, this study managed to present for the first time a picture of how the two Churches decided to invest in promoting mobile applications as auxiliary tools in the daily lives of believers. If in the case of the Romanian Orthodox Church, there is a single institutionally affiliated application and in the case of the Church of England, there are 8 different applications that serve the same common goal: facilitating access to biblical and liturgical text, meditations and memory of the day, among believers.

In the Romanian-Orthodox digital space there is an abundance of mobile applications, over 20, of which only one, we repeat, is institutionally affiliated. Most of these are intended to be complex applications, including both liturgical, biblical and patristic texts, commentaries and homilies, text and multimedia content. Consequently, we do not find the same very specific construction as in the Anglican Church, but, moreover, a series of generic and very extensive applications.

In this study we underline that a first disadvantage of the Romanian applications is that a lot of information is duplicated, which led to the repetition of a considerable volume of work, and the effects of the lack of a standardization of the liturgical text are obvious. Online stores that provide such applications do not implement any protocol to ensure the accuracy of theological content, so that some of the applications which are not officially affiliated to the Church have spelling, punctuation and theological errors.

The applications in the Anglican space were implemented with a lot of professionalism, following a common pattern, and they are compatible with most existing mobile devices on the market. They are updated frequently and have a user rating of 4-4.7 / 5. In the Romanian-Orthodox space, the applications were developed through private initiatives that are not officially assumed by the Holy Synod or by any other local or central Church authority. These are appreciated by users with a rating of 4.3-5 / 5, and the permissions required for installation do not raise any concerns regarding the confidentiality and protection of personal data, which is particularly important in this context.

The presence in Romania of many mobile applications developed by private individuals that do not display the source of the liturgical and biblical text is a concern for the accuracy of the information presented, especially knowing that some of these developers create various applications only for commercial purposes, without having a clear religious affiliation. The effects of

the lack of a standardization of the liturgical text are obvious, so that some of the applications have serious spelling and punctuation errors and consequently theological errors, caused by OCR scanning of the text and the lack of proofreading. Many of them use optical character recognition (OCR) methods in order to extract the text from the liturgical books edited and published by the official printing press of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Therefore, it would be a great advantage for the Church to design its own mobile applications in order to guarantee the authenticity of the text and the accuracy of the language.

We noticed that in the Romanian space, compared to the Anglican one, there are no catechetical applications that could provide users with short meditations on the Gospel of the day or on psalms. This lack stems in part from the general missionary agenda of the two Churches. Also, in the Romanian environment there are no specific applications, adapted to different liturgical periods, such as Lent, the period between the Ascension and Pentecost, the Fast of the Dormition of the Mother of God or the Nativity Fast. Through these dedicated applications, users can benefit more from the periods of intense liturgical and spiritual experience in the ecclesiastical year.

Last but not least, we would like to introduce the model of an application that is both technically and theologically attractive and useful. These should be its main characteristics:

1) It should be intuitive;
2) It should have a well-chosen chromatic;
3) It should be part of an institutional brand;
4) It should be specific, not general;
5) If it is general, it should provide links to specific applications;
6) It should be institutionally affiliated in order to guarantee the authenticity of the content.

As a complement to what has been said, the solution for a digital media initiative is not to copy the design of other applications from outside of the Orthodox world. That was not the purpose of the comparison. A valuable application does not imitate, but it borrows the strong technical elements while maintaining the Eastern Orthodox religious and cultural specificity. Being the first study of this kind in the Romanian literature, we hope to help both institutional and private developers from the religious environment in innovating and applying the most intelligent and efficient digital solutions.

REFERENCES

Campbell, Heidi A., Brian Altenhofen, Wendi Bellar, and Kyong James Cho. "There's a Religious App for That! A Framework for Studying Religious Mobile Applications." *Mobile Media & Communication* 2, no. 2 (May 2014): 154–72. https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157914520846.

Campbell, Heidi A. ed. *Digital religion. Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, London and New York: Routledge, 2012.

Church of England. *Common worship: daily prayer*. London: Church House, 2005.

Church of England. *The Book of Common Prayer: 1662 version*. London: David Campbell, 1999.

Church of England. *The Book of Common Prayer with the additions and deviations proposed in 1928.* Cambridge: University Press, 1960.

Gere, Charlie. *Digital Culture*. London: Reaktion Books, 2008.

Hutching, Tim. "Christianity and Digital Media." In *The Changing World Religion Map. Sacred places, Identities, Practices and Politics*, edited by Stanley D. Brunn, 3811-3830. New York: Springer, 2015.

Laby, Renaud. "Internet et la communication évangélique." In *Recherches 18.2*, 1–161. Louvain-la-Neuve-Québec-Paris: Cahiers Internationaux de Théologie Pratique, 2017.

Prensky, Mark. "Digital natives, digital immigrants." *On the Horizon* 9, no. 5 (2001): 1–6.

Prensky, Mark. "Listen to the natives." *Educational Leadership* 63, no. 4 (2005): 8–13.

Tredinnick, Luke. *Digital Information Culture: The individual and society in the digital age.* Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2008.

Vidican-Manci, Liviu. *Propovăduirea Evangheliei în Era Digitală. Impactul catehezei şi al predicii asupra „generaţiei digitale" prin utilizarea noilor tehnologii ale informaţiei şi comunicării.* Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2020.

Websites:

Church House Publishing. "Common Worship Lectionary." Accessed September 22, 2020. https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/lectionary.

Church House Publishing. "Daily Prayer." Accessed September 22, 2020. https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/daily-prayer.

Church House Publishing. "Live Lent: Care for God's Creation." Accessed September 22, 2020. https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/features/live-lent.

Church House Publishing. "Reflections for Daily Prayer." Accessed September 22, 2020. https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/reflections-for-daily-prayer.

Church House Publishing. "Reflections on the Psalms." Accessed September 22, 2020. https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/reflections-on-the-psalms.

Church House Publishing. "Sunday Worship." Accessed September 22, 2020. https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/sunday-worship.

Church House Publishing. "Thy Kingdom Come." Accessed September 22, 2020. https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/thy-kingdom-come.

Church House Publishing. "Time to Pray." Accessed September 22, 2020.
    https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/time-to-pray.
Google Play. "Acatiste si Paraclise." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=qq.abc4apps.ap.
Google Play. "Acatistier." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ro.bocan.acatistier&hl=en.
Google Play. "Audio Ortodoxia." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ro.bocan.audioortodoxia&hl=en.
Google Play. "Basilica." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ro.basilica.android.
Google Play. "BestProjects." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/developer?id=BestProjects.
Google Play. "Biblioteca Orotodoxa - Acatiste Biblia Rugaciuni." Accessed September 27,
    2020. https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.geometerplus.zlibrary.
    ui.android.aplicatii.romanesti.
Google Play. "Carte de rugăciuni." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ro.bocan.cartederugaciuni&hl=en.
Google Play. "Lumea Ortodoxiei." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ro.lumea_ortodoxiei.app.
Google Play. "Psaltirea Ortodoxă." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.mobileromania.psaltirea.
Google Play. "Psaltirea proorocului David." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ro.bocan.psaltireaproorocului
    david&hl=en.
Google Play. "Rugaciune." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.rugaciuneaudio.app.
Google Play. "Rugăciuni." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=qq.abc4apps.cro.
Google Play. "Rugăciuni." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cristian_slav.elements.
    prayersro.
Google Play. "Rugăciuni audio." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.RugaciuniAudio.Predici
    Duhovnicesti.
Google Play. "Rugaciuni AUDIO - Crestin Ortodox." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.rugaciuni.crestineaudio.
Google Play. "Rugăciuni Creştine Ortodoxe." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.mobileromania.rugaciuni.
Google Play. "Rugaciuni ortodoxe zilnice." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.webradio.hosting_rugaciuni.
    ortodoxe.a001.
Google Play. "Rugaciuni Ortodoxe Romane." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.miapsspro.Rugaciuni
    Ortodoxe.

Google Play. "Rugăciuni puternice ortodoxe." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.exceda.rugaciuni.
Google Play. "Texte Liturgice Ortodoxe." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.nativescript.tlo2.
Google Play. "Viețile Sfinților." Accessed September 27, 2020.
    https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ro.bocan.vietilesfintilor&hl=en.

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

THE PSALMS, THE HYMNS, AND THE TEXTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THEIR USE IN HOLY MONDAY AND TUESDAY

EIRINI ARTEMI[1]

ABSTRACT. The worship of the Orthodox Eastern Church involves a multitude of references hints and images of the Old Testament, in all the sequences (liturgies) and hymns. Particularly in the Holy and Great Week, the texts of the Old Testament are used with particular emphasis. On Holy Monday and on Holy Tuesday there is use of the texts of the Old Testament. Holy and Great Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday remind us of the eschatological meaning of Pascha. In this paper we are going to analyze the real and deep influence of the Old Testament to these days of Holy Monday and Tuesday and why the Orthodox Church chose to use the Old Testament although the Jews refused Christ and led him to death. The goal is to show that Orthodox Greek Christians use these texts from the Old Testament because they have no hostile attitude against Jews.

Keywords: Old Testament, Holy Week, Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday, liturgy, psalms

Introduction

The use of the Old Testament in the Christian Church is something that cannot be doubted by anyone. The question is if Christians should know the history of the chosen people of Israel through the books of the Old Testament. Christians should know the bond between the Old and New Testament[2].

---

[1] Post-Doc in ancient Greek and Byzantine Philosophy, PhD & MA in Theology Bacs in Theology and Classical Philology, Adjunct Professor in Hellenic Open University Professor in the Israel Institute of Biblical Languages of Hebrew University of Jerusalem, eartemi@theol.uoa.gr
[2] S. Kalantzakis, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* (Thessaloniki, 2006), in Greek, 35.

Christian Scholars believe that the entire Bible is Christ - centered. Christ is the central subject and focus of the Bible. This focus is obvious in the New Testament, but it is present in the Old Testament as well (Luke 24:25–27, 44–47; John 5:39–40, 45–47; 1 Peter 1:10–12)[3].

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself ... And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and the Psalms, concerning Me (Luke 24:27, 44).

So the bond of these two Testaments is to tell one ongoing story of salvation.[4] The New Testament authors saw Jesus, as the incarnate Logos and to be the fulfillment of that revelation. Through the books of the New Testament, God's plan of salvation unfolded with the Israelites, then was added to and redefined and fulfilled by Christ.[5] "The New Testament authors, while valuing the Old Testament as revelation, saw Jesus to be the fulfillment of that revelation. For them God's plan of salvation unfolded with the Israelites, then was added to and redefined by Christ"[6] The religion of the Old Testament is thought of as a shadow, a promise only, and a type of the promised things about the salvation of humankind through the incarnation, passions, death and resurrection of Christ The goal of this Testament is the preparation of people to accept Christ. He is Alpha and Omega for both Testaments, in the Old Testament as typos like prophecies, and in the New Testament as the fulfillment of the Old. Christ is the "inward organic unity" of these two Testaments[7] and the Old Testament is the historical base of the New Testament and the latter is interpreted through the first. So these Testaments cannot be separated. Scholars, theologians, ecclesiastic writers who tried to separate them, they failed and they became the cause of the birth of heresies.[8]

The place of the Old Testament in the Church was defined by the Church from very early in the Christian centuries. The Church fought the Gnostics and the Marcionites vehemently and very intensively against their attempts to exclude the Old Testament from the Canon, and was victorious in this endeavour.[9] In

---

[3] The texts of bible are found in New King James version translation of Bible in English.

[4] Kalantzakis, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* 35.

[5] J. Schorn, "What is the relationship between the Old and New Testaments? Though they sometimes seem dissimilar, the two parts of the Bible are all about fulfillment", *US Catholic* 59.2 (February 2014): 54.

[6] J. Schorn, "What is the relationship", 54.

[7] F. A. Gast, "The Relation of the Old Testament to the New", *The Hebrew Student*, 2.8 (April 1883): 234-239, here 234, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3156146. (viewed on: 04-07-2019).

[8] Gast, "The Relation of the Old Testament to the New", 234

[9] Fr. R. Stergiou, "The Old Testament in the Orthodox Church", *Voice in the wilderness*, 5 (1997): 4-6, here. 4.

this point, we should clarify that not all the Gnostics wanted to reject the Old Testament[10]. Marcion of Pontus (c. 90–160) was the only heretical leader who can be said, without question, that he had rejected the Old Testament.[11]

Christ didn't refuse the significance of the Old Testament. He was the defender of it, because He acted directly or indirectly in it. In the Old Testament prophets, patriarchs said prophecies about the incarnation of Logos. The New Testament is not only the fulfillment of prophesies about Christ, it is the complete and absolute revelation of the Logos as incarnate, total God and total man. But the questions that will be examined in this essay is a. how the Old Testament was accepted not only of the liturgy of Church, the Orthodox Church, b. why there are texts from the Old Testament during the Holy Week? Of course, it is undoubtedly that there are Old Testament's prophecies referred to the Holy Week. However, does this employ of the Hebrew texts reveal that Christians had a friendly or an Anti-Jewish attitude for Jews? Is there any use of the texts from the Old Testament during the Passion Week with culminate way in order the hostile feelings of Christians against Jews to be expressed? In the end, is it peculiar for Christians to have many texts from the Hebrew Bible in Holy Week, when all Jews — become known by Christians as "Christ-killers"?[12]

In this paper, we are going to analyze the attitude towards Jews in the text of Holy Monday and Holy Tuesday. On Holy Monday we commemorate Joseph the Patriarch, the beloved son of Jacob. A major figure of the Old Testament, Joseph's story is told in the final section of the Book of Genesis. Because of his exceptional qualities and remarkable life, our patristic and liturgical tradition portrays

---

[10] "They maintain that Sophia herself has also spoken many things through [the prophets] regarding the first Anthropos (Man), and concerning the Christ who is above, thus admonishing and reminding men of the incorruptible light, the first Anthropos, and of the descent of Christ. The [other] powers being terrified by these things, and marveling at the novelty of those things which were announced by the prophets, [Sophia] brought it about by means of Ialdabaoth (who knew not what he did), that emissions of two men took place, the one from the barren Elizabeth, and the other from the Virgin Mary," Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, 1.30.11, trans. by Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut, *From Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1. Ed. by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103130.htm [accessed 5 February 2021]. Gast, "The Relation of the Old Testament to the New," 235.

[11] Gast, "The Relation of the Old Testament to the New", 235.

[12] Cf. Jeremy Cohen, *Christ Killers: The Jews and the Passion from the Bible to the Big Screen,* (Oxford - New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Murray A. Ray, "Christ In/and the Old Testament." *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 2, no. 1 (2008): 1-22. [Accessed February 6, 2021]. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26421443. S.G. Wilson "The Jews and the Death of Jesus in Acts", in Peter Richardson, with David Granskou, eds. *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity. Vol. 1 Paul and the Gospels* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 155-164.

Joseph as "typos Christou", i.e., as a prototype, prefiguration or image of Christ. On Holy Monday, in the parable of the barren fig tree, the theme is God's long suffering with His chosen people, as with the fig tree in the vineyard. In the Old Testament, fruitful fig trees are symbolic of God's faithful covenant blessings on his people as they dwell in fellowship with their God, obedient to Him and trusting Him. Unfruitful and withered fig trees symbolize just the opposite.

1. Holy Monday and the use of the texts of the Old Testament

The Easter is the "Feast of feasts". Christians are invited to live in the sanctuary of Holy Week, not as spectators, but as participants in the commemoration and enactment of the divine Acts that changed thoroughly the world. Every day of the Holy Week is a step by step on the road of the resurrection of Christ, on the freedom of man from death and sin.

The morning prayers of the Holy Week are sung by anticipation on previous day. For example, the Morning Prayers of Great Monday[13] are sung and read by anticipation on Palm Sunday evening. The same exists for the prayers of Great Tuesday. These are said on Great Monday evening, etc. Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday and Holy Wednesday have "within the liturgical development of the Holy Week a very definite purpose, the eschatological meaning of Pascha."[14]

Holy Monday is the first of the seven days leading up to Easter in the Greek Orthodox Church. The Church has dedicated this day to the memory of Joseph Pangalos,[15] the blessed and noble Joseph, the 11th son of Jacob (Genesis 37:12-36; 37:39-47). Joseph is seen as a prototype of Jesus one who endures great hardships yet perseveres, and goes on to save his people. It was referred above that Joseph is prototype of Christ; for this reason his story is used in the beginning of the Great Week, on Holy Monday. Joseph symbolizes Christ. He lived many centuries before Christ, but many parts of his life are pretensions of signs of the life of Christ. So he is one of the preconditions for Christ in the Old Testament.

---

[13] "The service is MATINS [Morning Prayers] of Great Monday and is sung by anticipation on Palm Sunday evening".

[14] Al. Schmemann, "Holy Week: A Liturgical Explanation for the Days of Holy Week," 22/04/2019, https://oca.org/saints/lives/2019/04/22/21-great-and-holy-monday (viewed on: 05-05-2019).

[15] "Pangalos" means the very beautiful, the noble.

Let's present with a brief way the similarities of Christ with Joseph whose was presented: i) Christ is the only beloved Son of God. Joseph is the beloved son of Jacob. ii) Christ's cloak symbolizes the divine nature, so it is bright. Joseph's cloak symbolizes his glory. ii) Christ was enraged by Pharisees and Scribes as Joseph was enraged by Potiphar. Potiphar and Pilate the Pontius knew that Joseph and Christ were innocent. Although both of them were innocent, they were condemned, Joseph into jail and Christ into death. Joseph refused to obey to Potiphar's wife's sexual harassment.[16] On the other hand, Jesus refused to obey to any temptations of devil in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11. Mark 1:12-13. Luke 4:1-13). iii) Joseph was betrayed and was sold for pieces of silver by his own brothers (Genesis 37:25-28). Christ was betrayed and sold for pieces of silver too, by his discipline, Judas, and by people of his nation (Matthew, 26:15). iv) Joseph and Christ were stripped of their robes (Genesis 37: 23. Matthew 27:28-30). v) Both, they saved their brothers from death when they realized who Joseph and Christ was. When we say brothers of Christ we mean all the spiritual brothers, Christians. Joseph nourishes his brothers and brought them to the fertile land of Egypt (Genesis 45:4-7). Christ "feeds" his disciplines and people who followed Him with bread and spiritual speeches which revealed that He was the Messiah (Luke 21:25-28). Also, Christ nourished them with His flesh, the eternal bread and with His blood, the eternal water of Life vi) Joseph didn't remain humiliated all the time. From the humiliation of the prison was led to glory. Pharaoh raised him from the depths of the prison and made him lord. "Yes, I make you today lord in all Egypt" (Matthew 5: 3-16. John 6:48-51). This is the preface to the fact of the Resurrection of Christ. The death of Jesus brought the ultimate darkness; but death and darkness was invaded brilliantly by the light of resurrection.

Additionally, on Holy Monday there are many psalms of the Old Testament. Which is the use of all these psalms?

---

[16] "Christians considered him an anti-type of Christ and in the Christian interpretation the story of Potiphar's wife is an allusion to the passion of Christ and the institution of a new law. This interpretation casts the wife of Potiphar as Synagoga (the old law), unsuccessfully trying to tempt Christ; the coat that Joseph leaves in her hands signifies either the body he sacrificed on the cross or the veil that hid the Holy of Holies in the temple, which torn as Christ dies and thus marked the end of the old law and the beginning of the new (as recounted in Mt 27:51)," D. Tuesday Adamo (Unisa), "The Nameless African Wife of Potiphar and her contribution to Ancient Israel," *Old Testament Essays*, 26.2 (2013): 221-246, esp. 237. Gertrude Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art,* trans. J. Seligman, (New York: Greenwich, 1971), 110. E. G. Heller, "Bible, Midrashim and Medieval Tales: The Artistic Journey of Potiphar's Wife," in *Women of the Hebrew Bible and their Afterlives*, vol. 1, ed. P. Hawkins and L.C. Stahlberg, (Sheffield, 2009), 18. Heller supports that in the New Testament there is a real anti-Judaism spirit neither Christ nor John speaks against Jews or condemn Jews all, but they were strict with Pharisees and Scribes who didn't put into practice the orders of Law.

First of all, it should be underlined that the psalms that are used in the matins of Holy Monday are nine, specifically they are the psalms: 19th, 20th, 23th, 37th, 62nd, 87th, 102nd, 142nd, 50th[17]. The psalms 3rd, 37th, 62nd, 87th, 102nd and 142nd belong to Orthros.[18] Which is the context of these psalms for being used in the prayers of the Holy Monday morning and of the other days of the Holy and Great Week?

There is no psalm from these nine psalms that they belong to the psalms for praising God (ainoi). All thought these psalms are used for prayers; they are employed for liturgical use, too. Their absence in the morning prayers of Great Monday has to do with the attitude of Christians in order not to speak about God's glory or the history of Israel. On the contrary, the psalms 3, 37, 62, 87, 142 are included in the category of mourning psalms. These psalms have to do with the sadness that we feel for all the facts of the Holy Week.[19] And they are the majority among the nine psalms on Monday morning. By these psalms each Christian prays to God and he asks His help to him and His mercy. Moreover, He asks for himself courage and power to get rid of his disease, the danger of death, and any false categories against him. These kinds of psalms have to do with each Christian personally. They are an opportunity of a dialogue between the believer and God. The believer has realized his own mistakes, his own sins, and the difficult situation that he has to face up. He is in a terrible storm and the only one who can protect him, is God.[20]

The psalms 20 and 102 belong to the category of thanksgiving psalms. By these, the believer sends his thanks to God for every gift that He has given to man. The believer expresses his gratitude to God for his salvation. Additionally, the psalm 20 is one of the messianic psalms and reveals that the only real King of Israel (old and new) is only Jesus Christ, the Messiah. So the 20th psalm with the 19th present their real meaning on the face of Christ, on His passions and on his glory after the resurrection.[21] The hope of coming of Messiah and the freedom of man from death are become true with the incarnation of Logos and they are completed in the Holy Week. This is the last part of Christ's presence in earth which will be accomplished with His resurrection and His ascension to the Heaven.[22]

---

[17] The numbers of psalms follow the order of psalms in the translation of Septuagint.

[18] In the Byzantine Rite of the Eastern Orthodox Church, Orthros in Greek means early dawn or daybreak. It is the last of the four church services, which also include vespers, compline, and midnight office.

[19] Kalantzakis, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* 560.

[20] Kalantzakis, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* 560.

[21] Kalantzakis, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* 561.

[22] Kalantzakis, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* 561.

Generally, the psalms that are included in Orthros, speak of people's awakening from sleep, Morning Prayer, entry into the temple of God, the mercy and salvation that man expects from God. All these psalms in the Holy and Great Week, we can say that they are a culmination to Easter. As we wake up from the sleep and prepare ourselves to enter in the temple, by this way, during the Great week we should realize that our freedom from the Sin and from the Death has to do with our waking up and our acceptance of our sins and the attempt to struggle our passions in order to earn not only the objective chance of the salvation, but also the subjective one[23].

Finally, there is the psalm 50th, a very favourite psalm for most of Greek Orthodox Christians which is used in every Greek prayer, in every Greek liturgy. This psalm speaks for the real repentance of man. It declares that this repentance will be into practice as soon as possible. The believer will reject his sin and he will return to God as the prodigal son. As this lost son, the believer is satisfied to return home as a slave, but to his surprise and delight is restored back into the full privilege of being his father's son. He has been transformed from a state of destitution to complete restoration of his human nature as it was before man's exile from paradise.

In the morning prayers of Great and Holy Monday, besides, the story of noble Joseph and psalms there are some other verses from the book of Isaiah:

> My soul yearns for you in the night;
> in the morning my spirit longs for you.
> When your judgments come upon the earth,
> the people of the world learn righteousness.
> But when grace is shown to the wicked,
> they do not learn righteousness;
> even in a land of uprightness they go on doing evil
> and do not regard the majesty of the Lord.
> Lord, your hand is lifted high,
> but they do not see it.
> Let them see your zeal for your people and be put to shame;
>
> (Isaiah 26: 9-11).

---

[23] Salvation is described as the mystery of God that is now revealed. "Our objective salvation is realized only in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, whereas our personal or subjective salvation, which in the language of the New Testament is called righteousness, holiness, or salvation (in the narrow sense), is realized as a continuance of this objective salvation, with our personal energy or activity acting in co-operation with Divine Energy or Grace," V. E. Klimenko, "The Orthodox Teaching on Personal Salvation", Part 1, 9/12/2013, http://saintandrewgoc.org/home/2013/12/19/the-orthodox-teaching-on-personal-salvation.html. [Accessed on 23/4/2019].

Which is the role of this passage from the book of Isaiah? In this passage "the night" (Isaiah 26: 9) means the era before Christ's incarnation. Everything was in darkness until the incarnation of Logos who brought the real light of the Sun of Justice.[24] The law was employed as pedagogues only for Israelites, but Jesus Christ was the teacher of justice for the whole universe.[25] It is important in the beginning of the Holy Week, to be underlined that before the truth of the human being, man is silent. The Truth that is Christ is a truth of being on a divine level. So, only if people believe in Christ, they could live in the justice that Christ brought with His incarnation, and fulfilled with His passion, His death on the cross and His resurrection.[26]

In the Canon by Kosmas the Monk (Ode 1, Tone 2, Eirmos) it is said: "The impassable, raging sea, was made dry by his divine command, and the people of Israel he guided, to go through it on foot; Let us sing unto the Lord, for gloriously is He glorified." These words come from Exodus 14:15-16. There, Moses was ordered by God to order Israelites to march through the Red Sea like marching on dry land. Metaphorically, we, the believers of Christ we order to believe in Him to come through His death to the land of freedom, to the ability of the objective salvation, to the Kingdom of God.

In the Ode 8 (Eirmos)[27], there is a reference to the story of the three Youths in fire or the Song of the three Holy Youths (Daniel 3:22-28). Also, the reading of the story of the furnace, including the song Prayer of the Three Holy Young Men, is prescribed for the vesper Divine Liturgy and is celebrated by the Church on Holy Saturday. The Orthodox Church uses the story of the Three Holy Young Men, as a prefigurement of the descendant of Christ to Hades. For this reason, it is used in the beginning of the Holy Week, on the Matins of Holy Monday and on Great Saturday morning prayers by anticipation in the evening prayers of this day. By this way, we can understand the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter is the culmination of Holy Week. As the three Holy Youth were saved from the fire, so was Christ saved from Hades after three days in it, and He destructed the kingdom of death, totally.

---

[24] Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentaries in Isaiam Prophetam,* PG 70, 573CD.

[25] Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentaries in Isaiam Prophetam,* PG 70, 573D.

[26] Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentaries in Isaiam Prophetam,* PG 70, 573D.

[27] "The incessant fire, fed with endless fuel, retreated in fear, before the pure body and pure soul of the holy Children. And as the undying flame dwindled in strength, they sung an everlasting hymn: O all ye works praise ye the Lord, and exalt him above all forever", "Ode 8. (Eirmos), in the matins prayers of Holy Monday", *The Holy Week,* Apostoliki Diakonia, (Athens, 2005), 90.

At the Praises (Lauds) Tone 1[28], there is an indirect reference to the psalm 150 except this phrase of the specific psalm: "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord from the heavens: praise Him in the heights." (Psalm 150:6). The same psalm is directly presented in the following Stichera:

Verse 1: Praise Him for His mighty acts: praise Him according to His excellent greatness. Verse 2: Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet: praise Him with the psaltery and harp. Verse 3: Praise Him with the timbrel and dance: praise Him with stringed instruments and organs. Verse 4: Praise Him upon the loud cymbals: praise Him upon the high sounding cymbals. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.[29]

This last of the psalms is a doxology of doxologies. The psalm 150, with its expansive summons to praise, ends the depths of human sorrow because of the captivity of death. All are employed in praise of the God who created heaven and earth, the God who saved Israel through his "mighty deeds" (verse 2), the God who, as we proclaim in this Easter season, defeated sin and death once and for all in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Professor Kathryn M. Schifferdecker argues:

"Trumpets and harps! Tambourines and cymbals! Dancing feet and lifted voice! All are employed in praise of the God who created heaven and earth, the God who saved Israel through his «mighty deeds» (verse 2), the God who, as we proclaim in this Easter season, defeated sin and death once and for all in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ[30]

On the Matins of Holy Monday we hear the passage gospel of Matthew with the Fig Tree (Matthew 21:18-43). The question, that is raised, is why on the beginning of the Holy and Great Week there is the gospel with the Fig Tree. Which is the meaning?

---

[28] *The Holy Week,* 94. The translation became by Saint Katherine Greek Orthodox Church in New Jersey http://www.saint-katherines.org/assets/files/ChurchServices/PalmSundayEvening.pdf [Accessed on 1 May 2019)

[29] *The Holy Week,* 96.

[30] K. M. Schifferdecker, "Commentary on Psalm 150", 11/4/2010, https://www.workingpreacher.org/ preaching.aspx?commentary_id=562 [Accessed on 6 June 2019].

First of all it should be underlined that there are many passages in the Old Testament,[31] especially in the writings of the prophets, where the vine and the fig tree are mentioned together. Fig trees are very common trees in the countries round the Mediterranean See. It can grow and produce heavily a crop by the second year, if not the first, without any human intervention at all, usually producing. In the Old Testament, the people, who obey to the rules of God, they dwell in fellowship with their God, were symbolized with fruitful fig trees. Unfruitful and withered fig trees symbolize just the opposite.

God Himself says: "I saw your fathers as the first-fruits on the fig tree in its first season" (Hosea 9:10). Jeremiah uses the loss of the fig harvest as a way to emphasize what enemies would do and in another passage, he uses a lack of a fig harvest as a way to describe spiritual poverty (Jeremie 24:1-3). So the tree of Fig was used to express the obedient or the disobedient Israel.[32] Which is the meaning of the use of the tree of fig in the New Testament?

---

[31] Deut. 8:8: "A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey"; I Kings 4:25: "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon"; Jerem. 8:13: "I will surely consume them, saith the Lord: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them"; Hosea 2:12: "And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them"; I Kings 4:25: "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon"; Joel 2:22: "Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength"; Zechariah 3:10: "In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree". In the Old Testament, there is an expanded use of the word fig in order to the relation of God and the Israelites to be presented through mainly the prophetic texts. In the text of Jeremiah 8:13, there is a description of a story completely similar to the narration with the fig which exists in Mark and Matthew. Moreover in Jeremiah 24:5-24, 8 the use of a fig helps the contradiction among the descendants of Judas and the descendants of Seleucia. In Jeremiah 29:17 (Massoretic text) the prophet describes the divine punishment to pseudo- prophets and to astrologers as the picture of bad figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad. Also, there are many other parts of prophets and books of the Old Testament, in which the fig is used to show the divine interference into people's history (Zechariah. 3:10; Haggius. 2:19; Habbacum. 3:17-18; Nah. 3:12; Micah. 4:4 &·7:1; Amos. 4:9· Hos. 9:10;·Parables 27:18.

[32] The fig is used in order to speak the relations among God and Israel. In Jeremiah's book 8:13, 24:5-8, 29:17, there are good figs and bad figs. The good figs are people who put into practice the orders of God and the evil figs which represent the pseudo prophets. In Joel 1:6-7, there is the catastrophe of the figs. This symbolizes Israel's condemnation by God. This view was adopted by Christ as it is obvious in Matt. 7:16-17·and in Lk 6:44.

Some scholars support that the fig tree cursing is the historical Israel[33]. Some others support that the fig is not just about historical Israel,[34] it's about the New Israel, the Church. The latter exists in Origen who based on Jeremiah 6:13-15, interpreted the fig tree with Jerusalem and blamed the destruction of the holy city on the execution of Jesus,[35] because Christ was preaching three years in Jerusalem and he revealed who was in the Synagogue, but the people of Israel didn't accept Him.[36]

Athanasius of Alexandria expresses another idea for the cursed fig. Athanasius underlines that Christ didn't send the curse to the root of the fig tree but its fruits: "He brought the shadow to nought causing it to wither; but preserving the root, so that we might be grafted upon it".[37] George Dragas explains that:

"Actually, by the «root», Athanasius means the «Israel of God», who is to be seen not in the Israelite nation as such but in the faithful patriarchs and saints of ancient Israel, for it is to the first of them, Abraham, the father of the faith, that he turns."[38]

Also, Athanasius says that the figure of the cursed tree has to do not only with Jews who rejected Christ[39], but also with the wicked heretics and ignorant schematics that abandoned Christ and put themselves in

---

[33] Terry L. Puett, *The Prophecy Puzzle: Putting the Pieces Together* (AuthorHouse, 2004), 45

[34] Matt. 21:18-22. Mark 11:12-21. This view has its roots in the works of Origen of Alexandria, *In Jeremiah,* 18, Section 5.78-80, 13, 432A-C; John Chrysostom, *In Mattheum,* 67, PG 58, 633D-634A; Idem, *In Johanneum,* 24, PG 59, 602B; Theophylact of Ohrid, *In Mattheum,* PG 123, 373B: "The fig tree means the synagogue of the Jews, which has only leaves, that is, the visible letter of the law, but not the fruit of the spirit. But also every man who gives himself over to the sweetness of the present life is likened to a fig tree, who has no spiritual fruit to give to Jesus who is hungry for such fruit, but only leaves, that is, temporal appearances which fall and are gone. This man then hears himself cursed. For Christ says, Go, he accursed, into the fire. But he is also dried up; for as he roasts in the flame, his tongue is parched and withered like that of the rich man in the parable, who in his life had ignored Lazarus".

[35] Origen of Alexandria, *In Jeremiah,* 18, Sec. 5.78-80, E. Klostermann, *Origenes Werke*, vol. 3 *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller* 6 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1901) 85-194, esp. 175.

[36] Klostermann, *Origenes Werke,* 175.

[37] Athanasius of Alexandria, *Epistula Festalis* VI, 5 http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/ 03d/0295-0373,_Athanasius,_Epistula_festalis_xxxix_[Schaff],_EN.pdf, p. 1066- 1073, esp. [Accessed on 5 May 2019]: "Verily, when He came and found no fruit in them, He cursed them through the fig-tree, saying, 'Let there be henceforth no fruit from thee;' and the fig-tree was dead and fruitless so that even the disciples wondered when it withered away".

[38] G. D. Dragas, *Saint Athanasius of Alexandria: Original Research and New Perspectives,* (Rollinsford, 2005), 111.

[39] Athanasius of Alexandria, *Quaestiones in scripturam sacram,* PG 28, 716C.

the same position with Jews.[40] In another text, Athanasius says that the sin is the fig and when Christ cursed the fig, he cursed the sin.[41] This idea exists in John's Chrysostom writings.[42]

Moreover, Cyril of Alexandria[43] and Euthymius Zigabenus[44] analyze the withered fig as the Old Israel who refused Christ. It symbolizes the old Israel who rejected Christ and they didn't recognize Him as the Messiah. Moreover, the people of Israel condemned Christ in death with crucifixion.[45] They refer to the synagogue of Israel with not only its existence in the years of Christ, but from its beginning in the times of Moses and later. Also, Cyril thinks the fig as the representation of sin, of voluptuous, sensual desires.[46] Epiphany of Cyprus[47] parallels the withered fig with Judas, who lived near Christ but he didn't accept the preaching of Christ. He didn't accept any spiritual fruits of Lord and instead of that he betrayed Him.[48]

Maximus the Confessor explains that the fig tree symbolizes the hypocrisy of Scribes, Pharisees and their pride is like an unfruitful fig tree, rich only in leaves without nourishing people. So did Pharisees, they did no real practice righteousness for people's divinization.[49] On the other hand, Maximus employs the use of narration of the fig in order to express the inability of the whole human generation to understand the reality of salvation and thereby this imparts pedagogical dimensions. According to the symbolism of the fig there is the symbol of the spiritual shadow of the law in which humanity lived, but now human beings are in front of the revelation of God Himself because of Logos' incarnation.[50] Also, Philip F. Esler[51] and Donald B. Strobe[52] have the opinion that the fig symbolizes any Christian Community, Church which has no fruits

---

[40] G. D. Dragas, *Saint Athanasius of Alexandria,* p. 110.

[41] Athanasius of Alexandria, *Quaestiones in scripturam sacram,* PG 28, 716D.

[42] John Chrysostom, *In parabolam de ficu,* PG 59, 589A.

[43] Cyril of Alexandria, *In Lucam,* PG 761D-764D.

[44] Euthymius Zigabenus, *In Mattheum,* PG 129, 557B-D, 559AB, 613A; Idem, *In Markum,* PG 129,·829CD, 832A.

[45] Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarii in Lucam,* PG 72, 764B; Ibidem, PG 72, 764C.

[46] Cyril of Alexandria*, Collectio dictorum veteris testamenti,* PG 77, 1168C- 1184A,

[47] Epiphanius of Cyprus, *Tractatus de numerorum mysteriis,* PG 43, 512CD.

[48]Epiphanius of Cyprus, *Tractatus de numerorum mysteriis,* PG 43, 512CD.

[49] Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium,* 20, PG 90, 309C-312B.

[50] Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium,* 20, PG 90, 309C-312B.

[51] P. F. Esler, "The Incident of the Withered Fig Tree in Mark 11: A New Source and Redactional Explanation", *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28 (1/2005): 49.

[52] D. B. Strobe, "Not the Seasons for Figs," Collected Words, in *Dynamic Preaching*, ed. D. B. Strobe, (2005), 37-46.

of belief and deeds. M. Eugene Boring and Fred B. Craddock,[53] J. R. Donahue and D. J. Harriton[54] agree with the opinion that the fig refers to Christian Church, too.

Here, we should refer the interpretation of Andrew of Caesarea of Cappadocia, who explains the fig with eschatological way. The fig, the cursed one, will be people without good deeds, who will be condemned when Christ the Judge will come in glory.[55]

Jesus' cursing of the unfruitful fig tree presents Christians who will not put into practice the orders, the teaching of incarnate Word.[56] John Chrysostom argues that the story of Christ with the cursed fig, shows that Christ could destroy totally people of Israel who were responsible for His crucifixion, instead of that, He forgave them.[57] People of Israel had the prophecies as the leaves which were in the fig, but they refuse to accept the coming of the Messiah and the fulfillment of prophecies, so they became barren fig without fruits.

To sum up we can support that the story of the withered fig is used in the beginning of the matins of Holy Monday in order to show that everyone who will not follow the teaching of Christ and fail to exercise his faith in Jesus. These people who will be fruitless in practicing their faith, in virtues, they will have no life, because they will have rejected the life in the unity with Christ.[58] By this view, the fig can symbolize the hypocrites who have leaves, so they seem to have virtues, to be fruitful in Christian Life, and this is something false and not real. So, Jesus shows that people who will become spiritually barren, they will be cursed. They will know the right words to say, but their hearts will be far from God. This is the symbolism of the cursed fig tree. This tree becomes the symbol of judgment that will befall those who do not bring forth the fruits of repentance.[59]

---

[53] M. E. Boring, F. B. Craddock, *The People's New Testament Commentary* (Louisville- Kentucky 2009), 153, 154, 266.

[54] J. R. Donahue, SJ. and D. J. Harriton, *The Gospel of Mark*, (Minnesota: Collegeville, 2002), 331: "the fig tree… symbolize the Jewish crowds, the Jewish religious leaders, the Temple, the sacrificial worship enacted in the Temple, Israel as God's people, Judaism as a religious system, or even the Markan Community".

[55] Andrew of Caesarea of Cappadocia, *In Joannis theologi Apocapypsin,* 18, PG 106, 273.

[56] W. J. Cotter, "For It Was Not the Season for Figs", *The Catholic Bible Quarterly* 48 (1986): 62-66, here 66.

[57] John Chrysostom, *In Matthaeum,* PG 58, 633D.

[58] W. Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Vol. 2, (London, 1975), 255.

[59] K. Ware (ed.), *Mary Mother,* The Lenten Triodion (South Canaan, PA 1978), 60.

2. Holy Tuesday and the use of the texts of the Old Testament

Matins of Holy Tuesday are sung on Great and Holy Monday evening. There is the repetition of the nine[60] psalms of Holy Monday Matins which are sung on Palm Sunday. Of course, there is a repetition in the verses of Isaiah that are sung in the Matins of Holy Monday and of Odes which reveal the influence of the Old Testament in these songs.

In the Eighth Ode - irmos, we have a reference again to the three Holy Youth and to the prayer of Azariah:

"When the three holy young men did not yield to
the decree of the tyrant, they were thrown into
the furnace, but they were singing hymns to God:
'Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord'."[61]

The prayer of the Azariah (Daniel 3:34-35) is one of the few pre-Christian texts that in its context, there is the subject of the death of righteous human beings for the benefit of the "atonement for the sins of people"[62]. This can be said that represents the basic teaching of Christology that exists in the New Testament, there is the base of Christian Church, in its dogmatic theology, and it is analyzed in the teaching of Holy Church Fathers. Azariah as Christ cannot personally be blamed for the sins of Israel, but he nonetheless takes personal responsibility for them before God. Because of his own contrition and solidarity, "he can make this confession on behalf of the people."[63] Professor Mattis comments " 'The worship of Israel in the period of three Holy Youth, had become corrupted, and exile from the temple made it incomplete.' There had been no sacrifice since leaving Jerusalem. 'Yet Azariah offers himself totally to God as an act of pure worship'. This is a messianic, Christological view. Azariah is putting himself in the place of all Israel and offering himself as a total, complete sacrifice, prefiguring Jesus Christ."[64]

---

[60] 20th, 21st, the six psalms of Orthros: 3rd, 37th, 62nd, 87th, 102nd and 142nd, and of course the 50th psalm

[61] *The Holy Week,* 128.

[62] Th. Hieke, "Atonement in the Prayer of Azariah (Dan. 3:40)", in *Deuterocanonical Additions of the Old Testament Books,* vol. 5, ed. G. G. Xeravits and J. Zsengeller (Budapest, 2010), 43-59, here 43.

[63] Th. Matthis, *The Rest of the Bible: A Guide to the Old Testament of the Early Church*, (Kentucky, 2011), 122-125.

[64] Matthis, *The Rest of the Bible,* 124.

There is a repetition of the psalm 150 that underlines the way how should we praise God, as it refers in the matins of Holy and Great Monday, too.

Also we are going to present some hymns and hirmoi in the service of Holy Tuesday evening which are the matins of the Holy Wednesday. In this service, we have the presence of more hostile attitude against Jews. Although there are many references of the texts of the Old Testament, there is an appearance of hatred against Jews, who are thought responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. Actually there is not the majority of Jews but a part of Jewish population who were influenced by some of Pharisees and of Scribes, who condemned Christ in crucifixion.[65] They were the Pharisees and Scribes that Jesus exposed the religious hypocrisy of them and He opposed them for dictating laws for the people to follow but not practicing what they preached.

In the troparion of the service in the evening of Holy Tuesday, it is said:

> "In vain the council of the transgressors of the law gathers together, to pronounce maliciously the sentence of condemnation upon thee, O Christ our deliverer, to whom we sing: Thou art our God, and thou alone art holy".[66]

In this troparion the council of Pharisees is said "transgressors", because they were transgressors at heart. From the very beginning of his ministry the Pharisees showed themselves bitter and persistent enemies of our Lord. They could not bear his doctrines, and they sought by every means to destroy his influence among the people. So the transgressors can have double meaning, the Pharisees and the Scribes that didn't follow the law, or they were illegal because they didn't have the right to condemn in death Christ, the Messiah, the incarnate Son of God:

---

[65] "While some Pharisees became the loudest enemies of Jesus, the Gospel of John speaks about Nicodemus, a Pharisee who came to Jesus to hear his teachings and later helped Joseph of Arimatheas with the burial of Jesus. Historically Pharisees had many holy men in their midst, as well as many who succumbed to the temptations of the time. One of the most famous Pharisees was St. Paul, whose conversion set him on a path to become a pillar of Christianity and a strong force in spreading it throughout the region," Ph. Kosloski, "Who were the Pharisees and why did Jesus oppose them?", 3/4/2018, https://aleteia.org/2018/03/04/who-were-the-pharisees-and-why-were-they-so-bad/ [viewed on 7 June 2019].

[66] *The Holy Week,* 150.

"The terrible council of the transgressors of the law, with their souls fighting against God, conspires to kill as a criminal the Righteous Christ, to who we sing: Thou art our God, and thou alone art holy"[67].

Again, there is a reference to the three Youth in the fiery furnace,

"When the command of the tyrant prevailed, the furnace was heated sevenfold at one time. But the young men trampled the decree of the king were not even burned, but cried aloud: 'O all works of the Lord, praise the Lord and exalt him to all ages'."[68]

To sum up, there is not a rejection of the Old Testament in the Holy Week and mainly in the days of the Holy and Great Monday and Tuesday, there is a denunciation of Pharisees, the council of Sanhedrin[69], and Judas who organized an ambush with the intent to place Jesus under arrest.

Conclusions

Old Testament Prophecies are fulfilled during the Passion Week. For this reason, the presence of the texts of the Old Testaments in the services of the Holy and Great Week is not something that comes opposite to the meaning of the Holy Week and of course they don't express a general anti-Judaism attitude against the Jewish population. On Holy Monday, we cannot observe any anti – Jewish view in the texts of this day in the Orthodox Church. The first accusation of Jews for Christ's death exists in the second Sessional Hymn:

"O Savior, the priests and the scribes jealously gathered together with hostility a lawless council against thee, stirring up Judas to betray thee. And with shameless persistence he went out and spoke against thee to the law-transgressing. What do you give me, if I will betray him to your hands?"[70]

---

[67] *The Holy Week,* 150.
[68] Dan. 3:52. *The Holy Week,* 154.
[69] The Great Sanhedrin was comprised not only of Sadducees but also of Pharisees, but it was abolished with the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in 66-70 A.D.
[70] *The Holy Week,*110.

On these two days of the Holy Week, there is a reference of some texts of the Old Testament, as psalms, which are used in the Matins of each day before the Holy Liturgy but there are some other references of the Old Testament as the story of noble Joseph. On Holy and Great Monday we commemorate the blessed Joseph, because Joseph is regarded as an image of Christ from former times. The story of Joseph reveals and prefigures the mystery of God's providence, promise and redemption. Joseph was the innocent, chaste and righteous man. His whole life bears witness to the power of God's love and promise[71]. The lesson to be learned from Joseph's life, as it bears upon the ultimate redemption wrought by the death and resurrection of Christ, is summed up in the words he addressed to his brothers who had previously betrayed him,

> "Fear not ... As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones. Thus he reassured them and comforted them."[72]

The commemoration of the noble, blessed and saintly Joseph reminds us that in the great events of the Old Testament, the Church recognizes and accepts the facts of the New Testament. The first service of the Holy Week it remembers Joseph in Egypt, an Old Testament foreshadowing of Christ's unjust suffering and the triumph of righteousness, as we said before. Also, there is the story of cursed fig, which symbolizes people without repentance, without having real virtues. This is something important about the new world that Christ brings with His passions, His crucifixion, and His resurrection. Justin Miller supports that

> "Christ curses the fig tree because it had no figs and by day's end it withered. It is symbolic of God's Son coming to Israel to find it fruitless in its worship and leaving it cursed in its rejection of the Messiah."[73]

---

[71] "Holy Week", http://orthochristian.com/52793.html (accessed 5 June 2019)

[72] Gen. 50:19-21.

[73] J. Miller, *A journey through Holy week: From the Gospel of Matthew,* (Oregon: Eugene, 2019), 7. D. V. Vistar, *The Significance of the Temple Incident in the Narratives of the Four Gospels,* (Oregon: Eugene, 2015), 52.

On the Holy Tuesday, there is the repetition of the same nine psalms that exist in the matins of Holy Monday and there are some texts which express the hostile attitude of the Jewish council against Christ. Here, the hymns don't express a hostile attitude against all the Jews who heard the teaching of Christ.

Generally, the scholar of the common worship of the Orthodox Eastern Church is impressed by the multitude of the Old Testament references, hints and images in all the sequences and hymns of the Orthodox services including the services of the Holy Week. The unity of the two Testaments is emphasized far beyond. Biblical phrases and ideas are overwhelming in the orthodox services.

Many hymns are nothing more than paraphrases of Old Testament hymns, like Moses' ode to cross the Red Sea. In the great feasts, numerous cuts from the Old Testament are chosen and read to emphasize that Christian perfection is but an accomplishment of incarnate Word of God, Christ, who was prefigured and premeditated, or even pronounced, foretold in the period of the Old Testament. Particularly in the services of Holy Week, this Old Testament preparation is used with emphasis.

The services of the Holy Week present a wonderful knitting of the Hebrew Psalms with the Christian Tropares, Prophecies and other Old Testament passages with the Gospels and Apostles' reading of the New Testament. A major characteristic of these liturgical texts of Holy Monday and Tuesday

> "as they interpret biblical texts is the use of the typological sense. This means that rather than fill the liturgical verses with dogmatic statements and doctrinal phrases, the chanted hymns are filled with images— often mystically poetic, dramatic, and beautiful—where comparison of types expresses an inner meaning."[74]

This is the role of the use of the Old Testament in the Holy Week.

---

[74] V. M. Kimball, "The Bible and Ancient Liturgy: Good Friday Texts in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition", *Teaching the bible*, https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/TB9_Liturgy_VK.pdf, [Accessed on 21 May 2019].

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Ode 8. (Eirmos), in the matins prayers of Holy Monday", *The Holy Week,* (Athens, 2005), 90.

Adamo, D. Tuesday (Unisa), "The Nameless African Wife of Potiphar and her contribution to Ancient Israel." *Old Testament Essays*, 26.2 (2013): 221-246.

Andrew of Caesarea of Cappadocia, *In Joannis theologi Apocapypsin,* 18, PG 106, 273.

Athanasius of Alexandria, *Quaestiones in scripturam sacram,* PG 28, 716C.

Athanasius of Alexandria, *Quaestiones in scripturam sacram,* PG 28, 716D.

Barclay, W. *The Gospel of Matthew*, Vol. 2. London, 1975.

Boring, M. E., Craddock, F. B. *The People's New Testament Commentary.* Louisville-Kentucky 2009), 153, 154, 266.

Cotter, W. J. "For It Was Not the Season for Figs." *The Catholic Bible Quarterly* 48 (1986): 62-66.

Cyril of Alexandria, *Collectio dictorum veteris testamenti,* PG 77, 1168C- 1184A,

Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentaries in Isaiam Prophetam,* PG 70, 573CD.

Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarii in Lucam,* PG 72, 764B; Ibidem, PG 72, 764C.

Cyril of Alexandria, *In Lucam,* PG 761D-764D.

Donahue, J. R., SJ. and Harriton, D. J. *The Gospel of Mark*. Minnesota: Collegeville, 2002.

Dragas, G. D. *Saint Athanasius of Alexandria: Original Research and New Perspectives.* Rollinsford, 2005.

Epiphanius of Cyprus, *Tractatus de numerorum mysteriis,* PG 43, 512CD.

Esler, P. F. "The Incident of the Withered Fig Tree in Mark 11: A New Source and Redactional Explanation", *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28 (1/2005): 49.

Euthymius Zigabenus, *In Markum,* PG 129,·829CD, 832A.

Euthymius Zigabenus, *In Mattheum,* PG 129, 557B-D, 559AB, 613A;

Gast, F. A.,"The Relation of the Old Testament to the New."*The Hebrew Student*, 2.8 (April 1883): 234-239.

Heller, E. G. "Bible, Midrashim and Medieval Tales: The Artistic Journey of Potiphar's Wife," in *Women of the Hebrew Bible and their Afterlives*, vol. 1. Edited by P. Hawkins and L.C. Stahlberg, Sheffield, 2009.

Hieke, Th., "Atonement in the Prayer of Azariah (Dan. 3:40)." In *Deuterocanonical Additions of the Old Testament Books,* vol. 5. Edited by G. G. Xeravits and J. Zsengeller, 43-59 (Budapest, 2010).

John Chrysostom, *In Johanneum,* 24, PG 59, 602B.

John Chrysostom, *In Matthaeum,* PG 58, 633D.

John Chrysostom, *In Mattheum,* 67, PG 58, 633D-634A.

John Chrysostom, *In parabolam de ficu,* PG 59, 589A.

Kalantzakis, S. *Introduction to the Old Testament.* Thessaloniki, 2006.

Klostermann, E., *Origenes Werke,* vol. *3, Die griechischen christlichen,* Schriftsteller 6. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1901.

Matthis, Th. *The Rest of the Bible: A Guide to the Old Testament of the Early Church*, (Kentucky, 2011.

Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium,* 20, PG 90, 309C-312B.

Miller, J. *A journey through Holy week: From the Gospel of Matthew,* Oregon: Eugene, 2019.

Origen of Alexandria, *In Jeremiah,* 18, Section 5.78-80, 13, 432A-C.

Puett, Terry L. *The Prophecy Puzzle: Putting the Pieces Together* (AuthorHouse, 2004).

Schiller, Gertrude. *Iconography of Christian Art,* trans. J. Seligman. New York Greenwich, 1971.

Schorn, J. "What is the relationship between the Old and New Testaments? Though they sometimes seem dissimilar, the two parts of the Bible are all about fulfillment. "*U.S. Catholic 59.*2 (February 2014): 54.

Stergiou, R. "The Old Testament in the Orthodox Church." *Voice in the wilderness*, 5 (1997): 4-6.

Strobe,D. B. "Not the Seasons for Figs." Collected Words, in *Dynamic Preaching*, ed. D. B. Strobe, (2005), 37-46.

Theophylact of Ohrid, *In Mattheum,* PG 123, 373B.

Vistar, D. V. *The Significance of the Temple Incident in the Narratives of the Four Gospels.* Oregon: Eugene, 2015.

K. Ware (ed.), *Mary Mother.* The Lenten Triodion. South Canaan, 1978.

Internet resources

Kimball, V. M. "The Bible and Ancient Liturgy: Good Friday Texts in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition", Teaching the bible*,* https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/TB9_Liturgy_VK.pdf, [Accessed on 21 May 2019].

Klimenko, V. E. "The Orthodox Teaching on Personal Salvation", Part 1, 9/12/2013, http://saintandrewgoc.org/home/2013/12/19/the-orthodox-teaching-on-personal-salvation.html. [Accessed on 23/4/2019].

Kosloski, Ph. "Who were the Pharisees and why did Jesus oppose them?", 3/4/2018, https://aleteia.org/2018/03/04/who-were-the-pharisees-and-why-were-they-so-bad/ [Accessed on 7 June 2019].

Schifferdecker, K. M. "Commentary on Psalm 150", 11/4/2010, https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=562 [Accessed on 6 June 2019].

Schmemann, Al. "Holy Week: A Liturgical Explanation for the Days of Holy Week," 22/04/2019, https://oca.org/saints/lives/2019/04/22/21-great-and-holy-monday [Accessed on 05-05-2019].

THEOLOGY AND CULTURE

TENSIONS OF CHURCH T(T)RADITION AND THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL CULTURES IN THE AFRICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF KENYA: JUSTIFYING CONTEXTUALIZATION

EVANGELOS THIANI[1]

ABSTRACT. The African Orthodox Church of Kenya was formed as an African Instituted Church in 1929, with considerable cultural and liberative connotations, before officially joining the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa in 1956. The journey of being faithful to the rich and ancient Eastern Orthodox tradition, history, and heritage as well as grappling with the local cultures is been an ongoing tension for this church. The tension is better appreciated from the eye view of non-Kenyan Orthodox and young theologians in comparison with that of the locals. Some contextualization practices within this church were ecclesiastically sanctioned, while others have never been reviewed, even though both are practiced with no distinction. This Orthodox Church in Kenya continues to be regarded as one of the staunchest and first growing Orthodox Church in Africa, influencing many upcoming African dioceses and the theologians they form in the main Patriarchal seminary based in Nairobi. This paper seeks to document this tension and struggle of the church and local community traditions and cultures, and with it seek to justify some of the contextualization that is realized and practiced in this church at present.

Keywords: African Orthodox Church of Kenya, contextualization, tradition, culture, mission.

---

[1] Very Rev Senior Protopresbyter Fr Evangelos Thiani is an ordained Priest of the African Orthodox Church of Kenya under the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa. He is a Senior Lecturer in the Practical & Public Theology Department of the *Orthodox Patriarchal Ecclesiastical School: Archbishop Makarios III of Cyprus Seminary* in Nairobi-Kenya, and *Bishop Gathuna Theological Institute*, in Kiambu-Kenya. frevangelost@yahoo.com

1.0 Church and culture

Christianity to her core is founded on specific cultures, which played substantial roles in the life of the church. All mission endeavors have since the beginning been carried out in specific and unique cultures, starting with Christ who was born in the Hebrew culture, and the fact that Christianity grew within Judaic and Greco-Roman specific cultures.[2] The church cannot shy away from the existing local cultures, which since the Tower of Babel have continuously increased (Gen 11:1ff), and which God along history has used in His mission (*Missio Dei*). Furthermore, the church has membership from all sorts of cultures, with the underlying fact that the church meets its converts and adherents in their already existing cultures. Ideally, the church does not evangelize to cultures but rather to men and women within these cultures. Nevertheless, such conversions do not mean the neophytes are removed from their specific cultures and cultural orientations. Rather, the church sometimes transforms the new cultures, but sometimes borrows from them on how to portray the message of salvation. Such decisions determine how steadfast such converts shall remain in their newly acquired Christian spiritual journey and what relations they keep with their indigenous cultures and former traditional religion.

Some cultures have elements different from those of the church, while others are very close to what Christianity is. Nevertheless, because culture alone cannot save, no matter how good it is, rather Christ does, the church seeks to transform all human cultures.[3] Christianity being a faith that is founded on a truth that transcends all cultures can therefore not afford to be identified with some specific cultural trends, and neither can the good in the culture be ignored considering that God created cultures and the goodness in them (Gen 11). The role of the church, therefore, remains to bring all cultures in Christ where "the flame of Pentecost abolishes linguistic, ethnic, and cultural borders,"[4] uniting humanity with God, fellow humans and the rest of creation. The balance that is sort in "mission lands" is therefore about how to be faithful to the gospel of Christ as embodied in the Christian Tradition (capital T) without being irrelevant to the local community, and how the local communities continue being relevant to their positive cultures without being syncretistic and dualistic. Understanding how the church settles in such new mission cultures matters a lot, if formerly foreign cultural ways shall be justified as okay for both the creedal and newly

---

[2] Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 212-223.

[3] Georges Florovosky, *Christianity and Culture*, Volume 2 in the Collected Works of Georges Florovsky (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1974): 14.

[4] Archbishop Anasatasios Yannoulatos, *Facing the World: Orthodox Christian Essays on Global Concerns* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 87

converted Christians. The church Tradition (capital T) is been maintained along the centuries by the works and energies of the Holy Spirit. This has happened with few and sometimes many challenges on the human side, especially when the human traditions are challenged, or the cultural context calls for some new way of interpreting or representing the church tradition (small t). As Boris Bobrinskoy rightly puts it, "Faithfulness to the Tradition does not mean that it cannot be questioned. Thus the [Church] Fathers had to act against a certain notion of the Tradition in order to assert the mystery of the faith."[5] The issues that mostly brought complications in church history were those that were "new" to the church practices then and especially those not found in the scriptures, shown by the many historical events that has in many ways made the church what it is today.

"Church history," like Chryssavgis says, "is always cultural."[6] This only confirms that the way of doing things in a church that is led by the Holy Spirit is living and not dead and that there exist developments in the **t**raditions of the church with time, just like the age of the church fathers has not ended.[7] Different "mission lands" have along the years contributed to the development and enrichment of the church, even without formal declaration of the church on those issues, for the Holy Spirit leads the church. It is such missional additions that make the Orthodox Church in different local churches to practice differently, creating a unity in diversity. These differences are sometimes in the way of chanting; Byzantine and Slavic chants, or the dress code of the clergy in church; white or black veils for hierarchs, or in administration; where one church has a Metropolitan as a senior hierarch than an Archbishop and another an Archbishop being senior than a Metropolitan, or even having or not having pews or chairs to seat-on during church services. All these churches are Orthodox and in communion amidst their highly visible differences.

The last two centuries saw Christianity spread to the Global South, bringing with it very new cultures to the Christian demographic in those regions.[8] The beginning of the 21st century, paraded Christianity as a highly

---

[5] Boris Bobrinskoy, *The Compassion of the* Father. Anthony P. Gythiel trans., (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 168.

[6] John Chryssavgis, *The Way of the Fathers: Exploring the Patristic Mind*, 2nd revised and expanded edition, (Minneapolis, MN: Light & Life Publishing Company, 1998), 21.

[7] Cf. Ibid., 24-34; Panagiotes K. Chrestou. *Greek Orthodox Patrology: An Introduction to the Study of the Church Fathers,* (Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2005), 15-16.

[8] Andrew F. Walls, The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith (Edinburgh/Maryknoll, NY: T&T Clark/ Orbis Books, 2002); Philip Jenkins, The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity, 3rd ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Southern religion, a trend expected to continue.[9] Africa is taking a lead in this, with estimations putting it to hold one of the largest Christian populations that shall become one of the most popular global missionary sending centers of the 21st century.[10] The upcoming Global South third world theologies, will eventually be popularized and may be the theologies of the future, if past historic trends of theology are something to go by.[11] The Orthodox Church is not an exception in the changing Christian demographics, nor will it be different in the forthcoming new theologies, theological understandings and interpretations. Kenya holds the highest number of Eastern Orthodox Christians as well as the major theological school for the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa. It is from this church, that future Southern Orthodox theologies are to be expected. Thus, the African Orthodox Church of Kenya (AOCK) is the main focus of this study to help evaluate the place of culture and contextualization in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

This study will use a qualitative practical theology methodology to sort out the data available on the subject of culture and the Orthodox Christian tradition. The study shall seek to highlight and evaluate some of what the African Orthodox Christians are doing that is considered by visiting Orthodox Christians as well as some young African theologians as foreign to Orthodoxy and what the locals have to say about them. Secondly, the study will then seek an Orthodox theological and historical evaluation and understanding of such contextual practices that can justify or reject the same. The study shall then use the above to offer a theological justification for the unique cultural traits within the African Orthodox Church of Kenya. This third world Orthodox theological study will also offer guidance on how best to handle cultural matters from an Orthodox missiological perspective in Africa and beyond.

2.0 Mission and Contextualization

Contextualization is important in mission, to help transmit the gospel to all nations (Matthew 28:16-20). Contextualization involves transmitting the word of God to a specific culture in a way that they can fully understand, without compromising the gospel, while mission entails going out and spreading the

---

[9] Centre for the Study of Global Christianity, *Christianity in its Global Context, 1970-2020: Society, Religion, and Mission* (South Hamilton, MA: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, June 2013).

[10] Pew Research Center, Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, December 2011).

[11] John Parrat, *An Introduction to Third World Theologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Word of God and His salvation to all nations (Matt 28:16-20). Whereas the word of God is one, the church is one, and the sacramental life of the church is one, the nations and the languages of the nations needing to be reached are many. This forces contextualization, because if the word of God will be delivered to the unreached nations in a language and presentation they understand, then the gospel has to be packaged in a way that these nations can fully grasp. While doing this, the one basic principle is to make sure that the gospel, the church, and the sacramental life of the church is not compromised. Thus contextualization, or adopting without compromising the gospel, in order to make it culturally relevant to the nation needing to be reached is an important component in mission.

Full understanding of the culture, the context language and gospel is needed in order to contextualize correctly. Foreigners could belittle important things in a culture, for not fully comprehending what it is all about, while insiders may hold-on to some cultural aspects that may hinder the gospel, by assuming they are not harmful. Indigenous missionaries or foreign ones, by forcing the merger of incompatible cultural aspects to the gospel in a way that compromises the gospel, can bring syncretism or create space for the growth of dualism. Thus, soberness and absolute knowledge of both the gospel and the culture in question is needed in every context.

The Orthodox Church has had a history with many cultures, but that does not mean that they will not come across cultures the Orthodox tradition may be inexpressible. Thus Clapsis proposes "the Orthodox churches in their missionary efforts must allow 'young churches' that have been established in cultures that are not traditionally Orthodox to develop to ways by which they can express the gospel using their indigenous cultures (without, of course, departing from the essentials of Orthodoxy or disrupting communion with other Orthodox Churches)."[12] Thus he concludes, contextualization is not just a missionary issue but also a pastoral model of evangelization that all local churches must seek to discuss.

2.1 History of contextualization in the Orthodox Church

Most ancient religions, including the Orthodox Church, have constantly argued that they do not change or they have maintained very ancient traditions to this very day. But is this true? After the publication of books in the mid-15th

---

[12] Emmanuel Clapsis, *Orthodoxy in Conversation: Orthodox Ecumenical Engagements* (Boston, MA/Geneva: WCC Publications and Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2000): 152

century, the Orthodox Church is been noted as having stopped reforming its ways of worship, spirituality or administration.[13] Even when the basic structure of worship and spirituality is maintained, there are possibilities that the reality on the ground may be different due to diversity of contexts and mission areas.

The church has had a principal of how to handle matters culture in relations to the church **T**radition (with a capital T). Explaining time and change, saint Augustine is clear in his exegesis on Psalm 101, noting that anything that has a past or future is not what it was nor is it what it will be clearly because it changes, but "God does not change, because there is in Him neither past nor future",[14] and neither does the church's **T**radition change even amidst historical differences and developments. On the other hand, culture always changes and more so evolves even within the same generation and place, making some church **t**radition (with a small t) to always change so that the gospel can be packaged for a specific culture. It is this kind of cultural change that has given the Orthodox Church the greatest of its cultural effects left especially by the Byzantine empire: from vestments, architecture, music, administration, laws, and synods among others. It is in the Byzantine period that we see most of the existing diversity of church **t**raditions die out to pave way to commonality and unity of **t**radition in the East.[15] Thus cultural aspects added to the faith in the Orthodox Church are actually understood from a small **t** - tradition perspective rather than the capital **T**- Tradition.

The development of worship under the influence of culture is true for the Orthodox Church as for everyone else. Looking at the historical development of the early church (1st -3rd c) and the Byzantine liturgy (4th-16th c) shows how much the church borrowed from the Middle Eastern and North African cultures.[16] Another example is how the Slavonic churches borrowed in their 17th century reform from the already established Roman Catholic tradition in their region as well as from their own culture, which have made them slightly different from the rest of Orthodoxy; the Greco-Roman tradition.[17] These cultural imprints have remained to these very moments in the Orthodox world

---

[13] Gert Jan van der Sman, "Printing publishing in Venice in the second half of the sixteenth century," *Print Quartery* vol.17 No.3 (Sept 2000):235-247; Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky, "Liturgical Books: From Manuscript to Print" in *History of Liturgical Texts*. https://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/liturgical_books_pomazansky.htm accessed on 15 August 2019.

[14] *Enarr*. in Psalm 101

[15] Robert Taft, "Liturgy of the Great Church: An Initial Synthesis of Structure and Interpretation on the Eve of Iconoclasm", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers 34-35,* Washington, D.C. (1980-1981).

[16] Robert Taft, *The Byzantine Rite: A Short* History (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press,1992)

[17] Paul Meyendorff, Russia, Ritual and Reform: The Liturgical Reforms of Nikon in the 17th Century (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991).

While simple ceremonies would have worked for all of Christian worship, additions borrowed from the cultures Christianity rubbed shoulders with enriched these sacraments to their forms today. Baptism in just water is enough after the Holy Spirit is called upon, but the additional symbolisms and rituals give it even more splendour and grace.[18] The new theological terminologies used in the Nicean Council of AD325 to explain the unity and diversity of the Trinity: *homoousios* (consubstantial), brought a lot of turmoil in the Church and yet today the Trinitarian theology cannot be explained without this former foreign terminology.[19]Although the monastic community had an upper hand in the initiation of church music, considering the likes of Saints Romanos the Melodist, John of Damascus, Andrew of Crete, and Theodore the Studite, this same community together with the church in general had a lot of challenges accepting the present church music, including the *Troparia* and *Kontakia*, that was formulated not using just the scriptures but rather using the then secular methods of poetry, chant and voices; even though theologically sound.[20] The best example of rejecting church music is the riot against the *Homogenes* (Only Begotten Son...) song in the 6th c, which was led by monastics that demonstrated in the streets.[21] The use of iconography in the church brought what is known as the first (AD717-787) and second (AD813-843) Byzantine iconoclastic controversies until their formalization on 11th March 843, today known as the triumph of Orthodoxy and celebrated on every first Sunday of Lent in the Orthodox world.[22]

---

[18] Cf. Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Cambridge/ Grand Rapids, MI: William E. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009).

[19] John Behr, *The Way to Nicaea: Formation of Christian Theology,* vol.1 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001); _____, *The Nicene Faith: Formation of Christian Theology,* vol.2, part 1 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004).

[20] Egon Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

[21] Joan Mateos, The Evolution of the Byzantine Liturgy Part I: From the beginning to the Trisagion, in *John XXIII Lectures, Volume One. 1965 Byzantine Christian Heritage* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), 79; Robert Taft, "Liturgy of the Great Church: An Initial Synthesis of Structure and Interpretation on the Eve of Iconoclasm", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers 34-35,* Washington, D.C. (1980-1981): 50.

[22] Cf. Alice-Mary Talbot, "General Introduction", in *Byzantine Defenders of Images: Eight Saints' Lives in English Translation* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1998), vii-xix; Ambrosios Giakalis, *Images of the Divine: The Theology of Icons at the Seventh Ecumenical* Council, revised edition, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions vol.CXXII (Leiden/Boston, MA: Brill, 2005), 1-21; Patricia Karlin-Hayter, "Iconoclasm", in *The Oxford History of Byzantium* ed., Cyril Mango (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 153; "The Council of Nicaea II, 787" in Leo Donald Davis *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 290-322; Robin Cormack, "Art and Iconoclasm", in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, eds. Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon and Robin Cormack (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 751.

The Orthodox Liturgical year has continuously also been added to since the inception of the Church on Pentecost. Feasts such as the Nativity, Ascension, and the Feasts of the Theotokos were only inserted in the 5th and 6th centuries, while many feasts of contemporary saints and martyrs are added almost annually by their respective local churches, the feasts of St Nektarios of Pentapolis and the recent one of St Paisious the new of Mt Athos both of the 1900s being examples.[23]

2.2 Orthodox Mission and Culture

Orthodox missiological literature has mainly told success stories when it comes to how to do mission in new lands. Starting with the famous Cyril and Methodios' mission to the Moravians in Slavic lands in the 9th century, we see the preparatory work done by the church and empire before anyone is sent to those lands. They analyzed the situation and picked out two Thessalonian brothers, who knew the local Slavic language and culture in order to penetrate the "mission lands", and eventually use the same to the advantage of mission and evangelization.[24] The two Orthodox missionaries created a local alphabet, which they used to translate religious texts into the local language, and evangelized the Slavic lands without eliminating the local cultures, eventually creating an impact that brought others in the region into Christianity, including the Bulgarians a year later, and a century later the Kiev and Russian regions joined Christianity.[25] A second common contemporary mission success story is that of Saint Innocent Veniaminov of Alaska and the work he did in Alaska, Siberia and the Far East.[26] After his arrival in these regions, he assessed the local situation, learnt their languages and cultures, and with permission and help from his superiors in Russia did one of the most revered mission endeavors in contemporary

---

[23] Adolf Adam, The Liturgical Year: Its History and its Meaning after the Reform of the Liturgy, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1981); Hugh Wybrew, *Orthodox Feasts of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary: Liturgical Texts with Commentary* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000); Compare past synaxariste and present church calendars to see the additional saints.

[24] Francis Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions Among the Slavs* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970).

[25] Anthony-Emil N. Tachiaos, *Cyril and Methodius of Thessalonica: The Acculturation of the Slavs* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001).

[26] Michael Oleksa (ed.), *Alaskan Missionary* Spirituality (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2010); ___, *Orthodox Alaska: A Theology of Mission* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992); Paul D. Garrett, *Saint Innocent: Apostle to America* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979);

Orthodoxy. His ministry and mission was among very cultural based communities, but instead of abolishing their cultures with religion, he worked tirelessly to see them maintained and not tarnished by the foreign and so called advanced cultures.[27] His mission included helping translate religious literature in their languages, insisting on embracing what was good in their cultures, forming schools to educate the locals while maintaining the local languages, environment and spirituality.[28] It is such contextualized mission work that made the locals feel comfortable to join the Orthodox Church to this very day, becoming the first to receive Orthodoxy in America.

What the Orthodox have not done yet is to give the story of mission and culture when the locals are the ones who initiate the process of joining the Orthodox Church, and how the local cultures relate to the received Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition, which is the story of the African Orthodox Church of Kenya.

3.0 Cultural tensions in the Kenyan Orthodox Church

The African Orthodox Church of Kenya (AOCK) was formed in 1929 after the locals decided to separate from the British and Scotland Protestant Christianity.[29] Their main arguments were the need for a church that gave the locals a chance to lead as senior and ordained clerics, a church that respected

---

[27] Michael E. Krauss, "Alaskan Native Languages in Russian America", in Barbara Sweetland Smith and Redmond J. Barnett (eds.), *Russian America: The Forgotten Frontier,* (Tacoma, Washington: Washington State Historical Society, 1990); Richard L. Dauenhauer, *Conflicting Visions in Alaskan Education*, 2nd ed., (Alaska: University of Alaska Veniaminov Bicentennial Project and Alaskan Native Knowledge Network, 1997).

[28] Lydia Black and Katherine L. Arndt (eds.), A Good and Faithful Servant: The Year of Saint Innocent: An Exhibit Commemorating the Bicentennial of the Birth of Ioann Veniaminov 1797-1997 (Alaska: University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska State Museum, and Robert C. Banghart & Associates, 1997); Michael J. Oleksa (ed.,), Alaskan Missionary Spirituality (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2010).

[29] Evangelos Thiani, "Call for ecclesial recognition of Bishop George Arthur Gatungu Gathuna. The founding father of the African Orthodox Church of Kenya," Ortodoksia vol.59 (2019): 32-72; cf. Carl G. Rosberg Jr., and John Nottingham, *The Myth of "Mau Mau" Nationalism in Kenya* (New York and Cleveland, OH: Meridian Books, 1966): 105-135; Robert L. Tignor, *Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Kamba, Kikuyu and Maasai from 1900-1939* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976): 4-7; Robert W. Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa: Anglicans and Africans in Colonial Kenya, 1875-1935* (London/ Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1978): 77-87, 136-150.

rather than fought and abolished their cultures, and a church seeking for their freedom from colonialism.[30] After joining hands with another Ugandan group these Kenyans joined the African Orthodox Church community from America through South Africa in 1935 and eventually sort to join the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa in 1942, with their official reception happening in 1946.[31]

The African Orthodox Church of Kenya (AOCK) has had various challenges surrounding issues of culture in relation to Orthodox theology and practice. This is explicitly seen when some Orthodox Christians visit Kenya and narrate their experience. For some, the practices in or outside the AOCK are uniquely Kenyan, with the universal Orthodox identity fully in place, for others, the Orthodox and African cultural mix is very amusing, with others being very disturbed by the same. This mix of local cultures and Orthodox traditional ways of worship, administration and spirituality is not just a challenge for the foreigners but also for some locals and more so young theologians who want to "remain faithful" to the traditional Orthodox ways. The locals in the parishes do not understand any other way of worshiping God, leading the church, or living their spirituality, while some foreigners and some young African theologians fail to understand how the local cultures can affect such traditional Orthodox ways and not be considered unorthodox if not syncretistic, dualistic, or even heretical. The Orthodox Church in Africa has been silent on what model to use to handle the local cultures, if not give some theological justification to the locals, the young theologians and the visiting Orthodox Christians.

As a valuable church of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, the AOCK should engage the theological issues arising from their context and look for authentic Orthodox theological responses that will work for the African Church as well as the universal Orthodox Church and mission. This will not only help add an African Orthodox voice in the world of Orthodox practical theology and especially in the field of missiology, liturgics, and spirituality, but also help resolve some of the dire challenges and tensions the AOCK is presently facing on matters relating to culture.

---

[30] F. B. Welbourn, *East African Rebels* (London: S.C.M. Press Ltd, 1961): 135-136; Francis K. Githieya, *The Freedom of the Spirit,* thesis (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997.); Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965); Kamuyu-wa-Kang'ethe, "African Response to Christianity: A Case Study of the Agikuyu of Central Kenya," *Missiology: An International Review*, 16:1 (January 1988): 23-44.

[31] Evangelos Thiani, "The contribution of Daniel William Alexander to the birth and growth of Eastern Orthodoxy in East Africa," *Journal of African Christian Biography* 30.1 (2018): 27-35.

4.0 Contextualization in the AOCK

The Orthodox Church has had three ways of handling culture. Accepting some aspects of a culture, rejecting some aspects, and critically reviewing some aspects to see what fits and what doesn't.[32] Sometimes these are deliberate efforts and sometimes they are let to drive themselves. The issue of conflicting Orthodox and African cultures within the African Orthodox Church of Kenya (AOCK), can help shed light on how the sacramental life, administration and spirituality of Orthodox churches in newly established regions handle culture.

4.1 Leadership in the AOCK

Culturally awarded eldership is been a priority for leadership and formation of church councils and church leaders in the African Orthodox Church of Kenya. Getting married in Africa is one way of knowing one is gotten to a level they can be trusted to receive important community leadership as well as keep secrets of what they hear, and guide others where necessary.[33] This in a way restricts those who end up single for whatever reason, although this is changing with time. This is true among the Agikuyu of Kenya, the largest tribe in Kenya, which was the first tribe to receive Orthodoxy in Kenya and still holds the most Orthodox Christians in the country.[34] Traditionally, after a Gikuyu man is married he gives the local elders a fattened lamb and traditional brew (*mūratina*), while his wife gave her fellow women porridge (*ūcuru wa igongona)* and mashed food (*irio cia mukimo wa igongona*).[35] In return, the elders gave the Gikuyu man who brings

---

[32] D.H. Williams, Defending and Defining the Faith: An Introduction to Early Christian Apologetic Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020): 163-182; George W. Forell, "Christ Against Culture? A re-examination of the political ethics of Tertullian", *American Society of Christian Ethics* 19 (1978):27-41; Florovsky, *Christianity and Culture* (1974): 23-24; Saint Basil the Great, "Address to youth on how they might benefit from classical Greek literature", trans., Dimitri Kepreotes (Sydney: St Andrew's Orthodox Press, 2011).

[33] Cf. M. Masango, M. "Leadership in the African Context", *Verbum et Ecclesia JRG* 23.3 (2002):707-718.

[34] Fr. C. Cagnolo, *The Agikuyu: Their Customs, Traditions and Folklore,* 2nd ed., (Nairobi: Wisdom Graphics Place, 2006); Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965); L.S.B. Leakey, *The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903*, 2nd unabridged edition, three volumes (Nairobi: Intra-Lab Services Ltd, 2007); David P. Sandgren, *Christianity and the Kikuyu: Religious Divisions and Social Conflict* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000).

[35] The Muratina beer is made of water, honey, and sugarcane juice fermented under a sausage tree fruit- *kigelia Africana*, the porridge was made of *mwere, mukombi, muhia* and *mugimbi* and mashed food (*irio cia mukimo*) was a mixture of *njugu, njahi, thoroko, kahurura* and *marigu*. While the lamb is meant for eating, the brew which is made of water, honey and sugarcane juice has some very sober meaning. Water here represents life as given by God, and why it is

these items the tribes' leadership secrets and family life leadership guidelines. After his children are old enough to be married, the same man would give another fattened lamb and brew, to be given further community secrets and more guidance on eldership and leadership. By going through all these stages, the wife of such a man is also counted as a leader of the same level as her husband and is given almost similar secrets by women whose husbands have gone through these stages, and a few by her now enlightened husband. Such information is passed on by generations. It is such levels that are expected of all clergy, men and women in the AOCK leadership within the Agikuyu of Kenya for a long time, with little exceptions. Young clergymen are exempted from waiting for their children to reach marriage age, and so are given both the first and second level of traditional leadership even when their children are young, to help them learn early and not be barred from any council in society and church.

Among the Agikuyu, some information cannot be diverged when persons not accepted as traditional elders are there. Clergymen including hierarchs, or even elected church leaders who are not from the Agikuyu or tribes having such leadership stages as this tribe are thus not considered as elders in the real sense. This means the non-traditional leaders may be in a church committee and never know of some aspects within the same. Sometimes, the church leaders that have not received the traditional eldership are asked to exit when the traditionally sanctioned church leaders discuss some issues, or such matters are left for discussion in their absence. This is because, traditionally no one fully trusts such non-traditionally elevated elders to keep secrets or consider them mature enough to discuss some issues. Such can be devastating for elected lay church leaders and clergymen that are not approved of by such cultures or who do not belong to the same.

Such traditional African leadership puts a predicament in Orthodox administration where the local diocesan bishop is given the full mandate to lead the church as directed by the Tradition, canons and his pastoral discernment.[36] In the African traditional way of leadership, even if one is the most senior person in the council; which is how the bishop is considered, everything is

---

important to thank and praise God before and at the end of each segment of one's life and in traditional ceremonies. The honey gathered from different plants by bees, shows how one gets life skills and knowledge from various other persons and life experiences to become better and better. The sugarcane juice represents the segments of human life similar to the sugar cane plant, which is segmented and the older it gets the sweeter and harder the bottom part becomes. Thus, the elders are considered at the bottom part of the sugarcane plant segments where they get wisdom from personal experience, mentorship from others before them, and those from their roots: the traditions left to them from the generations before them.

[36] Paul Jonathan Fedwick, The Church and the Charisma of Leadership in Basil of Caesarea (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1979).

democratically approved and agreed on before being announced to the non-council members, and thus when the local hierarch or priest brings new decisions to the congregants before consulting or discussing it with the local leaders, such leaders feel unappreciated and they may not follow such instructions to the letter. It is such contradictions due to non-Kenyan bishops not understanding the local leadership styles and cultures that has also added to the conflicts that has made the locals take such bishops to the Kenyan civil courts. Some of such cases are between the local African clergy and laity, against their local bishop; and some against the Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa on matters, church properties in Kenya and who has the right to run the same.[37] The holy synod, the concerned patriarch and hierarchs, as well as other Orthodox outside Africa cannot understand how Orthodox Christians and clergymen can take the same ecclesial leaders they owe allegiance to and who they work with on a daily basis toa civil court. It is interesting that these same opposing groups could liturgize in the same church in the morning, head to court together in the afternoon, have the hierarchs led in entering the court, then seat in different opposing sides of the court of law, and all together continue with the evening service and other ecclesial matters of the day after the court session.

The laity and priests taking their bishop or patriarch to court, while they still fully respect him and are concelebrating with him would be unimaginable in most Orthodox countries but have been seen in Kenya since the early 1980s to the present. Such a dilemma is brought by the lack of full standardized contextualization which brings dualism. The bishops coming from outside Africa do not understand the local cultures as they should, and the locals do not accommodate the church cultures and traditions of the countries their non-African bishops come from. Thus, when a bishop makes a substantial decision as he would anywhere else outside Africa, he misses the collective consultation that the Africans demand of him.

It is such contradiction of church and traditional leadership methods that added to the challenges which led the very first hierarch of Kenyan origin, Bishop George Arthur Gatungu Gathuna, to his defrocation by the Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa in 1979.[38] Bishop

---

[37] cf. Kenya Judiciary (2014) High Court Civil Suit No.281 of 2014; Kenya Judiciary (2014) High Court Petition No.47 of 2014; Kenya Judiciary (2015) High Court Civil Petition No.86 of 2015; Kenya Judiciary (2015) High Court Petition No.43 of 2015; Kenya Judiciary (2015) High Court Petition No.525 of 2015.

[38] Evangelos Thiani, "Call for ecclesial recognition of Bishop George Arthur Gatungu Gathuna: The founding father of the African Orthodox Church of Kenya," *Journal of African Christian Biography* (January 2021):2-27; Cf. Thiani, Call for ecclesial recognition of Bishop George Arthur Gatungu Gathuna (2019): 32-72.

George who was one of the three assistant Bishops to Metropolitan Frumentios of East Africa, was also the Vicar Bishop of Kenya. His work included working with the local Metropolitan and communicating everything from the Metropolitan to the people and vice versa. When it came to ordinations, Bishop Gathuna arranged and prepared the candidates that were approved of and forwarded to him by the national church council of elders; in which he was also a member, he would then work on a date, time and place for the ordination with the local Metropolitan. In two occasions he did all these, and the Metropolitan missed to attend the agreed-on ordination ceremony. Bishop George being in attendance and as an assistant bishop with no permission to ordain, only apologized to the candidate and the congregation in both occasions. Before the third occasion, Bishop George was put on notice by the local elders, that if the Metropolitan doesn't show up next time, he being a canonically consecrated bishop had to do the ordination.

These elders did not understand why an assistant Bishop would not be permitted to ordain, rather for them three things stood out. (i) The council of elders had agreed on the candidate and ordination date, and so it had to be done, (ii) if a senior most elder, like the Metropolitan, promised to do something, he had to do it no matter what, to save face and keep his public status inviolate, and (iii) *gutiri githinji utathinja;* meaning everyone old enough and who has gotten the right training can also do what their master does when the master is not around or is not able to do the work for some reason. With these traditional reasoning, which do not make sense in the Orthodox Church administration, but which, does in the African Gikuyu traditional leadership, Bishop George was forced to do the ordination on the third occasion planned by the elders, even without the blessings of the Metropolitan. This elder sanctioned ordination, without the local Metropolitan's blessings, became one of the accusations taken to the holy synod on November 1979 to add weight on the reasons for the defrocation of Bishop George.

Another predicament on leadership relates to the youth. The African traditional leadership is taught from tender age. The more mature you get the more you are exposed to important information and decision-making forums and responsibilities. This may seem very okay from one side, but it also means while the youth are taught and given leadership responsibilities, the same is limited and/or highly supervised. Youthful church members in the AOCK have their own association, led by their elected leaders, but supervised in each parish by a patron and a matron from among the adult church members. These adult members chosen by the youths or by the parish priest are to help mentor the young people as well as guide, supervise, and sanction everything they are doing. The youth leaders allowed in the parish council are mainly limited to

discussing matters concerning the youth and will in most instances be voiceless in discussing other matters, even though it is an unwritten rule. While this traditional system is limiting, it on the other hand exposes the youthful leaders to how their elders handle matters, helping them learn from them as they are mentored into future leadership. Nevertheless, such policing of the youth could make them timid in their contributions and growth.

Additionally, this leadership system may also be a problem for the church of this century and region. Africa is said to be the most youthful continent in the world, with 40% of its population aged below 15 years and 20% between 16-24 years.[39] In just 2010, 63% of Africa's population was below 25 years, with sub-Saharan Africa having a 72% youthful population,[40] a number expected to double by 2045.[41] The 2019 demographic census in Kenya noted that 75% of Kenyans are below 35 years of age,[42] the AOCK is not different from these demographics. This means that the current AOCK leadership in all levels should at least be having over 50% of its leaders being less than 40 years of age, but the reality on the ground as far as the Orthodox Church is concerned tells you different. Unfortunately, Africa is known for people not wanting to leave their positions of power. The Orthodox Church is universally also run by men of the older generations, which seems to resonate with this African concept of leadership positioning. If the current church leadership system insists on the older generation continuing with this same trend, even when research proves that there is dire need for fresh blood to take over, then the transition process for the next generation may have many missing links. This experience of older leaders not trusting the younger ones to take over successfully is not only shown in African church leadership, but also in national politics and even local village leadership, and thus the necessity of transformative training to such African leaders on the need for mentoring and preparing their successors.[43]

---

[39] OECD, African Economic Outlook 2012: Promoting Youth Employment (OECD Publishing, 2012): doi: 10.1787/aeo-2012-en; AfDB, African Development Bank Report 2012: Towards Green Growth in Africa (Tunis-Belvedere, Tunisia: AfDB, 2013).

[40] www.youth-policy.org

[41] Africa Economic Outlook, (2012): 99.

[42] Tonny Ndungu, "Out of 47.6 million Kenyans, 35.7 million are under the age of 35", 21st February 2020 Citizen Tv Digital https://citizentv.co.ke/news/out-of-47-6-million-kenyans-35-7-million-are-under-the-age-of-35-323822/ accessed on 20th January 2021.

[43] Richard J. Gehman, Learning to Lead: The Making of a Christian Leader in Africa (Wheaton, IL: Oasis International Ltd, 2008); Robert J. Priest and Kirimi Barine (eds.,), African Christian Leadership: Realities, Opportunities, and Impact (Cambria, UK: Tyndale House Foundation/ Langham Publishing, 2019).

If the AOCK will grow, it has to start developing youthful leaders and deploying them in existing positions. Having the right people to lead is important, and thus the need to seek and recruit future leaders as early as possible.[44] Christ exemplified youthful leadership in the church, himself being within this youth bracket when he started and climaxed in His ministry at His thirties. Christ also had a mixture of youthful and older men among His Apostles, showing how important recruiting and mentoring the youth is to church leadership.[45] The early church mentorship and leadership development borrowing from the example of Christ had a methodology of recruiting, selecting, training and deploying leaders.[46] One great example of such early church mentorship and leadership development is that of the young Athanasius in the fourth century under the tutorage of Archbishop Alexander of the ancient Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria.[47] Archbishop Alexander picked the young man Athanasius, made him a bold disciple of Christ, and then moulded him into a great theologian and spiritual leader. This young man would later be sent as a delegate to represent his Archbishop and the church of Alexandria in the first ecumenical council in Nicaea in AD325. The young Deacon Athanasius defended the faith of his mentor against the heresy of Arius, in a probably better way than his mentor, Archbishop Alexander. Athanasius would later succeed his master and mentor to become the 20th Archbishop of Alexandria, lasting for about 45 years as its primate. Such should encourage the AOCK to see that it is possible for them to trust and give leadership opportunities to youthful leaders with much success and not be restricted to the European and African models of church leadership.

The Agikuyu traditional leadership had for so long died out among many Gikuyu people of Kenya, except in few communities like those of the AOCK. When it was revived in the 1990s many Gikuyu men ended up joining their village council of elders (*kiama*). While the AOCK was part of the institutions that preserved this culture, it was also negatively affected by the excessive revival movement of the Agikuyu culture. This is because while some people

---

[44] Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004): 105

[45] Alton Chua and Pelham Lessing, "A Biblical Model of Mentoring with a Knowledge Management Perspective," *Conspectus* 15 (2013): 86-90.

[46] Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004): 95-102.

[47] Claudio Moreschini and Enrico Norelli, Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature: A literary History: Volume 2, From the Council of Nicea to the Beginning of the Medieval Period, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2005): 21-46; Hans von Campenhausen, The Fathers of the Church: Combined Edition of the Fathers of the Greek Church and the Fathers of the Latin Church (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1998): 69-83.

did the revival genuinely, others used it to create outlawed criminal gangs including the former *Mungiki* (crowd) and the current *gwata ndai* (riddle).[48] Such gangs are known to terrorize many citizens asking for protection fees from businesses and resident areas that they took control of. They also revived the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), traditional alcohol drinking practice, and snuff use among the Agikuyu, and further passionately taught against Christianity while propagating for the revival of the traditional religions.[49] While the government eventually managed to suppress these kinds of groups, they negatively branded the council of elders in the society and any institution connected to such including churches like the AOCK. The AOCK is been in the forefront to see that a more positive, progressive and transformed traditional council of elders is formed in society, rather than reviving any and all detrimental practices, just because they were practiced by the Agikuyu ancestors. Even as late as 2020, the AOCK is lost several young men to such groups and even saw several young families break due to the negative practices that come with this cultural revival including FGM, alcohol use, snuff use and gang lifestyle which these groups brought about.

4.2 Burials and Ecumenical Wakes in the AOCK

One of the mysteries that show how the African ethos leads the church into ecumenism and contextualization is burials and wake ceremonies in Kenya. It is common in most places in Kenya that when Christians die, a week or so goes by before they are buried. During this week of mourning, the Christians within that community regardless of their church, converge at the grieving family's home or their place of choice, anytime from the afternoon hours to late in the night to share in an ecumenical service that entails consolation messages, prayers, extra-liturgical chants, a homily, and essentially contributions towards the burial arrangements. While the Orthodox Church is strict in sharing in prayers with other Christian,[50] this ecumenical tradition is generally accepted even by the Kenyan Orthodox Christians with no question. When it is within an Orthodox home, the meetings start with a maximum ten

---

[48] Erik Henningsen and Peris Jones, "'What kind of hell is this!' Understanding the Mungiki movement's power of mobilisation," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* (2013): 371-388, https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2013.794532

[49] Jacob Rasmussen, "Mungiki as youth movement: Revolution, gender and generational politics in Nairobi, Kenya," *YOUNG* 18.3 (2010):301-319, https://doi.org/10.1177/110330881001800304

[50] Thomas F. Best and Dagmar Heller (eds.,) *So We Believe, So We Pray: Towards Koinonia in Worship* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995).

minutes Orthodox prayer session for the dead (the trisagion service), and then the ecumenical version is incorporated. On the day of burial, the Orthodox prayers for the dead are done, some extra liturgical chant follows with a homily, and finally some spontaneous off-the-head prayers towards the bereaved family are done by the main celebrant. Such action and prayers have become an ecumenically accepted addition within the AOCK. Rather than the canonical guidelines of the church, the ecumenical aspects are mainly led by the Ubuntu[51] mentality, which calls for communal unity and personhood, especially when one is in need.

Different cultures in Kenya have different practices when it comes to the dead. The Agikuyu of Kenya have a culture that is shy when it comes to viewing dead persons. Thus, during the burial service, the AOCK parishes in Central Kenya will have closed caskets, while those in Western Kenya shall be opened and all attendants will first come to pay their respect to the departed person before they take their seat during the burial ceremony.[52] Many will mourn and wail loudly to show that they were not involved in the death of the departed.[53] The procession to the grave after the burial service will in Central Kenya involve a short and fast journey while singing *Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy immortal…* in the sad grave mode. In Western Kenya, this procession is a full traditional dance and extra-liturgical dancing mixed with joy and solemnity, following the rhythm of the drums and other available instruments with the coffin in the shoulders of the family members who rhythmically swing from one side to the other. The censer leads the Church team, while the family is led by the bereaved family's young men carrying the coffin. The two groups; the church and family, part ways and then come from opposite directions. The church team from the gate, and the family team carrying the coffin from the homestead. They then meet at the graveside which is in most instances in the middle of the home, go round the grave thrice swinging the coffin as they continue singing. When the body is put on the grave, then the Western and Central region of Kenya shall have the same form, for they then do the final part of the Orthodox burial services with the prescribed prayers and actions for the grave side.

After the death of an Orthodox Christian there are several prescribed periods of doing memorial service prayers. The memorials are done on the first, third, sixth, ninth and fortieth day, and then the first, third, sixth and ninth month, and from there every day of the year that the person died and during

---

[51] Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me* (New York: Seabury Books, 2009).

[52] Joseph Malusu, *The Luyia Way of Death* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1978).

[53] Michael C Kirwen (ed.,), African Cultural Domains Book 1: Life Cycle of an Individual (Nairobi: MIAS Books 2010): 120.

the memorial Saturdays for all the dead during the Lenten and Pentecostarion seasons. The practice in Kenya is to commemorate the dead on the fortieth day, annually on the day the person died and during the Saturdays of the dead. Sometimes a parish may decide to be doing all the memorials of their departed one Sunday annually, and in most instances, such has no relationships with the memorial Saturdays.

These memorial services have in a way replaced some of the traditional practices and rituals among the Kenyan tribes. The Agikuyu custom of remembering and praying for the dead in the traditional way is one such forgotten practice among the Orthodox Christians.[54] Before the colonial era, after a person died, the Agikuyu would dispose of the body by throwing it in the distance bush away from other people. This practice was changed during the colonial era, where the practice of burying the dead within the family land or homestead was picked up, mainly from the missionaries. The newly departed among the Agikuyu like in most African cultures are considered to be living among the ancestors watching over the living, while those who are named after them are considered as taking over their legacy on earth, a nominal reincarnation.[55] Some times after the burial, the bereaved family would do a *hukuro* (unearthing) by slaughtering a goat that would be eaten as they invoked the spirit of the dead person asking them to sleep in peace with the ancestors and not to disturb any of their living relatives, friends or neighbours in their dreams or even avenge themselves for whatever wrongs the living may have done against them while alive.[56] This practice of *hukuro*, is not seen among the Agikuyu of the Orthodox Church in Kenya anymore, rather the Orthodox memorial service seems to have completely replaced it, even in these days of traditional rituals revival among the Agikuyu.

4.3 Instrumental led dancing and extra liturgical songs

The "musical praise of God is emphasized by the worship of the church", while order, theology, and the church's message within the musical poetry and chant forms is intensified by the melody.[57] For this reason, the Orthodox Church has pride in the diverse liturgical chanting in various local churches. Although

---

[54] "Death and Disposal of the Dead" in Leakey, *The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903*, vol.2 (2007): 937-991.

[55] Michael C. Kirwen (ed.), *African Cultural Knowledge: Themes and Embedded Beliefs* (Nairobi: Maryknoll Institute of African Studies, 2005): 15-63

[56] Leakey, *The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903*, vol.2 (2007): 977-980

[57] Hilkka Seppälä, The Song of Fire and Clay: Perspectives of Understanding Orthodox Church Singing (Joensuu, Finland: University of Joensuu, 2005): 63-64.

the existing Orthodox forms of music seems to be variants of the monophonic Byzantine-Greek hymnography and the polyphonic Slavonic hymnography, they sometimes move quite far off their original source to create original orders and sounds. [58] Several local churches have their preferred chanting forms depending on where one is in church. The autocephalous churches are almost divided in half on the kind of church music they employ even though with variants. Albania, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Cyprus, Greece, Jerusalem, and Romania are among the churches that use the Byzantine-Greek church music, while Bulgaria, Czech-Slovakia, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Moscow, Poland, and Ukraine uses the church Slavonic form of music. Nevertheless, this does not mean one cannot find variants. For example in Romania, some churches use the Byzantine mono voice and others the Western four voices chant; while Finland, Georgia, Serbia and Bulgarian are each uniquely styled to form their local church music traditions, and are therefore no longer truly Salvonic.[59] Even with the wide varieties, the common practice of not using instruments, which are considered an Old Testament ideal, and in their stead the use of the original God-created instrument, that is humans, seems to be a widely accepted practice in Orthodox chanting universally, especially among the Byzantine chanters.[60]

The AOCK follows the Byzantine-Greek monophonic chant, although with a few variants created in the formative stages of the church in Kenya due to the lack of a byzantine music guides. The church music instructors that have influenced contemporary Orthodox church music in Kenya includes the late Patrick Masiza and his successor Evans Aseneka. The late 1980s and early 1990s, saw the Orthodox Church in Kenya loose so many members to the Pentecostal and Evangelical churches. This was according to those who left because of the "boring" church music and unfocused homilies. Those leaving the church mentioned that the Orthodox Church was too boring for them, with others mentioning they did not feel alive when in church. On matters music, the clergy then were very strict, and categorically rejected instruments, dancing or singing of extra liturgical religious songs in the Orthodox parishes. Those who

---

[58] Cf. Ivan Moody and Maria Takala-Roszczenko (eds.,), Unity and Variety in Orthodox Music Theory and Practice: Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Orthodox Church Music at University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Finland 6-12 June 2011 (Jyväskylä, Finland: International Society for Orthodox Church Music, 2013).

[59] Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity, Volume 3: The Architecture, Icons, and Music of the Orthodox* Church (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2014): 337-341

[60] Hilkka Seppälä, "The unity and variety of church music traditions: a theological view," in Moody and Takala-Roszczenko, *Unity and Variety in Orthodox Music Theory and Practice:* (2013):56-62.

left as well as those who remained concurred that the liturgy was too boring for an African, resembling funerals where the mood was low key and people recited liturgical words without truly understanding or caring about them.[61]

After the mass-exodus of laypeople, the Kenyan clergy and the hierarch then decided to review their stand and accepted instruments, extra liturgical music and dancing after the divine services, an approach that saw some of the AOCK members who had exited return and put a stop to the exodus. Since then, the AOCK accepted the use of non-Orthodox music and chants, instruments and dancing with one's entire body including jumping up and down, moving back and forth, and spinning and rotating around the church, while playing extra-liturgical music. This kind of emotional and physically engaging chant is considered naturally African,[62] with the locals picking up easily and fast, confirming the same. Such is equally very foreign to the Orthodox traditional church music. Some Orthodox Christians in Kenya may not even know their church music well, while almost everyone is conversant with the extra-liturgical chants and dancing done after the divine services. This involvement of African melodic music in the church has increased church attendance, participation and faithfulness to the faith within the AOCK, results complimented by similar studies elsewhere in Africa.[63]

Converts into the Orthodox faith since this kind of music was introduced, are said to find it easier to join the Orthodox Church, than the converts before the acceptance of local music. This is because they can already manage to participate in the extra-liturgical music, soon after converting and not feel out of place, as they slowly learn of the Orthodox music and way of chant. This makes music one of the most influential elements and medium of evangelizing and mission that the Kenyan church has.[64]

The liturgical chanting culture in the Orthodox Church in Kenya is that of the entire congregation chanting throughout the services. While this is a joyous thing to see, the difference arises when the communion chants are replaced with extra-liturgical chants, accompanied by hand clapping, drums and other traditional and modern musical instruments. Joy feels the entire congregation and is shown in the glowing faces of the congregants. Even those not formerly singing along in the divine services are seen to be fully awake at this juncture.

---

[61] Cf. Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in* Africa (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2004): 31-32

[62] Morakeng E.K. Lebaka, "the value of traditional African religious music into liturgy: Lobethal congregation" *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 71(3): 1, Art. #2761, 6 pages. http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts. v71i3.2761.

[63] Lebaka, "the value of traditional African religious music into liturgy."

[64] Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 4.

The Body and Blood of Christ is received with the highest of joy, not only because it is the climax of the second part of the Orthodox Eucharistic service, but more so because the music resonates with the local cultural chant and dance. It is disappointing that such joy is not seen when singing the Orthodox chants in the rest of the Divine Liturgy. This shows the disconnect of the Byzantine-Greek style of church music and the African mode of music, thus the need to re-look at the way of doing church music in Kenya.

Africans have in the past and present used music in transmitting information, as well as accompany every aspect of their life including working, religious-cultural ceremonies, prayer, births, weddings, funerals, praising warriors, families and leaders among others. This makes the African culture not only orally oriented but also a singing society, which like the psalmist (psalm 150), believes that the more they use their voices and bodies in singing and dance, the more they show they are alive and appreciative of being alive.[65] What then is unique about the African music that is so essential for the Kenyans to want it entrenched in their faith?

> Some say it is communal and inviting, drawing in a range of consumers young and old, skilled and unskilled. It allows for the spontaneous and authentic expression of emotion. It is integrated with social life rather than set apart, natural rather than artificial, and deeply human in its material significance. Its themes are topical and of sharp contemporary relevance, sometimes humorous and satirical, sometimes sad and affecting, often profound. Thoughtful observers celebrate the close affinities between language and music, marvel at the extraordinary intellectual acumen displayed by lead drummers, song crafters, and instrumentalists, call attention to musicians' clever use of iconic modes to signify, and above all perhaps, proclaim the subtle and intricate domestication of a broad range of temporalities in African music- from the syllabic, speech mode employed by talking drummers to the mesmerizing, endless melody of *mbira virtuousi*. Obviously, then, little effort is required on the part of Africans to produce reasons for wanting to celebrate the extraordinary range and depth of their musical-artistic resources.[66]

---

[65] Peter Mbede, "the influence of music in theologizing in African churches" One Planet Publishing & Media Services Ltd 2.1 (2018): 138-150 URL: http://dspace.pacuniversity.ac.ke: 8080/123456789/1579

[66] Kofi Agawu, Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions (New York/ London: Routledge, 2003): xi.

Orthodox mission initiatives are expected to be aware that while music is universal, the way it is done differs, and additionally explains a people to their core anthropologically, psychologically, and ethnologically. Human music involves tonality (fixed scale systems), "rhythm (a steady succession of beats), harmony (sounds produced at the same time)", and the history of where it hails, all which is integrated in a people's way of life, evoking joy or sadness in society gathering, religious and even political ones.[67] This is probably the challenge all Euro-American church music meant for use in Africa has been incompatible with the African rhythm and tones, even after much work is done on them, while the ones used by the African Indigenous/Independent Churches fits perfectly.[68] The kind of African music, their style of music and dance, and their values for the same are unique to Africa and thus in order for church music in such a place to speak to the locals, and for the locals to truly express their prayer and worship to God, there is need for Orthodox church music to be Africanized.[69] This goes to emphasize that the Orthodox Church cannot ignore the role church music plays in the spirituality of a people. At the same time, the disconnect of the current Orthodox liturgical music in Africa and the local way of doing and appreciating music, needs to be discussed further with a goal to contextualize Orthodox liturgical music and services to speak to the African soul and to allow authentic worship and praise of God by the Africans.

4.4 Saints and Iconography

The church exists to produce relics, out of the glorified saints that reached theosis. Icons, the depiction of Christ, the Theotokos, glorified holy persons and their feasts, are mainly done on wood, paper and walls. These icons and the relics of these holy persons are among others used for veneration and memory of their works and teachings in the Orthodox church. One of the easiest ways to identify an Orthodox Church or the premise of an Orthodox faithful is through the presence of icons. Iconography is therefore an important and common element in Orthodox spirituality, worship and life. The Orthodox Church in Kenya has mainly borrowed, received and bought icons from Orthodox parishes, monasteries, establishments, and persons abroad. These icons come in all shapes and sizes including new or old, small or big, copy or original, paper or painted, among others.

---

[67] Roberta Edwards Lenkeit, *Introducing Cultural* Anthropology, 3rd edition (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2007): 284-285

[68] Madimabe Mapaya, "Music traditions of the African Indigenous Churches: A Northern Sotho case Study," *Southern Africa Journal for Folklore Studies* 23.2 (2013): 47 [46-61]

[69] John Miller Chernoff, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms* (Chicago, IL/ London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979); Mbede, "the influence of music in theologizing in African churches (2018): 142.

While icons are highly important in Orthodox worship and spirituality, there are a few characteristics that make them challenging within the Orthodox church in Kenya, a reality that is also noted elsewhere in Africa. Usually, the inscriptions explaining who the saint or feast the icon is about, are written in the language of the country they come from, with most not in languages that the Kenyan Christians would understand. The icons in Kenya have inscriptions ranging from 98% in Greek, 1% in Finnish, 0.5% in English, Old Slavonic, Russian and Romanian, and 0.5% in Kenyan languages. The other disconnecting characteristic involves colour. The traditional colours of most Orthodox icons are dull in nature, to highlight the low key of the saintly life. Furthermore, even when the icons are depicting African saints, their skin colour is still highly European if not Middle Eastern.

The locals not understanding what the icon are all about due to language barriers, the lack of flashy and bright colours in the icons, which the Africans associate with holiness and not the dull ones, and the fact that no Africans that resemble them are noted or depicted as saints make the locals see the icons as foreign. This does not mean the icons are not respected or hang in the homes where they are available, but rather that there is relaxed venerations and religiosity of icons among the Africans. The exception are expatriates, most first-generation Orthodox Christians in Kenya, theologians, and very few from the other generations. This disconnect can be seen when the AOCK Christians enter or leave the church without venerating the icons, or the common hanging of icons high up where no one has access to venerating them, or the lack to identify uncommon icons in their homes or parishes.

Severally, the church is found a few people who were interested in writing icons for the African Church. Some were foreign missionaries and others were local iconographers who studied the art of iconography in Greece or Cyprus and some in Kenya through visiting iconographers. The few local iconographers that have tried making icons in Kenya have mainly failed to fulfil their expectations. Such failures are blamed on the lack of materials, the high cost of the available replacement raw materials, and the fact that most parishes would rather get free icons given by the diocesan offices rather than buy the original ones such iconographers make. Some of the greatest contributions of iconography were by Mama Stavritsa Zachariou an America-Greek missionary who lived in East Africa from 1979 till her death in 2000. She did the very first icons inscribed in local languages including Kikuyu, Luhya, Kiswahili and English. She taught several young men and women how to do Greek style iconography, but none really managed to continue in her footsteps. Her iconography is highly visible in some Kenyan, Ugandan and Congo churches. The Finnish mission to East Africa starting from the visit of Bishop Johanness (later Archbishop of Finland) in March 1974, saw visits and sending of Finnish missionaries in Kenya

and Uganda including Siina Taulamo, Teacher Maria Iltola (later Abbess Marina of Lintula Convent), Pirkko Siili, Nurse Leena Hijanen, Nurse Liisa Kyöstilä, Deacon Timo Lehmuskoski, Anja Hakonen, Fr Steven and his wife, Fr Johanness Charles Eko and the non-Orthodox project Manager Jouko Järviö. These missionaries brought some Finnish style icons to Kenya and also had some locally made, with inscriptions in Finnish, English, Kikuyu and Luhya languages.[70]

Some of the renowned local iconographers included George Wakibe Ndiguitha (b.1942 in Loitoktok - d.17th July 1993 in Kiambu) a resident of Banana Kiambu County, who was an experienced artist and the first Kenyan iconographer to return from Greece. George did a few Byzantine icons with English, Greek and Kikuyu inscriptions which are based within Nairobi and Kiambu County churches. Two other local Orthodox iconographers that were truly talented in art and went for studies in Greece and Cyprus were two Western Kenya artists, Joseph Matanyie Chasia and David Musambi. The iconography of the last two can be seen at the Seminary Chapel. The three Kenyans did not do iconography for long after their return to Kenya due to reasons explained earlier.

The other Kenyans that learnt the art of iconography are students that were taught under the joint project of Filantropia and Valamo monastery-Finland to assist the AOCK. The project brought one of the highly talented Greek and Russian style contemporary iconographers of the Orthodox Church of Finland, Antti Narmala, to the Orthodox Seminary in Nairobi, Kenya. While in Nairobi, Antti gave an intensive course on iconography to about twenty students from the willing seminarians from various African countries with the majority being Kenyans, and a few local Kenyan Orthodox artists. While the preparations and fund raising happened way before, the main intensive program commenced on 22nd September 2017 and ended with the student's graduation on 7th October 2017. These students would concurrently go through some intensive iconology lessons, confession, spiritual guidance and daily morning and evening services done under Fr Evangelos Thiani; the Kenyan coordinator of the program. From this class of different African nationalities, local artists Samuel Njoroge Kirai (Muguga) and Andrew Njoroge Kamau (Nakuru), showed exceptional iconographic talents. To gift Antti, Archbishop Makarios said the Mount Athos version of the prayer of consecrating an iconographer upon him on 8th October 2017 at Holy Trinity Muguga. It was this team under Antti and Fr Evangelos that did the very first fully African contextualized iconography in using local materials, bright colours and inscription language in various African languages including Buganda, Kikuyu, Kirundi, Luhya, Luo, Rwandese and Swahili among others.

---

[70] Jaako Lounela, Mission and Development: Finnish Pentecostal, Lutheran and Orthodox Mission Agencies in Development Work in Kenya 1948-1989 (Turku: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2007): 217-253.

4.5 Translations

Translating the message remains one of the most important aspect of contextualization, without which it would be difficult to evangelize or maintain the converted. Speaking, reading and hearing in the vernacular has always touched deeper than doing the same in a foreign language. As Bevans explains, "every model of contextual theology is a model of translation,"[71] thus the need to translate in the best way and form available for each context. The AOCK has had many translations done in various local languages. These translations are mainly done from Greek and English texts. Some were done by foreign missionaries and others by locally ordained and lay Christians.[72] The 1930s-1960s liturgical and theological translations in Kenya were led by Archbishop Daniel William Alexander of South Africa, Bishop George Arthur Gathuna of Kenya and Fr Nicodemos Sarikas of Asia Minor, the ones of the 1960s-early 1990s were led by Bishop George of Kenya, Fr Obadiah Bassajakitalo of Uganda, Fr Chrysostomos Papasarantopoulos of Greece, Acting Archbishop of East Africa Anastasios Yannoulatos and Mr Peter Kahuho of Nairobi; while the ones of the mid-1990s to the present were led by Archbishop Makarios Tillyrides of Nairobi, the seminary students and the clergy leaders of the concerned communities.[73] At the moment the AOCK has a translations department that is led by Fr Raphael Kamau and Ms Esther Kibe, who have undergone professional translations training under a translations expert from the USA, Dr Michael Colburn of the *Orthodox Christian Mission Centre* (OCMC). While much needs to be done on translating liturgical and theological books, the basic texts are widely available, most of them being reprinted annually if not bi-annually due to the growing demand.

One of the most fundamental Christian documents that needs translation in new mission cultures is usually the bible. Up until now, the AOCK churches and Christians use the biblical translations produced by Western Christian translation institutions for their church/liturgical and home/personal use. Nevertheless, in the 1980s the AOCK had Samuel Kiaraho, the current professor of biblical studies at the Orthodox seminary in Nairobi, as a translator at the Bible Society of Kenya. While this helped offer some Orthodox understanding and influence in the translations produced by the largest, most used and influential bible translators in Kenya, it was never enough. The deuterocanonical books as expected in the Orthodox bible are not available in the Kenyan local languages,

---

[71] Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Cultures*, revised and expanded ed., (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002):37-53.

[72] F.B. Welbourn, *East African Rebels: A Study of Some Independent* Churches (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1961): 90.

[73] Thiani, Call for ecclesial recognition of Bishop George Arthur Gatungu Gathuna (2019): 58-59.

rather some Roman Catholic translations are what are mainly used where available. The gospel books found in most AOCK altar tables are usually in Greek, with limited bilingual editions of English and Greek. During the liturgical readings, other local bibles are used, while the gold or silver covered scripture at the altar table remains a mysterious decorative book lying on liturgical tables and used in processions. To alleviate this, the Easter of 2011 saw the AOCK produce a bilingual gospel book in English and Kiswahili. This was initiated by Archbishop Makarios Tillyrides, but done by his two assistants; Fr Raphael Kamau and Ms Lydiah Gatwiri. These much-appreciated leatherbound gospel book is not an original translation but rather a cut-and-pasted Western translations of the English and Kiswahili Western translated bibles, which has greatly replaced most of the Greek gospel books on the AOCK churches altar tables, giving the locals a feel of the Orthodox gospel book as arranged according to the lectionary and Feastal readings.[74]

The official translations of the entire bible; from the Septuagint and with an Orthodox *phronema* (mindset), is still highly needed considering how much the bible is used by the Orthodox in Kenya.[75] Since not many theological or spiritual texts are available for the locals, the way the bible is used by the AOCK clergy and laity is very close to the model of the Church Fathers, more so their excessive use of the Old Testament and the Epistles in their long homilies.[76] These Kenyans read the bible at home on a daily basis, constantly preach long biblical homilies, and teach from scripture almost at every church, social, political economic, cultural and all other community event. The excessive use of the Old Testament in all these is common, more so because it has narratives that are very close to the local African cultures. If not for liturgical reasons and the spiritual edification of the Orthodox in Kenya, the fact that some biblical translations are far from the Orthodox ecclesial understanding is a reason to expedite such an effort of producing an official Orthodox translation of the Old and New Testament bible for use in church and Orthodox homes.

4.6 Pastoral Staff and Relics

The Orthodox bishop's pastoral staff /crozier (*poimantike rabdos* in Greek) and the relics of saints are highly contentious among many adherents of the AOCK. Some insiders and outsiders have interpreted their use in church as

---

[74] Archimandriote Job Getcha, *The Typikon Decoded: An Explanation of Byzantine Liturgical Practice* (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimior'ss Seminary Press, 2012): 53-66.

[75] John Breck, Scripture in Tradition: The Bible and its Interpretation in the Orthodox Church (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001).

[76] Christopher A. Hall, *Learning Theology with Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002); _____, *Reading Scripture with Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998).

demonic, while others have even left the Orthodox faith citing the same. While the two practices are still accepted and given a chance to continue, they raise very unpleasant conversations with the locals both the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox.

The *poimantike rabdos* is a long metallic rod with a cross and two serpents on the top, which carry several symbolisms. The cross denotes the victory of Christ, the source of power for the staff holder amidst all the struggles of ministry. The two serpents facing each other on each side of the cross, signify the prudence expected of the bishop holding it, and serves as an indicator of the visible and invisible enemies of the church. The serpent and cross combination has also a connotation of Prophet Moses pre-Christ symbolism of the cross, when God instructed Moses to mount one bronze serpent and those bitten on looking at it got well and did not die (Numbers 21:9), while the cross is the post-Christ symbolism of victory and the fruits received by those who come to Him. "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him" (John 3:14-15). The arrangement of the cross being in the middle of the two serpents is visible in Psalm 110:2, "The Lord will extend your mighty scepter from Zion, saying, "Rule in the midst of your enemies!" During their enthronement, Orthodox bishops are awarded this pastoral staff, to denote the transfer of pastoral authority and shepherding of their respective dioceses with the words: "Receive this Staff to shepherd the flock of Christ entrusted to you. To the obedient let it be a help and a support. With it, lead the disobedient and the wayward to admonishment and instruction." While all these symbolism, explanations and prayers look fine, the problems only come when the locals look at it and see the two serpents. The African take on serpents is completely different from the biblical and European one.[77] The African understand serpents to represent evil, darkness, the devil and devil worship, and essentially paganism and therefore not considered a Christian symbol.[78] Therefore, any place with serpents is highly disassociated with God, and instead associated with devil worship and witchcraft.

The Orthodox Church has much appreciation for relics (the bodily remains of a saint). The presence of these relics and the veneration of the same is common in Orthodox parishes. Furthermore, out of the early church performing services on top of the tombs of martyrs, the church extended the placement of

---

[77] Robert Hazel, Snakes, People, and Spirits, Volume One: Traditional eastern Africa in its Broader Context (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019).
[78] Wilfrid D. Hambly, "The Serpent in African Belief and Custom", *American Anthropologist* 31(1929):655-666.

the relics of three different martyrs on the altar table of each Orthodox Church during its consecration.[79] This is imbedded in the canons that instruct the destruction of all altars with no relics (canon 91 of Carthage held on AD 418/9) and churches without relics being considered heretical (canon 7 of the 7th Ecumenical Council held in Nicaea in AD787). Religious persons carrying the bones of holy people like Moses and his predecessors did with the bones of Joseph (Exodus 13:19), the miracles realized through them like the case of the bones of Elisha resurrecting a man (2 Kings 2:8), the souls of martyrs living under the altar due to their testimony (Rev 6:9), and the fact that whatever the saints used or touched (Luke 8:40-48; Acts 19:11-12) or even their shadows touched (Acts 5:15-16) did miracles among others are not contested by the Kenyan Orthodox Christians, for God works through his servants whether they are living or not.

The challenge on relics among the AOCK adherents arises because bones of dead people in Africa have a history of being used in witchcrafts and demon possessed personalities, if not devil worshipers.[80] Thus, a majority of Africans fear even coming near relics even though they know they are of holy people. This reality can be noted by the fact that except the consecrated churches having relics inside the altars, no visible relics are placed in the AOCK churches for veneration or otherwise. This is except the case of Saint Makarios Seminary chapel altar in Kenya, which has a closed box with the relics of Saints Nymphodhora, Mynodhora and Metrodhora put there in 2005 after the parish of Kambaa which they were meant for returned them to the Archdiocese. Even at this seminary chapel, these relics are not presented for veneration. The other relics in Kenya are stored in relic boxes of the diocesan bishops, which are only opened when teaching students or in readiness for consecration of churches.

While the relics and their use cannot be changed, and the fact that they are rarely seen except during consecrations, maybe the *rabdos* for the African bishops can be made to not contain the serpents in the spirit of contextualization.

---

[79] Gus George Christo, The Consecration of a Greek Orthodox Church According to Eastern Orthodox Tradition: A Detailed Account and Explanation of the Ritual. Texts and Studies in Religion Volume 109 (Lewiston/ Queenston/ Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005): 15-46; Nicholas Cabasilas, The Life in Christ. English Translated by Carmino J. deCatanzaro (Crestwood, NY: St.Vladimir's Seminary Press,1974): 149-158.

[80] Cf. Bernard Gechiko Nyabwari and Dickson Nkonge Kagema, "The impact of magic and witchcraft in the social, economic, political and spiritual life of African communities", *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education* 1.5 (2014):9-18.

5.0 Conclusion

While this study has given a glimpse of how the African culture has moulded the Eastern Orthodox Church in Kenya, there is need for further studies on the same. Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos insisted having a comprehensive study of the context and cultures, so that the ethos and culture of the locals will not crush with the Orthodox tradition and ethos.[81] He makes it clear that there is a problem in the lack of contemporary Orthodox mission clearly studying their "mission lands" before sending missionaries. At the same time, he emphasized on the need for analyzing the cultures of Orthodox mission areas so that their ways are accommodated, the lack of which divisions and subsequent complications could arise as seen in the case of Kenya. In matters liturgical reforms, it is been identified that several things have brought reforms in the worship of the Orthodox Church.[82] This paper has strongly added and demonstrated that even

---

[81] Anastasios Yannulatos, *In Africa*: *Orthodox Christian Witness and Service* (Boston, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2015): 134-139.

[82] Alexander Schmemann, "Liturgical Theology, Theology of Liturgy, and Liturgical Reform," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 13 (1969): 217-224; Ionannis Fountoulis, "Liturgical Renewal in the Orthodox Church: Opportunities and Obstacles," (in Greek) *Kleronomia* 21 (1989): 325-334; John F. Baldovin, *Reforming the Liturgy: A Response to the Critics* (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo Book, Liturgical Press, 2008); Lewis J. Patsavos, "Ecclesiastical Reform: At What Cost?," *The Greek Orthodox Theological review* 40.1-2 (1995): 1-10; Nicholas E. Denysenko, "A Proposal for Renewing Liturgy in the Twenty-First Century," *Studia Liturgica* 40 (2010): 231-259; __, *Liturgical Reform After Vatican II: The Impact on Eastern Orthodoxy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015); ___, "Resourcemnet or Aggiornamento? An Assessment of Modern Liturgical Reforms," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 20.2 (2018): 186-208; ___, "Towards An Agenda for Liturgical Reform in The Byzantine Rite: A Response to Peter Galadza," *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* 3.7 (2010): 43-68; Pantelis Kalaitzidis, "Challenges or Renewal and Reform Facing the Orthodox Church," *The Ecumenical Review* 61.2 (2009): 136-164; __, "New Trends in Greek orthodox Theology: Challenges in the Movement Towards a Genuine Renewal and Christian Unity," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 67.2 (2014): 127-164; Paul Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual, and Reform: The Liturgical reforms of Nikon in the 17th Century* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Theological Press, 1991); ___, "The Liturgical Reforms of Peter Moghila: A New Look," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 29.2 (1985): 101-114; Pierre Sollogoub, "Why a Reform of the Established Liturgical Calendar and of the Easter Date is Necessary," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 60.1-2 (2016): 53-64; Peter Galadza, "Restoring the Icon: Reflections on the Reforms of Byzantine Worship," *Worship* 65 (1991): 238-255; ___, "Schmemann Between Fagerberg and Reality: Towards an Agenda for Byzantine Christian Pastoral Liturgy," *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* 3.4 (2007): 7-32; Stefanos Alexopoulos, "Did the Work of Fr. Alexander Schmemann Influence Modern Greek Theological Thought? A Preliminary Assessment," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 53.2-3 (2009): 273-299; Thomas Fitch (ed.,), *Tradition and Liturgy: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemann* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990); Thomas Pott, *Byzantine*

contemporary culture is one way that worship in the Orthodox Church is being shaped. Thus, diversity of forms of worship in the Orthodox Church should be expected to continue as the Orthodox Church meets new cultures.

There is also noted that some Orthodox Christians from outside Africa have their conflict with some Kenyan Orthodox practices. In most instances they even comment that such are very Protestant (Pentecostal and Evangelical) and none-Orthodox ways. There could also be some truth in this, considering that the Neo-Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in Africa have been noted as having much influence on all religious and social lives of the African Christians including of the mainline and locally initiated churches.[83] If that is the case, the Orthodox Church in Kenya could be said to have evolved to create not just an African culturally conscious church, but also a highly ecumenical and modernized Church.

This paper has also demonstrated several things concerning the Orthodox understanding and place of contextualization in the spiritual life of Orthodox Christians in Africa. One point emphasized across the paper is that contextualization and the church tradition should always be balanced, to avoid dividing the church for or against culture or church tradition. While the contextualization in this study maybe unique for the African continent, it is important for the Orthodox Christians in other countries to witness how the church has handled the issue of church and culture not only in the past but also in our contemporary times. The understanding of how cultural rituals and symbols are adapted and accepted in the North varies from that of the South, thus seeking for purity and simplicity as it were, and acknowledging that the mode of accepting one may not work for the other.[84] These pushes for the need to accept the diversity involved and further study of the ritual realities of new "mission lands".[85]

Liturgical Reform: A Study of Liturgical Change in the Byzantine Tradition, trans., Paul Meyendorff, Orthodox Liturgy Series book 2 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2010); __, "The Problem of A Common Calendar: Do We Need To Reform Our Liturgical Calendar Or Our Understanding Of The Time of Salvation," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 160.1-2 (2016): 79-89; Vladimir Khulap, "Pastoral Problems of A reform of the Liturgical Calendar in Russia," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 60.1-2 (2016): 65-77; W. Jardine Grisbrooke, "Liturgical Theology and Liturgical reform: Some Questions," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 13 (1969): 212-217.

[83] Damaris Seleina Parsitau, "From the periphery to the centre: the Pentecostalisation of mainline Christianity in Kenya", *Missionalia* 35.3 (2007): 83-111; Jonathan Kangwa, "Pentecostalisation of mainline churches in Africa: The case of the United Church of Zambia", *The Expository Times* 127(2016): 573-584.

[84] Bell, *Ritual* (1997): 217.

[85] Bell, *Ritual* (1997); Paul Bradshaw and John Melloh (eds.,), *Foundations in Ritual Studies: A Reader for Students of Christian Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2007).

Some of the lessons learnt in the contextualization models of the African Orthodox Church of Kenya include

- That the Orthodox church is struggling to merge the church tradition and culture in some respects and that the same church has succeeded in some contextualization aspect, while keeping silent or not having a straight up response to some issues. Some aspects are easily manageable, others if deliberated on could find answers, while others are so complex and may not find any answers.
- That all past mistakes by Kenyan Christians or the Christians from abroad are also an important part of this journey of learning how to merge the church tradition and culture in Kenyan Christianity, but also in how to handle contextualization in new mission lands.
- What have succeeded in the contextualization models in Kenya are useful models to be shared by missiologists of the Orthodox communities worldwide and beyond.
- No matter what, not all challenges of the church tradition and culture can be resolved.
- Doing nothing is also an answer to some gospel and culture problems. It is important to let time handle some things, especially when they are as contentious as some of the Kenyan issues raised above.
- The early church struggles in seeking for models of how to intermarry culture and the church tradition is similar to the African struggle. We can thus use this as a way to understand how the early church handled culture.

The tension between the Orthodox tradition and the African traditional cultures continue to this very day. As the African Orthodox Church of Kenya grows and evolves within the local and the global community much remains to be seen. One thing is for sure, that the church in Africa should be more proactive in how they handle contextualization to keep the faith and still make it accessible and fitting for the locals.

REFERENCES

Adam, Adolf, *The Liturgical Year: Its History and its Meaning after the Reform of the Liturgy*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1981.

Agawu, Kofi, *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions*, New York / London: Routledge, 2003.

Alexopoulos, Stefanos, "Did the Work of Fr. Alexander Schmemann Influence Modern Greek Theological Thought? A Preliminary Assessment," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 53.2-3 (2009)

Alfeyev, Metropolitan Hilarion, *Orthodox Christianity, Volume 3: The Architecture, Icons, and Music of the Orthodox* Church, Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2014.

Baldovin, John F., *Reforming the Liturgy: A Response to the Critics*, Collegeville, MN: Pueblo Book, Liturgical Press, 2008.

Battle, Michael, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me,* New York: Seabury Books, 2009.

Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Behr, John, *The Nicene Faith: Formation of Christian Theology,* vol.2, part 1 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004.

Behr, John, *The Way to Nicaea: Formation of Christian Theology,* vol., Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001.

Bell, Catherine, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Best, Thomas F. and Heller, Dagmar (eds.,) *So We Believe, So We Pray: Towards Koinonia in Worship,* Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995.

Bevans, Stephen B., *Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Cultures*, revised and expanded ed., Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002.

Black, Lydia and Arndt, Katherine L. (eds.), *A Good and Faithful Servant: The Year of Saint Innocent: An Exhibit Commemorating the Bicentennial of the Birth of Ioann Veniaminov 1797-1997*, Alaska: University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska State Museum, and Robert C. Banghart & Associates, 1997.

Bobrinskoy, Boris *The Compassion of the* Father. Anthony P. Gythiel trans., Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003, 168.

Bradshaw, Paul and Melloh, John (eds.,), *Foundations in Ritual Studies: A Reader for Students of Christian Worship*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2007.

Breck, John, *Scripture in Tradition: The Bible and its Interpretation in the Orthodox Church,* Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001.

Cabasilas, Nicholas, *The Life in Christ.* English Translated by Carmino J. deCatanzaro (Crestwood, NY: St.Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974.

Cagnolo, Fr. C., *The Agikuyu: Their Customs, Traditions and Folklore,* 2nd ed., Nairobi: Wisdom Graphics Place, 2006

Campenhausen, Hans von, *The Fathers of the Church: Combined Edition of the Fathers of the Greek Church and the Fathers of the Latin Church*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1998.

Chernoff, John Miller, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms*, Chicago, IL/ London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979.

Chrestou, Panagiotes K. *Greek Orthodox Patrology: An Introduction to the Study of the Church Fathers,* Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2005.

Christo, Gus George, *The Consecration of a Greek Orthodox Church According to Eastern Orthodox Tradition: A Detailed Account and Explanation of the Ritual.* Texts and

Studies in Religion Volume 109, Lewiston/ Queenston/ Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005.

Chryssavgis, John, *The Way of the Fathers: Exploring the Patristic Mind*, 2nd revised and expanded edition, Minneapolis, MN: Light & Life Publishing Company, 1998.

Chua, Alton and Lessing, Pelham, "A Biblical Model of Mentoring with a Knowledge

Clapsis, Emmanuel, *Orthodoxy in Conversation: Orthodox Ecumenical Engagements,* Boston, MA/Geneva: WCC Publications and Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2000.

Cormack, Robin, "Art and Iconoclasm", in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, eds. Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon and Robin Cormack, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Dauenhauer, Richard L., *Conflicting Visions in Alaskan Education*, 2nd ed., Alaska: University of Alaska Veniaminov Bicentennial Project and Alaskan Native Knowledge Network, 1997.

Davis, Leo Donald, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology,* Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990

Denysenko, Nicholas E., "A Proposal for Renewing Liturgy in the Twenty-First Century," *Studia Liturgica* 40 (2010).

Denysenko, Nicholas E., "Resourcemnet or Aggiornamento? An Assessment of Modern Liturgical Reforms," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 20.2 (2018)

Denysenko, Nicholas E., "Towards An Agenda for Liturgical Reform in The Byzantine Rite: A Response to Peter Galadza," *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* 3.7 (2010).

Denysenko, Nicholas E., *Liturgical Reform After Vatican II: The Impact on Eastern Orthodoxy*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015.

Dvornik, Francis, *Byzantine Missions Among the Slavs*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970.

Fedwick, Paul Jonathan, *The Church and the Charisma of Leadership in Basil of Caesarea*, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1979.

Ferguson, Everett, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries,* Cambridge/ Grand Rapids, MI: William E. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009.

Fitch, Thomas (ed.), *Tradition and Liturgy: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemann*, Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990;

Florovosky, Georges, *Christianity and Culture*, Volume 2 in the Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1974.

Forell, George W., "Christ Against Culture? A re-examination of the political ethics of Tertullian", *American Society of Christian Ethics* 19 (1978)

Fountoulis, Ionannis, "Liturgical Renewal in the Orthodox Church: Opportunities and Obstacles," (in Greek) *Kleronomia* 21 (1989)

Galadza, Peter, "Restoring the Icon: Reflections on the Reforms of Byzantine Worship," *Worship* 65 (1991);

Galadza, Peter, "Schmemann Between Fagerberg and Reality: Towards an Agenda for Byzantine Christian Pastoral Liturgy," *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* 3.4 (2007)

Garrett, Paul D., *Saint Innocent: Apostle to America*, Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's
Seminary Press, 1979.

Gehman, Richard J., *Learning to Lead: The Making of a Christian Leader in Africa*,
Wheaton, IL: Oasis International Ltd, 2008.

Getcha, Archimandriote Job, *The Typikon Decoded: An Explanation of Byzantine
Liturgical Practice,* Yonkers, NY: St Vladimior'ss Seminary Press, 2012).

Giakalis, Ambrosios, *Images of the Divine: The Theology of Icons at the Seventh
Ecumenical* Council, revised edition, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions
vol.CXXII , Leiden/Boston, MA: Brill, 2005.

Githieya, Francis K., *The Freedom of the Spirit,* Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997.

Grisbrooke, W. Jardine, "Liturgical Theology and Liturgical reform: Some Questions," *St
Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 13 (1969).

Hall, Christopher A., *Learning Theology with Church Fathers*, Downers Grove, IL:
InterVarsity Press, 2002.

Hall, Christopher A., *Reading Scripture with Church Fathers,* Downers Grove, IL:
InterVarsity Press, 1998.

Hambly, Wilfrid D., "The Serpent in African Belief and Custom", *American Anthropologist*
31(1929).

Hazel, Robert, *Snakes, People, and Spirits, Volume One: Traditional eastern Africa in its
Broader Context,* Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019.

Henningsen, Erik and Jones, Peris, "'What kind of hell is this!' Understanding the
Mungiki movement's power of mobilisation," *Journal of Eastern African Studies*
(2013) https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2013.794532

Jenkins, Philip, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd ed., Oxford:
Oxford University Press, 2011.

Kalaitzidis, Pantelis, "Challenges or Renewal and Reform Facing the Orthodox Church,"
The Ecumenical Review 61.2 (2009)

Kalaitzidis, Pantelis, "New Trends in Greek orthodox Theology: Challenges in the Movement
Towards a Genuine Renewal and Christian Unity," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 67.2
(2014).

Kamuyu-wa-Kang'ethe, "African Response to Christianity: A Case Study of the Agikuyu
of Central Kenya," *Missiology: An International Review*, 16:1 (January 1988).

Kangwa, Jonathan, "Pentecostalisation of mainline churches in Africa: The case of the
United Church of Zambia", *The Expository Times* 127(2016).

Karlin-Hayter, Patricia, "Iconoclasm", in *The Oxford History of Byzantium* ed., Cyril
Mango, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 153;

Kenyatta, Jomo, *Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu,* New York: Vintage
Books, 1965.

Khulap, Vladimir, "Pastoral Problems of A reform of the Liturgical Calendar in Russia,"
St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 60.1-2 (2016)

Kirwen, Michael C (ed.,), *African Cultural Domains Book 1: Life Cycle of an Individual,*
Nairobi: MIAS Books 2010.

Kirwen, Michael C. (ed.,), *African Cultural Knowledge: Themes and Embedded Beliefs,*
Nairobi: Maryknoll Institute of African Studies, 2005.

Krauss, Michael E., "Alaskan Native Languages in Russian America", in Barbara Sweetland Smith and Redmond J. Barnett (eds.), *Russian America: The Forgotten Frontier,* Tacoma, Washington: Washington State Historical Society, 1990.

Leakey, L.S.B., *The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903*, 2nd unabridged edition, three volumes, Nairobi: Intra-Lab Services Ltd, 2007.

Lenkeit, Roberta Edwards, *Introducing Cultural* Anthropology, 3rd edition, Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2007.

Lounela, Jaako, *Mission and Development: Finnish Pentecostal, Lutheran and Orthodox Mission Agencies in Development Work in Kenya 1948-1989*, Turku: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2007.

M. Masango, M. "Leadership in the African Context", *Verbum et Ecclesia JRG* 23.3 (2002).

Madimabe Mapaya, "Music traditions of the African Indigenous Churches: A Northern Sotho case Study," *Southern Africa Journal for Folklore Studies* 23.2 (2013).

Magesa, Laurenti, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in* Africa, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2004.

Malphurs, Aubrey and Mancini, Will, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004.

Malusu, Joseph, *The Luyia Way of Death,* Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Management Perspective," *Conspectus* 15 (2013).

Mateos, Joan, The Evolution of the Byzantine Liturgy Part I: From the beginning to the Trisagion, in *John XXIII Lectures, Volume One. 1965 Byzantine Christian Heritage*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1966.

Meyendorff, Paul, "The Liturgical Reforms of Peter Moghila: A New Look," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 29.2 (1985)

Meyendorff, Paul, *Russia, Ritual and Reform: The Liturgical Reforms of Nikon in the 17th Century*, Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991.

Moody, Ivan and Takala-Roszczenko, Maria (eds.,), *Unity and Variety in Orthodox Music Theory and Practice: Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Orthodox Church Music at University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Finland 6-12 June 2011*, Jyväskylä, Finland: International Society for Orthodox Church Music, 2013.

Moreschini Claudio and Norelli, Enrico, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature: A literary History: Volume 2, From the Council of Nicea to the Beginning of the Medieval Period* Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2005.

Nyabwari, Bernard Gechiko and Kagema, Dickson Nkonge, "The impact of magic and witchcraft in the social, economic, political and spiritual life of African communities", *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education* 1.5 (2014).

Oleksa, Michael (ed.), *Alaskan Missionary Spirituality*, Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2010);

Oleksa, Michael, *Orthodox Alaska: A Theology of Mission*, Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992.

Parrat, John, *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Parsitau, Damaris Seleina, "From the periphery to the centre: the Pentecostalisation of mainline Christianity in Kenya", *Missionalia* 35.3 (2007)

Patsavos, Lewis J., "Ecclesiastical Reform: At What Cost?," *The Greek Orthodox Theological review* 40.1-2 (1995)

Pomazansky, Protopresbyter Michael, "Liturgical Books: From Manuscript to Print" in *History of Liturgical Texts.* https://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/liturgical_books_pomazansky.htm accessed on 15 August 2019.

Pott, Thomas, "The Problem of A Common Calendar: Do We Need To Reform Our Liturgical Calendar Or Our Understanding Of The Time of Salvation," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 160.1-2 (2016)

Pott, Thomas, *Byzantine Liturgical Reform: A Study of Liturgical Change in the Byzantine Tradition,* trans., Paul Meyendorff, Orthodox Liturgy Series book 2, Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2010.

Priest, Robert J. and Barine, Kirimi (eds.,), *African Christian Leadership: Realities, Opportunities, and Impact*, Cambria, UK: Tyndale House Foundation/ Langham Publishing, 2019.

Rasmussen, Jacob, "Mungiki as youth movement: Revolution, gender and generational politics in Nairobi, Kenya," *YOUNG* 18.3 (2010), https://doi.org/10.1177/110330881001800304

Rosberg Jr., Carl G., and Nottingham, John, *The Myth of "Mau Mau" Nationalism in Kenya*, New York and Cleveland, OH: Meridian Books, 1966.

Sandgren, David P., *Christianity and the Kikuyu: Religious Divisions and Social Conflict*, New York: Peter Lang, 2000.

Schmemann, Alexander, "Liturgical Theology, Theology of Liturgy, and Liturgical Reform," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 13 (1969)

Seppälä, Hilkka, *The Song of Fire and Clay: Perspectives of Understanding Orthodox Church Singing*, Joensuu, Finland: University of Joensuu, 2005.

Sman, Gert Jan van der, "Printing publishing in Venice in the second half of the sixteenth century," *Print Quartery* vol.17 No.3 (Sept 2000)

Sollogoub, Pierre, "Why a Reform of the Established Liturgical Calendar and of the Easter Date is Necessary," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 60.1-2 (2016)

Strayer, Robert W., *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa: Anglicans and Africans in Colonial Kenya, 1875-1935,* London/ Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1978.

Tachiaos, Anthony-Emil N., *Cyril and Methodius of Thessalonica: The Acculturation of the Slavs,* Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001.

Taft, Robert, "Liturgy of the Great Church: An Initial Synthesis of Structure and Interpretation on the Eve of Iconoclasm", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers 34-35,* Washington, D.C. (1980-1981).

Taft, Robert, "Liturgy of the Great Church: An Initial Synthesis of Structure and Interpretation on the Eve of Iconoclasm", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers 34-35,* Washington, D.C. (1980-1981).

Taft, Robert, *The Byzantine Rite: A Short* History, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992.

Talbot, Alice-Mary, "General Introduction", in *Byzantine Defenders of Images: Eight Saints' Lives in English Translation*, Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1998.

Thiani, Evangelos, "Call for ecclesial recognition of Bishop George Arthur Gatungu Gathuna. The founding father of the African Orthodox Church of Kenya," Ortodoksia vol.59 (2019).

Thiani, Evangelos, "The contribution of Daniel William Alexander to the birth and growth of Eastern Orthodoxy in East Africa," *Journal of African Christian Biography* 30.1 (2018).

Tignor, Robert L., *Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Kamba, Kikuyu and Maasai from 1900-1939*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976.

Walls, Andrew F., *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith,* Edinburgh/Maryknoll, NY: T&T Clark/ Orbis Books, 2002.

Welbourn, F.B., *East African Rebels: A Study of Some Independent* Churches, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1961.

Wellesz, Egon, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.

Williams, D.H., *Defending and Defining the Faith: An Introduction to Early Christian Apologetic Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Wybrew, Hugh, *Orthodox Feasts of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary: Liturgical Texts with Commentary*, Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000.

Yannoulatos, Archbishop Anasatasios, *Facing the World: Orthodox Christian Essays on Global Concerns,* Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003.

Yannulatos Anastasios, *In Africa*: *Orthodox Christian Witness and Service* (Boston, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2015.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

LOVING NATION, ENDORSING THE ECCLESIAL UNIVERSAL: A ROMANIAN PERSPECTIVE[1]

PAUL ANDREI MUCICHESCU[2]

ABSTRACT. This theological and philosophical article aims for a solution to the provocation of nationalism and offers a series of interconnected arguments for this purpose. In doing so it makes use of Romanian cultural realities and sources (stances of Dumitru Stăniloae, of Daniil Sandu Tudor and others, as well as dictionary entries). The considerations start from the topic of politics and of what politics consists of – ideology. Turning towards ecclesiology and social theology, the relationship between hate and phyletism is assessed. Considering this relationship, the analysis shows that, from an Orthodox point of view, true nationalism should be understood as a form of love – corruptible but legitimate. Ideological nationalism is identified as its opposite. The Gordian Knot of ideological nationalism is found to be a false understanding of "national interests". Finally, a second relation is investigated – the one between the national and the universal, seen from Romanian premises.

Keywords: nationalism, patriotism, universalism, One Church, identity, love, ideology, phyletism, autocephaly

---

[1] This article is based on a presentation held at the 2019 Annual Conference of the European Academy of Religion. It completes an older strain of research, which had its first written expression (with a different emphasis) in: Paul Andrei Mucichescu, 'Identitate națională şi ecclesială', *Studia Theologica Orthodoxa Doctoralia Napocensia* II, no. 2 (2019): 110–26. The mentioned EuARe conference paper, representing a draft, incomplete version of the present text, has been published by CEMES: Paul Andrei Mucichescu, 'Loving the Nation as Endorsing the Ecclesial Universal. A Romanian Perspective', in *National and Ecumenical Orthodoxy* (Thessaloniki: K. & M. Stamouli Publications, 2021), 125–43.

[2] M.A. (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin - philosophy, art history); graduate study in orthodox theology (Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca); currently „hibernating" PhD candidate in philosophy (Potsdam); active PhD candidate in orthodox dogmatics (Alba-Iulia), mucichescu@posteo.de

Introduction and structure

Motto: *"Lord! My people does not wash me off! I don't wash away my people!"*

(Nichita Stănescu)

"What is nationalism?" Seemingly, each possible answer to a "what is x?"– question is bound to the academic field answering it. However, in this particular case, the power of the stereotypical, unsophisticated answer is so impressive that the message of the political science fades and everyone feels entitled to an opinion. The present article will constitute a rather uncommon *theological* endeavour to find a way out of this pandemonium, following the footsteps of Father Dumitru Stăniloae. This approach concerning nationalism will start from contents which are being currently politicized into today's common sense. However, it will not strive for an exhaustive summary of the historical and political dimension of the topic. Rather, the arguments to be offered will consider the essence of things, from a perspective which declares itself to be radically opposed to ideology: The present approach will be a *Christian* one. But it will also be an Orthodox one and a Romanian one.

What is a nation? According to a definition wide-spread in popular culture and which is (Neo)marxist (some of its promoters will be indicated below), a "nation" is a recently developed "myth", sold to the masses by rulers; an instrument of exercising power over a territory which contains several ethnicities, most of which are discriminated against. Allegedly, it is a manipulative "narrative" which has led the world into two devastating wars. According to the other, almost-forgotten definition, which not long ago was still the textbook one in Romania and which during the '90s could also be found in the work of Adrian Hastings[3], "nation" stands for a people sharing a common specific (and written) language, religion, culture, long history and same ethnic origins (a people inside of which ethnic minorities can choose to integrate). By the way, to the same extent as any concept of "race" is extraneous to the one of a nation, the concept of the consciousness of belonging together is intrinsic to it. What Hastings' view stressed is the truth that the contemporary way in which the european nations are organized (i.e. in territorial, civic, ethnicly-inclusive and constitutional states) has been historically encouraged and even shaped by the Church. Hasting, a catholic priest and scholar, has made important steps in showing that the history of nations is the history of the Christian civilization. But it can be argued that his related definition of "nationalism" still lacked the indication of the essential element of nationalism. Instead of delivering it, Hasting mainly addressed the

---

[3] Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood. Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: University Press, 1997).

outline of what "nationalism" really means. By defining nationalism as the shared propensity towards establishing a nation-state, he only referred to a *manifestation* of that essential element, a manifestation bound to a specific historical stage. Not even *"deep horizontal comradeship" within a nation*, hits the nail on the head – a description made by Anderson[4], which Hasting has subsequently endorsed[5].

Before continuing, the kind of the present study should better be stated here, at the outset: This article started as a reaction to witnessing recent and current societal changes in Romania, through theological and philosophical lenses, a critical response which had the chance of being presented in the 2019 International Annual EuARe Conference. It started as an analysis by someone studying the theology of Dumitru Stăniloae and fairly familiar with Romanian history, as well as with many writings of the Romanian interwar-generation. The latter are authors which have recently been accused of holding far-right views. What those in power have made possible in 2015, through new amendments brought to the emergency ordinance nr. 31/2002, is the legal ban on praising most of the names which have brought the Romanian spirit to the level of universality, in what can be seen as a defence of communist verdicts. According to such a stance, admiration should be proscribed for anyone who was in any form linked to Romanian interwar right-wing politics *or* "ideas". Names like the ones of Noica, Eliade, Vulcănescu, Țuțea, Cioran, Vintilă Horia, Nae Ionescu, Fr. Gheorghe Calciu and so many others (perhaps even Eugene Ionesco according to some), can now be blacklisted. Today, perhaps influenced by popular neoconservative rhetoric, the latest trend whithin (Romanian) Orthodox theology is to consider anything that had- or has to do with nationalism to be tainted and "unchristian". To counterbalance this viewpoint[6], after taking in consideration the circulating fashionable views, the present contribution basically claims to identify the right (and forgotten) solution to the dilemma of dealing with nationalism. The tone of this article is slightly polemical, but its aim is the one of *inviting reactions* to the proposed solution, in order to arrive at the Truth of the matter by way of dialogue and concerted analysis.

---

[4] Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 7.

[5] Hastings, *The construction of nationhood*, 25.

[6] As an effect of such a point of departure in writing this research – societal conditions –, the text at hand has not followed the general path of first presenting an extensive scholarly material, thereafter discussing the issue and finally reaching a conclusion, all with the aim of going beyond what has already been said by contemporary scholars on the same subject. Most certainly, if the document "For the Life of the World" would have been published one year before it has been, the reflections of this article would have been triggered by it and would have adopted the usual pattern. (This introduction tries to compensate for this deficiency.) For the appraisal of the mentioned document, cf. section 3.3., below, including footnote number 81.

Returning now to the state of the research, Hastings' above-mentioned study should first of all be put in context. His important work can be considered a systematic critique of Eric Hobsbawm's Marxist treatise entitled "Nations and nationalism since 1780" (1991). With the passing of time, the latter became a reference work, for a series of reasons: It commented almost all the existing literature at the time of its publication; it contained many confirmed observations (e.g. the written vernacular being a trait of a nation, or patriotism naming attachment to an existing state entity); it was based on a largely objective terminological research; it expanded the Marxist idea of historical power play and social dynamics, which does have an initial appearance of being true. (For example, it asserted that in continental Europe it was "actually" the economy that has divided people into nations, after the fall of the empires; that linguistic unification always followed political unification, or that "actually" the state produces the nation and not vice-versa, the political bonds always being the driving force in "nation-building"). This latter work, John Breuilly's "Nationalism and the State" (1982), Ernest Gellner's "Nations and Nationalism" (1983) and Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities" (1983) represent the dominant but increasingly challenged[7] "modernist" view within nationalist studies. What this view basically asserts is the fact that nations emerged only in the 19th century and that nationalism is an instrument of power used by the elites (just like racism), an instrument owing much to religion, according to Hobsbawm.

Among the most recent approaches to nationalism, perhaps two stand out most. The first one is the Czech Marxist historian Miroslav Hroch's corpus of works (the latest addition being "European Nations: Explaining Their Formation", from 2015[8]). Much more moderate than Hobsbawm, he is one of the rare Marxists who do not consider a nation to be simply a cultural construct. To a certain degree, his comparative research of different historical instances of nation-formation can even be regarded as a sequel to Hastings' critique of the modernist view. One of the significant Hrochian concessions consists in the emphasis of the existence of a collective consciousness of the nation. The second notable approach consists in a survey of the immense (and increasing) number of theories about nationalism. It belongs to the Turkish scholar Umut Ozkirimli[9], and it focuses on theories developed since 1960. Ozkirimli classifies them as primordialist ones (with which the present perspective does sympathise

---

[7] For a relevant list of studies, cf. Hastings, *The construction of nationhood*, 8 seqq.

[8] Miroslav Hroch, *European Nations: Explaining Their Formation* (New York: Verso, 2015).

[9] Umut Özkirimli, *Contemporary Debates on Nationalism: A Critical Engagement* (Houndmills; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

but does not wholly embrace[10]), modernist ones derived from social theories, and ethno-symbolist ones (Anthony D. Smith etc.). He himself offers a new theory, centred on the claim that the essential element of nationalism is the rhetoric of "national interest", a rhetoric which "constructs reality"[11]. By way of an unexpected argumentative concourse, the current text also observes and analyses the latter element, with a big difference though: While Ozkirimli deems this element essential to nationalism (in general), the present argumentation assigns it to nationalism *qua ideology*, while claiming that the authentic sense of "nationalism" is another one, which the nationalist ideology only perverted.

Even more remarkable, from the viewpoint of this study, is a second existing critical stance against the concepts of nation and nationalism (besides the one vocal within nationalist studies). This criticism is raised by Orthodox theologians, both foreign and Romanian[12]. For instance, Cyril Hovorun, also famed for his views on another recent topic, holds that "protonationalist" and (even "Orthodox") "nationalists" typically *worship* either ethnic identity (for irenic, emancipatory or for violent, oppressive ends) or supra-ethnic "civilizations"[13]. His position and related ones consider nationalism to be "coherent with" ideology and confuse the true Life of the Orthodox Church with mundane Realpolitik. Such a move is also typical in Marxist texts. While opting for a more moderate tone in their ecclesiological study, Pantelis Kalaitzidis and Nikolaos Asproulis[14] still regard nationalism basically as the endorsement of a "chosen" nation or race, which stands in opposition to the universality and ecumenicity of Christ's Love. Focusing on the history of Orthodox peoples, Vasilios N. Makrides delivers a patient, balanced, lesser polemical- and more objective view of what he proves

---

[10] Cf. Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations And States: An Enquiry Into the Origins of Nations and The Politics of Nationalism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977).

[11] Özkirimli, *Contemporary Debates on Nationalism: A Critical Engagement*, 299.

[12] To name just one of the most recent Romanian contributions (one valuable also for reasons like including a brief survey of the myriad of works form the field of today's nationalist studies), take the following succinct scrutiny of Nichifor Crainic's life and work: Maxim Morariu, *The "Christian Nationalism" of Nichifor Crainic Reflected in His Work from the 4th Decade of the 20th Century* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2020), http://www.editura.ubbcluj.ro/bd/ ebooks/pdf/2659.pdf. Although formulated in a way one could call rather wanting, the text correctly indicates the historical sense in which "nationalism" stood for a messianic ideology which at times even tried to create a „secular religion" (p. 42). Unfortunately, what it fails to notice is that nationalism is not reducible to this concept. The present text will contradict Morariu's assertion of a „total contradiction between «nationalism» and «Christianity»" (ibd.).

[13] Cyril Hovorun, 'Nation-Building Versus Nationalism: Difficult Dilemmas for the Church', *IFIJISR Icoana Credintei* 6, no. 11 (2020): 5–16.

[14] Cf. Pantelis Kalaitzidis and Nikolaos Asproulis, 'Greek Religious Nationalism and the Challenges of Evangelization, Forgiveness and Reconciliation', in *Just Peace: Orthodox Perspectives* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2012), 68–89.

to be the endogenous tendency of the local Orthodox Churches to identify themselves "with the respective nations and concomitant national ideologies"[15]. According to him, nationalization (detached from chauvinism and other sorts of extremism) "should be rather regarded as normal, namely as the modern continuation of various pre-national Orthodox traditions"[16]. Still more striking is another statement from his concluding remarks – "nationalism [...] is neither a virus nor a heresy"[17]. In its basic form, this is a thesis also found in the present article (see part 2.2. below for its expansion). But in Makrides' context what is actually meant is a fatal development, much the same as today's globalist turn – a historical process which calls for an (unspecified) adaptation from the part of the Church. So despite his concessions, Makrides still considers nationalism to be an ideology, which sometimes came in tolerable forms. From the viewpoint of the text at hand, when nationalism is considered as an ideology, its staunch criticism, like the one of Kalaitzidis and Asproulis is more justified. The problem lies elsewhere: Even if all of the last three authors are right in pointing out that all our natural characteristics are "relativized" and transcended in the perspective of faith and salvation, as stated by Saint Paul[18], they do not clarify the way in which this *sublation* (cf. part 2.1.), this transfigurating surpassing is to be understood. This and all other shortcomings mentioned during this outline of the existing research will be addressed in the present contribution, in a rather surprisingly simple way.

But is an Orthodox Christian stance different from the mentioned ones even *conceivable*? Can the very possibility be imagined that these authors have missed an essential element? Isn't the christian *kerygma*, by definition anti-nationalist? Isn't Christianity supposed to give birth to a "new human" (Cf. Ephesians 2, 15; 4, 22-24) whose old bonds are "loosed" (Ps 116, 16)? As a final introduction to the present study, please consider the following conclusion of a certain analysis:

> "The christians have no country. One cannot take from them what they have not. Since Christendom must [...] constitute itself as a nation, it is itself national, though not in the old sense of the word."

---

[15] V.N Makrides, 'Why Are Orthodox Churches Particularly Prone to Nationalization and Even to Nationalism?', *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly.* 57, no. 3/4 (2013): 325–52. The current quote is form page 327.

[16] Makrides, 'Why Are Orthodox...', 349.

[17] Makrides, 'Why Are Orthodox...', 351.

[18] Kalaitzidis and Asproulis, 'Greek Religious Nationalism...', 71; Makrides, 'Why Are Orthodox Churches...', 327.

Its exact source is still irrelevant at this stage of the reflection. Taken to imply that the christians do not have an *earthly* Jerusalem (cf. "πατρίδα", Hebrews 11), and that their new "nation" is the Church, the point seems indeed correct. Because it oddly chooses proscribed words to describe the Church as the new people, it could be taken as a (pretty rough and dashing) missiological strategy for approaching the nationalists. But is its message really correct? Perhaps judgement can be easier passed when considering the way the quoted conclusion is being arrived at, which is the following:

> "[...] the Church alone is really non-ideological. [...] The life-conditions of the old society are already destroyed within the life-conditions of the neophytes. The neophyte is without property; his relation to his wife and children has no longer anything in common with the old family relation; [...his life] has stripped him of every trace of national character. Law, morality, religion, are to him so many old prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many old interests. [...] Christendom, the lowest stratum of our present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself up, without the whole superincumbent strata, which make up the official society, being blown up. Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of Christendom with the old domination is a national struggle, at first. The Church of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own old domination [...] up to the point where that war breaks out into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the old domination lays the foundation for the domination of the Church."

As one surely notices at least now, not only is this not a Christian text, but it is actually a modified version of the Communist Manifesto, describing criminal ideological principles. In these two quoted fragments, the words "workers" and "proletariat" were substituted by "Church", "christians", "neophytes" or "Christendom", depending on context, "bourgeois" was replaced by "old" or "old domination" and "the revolutionary class" by "non-ideological". No other modifications were made and the translation was made in strict accord with the original[19]. Leaving aside the convincing indictment that Marxism entails

---

[19] This is a personal translation. (No faithful English translation of these paragraphs could be identified.) The original text has been consulted in accordance with following reproduction and transcription: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifest Der Kommunistischen Partei*, ed. Deutsches Textarchiv Team, Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1. Auflage (London: Office der „Bildungs-Gesellschaft für Arbeiter" von I. E. Burghard, 1848), http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/show/marx_manifestws_1848 . The first fragment is quoted from page 14: "Die Arbeiter haben kein Vaterland. Man kann ihnen nicht nehmen, was sie nicht haben. Indem das Proletariat [...] sich selbst als Nation konstituiren muß, ist es selbst noch national, wenn auch keineswegs im Sinne der Bourgeoisie.". The second fragment

perverted Christian motifs, the truth is that all of these thoughts represent – to their core, i.e. structurally, syntactically even – nothing but a turn-over of the christian *kerygma* and a blasphemy. No similarity can exist between Marxism and the Christianity it must *annihilate* (something literally stated by Gramsci[20], for example) – neither relating to family, nor relating to nation, nor to anything else. This should be a starting point whenever theologically approaching these topics. In fact, one *can* take away from many Christians their identity, their social dignity, as well as the biological lives and the mundane future of their beloved, *in this world*, by means of brainwashing, but also by other violent means. But can the fifth commandment cease to apply *in this world*? Can the teaching about Gods *logoi* permeating all cultures be annulled? Such truths and norms have no "expiration date". As for blowing things up, "all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matthew 26, 52). The only real Revolution which existed in history and which made straight the paths for the Lord has been brought about by Christ Himself. The only true statement obtained within the text above after the substitutions is given in the most modified sentence: Indeed, only the essential Church, only true christian faith is non-ideological. *All ideology is the opposite of religion and also the opposite of true religion – of Christianity*.

From the Christian point of view, the present article will argue that nationalism should be understood as a form of *love*, which – like all forms of love – is easily corruptible. The positions that ascribe a nationalistic view of the

---

is qouted from pages 9 to 10: "[…] nur das Proletariat [ist] eine wirklich revolutionäre Klasse. […] Die Lebensbedingungen der alten Gesellschaft sind schon vernichtet in den Lebensbedingungen des Proletariats. Der Proletarier ist eigenthumslos; sein Verhältniß zu Weib und Kindern hat nichts mehr gemein mit dem bürgerlichen Familienverhältniß; die moderne industrielle Arbeit, die moderne Unterjochung unter das Kapital […] hat ihm allen nationalen Charakter abgestreift. Die Gesetze, die Moral, die Religion sind für ihn eben so viele bürgerliche Vorurtheile, hinter denen sich eben so viele bürgerliche Interessen verstecken. […] Das Proletariat, die unterste Schichte der jetzigen Gesellschaft, kann sich nicht erheben, nicht aufrichten, ohne daß der ganze Ueberbau der Schichten, die die offizielle Gesellschaft bilden, in die Luft gesprengt wird. Obgleich nicht dem Inhalt, ist der Form nach der Kampf des Proletariats gegen die Bourgeoisie zunächst ein nationaler. Das Proletariat eines jeden Landes muß natürlich zuerst mit seiner eigenen Bourgeoisie fertig werden […] bis zu dem Punkt, wo er [der mehr oder minder versteckte Bürgerkrieg] in eine offene Revolution ausbricht und durch den gewaltsamen Sturz der Bourgeoisie das Proletariat seine Herrschaft begründet".

[20] "[Communism was] the religion that was supposed to kill Christianity. Religion in the sense that it too is a faith, which has its martyrs and its practices; religion because it has replaced in the consciences of the transcendental God of Catholics the trust in Man and in his best energies as the only spiritual reality". Personal translation of the original: "[Il comunismo era] la religione che doveva ammazzare il cristianesimo. Religione nel senso che anch'esso è una fede, che ha i suoi martiri e i suoi pratici; religione perché ha sostituito nelle coscienze al Dio trascendentale dei cattolici la fiducia nell'uomo e nelle sue energie migliori come unica realtà spirituale" Antonio Gramsci, *Sotto la Mole (1916-1920)* (Torino: Einaudi, 1960), 228.

faith to the autocephalous Church are based on the premise that its "emancipation" was triggered by religious nationalism[21]. This is a non-evident generalisation which ought not be accepted as a premise. Actually, the system of autocephalies was established by the Church as a whole[22]. When assessing such matters, what primarily counts is the principle, not (eventual flaws of) the implementation. As it will be argued, two necessary distinctions should correct this fallacious premise. Their exposition will clarify the structure of this study and, in the end, the employed methodology.

The two distinctions referred to also structure the whole article: The first of them differentiates between two main meanings of the homonymous term "nationalism" – between nationalism qua ideology (which comes in four types), and nationalism as "love for one's nation". In part 1, a concept-analysis and a contrast with "patriotism" will prove the general legitimacy of the second meaning of "nationalism". The second distinction to be made is the one between the (self-evident) Christian impeachment of chauvinism and hate, on one side, and the official impeachment of ethnophyletism (1872), on the other side. This topic will be discussed in part 2, which turns towards ecclesiology and social theology, and assesses the relationship between hate and phyletism. Finally, part 3 ascertains the proper sense of universalism, valid for any cultural context. It briefly explores (or rather indicates) features of the Romanian universalism and it uses them to outline the meaning of (national) tradition(s). (Needless to say, no relation whatsoever exists between the use of "universalism" in such contexts and the errant *apokatastasis*-doctrine, which is improperly named in this way.) The issue of assuming one's national identity is investigated in a last step, in order to arrive at what the Church calls "the dignity of a nation" as a form of communion, endorsed even by Christ Himself. Nationalism in the sense advocated here is precisely this endorsement.

These main steps of the argument are often linked by answers given to adjacent questions. Part 2, for example, starts with an effort to clarify what "national" meant for the Church in the first stage of its history and with addressing the further question if (and through which means) the Church could still assist society today, so that grave ideological slides could be avoided.

---

[21] Cf. Cyril Hovorun, 'Nation-Building...', 10. According to Hovorun, Orthodox autocephaly is the result of the "nationalization" of religion. However, unlike what he believes, those persons who today confuse being Orthodox with being Serb, Bulgarian or Russian are in general not the Orthodox faitful. For instance, the large majority of those Germans who did hear about the Orthodox Church, when being informed that someone is Orthodox will always ask "Russian Orthodox or which other kind?". It is mainly the West that holds that the Orthodox Church has been split, while the Orthodox faithful usually have the consciousness of belonging to the One Church, at all times.

[22] Cf. Makrides, 'Why Are Orthodox Churches...', 336.

A final third subsidiary question answered there is if Christianity should be considered "valuable" because of being an alleged anticipation of modernism (as the neocons claim), or even of postmodern individualism and tolerance[23]. The three answers given in (and around) part 2.1. represent an intermediary step between introducing the second meaning of "nationalism" at the end of part 1 (in a context dominated by the issue of politics and ideology), on the one hand, and the love-hate pair and the conciliar impeachment of ethnophyletism in the 19th century, on the other hand. One last underlying aspect also remains only implicit in part 2: The sense of "universality" discussed there ("universal" as opposed to "individual") is still a superficial one. The aspect of universality becomes explicit only in part 3, which also gives its proper sense. In the course of part 2, merely its superficial sense is present – even if the contexts do already touch upon the aspect of the Church being καθολικός (universal). However, just like the latter attribute does not primarily point towards the entirety of peoples to be included in the Church, but to the wholeness (κατά, "down[wards]" and ὅλου, genitive of "whole") of the (undistorted) Teaching, so too intrinsically, the proper sense of "universal" (the one valid for any cultural context) does not just point to the opposing term "individual". It points to the spiritual level present in the (national) cultural traditions, which is *both* common to- and transcendent of- any of its manifestations. This is the reason why it is possible to dogmatically demonstrate and to liturgically confirm that the (non-ideological) concept of a *national culture* does not contradict the universalist claims of the Church. If the later goal has been achieved in this article, or if further reflection still needs to be undertaken, remains to be seen.

As it can be derived from the latter observations, the employed methodology will mainly be the one of *Orthodox Church Dogmatics*. In other words, the relation between the Church and nationalism will be seen "from above"; deduced conclusions will be measured against realities on the ground. The methodology used in understanding historical stances will follow the "principle of charity" and the Gadamerian "fusion of horizons". These will be used in approaching facts and historical perspectives on nationalism stemming from antiquity, Romanian middle ages, 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, of both secular and ecclesial nature, as well as in approaching the selected Romanian authors. Primarily four of them have been chosen in order to substantiate the view presented here – Mihai Eminescu, Dumnitru Stăniloae, Daniil Sandu Tudor, Mircea Vulcănescu[24].

---

[23] If classical modernity only cared about freedom (one that lead to the tens of thousands of guillotined frenchmen) and if the totalitarian modernity only cared about equality, postmodernism radicalizes both concepts, promoting an anarchist "correctness" and anti-elitism.

[24] Mihai Eminescu (1850-1889) studied philosophy and law in Vienna and Berlin and was employed upon his return as editor and journalist. He is the Romanian *national poet*, a title

1. The two meanings of nationalism

Ideologies are alive, in the same manner as languages are – but only ideologies shape languages. Languages don't shape ideologies. Nevertheless, they last longer, hopefully. Taken in the order of today's common sense, the first (and often only) meaning of nationalism is the ideology. What this article will endeavour to show is that the ideology named "nationalism" has given a name to a much older phenomenon and has tried to replace it. The corresponding second meaning will be introduced by way of analysing the Romanian understanding of nationalism.

Until recently, western politics was constantly moving towards the left. The bias present in the unfair labelling of the right as the "far-" right and of the far right as "ultra-" right was hardly felt at all. The public censorship of terms associated with a "conservative" stance extended in some places even to words like "mother" and "father". No wonder it seems impossible (at least in Europe) that "nationalism" could ever escape the stereotypical association with nazism and, generally, with *evil*. Nevertheless, nationalism still is occasionally recognised as being of two kinds – one linking nationality to *ius soli*, the other to *ius sanguinis*. However, things are complicated, indeed. Just like the laws of all contemporary states exhibit a mixture of these two, so does any form of nationalism. But as a rule, any form of nationalism "sold" to the public through politics is ideological and people should be aware of this.

In actual geopolitics one can generally count about four types of nationalist ideological stances, today. The most impressive one is called "exceptionalism". What it means is actually a sort of patriotism which reunites the right- and

---

assigned to him 1941 by George Călinescu (the greatest Romanian literary historian) in his *History of Romanian Literature* (cf. pages 371–402, where it is also stated that "while being highly Romanian, Eminescu is a great universal poet"). Nicolae Iorga, the most famous Romanian historian, called Eminescu "the full expression of the Romanian soul" (*Istoria literaturii române*, 1929, 167) and one of the Romanian philosopher Constantin Noica's books is entitled *Eminescu or thoughts about the complete man of the Romanian culture* (1975). The fact that because of its difficult translation Eminescu's oevre cannot reach an international audience is not something that affects his universalism, for reasons to be exposed in this article. Fr. Dumnitru Stăniloae (1903-1993) is best known for his Dogmatic Orthodox Theology (1978), for his work at the first Romanian translation of the *Philokalia* and for various commentaries on Church Fathers. Daniil Sandu Tudor (1896-1962) was a Romanian journalist and poet who became a monk. One of the victims of communist torture, he died at Aiud prison after being accused of high treason and crimes against the working class and the "revolution", for having organized the *Burning Bush* meetings. Mircea Vulcănescu (1904-1952), Romanian sociologist, economist and philosopher was also a public servant (1935-1940) and an official at the Ministry of Finance (1941-1944). He was condemned in a Stalinist-style trial for activities against the Soviet Union and he died as a martyr, also at Aiud prison.

left-wing descendants of U.S.-liberalism[25]. The second kind of nationalism seems to be the one vocal in states as dissimilar as Iran, China, India, Russia, Bolivia, Venezuela, former Libya, Syria and so on. This kind can generally be considered as the enduring attempt to challenge the dominance of the U.S. and to strive for sovereignty, autonomy or even for local and regional influence. This is arguably the type of nationalism Hungary, Czechia, Poland, Italy and even Britain have been recently attracted to, faced with the pressure of Bruxelles. This type is also an ideological kind because it is promoted and modelled by the political class, but this does not necessarily signify that it does not represent justified worries and aspirations of the people, to a fair level. The third type of nationalism is the intolerant one, advocated by all fundamentalist right parties. At state level, it is present in countries like Turkey, Saudi Arabia and, still increasingly, in Ukraine. How well these examples fit the model is certainly a matter open for debate.

---

[25] In *Realpolitik*, both of these descendants – neoconservatism and neoliberalism – "defend" the national U.S.-interest "globally", in an almost identical manner. (Admittedly, the 2017-2020 U.S. government was the first one since many decades not to initiate any new war.) Generally, the two follow the post-westphalian "humanitarian war" doctrine and the economic shock-doctrine, the latter usually through the structural adjustments prescribed by the I.M.F. and by the World Bank. At home, both defend the blending of the corporate power and the power of the (deep-)state. (Such corporations belong to Big Tech, to the military-industrial complex etc. While the neoconservatives do all of this usually straightforward, openly calling for protectionism and interventionism, arms race, full spectrum dominance and the right of a pre-emptive strike, the progressives tacitly continue the same policies, while also pretending to care about the distribution of income. In their narrative, this distribution is efficiently taken care by an entity called "the free market". The prophets of laissez-faire capitalism, like Milton Friedman, bear witness to this entity's ability to make the world a better place, once unleashed. This means privatising as much as possible – land, water, healthcare, infrastructure etc. This neoliberal stance encourages the world to "liberate" the capital from government regulations and constraints, claiming that economic freedom leads to political freedom. Meanwhile, it functions as the perfect cover for the accumulation of capital by the elites at the top of multinational corporations and it considers state interventions a threat to freedom because it would mean upholding collective decisions to the disadvantage of the individual ones (of the elites). In our neoliberal world, corporations regularly challenge health and environmental regulations qua "trade barriers" through the system of investor-state dispute settlement (within special courts, which are not bound to disclose the negotiations). They have all the resources to launch economic wars against those states which defend their own sovereignty against intrusive corporate politics. Those states in which neoliberal recommendations are not embraced and the demands of the american corporations are being refused, are either sanctioned or intervened into, with the stated reason of "restoring" or "establishing" "democracy". The bellicose rhetoric and the start of the interventions often belong to the neoconservatives, because their electorate doesn't need cosmeticized reasons, but the democrats follow the same direction (cf. Libya, Syria). In the end, bipartisan intentions are satisfied. The only real political disagreement in the U.S. is caused by the neoconservative rejection of abortion, of immigration and, to some extent, of gender-ideology.

Finally, a paradoxical fourth kind encourages *hating* everything which falls under the banner of nationalism of any sort, along with the nations in which it persists, and even deems it "relativist" for allegedly existing only by resenting others[26]. This fourth kind presents itself in great contrast to nationalism and brands itself enlightened "patriotism". It supports maintaining the status quo of the borderlines (for reasons constantly diminishing in strength, because it increasingly regards borders as having been randomly established by an act of raw power). It also regards the nation not to be determined by the majority (even though it asserts its enriching individuality internationally). Consequently, to reject nationalism is a patriotic duty:

> "Car le patriotisme est l'exact contraire du nationalisme.
> Le nationalisme en est la trahison."
> (Emmanuel Macron, 11.10.2018, Paris)

By permanently contrasting their ideology to nationalism, patriots can easily be seduced by populist demagogic techniques of declaring one's distinctiveness to be one's moral superiority, empathy, inclusiveness. In such cases, they won't miss a chance to pronounce the intolerance of slogans like "national interests first":

> "En disant «nos intérêts d'abord et qu'importent les autres !», on gomme ce qu'une Nation a de plus précieux, ce qui la fait vivre […]: ses valeurs morales."
> (Emmanuel Macron, 11.10.2018, Paris)

Patriotism cherishes only "today's" universal values (although it is yet unclear what forum establishes them) and it judges the state of the society in terms of its consent to them. It never regards society as something already constituted, but as a perpetual project. Otherwise, the people could not allegedly avoid succumbing to *collective egoism* – not only with regard to resources, but also to culture. Thus, culture is just the sum total of encounters between populations and it must only be understood in its *"universal", i.e. "diverse", sense*:

> "Il n'y a pas de culture Française, Il n'y a pas une culture française, il y a une culture en France et elle est diverse."
> (Emmanuel Macaron, 05.02.20187, Lyon)

---

[26] Cf. Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, v4.1_r2ep (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2017), 62, seqq. (chapter "Be a patriot").

The message coming from this sort of patriotism seems to be that there exists only one kind of bad diversity – the one that includes opinions divergent from its own.

But historically, this patriotic antagonist stance towards "nationalism" did not exist from the beginning and did not exist everywhere. In Romania, the belief that "patriotism" was synonymous with "nationalism" was occasionally voiced as soon as the influence of the French enlightenment started to be felt, and it endured as far as 1939. The "Dictionary of Romanian Language" of that year gives the following definitions:

> **1939** (DLR)[27]: "**nationalism** noun. The character of loving your own nation, patriotism.
>
> [...] **nation**, noun. People, the total number of people of the same blood, settled on a determined territory as a basis of their existence, who have the same language (which they formed), the same present interests and the same aspirations; whose organism constitutes the same power (nationality), which creates human culture, which is nothing but its varied product".

Needless to say, with the advances in science, in civil rights and in conscience, ideological statements like the one that the nation is formed of those who "have the same blood" have been proven as wrong as inadmissible. But this Romanian view regarding the synonymy of "patriotism" and "nationalism" only additionally justifies the labelling of patriotism as the fourth type of nationalism qua ideology. Nationalism as ideology has been bred by the doctrines of Herder and Fichte up to Renan, Maurras and the ideologists of the 20th century. Here lies the root of the US' attitude – the idea of using military campaigns to spread enlightenment and democracy. And here lay the roots of nazi imperialism – the ideas of revenge and of race. The nationalist ideology exists even in a patriotic form: Patriotism, depending on the sort, may declare the interests of a confederation greater than those of a component nation, or it may start wars to defend the "foreign interests" of such a confederation in other places of the world, like in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria or Venezuela. The ideology of nationalism often also resorted to abstruse lies: In the time of the domination of the great empires, it often promoted the creation of national

---

[27] "1939 in Iassy occurs the publishing of the Dictionary of the Romanian Language (Etymologies, meanings, examples, citations, archaisms, neologisms, provincialisms) by August Scriban, 36 years after the work begun and over a decade and a half since the initial compilation was finished." (Gabriela Haja, Academia Română, and Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide" (Bucharest), *Dictionarul limbii române (DLR): în format electronic. Studii privind achizitionarea* (Iasi: Alfa, 2005), 13).

states by recurring to phantasmagorias, in order to give enough "restoration"-impulses (as was also the case with the ideal of reestablishing a "Greek empire" which never existed).

However, there *is* a sense according to which the conflation of nationalism and patriotism is incorrect, albeit not one compatible with Macron's beliefs: It is given by the second meaning of "nationalism" which does also exist, and has always existed, in one form or another. It is the sound underlying substratum parasitized by the nationalist ideology. On this basal level, "nationalism" stands for nothing else, actually, than the love towards the nation, etymologically stemming from the latin for "being born" – "natio".

Yes, the perversion of nationalism into idolatry (the idolatry of deeming one's nation as *absolute* or *better*) is an unfortunate *possibility* indeed – but it is in no way a *necessity*. The natural, honest and reasonable impulse towards unity which can, but must not lead to perversion, is a form of love. The peril of a negative outcome must be engaged in an ascetic manner, something "highly likely" only Christian morals are capable of, owing to the ontological implications of Christology.

The pre-Christian status-quo is described by Plato by depicting the "logic" of holding "that the Hellenic race is friendly to itself and akin, and foreign and alien to the barbarian" (Πολιτεία, 470c[28]). (What a clear example of ancient "ideological" nationalism, not to mention the hebrew one…) In this pre-Christian view, "war is the fit name" for the "enmity and hatred" of "enemies by nature". But the same Plato shows that even this negative ancient definition of nationalistic love was grounded upon the positive one: "Greeks, however […] are still by nature the friends of Greeks [even] when they act in this [belligerent] way, but [we shall say] that Greece is sick in that case and divided by faction" (Πολιτεία, 470c). The greeks, writes Plato, are by nature "philhellenes" (Πολιτεία, 470e).

Thus the second meaning of nationalism is the love for the greater *family*, while patriotism is the love for a home-*country*. The preeminence of the physical-geographical sense of the root πατρίς (Romanian: "patrie") is confirmed by the lexicography. Countries encompass *material* wealth. They are governed by the power of the state. Christians must fulfil their material duties towards the state, to be in the position to demand allowance for the Church to offer God that which is "God's" (Matthew 22:21) – the divine service and our whole lives. But the Church is not dedicated to the states. The Church is dedicated to the *nations*, and *the primary nature of the latter is spiritual*, because they are build by humans and humans share this trait.

---

[28] Cf. Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Paul Shorey, Perseus Digital Library Project (London; Cambridge [Mass.]: W. Heinemann; Harvard University Press, 1969), http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D5%3Asection%3D470c.

2. How should the Church address national identity and offer guidance to the society?

The short answer to this question should be the following: Just as it has done historically (and canonically) and how it tries to, today – that is, *neither giving in to the seduction of right-wing extremism, nor incriminating the love for one's nation*. This section represents a longer answer to the same question. Everything comes down to the just distinction between love and hate.

In the case of the holy Canons of the Church, the term "nation" meant "metropolitan province"[29]. In this sense, although the expression "national councils" was used even before the organization of the Roman Empire in provinces, it admittedly had a rather geographical sense. E.g., the 34th apostolic Canon (which establishes the principle of episcopal collegiality) requests that the local bishop, who identifies himself with the "nation" of that respective region acknowledges his superior. Territories are more important to the Church in times in which populations come and go, indeed: Canon Law demands the *de iure* preservation of a certain administrative jurisdiction even if all the parishioners and even the hierarch happen to be forced out of it by the historical adversities (e.g. 39 Trulan). However, what the logic of the Church referred to, even in these terms, were *frameworks for the administration of the existing human realities* on the ground – and *not of the existing material patrimony*. Secondly, that any ecclesiastic organization is definitely *also* regulated by the ethnic criterion is a proven fact as well: When Canon 28 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council stated that the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate extends over the (nations of) "barbarians"[30], it did not refer to a *geographical* "nation". Yes, Gospel indigenization involves no more than national missions. But through these missions, which christianised certain peoples, *national churches* were established wherever migratory tribes settled. Even earlier, national churches began to evolve after the indigenization of the Gospel among the Armenians

---

[29] The Ecumenical Patriarchate, 'Territorial Jurisdiction According to Orthodox Canon Law. The Phenomenon of Ethnophyletism in Recent Years', The Ecumenical Patriarchate - Theological and Other Studies, 2001, https://www.patriarchate.org/-/territorial-jurisdiction-according-to-orthodox-canon-law-the-phenomenon-of-ethnophyletism-in-recent-yea-1.

[30] "The adjective «barbarian» defines the noun «nations», which is omitted from the text of the canon, but which is to be inferred, as Zonaras interprets it. Barbarian nations or countries are, as has been said, those provinces which lay beyond the Roman Empire at the time of the 4th Ecumenical Synod: «While it called bishoprics of the barbarians those of Alania, Russia and others». The other barbarian lands, apart from Alania and Russia, are, in general, «the Barbarians», according to the interpretation of Aristenos of Canon 28: «... the (bishops) of Pontus and Thrace and Asia, as well as the Barbarians, are consecrated by the Patriarch of Constantinople...»" The Ecumenical Patriarchate, "Territorial Jurisdiction According to Orthodox Canon Law. The Phenomenon of Ethnophyletism in Recent Years".

and the Georgians[31]. Saints Cyril and Methodius became the Apostles of the Slavs. They set an absolute example for the missionary acculturation, followed thereafter e.g. by Saint Olaf.

Father Dumitru Stăniloae has written a brief but dense historical account of how the ethno-cultural criterion has been applied in some monasteries since the very beginning of cenobitic life. Its application led to the evolution of the tradition of officiating the Liturgy in two or more languages in parallel, in the same community but in different churches[32] (something unimaginable in today's Athos). By giving approval for worship to take place in national languages from the beginning and by afterwards establishing the system of autocephalies, the One Church did always support the affirmation of nations. Father Stăniloae named this feature "the poly-national universality of Orthodoxy"[33]. That which became the main weakness in the West after the Great Schism, was a strength during the times of the greatest closeness of the One Church to ideal unity: It was *variety*.

In the Gospel of John, chapter 4, Jesus Christ passes over the physical border between Jews and Samaritans and over the spiritual border (customs). However, He Who has the fulness of "a complete man" (Ephesians 4, 13) still utters His commitment to His national identity in the clearest possible way, proving that it essentially pertains to human nature: "You [Samaritans] worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews." (John 4, 22).

Does this mean that the ladder of love ends with the love for the nation? Obviously, no conclusion could be more fallacious.

2.1. The problem of love

As a contemporary author puts it, "since the nation is defined by its inherent virtue rather than by its future potential, politics becomes a discussion of good and evil rather than a discussion of possible solutions"[34]. Yes, for the Church politics *is* the discussion of good and evil. And yes, the Church does not (and should not) give concrete political solutions. At the same time, given today's reality, the Church cannot view the world other than it is – and the world is comparable with a plant nursery, where instead of plants problems are propagated and grown, ready to be supplied to- and thrive in any person. So if "political life" is defined as "public life of the πόλις (city, state)", the nature

---

[31] Cf. Makrides, 'Why Are Orthodox Churches…', 339-340.

[32] Dumitru Stăniloae, "Universalitatea și etnicitatea Bisericii în concepția ortodoxă", *Studii teologice*, no. 2 (1977), p 143, seqq.

[33] Stăniloae, "Universalitatea", 147.

[34] Snyder, *On Tyranny*, 67 (chapter "Epilogue").

of the Church is inherently *political* (social-spiritual). There cannot exist any sort of neutrality inside the Church. If, on a personal level, "political neutrality" means the approval of the leading power, on a state-level "religious neutrality" ultimately means the exclusion and oppression of all morals. The only state-related mission of the Church is to give warnings (and not to come up with historical solutions, something which is the task of the governments). The primary mission of the Church (i.e. of each of its members) is that Love which is always ready for a self-sacrifice in favour of the Truth, i.e. of Christ. The Church has to defend everything that participates in Him – persons and truths alike, e.g. the truth that any future potential is determined by inherent virtue. For this reason, the way it can offer guidance is foremost by remaining upright and not negotiating Dogma and Liturgy.

Today it may be common to think that Christianity opened the path to modern universalist individualism. According to this (unreflected) perspective, the first major positive contribution brought by Christianity was declaring everyone equal in the eyes of God. Then, in the very same "moment" in which truth has been "christianly" set in the process of becoming established by the (augustinian) "inward" turn, the protestant spirit of capitalism (and enlightenment itself) has shifted only a stone's throw away. Hence, as soon as Christianity was born, the chain of liberation has been allegedly inescapable – the liberation from God and the drift towards science, then the one from monarchies to national republics, and finally from national republics to transnational corporations.

After all, doesn't the ultimate level lie beyond the nations, even for the Church? It does, but is the ultimate level in question the one of the brave de-symbolised consumerist society which belongs (just like everything else – "ideas", "policies" etc.) to the "free market"? To put it short, the answer is no. Neither Christ nor the historical Church in its human, institutional dimension opened this path. From the point of view of the Church, man is not an individual, but a person – body and soul. The many parts of the "one body" are hierarchical, not "equal" (cf. 1 Corinthians 12, 27-30). But certainly, from the very first centuries on, the Holy Fathers of the Church insisted that God is not concerned only with the one who lives in God and has attained the knowledge of God. Instead, in the words of late Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, God is also concerned "with those who are far below", so He sends the saint to lift them up – "to turn to those who are standing on the lower steps, to teach them what he has discovered […] in their language"[35]. The best general rendering of the same content can be found in the words of the Saviour: "The first [commandment] is this: «Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. Love the Lord your God

---

[35] Anthony Bloom, '11 Lectures on Dogmas', Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh Archive - Texts - Series of Talks, 1959-1960, http://masarchive.org/Sites/texts/1959-00-00-1-E-E-C-EM03-019ChurchDogmas.html, (Dogmes I).

with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.» The second is this: «Love your neighbour as yourself.» No other commandment is greater than these." (Mark 12, 29-31).

Such "neighbours" are successively encountered by a Christian during the human life-span: one's mother, one's father, one's family, one's community (including any man on the street), one's nation, the communities of other ethnicities and traditions living alongside, the people of other nations abroad. (This is not so much a temporal succession as a general hierarchy.) Stepping into the adulthood of one's conscience, the final stages of this ladder are reached – the One Church and, by God's Will, the presence of He Who is holding the ladder. The ultimate "level" is the ἐπέκτασις, the eternal movement towards the eternal Foundation and Head of the Church.

To this day, this very same line of thinking is well alive in Romanian theology:

> "Your neighbour and your fellow are real only if they start from the family, relatives, neighbours, street, village, city, region and country. If you don't love these first, you don't love the world or humanity or man kind […]. We don't go from the general humanity to the concrete man, but from the concrete person close to us we come to the idea of general humanity […]"[36].

The reason why one cannot love the people from the other side of the world without loving one's closer neighbour is that "human beings are not abstract unities, shorn from any determinations and, therefore, entirely identical."[37] *Love is not abstract.* If one does not learn to love one's very neighbour, one neither learns to properly love oneself, nor any other human.

The hierarchy of love, the symphony of its sublated[38] steps are eschatologically crucial. In the hierarchy of love, *the level of the nation proves*

---

[36] George Remete, *Leacuri Contra Evlaviei* (București: Paideia, 2018), 143.

[37] Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ortodoxie și românism*, ed. Constantin Schifirneţ (București: Albatros, 1998 [1939]), 1. All quotations form Romanian sources have been translated by the author of this article, responsible for eventual mistakes.

[38] This article's descriptions of the processes of surpassing a natural characteristic (e.g. parental love) while embracing the gift of a supernatural one (e.g. christian love), and even the descriptions of the qualitative "ascension" within the same general kind of love (natural love for family, natural love for the neighbours of one's family), the hegelian concept of *sublation* will be used. What the English verb "to sublate" translates is Hegel's technical term "aufheben". It means both to negate and to preserve, in one single act, at the same time: When an old form is being sublated, its corresponding content remains the same, on one hand, but is transformed through the process of reshaping. It gains a new life. Sublation can be thought as a refreshment, but one which transfers the entity into a radically new state, in which it both *is* and *isn't* the old one.

to be (not a transient phenomenon, but) *a reality that will exist until the last day*. In Father Stăniloae's words,

> "God did not create the world and the people in their variety with the purpose to destroy this variety in the end, for this would mean to destroy what He created, but He intended to lead creation in its variety to its completion, hence to its unification in God. In the Revelation it is said that «the nations will walk by the light of the lamb» (Rev 21:24). «And the glory and honour of the nations will be brought into the city of the eternal kingdom» (Rev 21:26), meaning that they will bring in the forms in which they achieved human, christian, completion so that we will see in it the richness of the creative and perfecting imagination of God."[39].

> "God will not reward me for the manner in which I knew how to break off from the natural community in which I was granted to live, but according to the manner in which I endorsed this communion with my Christian will and love"[40].

> "God considers man not in isolation, but as a member of a bigger community, He looks at communities and through them He makes man part of grace and salvation. And since the most natural communities are nations, why couldn't we say that God's look falls straight on nations and only because individuals are part of nations, each of them feels God's look upon them.[41]

From the ecclesiological perspective, the level of the nation is likewise crucial, because the Orthodox and apostolic view of our Sobornost...

> "combines the universal and eternal character of the Gospel with the variety of nations, beyond the tendencies of a superficial universalism of imperialist character which doesn't want to acknowledge this variety. [...] The local Church is the concrete manifestation of the universal Church in various cultural, ethnic and social environments [...]"[42].

This is the sense in which *the Encyclical of the Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church from Crete*, with its paragraph 15 *proposes the protection and strengthening of ethnic identity*.

---

[39] Stăniloae, "Universalitatea", 150.

[40] Dumitru Stăniloae, "Creștinism și naționalism", *Națiune și Creștinism*, ed. Constantin Schifirneț (București: Elion, 2003), 119.

[41] Stăniloae, "Creștinism și naționalism", 119.

[42] Valer Bel, *Misiunea bisericii în lumea contemporană* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2002), 63.

2.2. The problem of hate

If, on the one hand, many consider the Church to be the forerunner of modernism, in the manner mentioned above, on the other hand, some consider the Church to be playing into the hands of ideological nationalism. The ascription of a nationalistic view of the faith is based on the premise that the "emancipation" of the autocephalous Church was triggered by religious nationalism. To counter this idea, some in the Church tend to appeal to the ethnophyletism-impeachment of 1872, identifying it as the official Orthodox condemnation of chauvinism.

Such an appeal is highly questionable, for the following reasons: The canonical decisions taken in 1872 by the local Council of Constantinople elaborate precisely the above-mentioned provisions of the 34th apostolic Canon, in the context of the territorial principle. Consolidated by the 35th apostolic Canon, by Canon 8 of the First Ecumenical Council, by the 12th Canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council and by others, what the 34th apostolic Canon establishes is *the interdiction of overlapping episcopal jurisdictions*.

In each metropolis there can exist only a single episcopal throne. *Nothing else than the offence of this principle constitutes the infamous ecclesiological heresy of (ethno)phyletism*:

> "*Phyletism* is […] an ecclesiological heresy which says that the Church can be territorially organized on an ethnic, racial, or cultural basis so *that within a given geographic territory*, *there can exist several Church jurisdictions*, directing their pastoral care only to the members of specific ethnic groups."[43]

> "[In 1872 the Church] condemned through the Council of Constantinople phyletism, that is the autocephaly provoked by ethnic rivalries which, by exaggerating the local peculiarities, splits the unity of the communion of the universal Church."[44]

In other words, according to the conciliar decision, ethnophyletist heretics are those who territorially organize the Church according to exclusivist cultural or ethnic criteria[45] – the ethno-cultural tribalists within the ecclesial administration.

---

[43] Stephane Bigham, 'The 1872 Council of Constantinople and Phyletism', 2012, https://ocl.org/the-1872-council-of-constantinople-and-phyletism/ (emphasis: PM).

[44] Bel, *Misiunea Bisericii în lumea contemporană*, 63.

[45] "What generated this canonical incrimination was the problem of the overlapping the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople with that of an Exarch proposed by the Bulgarians, starting with 1870, during a time in which the Bulgarians had an important

Letting the exclusivism part aside, in this category would fall (as shocking as this may sound) not those who hate an ethnic community, but rather those who organise the Orthodox communities in the diaspora in such a way, that in the same place the Greek Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Romanian Orthodox Church each have their own bishop[46]. It is the unresolved and absurd situation in which the Orthodox communities of the diaspora stand[47] (and the situations from Moldova, Estonia, Ukraine etc.) that really risks setting the scene for the malefic temptation of this heresy, not the chauvinists.

Again, hierarchical thought is crucial: Of the two, the *most* severe sin is heresy. Hate is certainly severe. Hate stands right next to heresy, being a terrible and inadmissible sin. Christ equates hate to the act of murder (Matthew 5:21-22). But heresy is that diabolical subversive form of spiritual murder which defines the tares (cf. Matthew 13:24-30) and the wolves which come in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15; cf. Acts 20:29-30; 2 Timothy 3:5). Christ "hates" such an act, e.g. "the deeds of the Nicolaitans" (Revelation 2:6). The relationship between Truth and heresy is best expressed by St. Paul's contrast "between the temple of God and idols" (2 Corinthians 6:14-16). Confronted with the false preaching of "the liar […] who denies that Jesus is the Christ" (1 John 2,22), Saint John the Apostle defined the heretics as antichrists (1 John 2,18). The Church's incrimination of phyletism is not *identical* with the incrimination of

---

diaspora in Istanbul. The Bulgarian Church was declared schismatic. Many Orthodox churches missed out from this council, from the ranks of those whose autonomy had already been accepted, and some even refused to participate, because the Ecumenical Patriarchate catalysed Hellenization even outside the Greek territories. Not just the Napoleonian or the Ottoman occupation assured the success of the ideological nationalism, but also the dependency of many Orthodox nations on the Phanariotes and on the Patriarchate from Constantinople" PM (Cf. Stăniloae, "Universalitatea", p 143, ff.)

[46] "The Patriarch's condemnation of Phyletism is based only on his loyalty to the canonical and theological tradition of the Church, nothing more. As we have said above, we should heartily applaud him for having courageously maintained the faith in a moment of crisis. In 1922, however, fifty years later, the Patriarch of Constantinople, the successor of the Patriarch who condemned Phyletism in 1872, himself violated the organizational principle of the Church by establishing an ethnic, Greek jurisdiction for the Americas; there is no lack of irony here. By this action, Constantinople opened the flood gates to Phyletism so that nearly all the national autocephaly Churches created dioceses for «their own» in the Americas and in Western Europe." (Bigham, "The 1872 Council of Constantinople and Phyletism").

[47] "In the case of diaspora, the most rational approach would be for the Church to encourage the love for their own nations exclusively in the case of the persons whose expatriation is temporary. A country like Germany, for example, would need its own national Orthodox Church to welcome with arms wide open of all those who, by emigration, decided (themselves or by the decision of their parents) to become German." Paul Andrei Mucichescu, 'Identitate naţională şi ecclesială', 123.

hate towards an ethnic community and xenophobia. The Church does not need to officially incriminate the sin of hate. Things are clear. God made "from one man" "all the nations" (Acts 17:26). *In Christ* "there is neither Jew nor Gentile" (Galatians 3:28).

Faith cannot be reduced to a national trait. That which one could call "Orthodox ethics" would be equally violated by the discrimination of nations as it is by the idolization of nations[48]. The Church hasn't felt the need to emit a canonical decree for either of these two sins. *The idolization of a nation, the perversion of the love for a nation through selfishness and arrogance is the definition of ideological nationalism.* It too amounts to a very grave sin: It distorts the hierarchy of love, attempting against the most superior one, which transcends and sublimes the loves of nations. The idolization of a nation is the collective sin against the Holy Spirit, The Divine Person that keeps the Church together. But for the Church this grave sin is also self-evident.

As it will gradually become clearer, the reasons why "healthy" forms of nationalism often turn into "un-healthy" ones are personal and psychological (whereby ψυχή should be understood in Orthodox Christian manner). There is no "special" way in which the Church can assist society so that such a process can be avoided, other than the ways recommended by the Holy Fathers – other than νῆψις, which means remaining watchful by not forgetting Who God is (cf. 1 Peter 5, 8).

So if the Church did not condemn hate or perverted love in 1872, other than implicitly, how can it have condemned natural love? The Church condemned the ecclesiological heresy of (ethno)phyletism, not ethno-philia.

3. (Romanian) Universalism

"Any collective conscience, as well as every human society in general, exists before and outside the individuals that form it in each moment of its history. It is true, this conscience, this Romanian society lives only through the passive or voluntary adhesion of those who give it. However, it does not depend on each individual or on a few of them. A nation is a superior spiritual achievement, a spiritual unity polarized around a vital original centre in which all those who believe they belong, [do] take

---

[48] The Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow 13-16 August 2000), "Church and society or the fundaments of the social conception of the Russian Orthodox Church", chapter II ("Church and nation"), subchapter 4, *Gândirea socială a Bisericii*, ed. Ioan Ică Jr and Germano Marani (Sibiu: Deisis, 2002).

part. [...] salvation does not come from siding with a national-socialist point of view or with another external point of view, manipulated by random will and called «Romanian»."[49]

This lines, written shortly before World War II, belong to Father Daniil Teodorescu (Sandu Tudor), founder and supporter of the renowned *Burning Bush* spiritual collective, a kind of "philocalic university"[50]. Imprisoned for two years while still a journalist (for what the monarchy considered to be radical leftist political views[51]), a few years later Father Daniil was martyred as a hieromonk in communist cellars, having been accused of sympathizing with the right. (Panait Istrati's later life comes to mind here, but at least he had obvious political views, until he shook them of.) What Father Daniil did stand for – just like the whole Romanian intellectual elite gathered in the Burning Bush and later decimated by the communists – wasn't any political party, but *the transcendent meaning of Tradition[52]*.

3.1. "National" and "nationalism" - from ideological interest to sympathetic consciousness

In the prewar period, Father Daniil observed that "nationalism" started to mean...

"the hate and the ostentatious, uninterrupted threat towards unfriendly neighbours, [the hate] with which we have to nurture the lightsome soul of the young. [...] *This* nationalism is mediocre, supported by small and self-seeking souls"[53].

---

[49] Sandu Tudor, "Spre o conştiinţă limpede românească", *Credinţa: ziar independent de luptă politică şi spirituală* An III, no. 207 (12 August 1934), *apud* Sandu Tudor and Marius Vasileanu, *Universalism românesc* (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2013), p 33-34.

[50] Among its members were luminaries from the fields of theology and varous sciences, united in prayer: Fr. Ivan Culighin, Fr. Benedict Ghiuş, Fr. Sofian Boghiu, Alexandru Mironescu, Anton Dumitriu, Dumitru Stăniloae, Alexandru Elian, Virgil Cândea, Vasile Voiculescu, Paul Sterian, Ştefan Todiraşcu, Paul Constantinescu, as well as many others remarkabe personalities, like Fr. Bartolomeu Anania, Fr. Adrian Făgeţeanu, Fr. Arsenie Papacioc, Olga Greceanu, Şerban Cioculescu, George Văsii etc.

[51] Constantin Jinga, *Ieroschimonahul Daniil Sandu Tudor: omul şi opera*, Corifeii rugului aprins (Bucureşti: Christiana, 2005), 148.

[52] Cf. Ibid., 149.

[53] Sandu Tudor, "Naţionalismul la modă", *Credinţa: ziar independent de luptă politică şi spirituală* An III, no. 397 (27 March 1935), *apud* Tudor and Vasileanu, *Universalism românesc*, 120. (emphasis: PM).

In particular, two of Father Daniil's phrases seem irrefutable. The first one is this:

> "The «Nationalism» of all the political parties is not nationalism, but menial dirt and a disgrace. It does not serve the «interest» of the nation, but that of a few"[54].

From the beginning, the corresponding political ideology has brought into play the defence of so called "national interests". The nationalist doctrine culturally entered the Romanian provinces sometime in the 19th century, but the term "nationalism" isn't to be found in any dictionary, between the middle of the 18th century and even until 1848. However, in a Romanian dictionary published in the latter year, the expression "national interest" comes up in the definition of the word "national":

> **1848** (VR[55]): "NATION, noun. All the inhabitants of a country, of a state who speak the same language. *In politics, place yourself on the side of the nation."

> **1848** (VR): "NATIONAL, adj. What is in the interest of the entire nation. * The principle of each government must be a national will."

Any positive elaboration of "national interest", which exceeds the call to defend the people's dignity, risks politicization. This may well be the reason why Mihai Eminescu (the maestro of all Romanian hearts) chose to be an anti-modernist nationalist. His life is one of the clearest Romanian proofs of the fact that "nationalism" also possesses a sense completely free from the connection with liberalism and modernity, i.e. free from the corresponding ideology. Eminescu was a conservative monarchist, hostile to the egalitarian "bonjourist" cosmopolitanism which was en vogue in his time.

Eminescu proposed another concept for the definition of the term "national", one related to its essential meaning – to the concept of *collective consciousness.* In 1882 he explained the latter as *the national being capable of not growing old[56]*. Eventually, it then entered Romanian common sense:

---

[54] Sandu Tudor, "Naționalismul bogaților și cel al săracilor", *Credința: ziar independent de luptă politică și spirituală* An III, no. 427 (5 May 1935), *apud* Tudor and Vasileanu, *Universalism românesc*, 156.

[55] I.D. Negulici, *Vocabularu romanu de toate vorbele străbune repriimite pînă acumu în limba romana și de tote quelle que suntu a se mai priimi d'acum înainte și mai allesu în sciințe* (București: Tipografia Colegiului, 1848).

[56] Mihai Eminescu and Dimitrie Vatamaniuc, *Iubirea de patrie: pagini de publicistică* (București: Ed. Militară, 1989), 204.

1882 Eminescu: "national being" = collective conscience capable of not growing old

1998 (DEX[57]): "**NATION**, nations, *noun* Durable community of people, constituted historically as a state, appearing based on a unity of language, territory, economical and psychological life, which is manifested in peculiarities characteristic to the national culture and in the conscience of the common origin and fate."

2009 (DEX[58]): "**NATION**, nations, *noun* Human community characterized by the unity of the territory, conscience of the historical and cultural identity and, in general, through unity of language and religion.

The care for the genuine national interest – for the national dignity – is thus revealed as the enduring collective conscience (in the sense of a consciousness). What is this consciousness *of*? In the words of Father Daniil, it is the awareness of the fact that…

"there is an eternal tradition that moves across the centuries, that grows from Romanian art and science through everything that they have in terms of universal and eternal"[59].

"Romanian universalism" is how Father Daniil entitled one of his articles, but it is also the best title which suits the works of Brâncuşi and Enescu, Eliade and Stăniloae, Noica and Eminescu. It also suits the Romanian traditional ("folkloric") creation, orbiting around the poem "Mioriţa" – the Romanian embodiment of the feeling of universal solidarity. Romanian universalism, the universalism which stresses the *natural cosmicism and organicism* of thought and of spirituality, was constantly observed by the likes of Vasile Pârvan, Mircea Vulcănescu and Vasile Băncilă in their oeuvres. The message of the corresponding Romanian theory of culture – as it will be briefly exposed hereafter – is about the existence of *national manners of transmitting the one Universal Truth, each of them unquantifiable and unique.*

---

[57] Ion Coteanu et al., *DEX: Dicţionarul explicativ al limbii române* (Bucureşti: Univers enciclopedic, 1998).

[58] Ion Coteanu et al., *DEX: Dicţionarul explicativ al limbii române* (Bucureşti: Univers enciclopedic Gold, 2009).

[59] Sandu Tudor, "Ce e cu tradiţia românească?", *Credinţa: ziar independent de luptă politică şi spirituală* An III, no. 383 (10 March 1935), *apud* Tudor and Vasileanu, *Universalism românesc*, 85.

✳

As the biblical eschatology stressed by Father Stăniloae reveals (v.s., 2.1), the achieved Christian completion will be brought into Heavenly Jerusalem in a multitude of *national* forms, as natural forms of communion. Christianly united, they form the same (natural-and-supernatural) Church.

This same essential message was independently thought by Mircea Vulcănescu: "Each nation has, as established by God, a particular countenance [Romanian: *față*], its own manner [ro.: *chip*, cf. gr.: *εἰκών*] of seeing the world and of refracting it for others"[60]. Closely related to this symphony dedicated to God stands the thought, ubiquitous in Romanian traditional culture, of universal interconnectedness: "Each action echoes in the whole world, each gesture propagates its music into the whole"[61]. This is the reason why the ultimate goal of the shepherd from "Miorița" is not the one of holding on to his "own" life, but the one of *keeping the right order of things*[62]. It was nothing else that Brâncuși sought in his art, with the means of a Romanian alphabet of forms. He strived for expressing the quiet breathing space of Being. If one eventually sees similarities with other such "alphabets" in the solutions this sculptor and Orthodox hypodeacon came up with, they should be acknowledged to be the result of the universality of the outcome, rather than a result of influences.

As Vulcănescu observes, that which is called "realité" by the French, derived from the latin "res", and which is called "Wirklichkeit" by the Germans, derived from "wirken" (working, acting), is named by the Romanians by reference to another aspect: It is that which is, paradoxically, eternally (ro.: *dintotdeauna*)[63] happening (ro.: *se întâmplă*)[64], but not because of an intrinsic power, but because of the participation in True Being. This is what sustains Romanian symbols and rituals[65].

The right order of things, the perfect archetypal coherence is the Christian one. This is the reason why the Church as the mysterious entity permeating all cultures, has integrated not only the languages, but also the local pre-christian beliefs, critically approving the ones that were evidently announcing the contents of the Gospel. The Holy Tradition extends towards all traditions the gift of a sublation which can "regive" them to their true unique selves, to use an Eminescian thought.

---

[60] Mircea Vulcănescu, "Dimensiunea românească a existenței [1943]", *Dialog despre identitatea românească*, vol. 3, Dreptul la memorie (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1992), 286.
[61] Ibid., 296.
[62] Ibid., 325.
[63] Ibid., 325.
[64] Ibid., p 306-307.
[65] Ibid., 325.

As St. Silouan says, the whole of humanity is actually comprised in one's own personal existence[66] and true prayer has a cosmic nature[67]. Summing all of this up, one can say that when each of us return to God the gifts He gave to us, the Maximian, cosmic New Adam comprises us all, while enriching each one's personality. Likewise, as used here, "universalism" neither means an uncritical totality of what happens to be in the fallen world at a particular time, nor does it mean syncretism. It means critically reflecting the universal in the particular – in the given case, the universal in the national. As father Stăniloae says, it does so, strengthening the symphonic unity of the Creation through each particular contribution[68].

The transcendent sense of the "eternal" tradition father Daniil was writing about, lies specified already in the etymology of the term "tradition": On the one hand, the Latin "tradere" means granting and accepting a spiritual inheritance. On the other, it means a certain productive hope. It is the hope that tradition will continuously grow from everything universal and eternal that a nation has to offer. Accordingly, this second sense of "tradere" is the one of *surrendering the maintained spiritual goods to God, in the hope of their being received in His eternal renewing spring*.

3.2. Assuming one's national identity

So the nation is shaped through the *free*, authentic, universal works of culture, which demand everything their creators have to offer and the highest degree of receptivity which their recipients are capable of. But another kind of sacrifice is likewise demanded – the one made with the purpose of defending cultural freedom. *These two layers have parallel trajectories*. This explains for example why the Romanian cultural tradition is impregnated by the motif of the creative sacrifice, whilst Romanian history barely includes any decade of peace[69].

---

[66] Sophrony Sakharov, *Viaţa şi învăţătura stareţului Siluan Athonitul*, trans. Ioan Ică (Sibiu: Deisis, 2004), 135

[67] Ibid., 126.

[68] Stăniloae, "Universalitatea", 151-152.

[69] The latter observation can count as a general paraphrase of one of Mircea Eliade's leitmotifs, best detailed perhaps in his article "The destiny of the Romanian culture" from 1953, reedited in: Mircea Eliade, *Profetism românesc 1*, ed. Alexandru V. Diţă. (Bucuresti: Roza Vînturilor, 1990), 139-151. Eliade has, indeed, entered a compromise with history – which was and should remain a taboo in the case of great spirits. He did, indeed, succumb to the language of "Tathandlung" and to the idea of a "fertility of conflicts" (a seducing one perhaps, back in those days). He even wrote about a "new man" – however, this thought also marks the red line of this propensity of his. The nature of Eliade's message was never far-right. It is of outmost

Today, a nation is no longer something built of those who "have the same blood" – neither like in the most ancient days, nor like in the ideological and anachronistic 20th century. However, a nation has always been and can only be constituted (founded and maintained) by two classes of people. On the one hand, by those who have shed their blood for it or have dedicated their life to it. On the other hand, by each person alive, who 1. is ready to do the same for the generation to come and 2. is accepted by his or her co-nationals as one of theirs.

In the 7th century, Theophylact Simocattes wrote about the words "*torna, torna, fratre!*", which had been recorded a century before – they were uttered in the Balkans, by a local soldier, during a byzantine campaign against the Avars[70]. "Fratre" is a Proto-Romanian form of "frate" ("brother") and "torna" means here "return"[71]. Aside proving the formation of the Proto-Romanian language, these words express the Proto-Romanian consciousness of belonging together. For one thousand years the Wallachians and the Moldavians have been living separated, and the Transylvanians have lived under foreign occupation, but

---

importance to investigate his writings dedicated to social realities in an exact manner. The articles reedited in collections (like the mentioned one) make this easy. In a sequel – Mircea Eliade, *Profetism românesc 2*, ed. Nicolae Georgescu (București: Rosa Vînturilor, 1990) – the reader can find proofs that Eliade was against politicization (pages 79, 92), against racism (pages 54, 73) and against abusing communists (pages 35-38, i.e. his article "Where is our humanness?"). Eliade was, indeed, a promoter of "romanianism", but his purpose thereby was to encourage his readers "to find its universal values" (cf. page 60). Concerning the topic analysed here, Eliade writes that "the Proto-Romanians were already christian, in a time in which, in the middle of historical catastrophes, the Romanian people was being born. Thus, the sympathy with the cosmos, so very specific to the Romanian spirit, does not manifest itself as a pagan sentiment – but as a form of the christian liturgical spirit" (Eliade, *Profetism românesc 1*, 146). In the Romanian culture one can discern "that magnificent attempt of *christianising the cosmos*, initiated by the Saint Fathers" as one "outstretched until into our days" (Ibid., 147, original emphasis). As a conclusion, for Eliade "a nation does not engage eternity through its politicians or through its army, through its peasants or through its proletariat – but only through what is being thought, discovered and created" (Eliade, *Profetism românesc 2*, 32).

[70] Nicolae Saramandu, 'Torna, torna, fratre', *Revista de fonetică şi dialectologie a Academiei Române* XX–XXI (2002 2001): 233–51.

[71] This oldest recorded sentence, which can count as Proto-Romanian, could soon be regarded as a prophetic motto of a vanishing population, in the light of the present alarming and strange trend: "Between 2000 and 2015, some countries have experienced a rapid growth in the size of their diaspora populations. Among the countries and areas with the fastest average annual growth rate during this period were the Syrian Arab Republic (13.1 per cent per annum), Romania (7.3 per cent per annum), Poland (5.1 per cent per annum) and India (4.5 per cent per annum). In Syria much of this increase was due to the large outflow of refugees and asylum seekers following the conflict in the area." (United Nations, 'International Migration Report 2015: Highlights' (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2016), https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2015_Highlights.pdf, 19).

all three of these Romanian populations have used one unitary language. Their sentiments for each other can be considered reflected by the affection felt by their first unifying King, Michael the Brave – as German chronicler Baltasar Walter personally recorded, in the moment of national glory from 1599[72] – or it can be seen reflected by the centuries-old "three countries fairs", like the ones held in the province of Vrancea[73].

In the face of the first Transylvanian Anti-Romanian laws established by the Unio Trium Nationum (1438) and by the religion decrees (1568, 1571) which were given against a Romanian majority[74], the Church from the other two Romanian provinces supported Orthodox education in the occupied territories by legal and illegal means, up to the time of Metropolitan Andrei Şaguna. The oppressive policy, which lasted for centuries, led to the martyrdom of Transylvanian Martyr Saints (such as St. Visarion Sarai, St. Sofronie from Cioara, St. Oprea Miclăuş, St. Moise Măcinic and St. Ioan from Galeş) and of people's heroes (e.g. Horea, Cloşca and the other 36 men executed by being broken on the wheel, most of whom were priests; of Avram Iancu, Ioan Buteanu, Pintea Viteazul et al.). It also led to conflicts with hundreds of casualties (on both sides sometimes, like in Zlatna, 1848). In the 19th and 20th centuries, the same policy led each time to many tens of thousands of people being martyred for being Romanian usually in abhorrent ways, at the hands of leaders like Lajos Kossuth, Vasvari Pal and Miklos Horthy, as well as of executioners like Josef Bem, Albert Wass and others. If, to all of these victims, one adds the heroes and the hundreds of thousands of sacrificed lives of the other two Romanian provinces and, afterwards, the ones of unified Romania, one can get a picture about those who have founded the Romanian nation by shedding their blood for it.

---

[72] Ioan Aurel Pop and Ioan Bolovan, *Istoria Transilvaniei*, a II-a, revăzută şi adăugită (Cluj-Napoca: Şcoala ardealană, 2016), 113. Other facts of this kind are indicated in: Mucichescu, 'Identitate naţională şi ecclesială', 114-115.

[73] Gheorghiţă Geană, "Muntele ca matrice comportamentală, stimul perceptiv şi sublimare simbolică", *Muntele - metaforă fundamentală. relief concret şi ascensiune spirituală*, Caietele de la Putna (Suceava: Muşatinii Editura Nicodim Caligraful, 2013), 85.

[74] In the 16h century, the Hungarian chronicler Istvan Szamosközy mentiones that the Romanian nation inhabited "each of the villages of Transylvania" (Pop and Bolovan, *Istoria transilvaniei*, 113.). Relying on Pop and Bolovan's study, it is important to notice that "a commission of Ferdinand of Habsburg was sent to Maramureş to evaluate the production of the salt mines in a time of revolts. Very alarmed, it presented the fact that «the inhabitants of the county» «are mostly Romanian and [...] they have the same language, religion and customs as the Moldavians» [Ibid., 106]. After more than a century, the same observation was made by prince Dimitrie Cantemir, in his research on the history of Dacia". (Mucichescu, 'Identitate naţională şi ecclesială', 115).

Being capable of sacrifice for one's nation, to some degree, is also one of the two criteria of the other class – the one of the living. The other criterion in force for this class is the one of dedicating one's life to the nation, again at least to some degree. The most superior way to do this is through a life dedicated to the highest possible spiritual contributions. These two active criteria are complemented by a supplementary one which is passive: *the act of assuming the national identity through the reception of the masterpieces of the national predecessors*. Furthermore, the condition for the existence of a nation is *the reciprocal consent of all those who consider themselves of the same nation*. All of these thoughts fit the second seemingly irrefutable phrase of Father Daniil:

> "To be Romanian means to have in your heart the clear thought and vigilance of the great duty, which tells you that you weren't born only for yourself"[75].

What Father Daniil foresaw was the Stăniloean ladder of love. In wanting to help the world, after starting with oneself, one usually struggles for this within the nation of birth (or even of choice, sometimes). The sense of this duty and the resulting living love, named *dignity of a nation* by the Church (v.i.), is what *being of* a certain nationality means.

3.3. *Does the concept of a national culture contradict the universalist claims of the Church?*

In the Gospel of John, chapter 4, Jesus Christ passes over the border between Jews and Samaritans, passing beyond customs and revealing that "a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such as these to worship Him. God is spirit […]." (Mt 4:24-25). The Saviour calls to transcendence – from valuing national characteristics to valuing truthful worship; from love for one's nation to love for God and for one's brothers in Christ. He asserts the true hierarchy of love without compromise: "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37). But this does not mean that the natural pedagogy of love doesn't involve love for one's nation, on a third-last step, just like it does not mean it doesn't involve love for one's family, at its beginning. Perhaps it could be argued that the "national"

---

[75] Sandu Tudor, "A fi român", *Credința: ziar independent de luptă politică și spirituală* An III, no. 304 (4 December 1934), *apud* Tudor and Vasileanu, *Universalism românesc*, 54.

marks the limit of the natural propensity towards greater unity, a limit which can only be surpassed through the assistance of the Supernatural. But actually, any form of true love is only possible through God's Help.

Therefore, the mission of the Church is to expose each culture "to a process of «transcendence» and transfiguration, according to the pattern of the incarnation of the Lord"[76], indeed. But at the same time, to quote Nikos Matsoukas, the life of the Church is manifested "necessarily within vestiges – consequently, within the vestiges of a particular national life"[77]. The spiritual creations of the nations are the least that they can "give in return", in an enriched manner, relative to the "wealth" they have received (Matthew 25:14, seqq; Luke 19:11, seqq.). The blossom of each nation is the unique way in which it comes closer to a divine attribute. The result is Humanity's symphony which reflects the perichoresis of God's Attributes.

The true Church is inclusive and open to everybody, and was so from the very beginning, never imposing a special regime on those from a certain nation. But neither local traditions, nor national ones, nor the national synaxaria affect the unity of Orthodoxy. The actual statute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Church of the "Romanian nation" stipulates that "the Romanian Orthodox Church is national and in majority according to the apostolic age, tradition, number of faithful and its special contribution to the life and culture of the Romanian people"[78].

During the Liturgy, the Church explicitly prays to the Lord God to remember in His kingdom...

> "the heroes blessed in death, soldiers and Romanian fighters, of all times and from all places who gave their lives on the battle fields, in camps and in jails for the defence of the country and of our ancestral faith, for the reunification of the nation, for the liberty and dignity of the Romanian people"[79].

> And "again we pray for the faithful Romanian people from all the places, for the rulers of our country, for the leaders of our cities and villages and for the Christ loving army for their health and salvation."[80]

---

[76] Valer Bel, *Misiunea*, 75.

[77] Nikolaos Matsoukas, *Introducere în gnoseologia teologică*, trans. Maricel Popa (Bucureşti: Editura Bizantină, 1997), 116.

[78] The Revised Statute for the organization and functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church, art. 5.2.

[79] Quote from the standard Romanian variant of the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom: Ioannes Chrysostomus, *Dumnezeiasca Liturghie a Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur* (Bucureşti: Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2012), 96.

[80] Ibid., 75.

It is true that the nations will become the new "nation" of the heavenly Jerusalem, united in love for their neighbours, in faith and in Baptism (I Peter 2:9; I Cor 12:12; Rom 3:29; 10:12; Col 3:11). But this does not mean that the sacrifice for the defence and spiritualization of the nations is not approved of by God, as well.

The local Churches themselves helped engender the national cultures in the first place. Now, in their matured state, the autocephalous Churches should not seek to drop out, repulse or refute cultural goods allegedly "stained" by "national character". As shown by Father Stăniloae and by other analyses, like the current one, instead of being a stain, the national character marks the universal core-contribution of what each local Church eschatologically offers God in return. The concept of nation does not build upon the one of race. According to the meanings exposed here, they must never be put together.

Unfortunately, last year, the document supported by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and entitled "For the Life of the World" did just that. However, by God becoming "incarnate as a Jew, born within the body of Israel"[81] (*nota bene* albeit with a lineage which includes gentiles, and a celestial Kingdom to which all nations are summoned to), *the nation and the national are not undone, but rather sanctioned, legitimated*. This document (which endorses a rather hostile tone towards the state, seemingly not realizing that a worse form of domination is yet to come) seems to disavow even the historic indigenization of the Gospel, while trying to pit the concepts of universal "human goods" and of "national culture" against each other[82]. It seeks to do the latter by equating

---

[81] John Chryssavgis et al., 'For The Life of the World. Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church', Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, March 2020, https://www.goarch.org/social-ethos?p_p_id=56_INSTANCE_km0Xa4sy69OV&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-1&p_p_col_count=1&_56_INSTANCE_km0Xa4sy69OV_languageId=en_US.

[82] Predominantly, the document in question raises fundamental objections against (any kind of) state authority (II, §§ 8-10; cf. VII, §67). Even more problematical – from the point of view of the present article – is the fact that it illicitly conflates ideological nationalism with the love for the nation, thereby discrediting both. The document may have served well in shedding light upon the existence of „certain crippling limitations" imposed upon the Church by past Christian states, crippling limitations which occurred in „transient political forms of the Orthodox past, such as the Byzantine Empire" (II, §10). However, the objective take within this document, which – indeed – *also* mentions the possibility given under such a rule „for the gestation and formation of a distinct Orthodox ethos", as well as unspecified „special advantages of the Church" (ibd.), could also have mentioned the fact that *no Ecumenical Council could have taken place and enforce its decisions without this Byzantine Empire*. The implications are obvious. Besides, mentioning such a fact could certainly not have lead anybody to mistake a political system for the essence of the Apostolic Church. After this passage, once again by generalizing (in a way which could be interpreted as an insurance against having to assume responsibility for the claim), the document accuses the Orthodox

"national culture" and the ideological "national interest", in the hope of excluding any relation to one's nation from the concept of human dignity.

The present study has shown the main reasons why any such effort is doomed to fail. The fact that the "national character" is no "stain" cannot be contradicted by any contemporary shift in "public opinion", regardless of how voguish or violently intrusive it may be. To assume that diabolical hate can stem from true love goes against any form of (Christian) logic. Therefore, if even the faintest sense exists, in which the love for one's parents, for one's community and for one's nation is *true* love, it rebukes any charge of idolatry. Indeed, that "the Kingdom of God alone is the Christian's first and last loyalty, and all other allegiances are at most provisional, transient, partial, and incidental"[83] *is self-evident*, in the light of Matthew 10:37[84]. But there is a crucial difference between the claim that "all other allegiances" are "replaced by a singular fidelity to Christ's law of charity"[85], and the *fact* that no allegiance can be compared with the allegiance to Christ, or that any allegiance within the hierarchy of love is transfigured, *sublated* by a higher form, no other Love being greater than God Himself, in the end. So if love for one's parents, community, nation can in any way be considered true, the wild guess that racial discrimination and chauvinism originate not from ideology and idolatry, but from this love, is most obviously preposterous.

The message of the Church has entered the very fabric of national cultures. It enriches it, it reinvests it with meaning – this is what "sublation" means. It has cleansed the lenses of our souls and it has provided them with a better sight of the world as it is in itself. Who could conceive the *Russian* Dostoevsky without his *Christian* fibre? Lastly, it is important to notice how utterly erroneous it would be to think that this line of reasoning, as long as its

---

Church of allowing for the frequent „conflation of national, ethnic, and religious identity". Actually (as proven by the examples mentioned in parts 1 and 3 of the present study), the Church has promoted and imbued national cultures in order to offer various nations a *means* for ascending to their *own particular-universal Christian identity*. Any such „conflation" as criticized by the document is either only an external appearance (which the process of indigenization may have in the eyes of the uninitiated), or an historic exception (which then has to be named). According to the line of reasoning of the document, the indigenization „has often inhibited the Church in its vocation to proclaim the Gospel to all peoples" (ibd.). This still has to be proven, because the *indigenization has mostly led to the opposite, i.e. to christianization*. Further places within the document, where the concepts of state-authority and national dignity are challenged, are sections II, §§11-12 and V, §42, §§46-47.

[83] Chryssavgis et al., 'For The Life', II, §9.

[84] It is basically self-evident, even though the way how each of these attributes do apply to the love for "your neighbour" would remain a matter of argument.

[85] Chryssavgis et al., 'For The Life', I, §6.

premises are observed, could ever lead to an identification of Christianity with nationality. In fact, what it prospectively leads to is the inverse. (An accurate sense of the right hierarchy is crucial, in all these matters.)

Christianity will endure as a living entelechy until the eschaton – that is, until the Gospel will be preached *to all nations* (Mt 24:14, "πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν").

4. Conclusion

The (non-ideological) concept of a *national* culture does not contradict the universalist claims of the Church. Accordingly, the Church is entitled to regard *nationalism* as a form of love (unlike its ideological version, which is mainly a form of sin). Behind the ideological sense of "nationalism" lies the one which it caricatures – the natural love for one's nation.

Indeed, love is corruptible. But it is also legitimate. It has been shown that even Christ endorsed the nation as a form of communion. But this form of communion is not the final one. It has its own sublation. Nationalism in the proposed sense can therefore be seen as the third-last essential step in the hierarchy of love, the second-last being the Church and the Keystone of the ladder being Jesus Christ. This true meaning of nationalism is supported by the Romanian sources used and by Father Stăniloae especially, as it was seen in section 3.

Despite being an almost forgotten one, this meaning of nationalism calls for affection towards all other existing national spiritual creations, all of which embody a transcendental universal Tradition. Such masterpieces are shaped by universal national manners of transmitting One and the Same Truth. Each of these manners is unquantifiable and unique. Embracing such a tradition implies gaining the consciousness that you weren't born only for yourself. It implies the disposition to (culturally) help the world become a better place by making use of its means – whether or not all particular elements a subject uses are endemic and whether or not the use of the "language" of a certain tradition is deliberate. It furthermore implies *accepting a national identity* (also) through assenting to the prior advances made by national predecessors and through the willingness, at least to some degree and to (sacrificially) dedicate one's life to one's nation. (For example by making spiritual contributions, but sometimes also just by the simple act of deciding to live in one's home country, "in spite of it all"). Does this mean that a "nationalist" would *not* choose to die for a foreigner, in a situation analogous to one in which he would choose to do so for his nation? Unequivocally, according to the described framework such a decision would make no sense.

To some degree, the present account has also demonstrated from a Romanian perspective that no contradiction exists between the national and the universal. If this is true, and if the Holy Scripture, together with the Holy Tradition are indeed to bring Salvation, the consequence can only be that the inherent traits of human culture make it the predestined recipient of the Christian message. This would only reinforce the christian confession that the essence of human culture, as a medium, intrinsically fits the content of the Revelation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Benedict R.. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

Bel, Valer. *Misiunea Bisericii în lumea contemporană*: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2002.

Bigham, Stephane. 'The 1872 Council of Constantinople and Phyletism', 2012. https://ocl.org/the-1872-council-of-constantinople-and-phyletism/.

Bloom, Anthony. '11 Lectures on Dogmas'. Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh Archive - Texts - Series of Talks, 1960 1959. http://masarchive.org/Sites/texts/1959-00-00-1-E-E-C-EM03-019ChurchDogmas.html.

Chrysostomus, Ioannes. *Dumnezeiasca Liturghie a Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur*. Bucureşti: Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2012.

Chryssavgis, John, David Bentley-Hart, George Demacopoulos, Carrie Frederick Frost, Brandon Gallaher, Perry Hamalis, Nicolas Kazarian, et al. 'For The Life of the World. Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church'. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, March 2020. https://www.goarch.org/social-ethos?p_p_id=56_INSTANCE_km0Xa4sy69OV&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-1&p_p_col_count=1&_56_INSTANCE_km0Xa4sy69OV_languageId=en_US.

Coteanu, Ion, Luiza Seche, Mircea Seche, Academia Româna, and Institutul de lingvistică. *DEX: Dicţionarul explicativ al limbii române*. Bucureşti: Univers enciclopedic, 1998.

Coteanu, Ion, Luiza Seche, Mircea Seche, and Institutul de Lingvistică 'Iorgu Iordan-Al. Rosetti.' *DEX: Dicţionarul explicativ al limbii române*. Bucureşti: Univers enciclopedic Gold, 2009.

Eliade, Mircea. *Profetism românesc 1*. Edited by Alexandru V. Diţă. Bucuresti: Roza vînturilor, 1990.

———. *Profetism românesc 2*. Edited by Nicolae Georgescu. Bucureşti: Rosa Vînturilor, 1990.

Geană, Gheorghiţă. 'Muntele ca matrice comportamentală, stimul perceptiv şi sublimare simbolică'. In *Muntele - metaforă fundamentală. relief concret şi ascensiune spirituală*, 54–72. Caietele de la Putna. Suceava: Editura Nicodim Caligraful, 2013.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Sotto la Mole (1916-1920)*. Torino: Einaudi, 1960.

Haja, Gabriela, Academia Română, and Institutul de Filologie Română 'A. Philippide' (Bucarest). *Dictionarul limbii române (DLR): în format electronic. Studii privind achizitionarea*. Iasi: Alfa, 2005.

Hastings, Adrian. *The Construction of Nationhood. Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*. Cambridge: University Press, 1997.

Hovorun, Cyril. 'Nation-Building Versus Nationalism: Difficult Dilemmas for the Church'. *IFIJISR Icoana Credintei* 6, no. 11 (2020): 5–16.

Hroch, Miroslav. *European Nations: Explaining Their Formation*. New York: Verso, 2015.

Kalaitzidis, Pantelis, and Nikolaos Asproulis. 'Greek Religious Nationalism and the Challenges of Evangelization, Forgiveness and Reconciliation'. In *Just Peace: Orthodox Perspectives*, 68–89. Geneva: WCC Publications, 2012.

Makrides, V.N. 'Why Are Orthodox Churches Particularly Prone to Nationalization and Even to Nationalism?' *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly.* 57, no. 3/4 (2013): 325–52.

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*. Edited by Deutsche Textarchiv Team, Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. 1. Auflage. London: Office der „Bildungs-Gesellschaft für Arbeiter" von I. E. Burghard, 1848. http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/show/marx_manifestws_1848.

Matsoukas, Nikolaos. *Introducere în gnoseologia teologică*. Translated by Maricel Popa. Bucureşti: Editura Bizantină, 1997.

Morariu, Maxim. *The "Christian Nationalism" of Nichifor Crainic Reflected in His Work from the 4th Decade of the 20th Century*. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2020. http://www.editura.ubbcluj.ro/bd/ebooks/pdf/2659.pdf.

Mucichescu, Paul Andrei. 'Identitate naţională şi ecclesială'. *Studia Theologica Orthodoxa Doctoralia Napocensia* II, no. 2 (2019): 110–26.

Mucichescu, Paul Andrei. 'Loving the Nation as Endorsing the Ecclesial Universal. A Romanian Perspective'. In *National and Ecumenical Orthodoxy*, 125–43. Thessaloniki: K. & M. Stamouli Publications, 2021.

Negulici, I.D. *Vocabularu romanu de toate vorbele străbune repriimite pînă acumu în limba romana şi de tote quelle que suntu a se mai priimi d'acum înainte şi mai allesu în sciinţe*. Bucureşti: Tipografia Colegiului, 1848.

Özkirimli, Umut. *Contemporary Debates on Nationalism: A Critical Engagement*. Houndmills; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Plato. *The Republic, with an English Translation by Paul Shorey*. Translated by Paul Shorey. Perseus Digital Library Project. London; Cambridge [Mass.]: W. Heinemann; Harvard University Press, 1969. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D5%3Asection%3D470c.

Pop, Ioan Aurel, and Ioan Bolovan. *Istoria transilvaniei*. A II-A, Revăzută şi adăugită. Cluj-Napoca: Şcoala ardealană, 2016.

Remete, George. *Leacuri contra evlaviei*. Bucureşti: Paideia, 2018.

Sakharov, Sofronie. *Viaţa şi învăţătura stareţului Siluan Athonitul*. Translated by Ioan Ică. Sibiu: Deisis, 2004.

Saramandu, Nicolae. 'Torna, torna, fratre'. *Revista de fonetică şi dialectologie a academiei române* XX–XXI (2002 2001): 233–51.

Seton-Watson, Hugh. *Nations And States: An Enquiry Into the Origins of Nations and The Politics of Nationalism*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977.

Sinodul episcopal jubiliar al Bisericii Ortodoxe Ruse (Moscova, 13-16 august 2000). 'Biserica şi societatea sau fundamentele concepţiei sociale a bisericii ortodoxe ruse'. In *Gândirea socială a Bisericii*, edited by Ioan Ică Jr and Germano Marani. Sibiu: Deisis, 2002.

Snyder, Timothy. *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*. V4.1_r2 ep. New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2017.

Stăniloae, Dumitru. 'Creştinism şi naţionalism'. In *Naţiune şi creştinism*, edited by Constantin Schifirneţ, 117–20. Bucureşti: Elion, 2003.

———. *Ortodoxie şi românism*. Edited by Constantin Schifirneţ. Bucureşti: Albatros, 1998.

———. 'Universalitatea şi etnicitatea Bisericii în concepţia ortodoxă'. *Studii teologice*, no. 2 (1977): 143–52.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate. 'Territorial Jurisdiction According to Orthodox Canon Law. The Phenomenon of Ethnophyletism in Recent Years'. The Ecumenical Patriarchate - Theological and Other Studies, 2001. https://www.patriarchate.org/-/territorial-jurisdiction-according-to-orthodox-canon-law-the-phenomenon-of-ethnophyletism-in-recent-yea-1.

Tudor, Sandu. 'A fi român'. *Credinţa: ziar independent de luptă politică şi spirituală* An III, no. 304 (4 December 1934).

———. 'Ce e cu tradiţia românească?' *Credinţa: ziar independent de luptă politică şi spirituală* An III, no. 383 (10 March 1935).

———. 'Naţionalismul bogaţilor şi cel al săracilor'. *Credinţa: ziar independent de luptă politică şi spirituală* An III, no. 427 (5 May 1935).

———. 'Spre o conştiinţă limpede românească'. *Credinţa: ziar independent de luptă politică şi spirituală* An III, no. 207 (12 August 1934).

Tudor, Sandu, and Marius Vasileanu. *Universalism românesc*. Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2013.

United Nations. 'International Migration Report 2015: Highlights'. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2016. https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2015_Highlights.pdf.

Vulcănescu, Mircea. 'Dimensiunea românească a existenţei [1943]'. In *Dialog despre identitatea românească*, 283–326. Dreptul la memorie în lectura lui Iordan Chimeţ 3. Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1992.

BOOK REVIEW

Liviu Vidican-Manci, ***Propovăduirea Evangheliei în era digitală.*** **Impactul catehezei și al predicii asupra „generației digitale" prin utilizarea noilor tehnologii ale informației și comunicării** *[Preaching the Gospel in the digital era. The impact of catechesis and sermons on "the digital generation" by using the new technology of information and communication]* **(Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2020), 254 p.**

Preaching the Gospel in the digital era is a necessary and important work for our present technological society, which is so familiar with the online environment. At the same time, the work is a very good spiritual help for our modern society. It represents the results of Father Liviu Vidican-Manci's efforts of approaching, understanding and entering the mind and soul of the digital generation, in order to read and understand this hidden code of faith, as the image with the Holy Cross suggests, from this book's cover. The image of the processor and the binary code 1 and 0, within the Cross, represents somehow the fact that we have the responsibility to discover and to preach God even in those places where we may think He is missing. We can still find God in other forms, into the soul of these young users, their thoughts and ideas, freely expressed in this *global digital community*.

In this book, the author raises a series of important questions, which arouse interest and make us realize the fact that in this virtual space we are not always safe, whether we are young or adults, *digital natives* or *digital immigrants*. The internet is called virtual space, but in fact, its users and the problems that can occur, are as real as possible. Therefore, the Church's discourse has to be adapted to our current times, by using the digital means of communication and socialization. How can we make the *catechesis* and the *pulpit* digital and still keep their efficiency? Probably this remains every person's challenge, as a priest, preaching from the church's *pulpit*, as a teacher, speaking from school's *pulpit*, or even as a parent, model and teacher from the *pulpit* of his house.

In the first part, the author introduces us into the digital space terminology and the specific concepts of the exact disciplines, terms like: internet, URL, HTTP, HTML, Web, ICT (Information and Communication Technology), digital natives, digital immigrants and so on. The author is also making a brief historical approach of this subject in order to better understand the evolution of the internet and its roles in our daily life. An important point is the division among specialists between those two categories above-mentioned of digital space users, *digital natives* and *digital immigrants*, both categories with their particularities. These characteristics are not general, and they do not fully describe a certain category of users (digital or immigrant). Is this division justified or is it just creating a considerable gap between people of different ages?

Further on, the author presents the Romanian school's educational policies and also the tendency of adopting new digitalization projects, namely education based on information and communication technology. The entire catechetical process of preaching the orthodox faith should be combined with the educational process of children, even when we discuss about digitalization. The perspective of combining these methods remains open, because it is very important that technology could not completely replace traditional formation and education. We must always take into consideration every positive and negative effect, in order to determine the efficiency of implementation of digital process in education.

The next chapter presents religion in the digital era, as it is perceived in studies of foreign authors like Stewart M. Hoover, Heidi A. Campbell, Tim Hutchings, Elaine Graham, Anita Cloete and so on. Into the new virtual space new forms of manifestation of faith start to take place, not only as forms of communication and preaching faith. On the Internet, new religious congregations started to appear. First appeared cyber-churches, but also new forms of cult and digital rituals[1] . Are these new online religious forms complementary, acting as addition to *offline* religion, or do they become a substitute for real-life religion? In the process of digital education, the true relationship between communication, communion and community is very important.

Chapter IV describes Christian Church's opinion about the digital phenomenon. From the beginning, Christian Churches had embraced the capabilities of the internet, considering it is a good way of preaching the

---

[1] See Heidi Campbell's studies: *Digital Religion Understanding religious practice in New Media worlds*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2013); *Networked Theology. Negotiating faith in digital culture,* Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Ebook edition created 2016; "Religion and the Internet", *Communication Research Trends. Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture*, 25, no. 1 (2006).

Gospel, a field for the development of Christian mission and a true religious market. Somehow, the internet could enhance people's religious experience, but certainly it could not fully replace it. The Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church rely on the theoretical and practical aspects of this digital revolution, using each instrument to its full potential in order to expand the Church's work and message in the world, without ignoring the negative aspects of the digital space.

The position of the Orthodox Church regarding the digital space takes over the main part of this book. Generally, the Orthodox Church has adopted a reluctant, cautious, sometimes critical approach, regarding the internet. In order to include as many aspects as possible, the author studies the Orthodox Churches of Russia, Greece, Albania, Romania and also the great international orthodox conferences from Athens (2015) and Crete (2018). Depending on the purpose for which it is used, the internet could become a valuable instrument of preaching the faith. In this space it is recommended to develop our ecclesial responsibility, pastoral wisdom, moral discernment, in order to support the traditional Christian values.

The second part of the book is the practical one, where the author analyses the impact, the quality and the efficiency of preaching through new communication technology, performing three studies. The first study consists of three questionnaires applied on one hundred fifty-one teenagers, following different aspects: demographic data, knowledge and religious behaviours of the participants and so on. The second study, applied to the same number of people, follows the differences between spoken catechesis and the one transmitted through electronic ways as well as their impact on teenagers or *digital natives*. Even the digital catechesis seems to have the same results as the spoken one, bringing progress both in terms of knowledge and behaviour. Finally, the third study analyses the process of preaching via You Tube, focusing on certain speeches of church ministers, catechists and preachers, on the way the preaching were prepared and on the listeners' comments on catechesis subjects.

The author underlines the importance of educating and preparing the future preachers, referring to the responsibility of every diocesan centres, through every Faculty of Theology, in this sense. The message, the style, the duration of the presentations, need a careful reorientation in contact with the digital environment, so that the process of preaching can prove its efficiency and fulfil its purpose, that of making known the message of the Church in the sphere of a global society.

Therefore, we recommend for reading Father Liviu Vidican-Manci's work, a necessary and a beneficial challenge to evaluate our position towards the digital environment, especially in these times when our lives and attention are directed to information and communication technology.

BOGDAN GABOR

PhD, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Cluj-Napoca,
gabor_bogdan1990@yahoo.com

BOOK REVIEW

Carmen Angela Cvetković, Peret Gemeinhardt (Eds.), *Episcopal Networks in Late Antiquity. Connection and Communication Across Boundaries*, (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte vol. 137), De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston, 2019, 365 pages ISBN 978-3-11-055188-4

Among the valuable volumes of the Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte series last year, the papers of the conference dealing with the topic of "Episcopal Networks in Late Antiquity. Connection and Communication across Boundaries" held in Gottingen (28th-30th September 2016) were published. The contributions of this volume emphasize the important role played by regional or local contexts of the late ancient world and, according to the editors, investigate "a specific aspect of the 'inter-connectivity' that characterizes the late ancient Christianity in the Mediterranean area by focusing on the formation and operation of episcopal networks". As key figures of authority in the late antique city, the bishops played various roles such as patrons, teachers, defenders of faith, managers of economic resources and even as political actors. That is way they were expected to interact with individuals of diverse social background that forms their congregations as well as with secular authorities. (p. 1)

The fourteenth contributions of the volume revolve around the efforts of defining the episcopal networks, searching for their origins, the mechanism behind their development and their role in specific situations. To this main concern, the investigations of episcopal networks enable us to gain new insights about interpersonal connection and social interactions of bishops in Late Antiquity. All these contributions are organised in two main parts, dedicated to the definition of this network and to its context.

In the first study, "Episcopal Nepotism in the Later Roman Empire (c. 350–450)" (p. 19-42), Volker Menze sheds a fresh perspective on episcopal families and Eastern Roman Empire, showing that from the mid fourth to the mid fifth century nepotism was quite spread and did not have a pejorative connotation. On the contrary, by analysing the case of the Cappadocians and the succession of Theophylus-Cyril-Dioscor, the author leads us to the conclusion that these close familial ties could have been seen by their contemporaries as guaranties of the "Orthodoxy" of bishops related to the authoritative figures of the Christian doctrine.

In her study, entitled "A New Approach to Ambrose of Milan's Kinship" (p. 43-62), Ariane Bodin analyses the geographic background of Ambrose's family and the kinship terminology used by the Milanese bishop in his correspondence in order to establish if he was truly related to Quintus Aurelius Symmachus.

In the next contribution "Influential Friends? Augustine's Episcopal Networks" (p. 63-82), Gillian Clark tries to reconstruct Augustine's social network following his correspondence. But the expectation that Augustine had influential friends is rather a projection of the modern assumptions according to which Augustine was one of the leading theological and political actors in North Africa. Moreover, Gillian Clark underlines the challenges to trace networks of communication from the tiny proportion of material which has survived. At the same time, she points out that "the techniques of network analysis and digital mapping may help to answer questions, but probably they can do no more than redescribe in social-science language, and try to represent in diagrams, the information we already have" (p. 78).

A similar case is approached in the contribution signed by Madalina Toca and Johan Leemans, "The Authority of a 'Quasi-Bishop:' Patronage and Networks in the Letters of Isidore of Pelusium" (p. 83-100). They focus on the activity of Isidore reflected in his correspondence, given that "his corpus of 2000 extant letters is a goldmine of information about late antique patronage and networking" (p. 83). The brief and abstract content, the difficulty of dating or identifying the addressees of these letters hinder a more precise contextualisation, but the information is enough to reconstruct some of the networks and the types of patronage Isidore was involved in. The authors explore Isidore's involvement in the Gigatius-affair and some aspects of his correspondence with emperor Theodosius II, Cyril of Alexandria, and different monks. They conclude that Isidore assumed all kinds of pastoral and patronage duties, intervened for his city and church and was probably more influential than many local bishops.

In the next contribution, "Patronage Networks in the Festal Letters of Athanasius of Alexandria" (p. 101-116), David M. Gwynn investigates the crucial role played by these Festal Letters in Athanasius' success to strengthen the Alexandrian authority within Egypt and to maintain his authority despite his numerous periods of exile. Even more, these letters bear testimony to the cultivation of patronage networks and the control exercised by Athanasius over the entire Egypt.

Peter Gemeinhardt investigates in his contribution, "Bishops as Religious Mentors: Spiritual Education and Pastoral Care" (p. 117-148), three types of mentor-mentee relationships: pagans in the course of conversion (including individuals, like Volusianus, to whom Augustine wrote letters, or groups like

the hearers of Zeno of Verona's sermons), virgins (like Olympias, the head of a female ascetic community in Constantinople, to whom John Chrysostom wrote many letters), or monks (like Dracontius whom Athanasius tried to convince not to resign from the bishopric). The author concludes that a) Christian mentorship presupposes hierarchy, but it also bridges hierarchical patterns, b) it involves responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the mentee (and could be considered as a variant of pastoral care), c) mentorship has an educational component, d) it regularly refers to the Scriptures and e) it aims at building networks by creating strong personal ties between mentor and mentee (p. 143).

Sigrid Mratschek points out the relation between Christian pilgrimages and practices of hospitality, in her contribution entitled "Crossing the Boundaries: Networks and Manifestations of Christian Hospitality" (p. 149-178). She claims that many of the pilgrimages increasingly undertaken in the second half of the fourth century, would have been impossible without the hospitality and local knowledge of monks and bishops along the way. "Networks of hospitality and cooperation linking places far apart brought the Christian world of Late Antiquity closer together" (p. 162). The author insists also on a particular form of hospitality, namely the asylum, as a form of support and protection for the victims of persecutions.

In her paper entitled "Niceta of Remesiana's Visits to Nola: Between Sacred Travel and Political Mission" (p. 179-203), Carmen Angela Cvetković deals with the relationship between Paulinus of Nola and Niceta of Remesiana. She explores Niceta's visits to Nola on at least two occasions. These encounters have been recorded by Paulinus in his Epistula 27, Carmen 17 and Carmen 18. The texts enable us to perceive Niceta as a well-connected bishop involved in more mundane issues, like the ecclesiastical business between the Illyrian churches and the church of Rome. She also identifies Niceta as a messenger of ecclesiastical news to his fellow bishops, whom he informs about recent works produced in the regions he visited as well as about the results of important events, such as episcopal elections in Rome.

The second part of the volume "Episcopal Networks in Context" focuses on the behaviour of the bishop(s) involved in that given situation not only through an understanding of the role a bishop was expected to play in the late ancient society, but also in light of the position he occupied in a social network

In the first contribution of this second part, "The Impact of the Laurentian Schism on Ennodius of Pavia's Participation in Episcopal Networks" (p. 207-226), Daniel K. Knox tries to reconstruct the impact of this schism through a quantitative analysis of the interconnectedness of Laurentius. The network of Ennodius' epistolary patterns is realised using a software generated model and "is based on two social actions: the sending of letters and the mentioning the

third parties in letters that they are not the addressee of" (p. 210). According to the network analysis of epistolary actions "the prominence of supporters of Pope Symmachus in Ennodius' preserved correspondence can be seen not only in the volume of epistolary actions that they received but also in their relation to other supporters among Ennodius' correspondents. Supporters of Pope Symmachus were a part of a dense web of correspondents with whom Ennodius corresponded frequently and who were frequently mentioned in his letters to others. As we have seen, there are fewer preserved conversations with supporters of Laurentius" (p. 224).

The contribution of Jamie Wood, entitled "Building and Breaking Episcopal Networks in Late Antique Hispania" (p. 227-248), examines the cultivation and operation of networks of groups of bishops within Hispania, rather than the networks of an individual bishop. "As key figures within their cities and members of regional aristocracies, bishops have often been seen as playing a pivotal role in managing the transition from Roman to post-Roman Hispania" (p. 227). This may explain why the episcopal vacancies were regarded as moments of conflict and the conflicts over episcopal position encouraged the formation of yet further networks in efforts to solve problems, especially during church councils. The author points out that "Analysis of the contested episcopal elections of late antique Hispania demonstrates that the neat networks of bishops described by the normative sources were rather more ephemeral in practice. The rhetoric of the bishops and their focus on consensus decision making at councils masks the insecurity of their position on a local level and in relation to other sources of power" (p. 244).

In the next paper, "Macedonius, Constantius and the Changing Dynamics of Power" (p. 249-266), Erika Manders focuses on the relationship between emperor Constantius and Macedonius,one of the first bishops of the newly established capital in the East. She highlights the practical and conceptual challenges which were posed by the rise of a new religious authority which would eventually replace the emperor's role in religious affairs. By exploring the episode of removal of Constantine's tomb from the Church of the Holy Apostles that broke the ties between Constantius and Macedonius, she concludes that this act must be seen in the broader context of the power struggle between emperor and bishop, who "wanted to cut the 'imperial cult' that was developing there in order to strengthen the episcopal preeminence". This action revealed that "the bishop no longer considered the emperor's authority as self-evident" (p. 263), and the emperor reacted by deposing his rival.

In the contribution of Jakob Engberg, entitled "Caring for African Confessors in Exile: The Ministry of Numeria and Candida during the Decian Persecution (Cyprian, Epistulae 21 –22)" (p. 267-294) it can be observed an

epistolary network between different regions of the Church as well as the strife for spiritual and material support of refugees, provided by the confessor Celerinus and his sisters Numeria and Candida who had previously apostatized (or sacrificed, respectively, following the emperor Decius' decree of 250) but now were respected, even leading figures in the community of refugees. This episode also sheds light on Cyprian's communication during these difficult times: the episcopal network in North Africa served as means of transmission of letters and thus helped to uphold Christian ideals of confessorship.

The paper of Daniëlle Slootjes, "The Impact of Geographical and Administrative Boundaries on Late Antique Bishops" (p. 295-312), present an examination of the way in which existing civic structures and institutions might have had an impact on the way in which late antique bishops were able to exercise their position of power and influence within their Christian communities. She underlines that the expectation of "stable, life-long and regional appointments of bishops" had no parallel in imperial offices, but it was the basis on which bishops could create local and regional networks (and thus gain lasting prominence in a city and/or province); in the course of time, and even taking over some duties of urban or imperial officials. She also makes a first step towards a reconsideration of our perception of the meaning of dioceses, both as civic and ecclesiastical organizations. "It has become clear that civic dioceses were not units that were simply taken over by the church for its own purposes, but we should be much more careful in our analyses of the instances in which dioceses are mentioned in the late antique ancient Christian sources" (p. 308). Thus, we should not infer from medieval regulations how the late antique church was structured and how such structures were instrumental in shaping the limits of episcopal networks.

In the closing contribution, "Bishops and Mission Beyond the Frontiers: From Gothia to Nubia" (p. 313-337), Andrea Sterk investigates the missionary networks and highlights the role of bishops in such endeavours. Gothia and Nuia serve as case studies of the diverse roles that bishops played in the spread of Christianity on the eastern frontiers. She concludes that "within the process, 'episcopal networks' included not only bishops, but a diverse cast of characters too easily dismissed as 'accidental' evangelists. The reality of unofficial missionaries working both with and without episcopal oversight helps explain the rapid spread of Christianity in Late Antiquity, even when emperors showed little interest in mission to barbarians and bishops were preoccupied with doctrinal disputes" (p. 333).

Overall, the volume reflects the particularities of the episcopal networks and helps us understand their effects on the collective and individual destiny of Christians in Late Antiquity. The editors underline also that the contributors

"seek to understand how Christian ideals of doctrinal normativity, ecclesiastical unity and spiritual perfection governed, shaped and affected interpersonal relationships leading towards cooperation or conflict" (p. 15).

DRAGOȘ BOICU

Faculty of Theology, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu,
dragos.boicu@ulbsibiu.ro