THEOLOGIA ORTHODOXA

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CONTENTS

III. SOCIAL THEOLOGY

IV. REVIEWS

I. SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD AS REVELATION AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRIUNE GOD IN THE WORKS OF DIONYSIUS AREOPAGITE AND THEIR USE IN THE THEOLOGY OF DUMITRU STĂNILOAE

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ABSTRACT. Dumitru Staniloae in his Dogmatic Theology develops the connection of the Experience of God as Revelation and knowledge of the Triune God based and on the works of Dionysius Areopagite. The divine essence remains inaccessible eternally. For this reason, the man as finite logic being should articulate a moderate thought. The knowledge of God commensurate with the ability of the finite man to know the infinite God. He doesn't completely escape from the reality of darkness - a general characteristic of the created nature. The very fact that man was created out of nothing, and the characteristics of createdness and decay contain in his nature, this is an essential differentiation between him and his Creator. Thus, the basis for every human expression or knowledge about God is the fact for the ontological distinction between the created and the uncreated nature. The knowledge of God should be understood as the knowledge of God's attributes and His modes of being, the direction from the "heaven" to the "earth" and not the opposite one.

The sole ground of man's knowledge of God is thus God's self-revelation; it is premised on the idea of divine incomprehensibility. The term revelation signifies two things; that the knowledge of God itself by itself is impossible. However, God can be known (economically) through revelation, and a human being is capable of receiving this knowledge according to her/his capacity.

Keywords: Dumitru Staniloae, Dionysius Areopagite, knowledge of God, attributes, finite man, infinite God, commensurate.

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1. The Knowledge of God in the works of (pseudo) Dionysius Areopagite

"The knowledge of God is beyond man's power. God promised that only those who are pure of their heart can have vision of God[1]. For God who is by nature beyond our sight is visible in His activities 'energeiai', being perceived in the characteristics 'idiomata' that surround Him. So, it is better for man to speak for the deeds of God but when he is going to speak about His essence, then man should be remain silent"[2].

The divine essence remains utterly inaccessible, and for this reason man who is a finite logical being is obliged to articulate a modest reason having fully understood his cognitive limitations. Thus, through Mystical Theology, Dionysius Areopagite points out that the human mind knows God. The mind was given to man, in order to know sufficiently the truth. The only self-esteem is God. Therefore, the primary work of the mind is the awareness of God, but consciousness of the ability of the finite man to know the infinite in size God. It is certain that man is unable to understand God without his above assistance. Moreover, when man surpasses the first type of agnosia (lack of knowledge), he still has not completely escaped the reality of darkness - a general characteristic of his created nature. The very fact that man was created from the non-being and contained in his nature the characteristics of the creature and the finity of it makes him distinct from his Creator. So, the basis for any human expression or knowledge of God is the unity that involves the ontological distinction between the created and the uncreated nature.

Moreover, Divine illumination makes the human mind free from any darkness. It purifies the eyes of the mind and makes it fertile to accept the knowledge of God, according to every man's passion for searching this divine acknowledge. God cannot be "seized" by bodily senses. On this point of view, Paul Gavrilyuk supports that Dionysius doesn't agree with the Messalianism which accepts that God can be perceived by bodily senses[3]. But, Alexander Golitzin supposes that Dionysius had the goal to adopt Messalian sensibilities in ascetic circles[4].

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[1] "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God", Mat. 5:8.

[2] Eirini Artemi, "Man's 'knowledge' and 'ignorance' for God in the teaching of Gregory of Nyssa and Nicholas of Cusa", *Mirabilia* 19, no. 2 (2014), 45. Vl. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 81.

[3] Paul L. Gavrilyuk, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite", in *The spiritual senses Perceiving God in Western Christianity*, eds. Paul L. Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 93.

[4] Ibidem. Alexander Golitzin, "Dionysius Areopagites: A Christian Mysticism?", in *The Theophaneia School: Jewish Roots of Eastern Christian Mysticism*, eds. Basil Lourie and Andrei Orlov (Vizantinorossika, St Petersburg, 2007), 145, 151, 162.

Dionysius underlines that Negative - Apophatic[5] theology is used by man to describe God by negation, in which one has only what may not be said about God. So, the negative way comes to play a role in knowing God, a knowing in unknowing. Through the apathetic-secret theology Christian can achieve his union and assimilation with God. Apophatic theology reveals the weakness of human thought in front of the mystery of the greatness of the divine nature. That doesn't mean that the apophatism rejects the rationality of human being. Professor Papanikolaou supports that

> "The emphasis on a mystical union with God beyond reason did not necessarily entail the rejection of rationality in the life and expression of faith. A cursory reading of apologetic texts and those commenting on the ascetical life reveal the importance of the role of reason for the Eastern Christian tradition"[6].

God, who transcends all human thought, reveals his actions to the human race. In the thought of Dionysius the negative way forms a pair together with the kataphatic or positive way. According to Deirdre Carabine: "the terms apophasis and kataphasis belong to what the Pseudo-Dionysius called the 'sacred science' of theology"[7]. Dionysius analyzes the kataphatic way to the divine as the "way of speech": that we can come to some understanding of the Transcendent by attributing all the perfections of the created order to God as its source[8]. So we can say that God is omnipotent, good, love and etc. On the other hand the apophatic way shows God's absolute transcendence and unknowability in such a way that we cannot say anything about the divine essence because God is so totally beyond being, beyond place and time[9]. The combination of the immanence and transcendence of God make us sufficient to realize the simultaneous truth of both "ways" to God: at the same time as God is immanent, God is also transcendent[10]. At the same time as God is knowable, God is also unknowable. God cannot be thought of as one or the other only[11].

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[5] "The negative way, more often than not, is called *apophatism* or *via negativa* in religious and philosophical discourse. The apophatic tradition has a long history with its 'metaphors of negativity' The 'metaphors of negativity' came to be called as *apophatism* in the Greek tradition and *via negativa* in the Latin tradition in the West", C.D. Sebastian, *The Cloud of Nothingness*, Sophia Studies in Cross-cultural Philosophy of Traditions and Cultures 19, Springer India 2016, 19-20, doi 10.1007/978-81-322-3646-7_2. D. Turner, *The darkness of god: Negativity in Christian mysticism* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998), 1: 35-40.

[6] Aristotle Papanikolaou, "Reasonable faith and a trinitarian logic", in *Restoring faith in reason*, eds. L. P. Hemming & S. F. Parsons (SCM Press, London, 2002), 244.

[7] "Living Without a Why. An Interview with Deirdre Carabine", *Holos: Forum for a New Worldview* 5, no. 1 (2009), http://www.centerforsacredsciences.org/index.php/Holos/holos-carabine.html. Deindre Carabin, *The unknown God. Negative theology in the Platonic Tradition: Plato to Eriugena,* Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs 19 (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1995), 2.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

In the treatise *On Mystical Theology*, the mystical theology is the goal and ground of the other stages of theology. The apophatic and the superlative theology are developed in succession, but also, there is the positive theology. The first declares that God cannot be described with notions that are used to describe the products which he has produced. The result of this apophaticism is to reject "any notion obstructing the knowledge of the divine nature defined positively as the One", argues Aristotle Papanikolaou[12]. The negation employed in the texts of Dionysius is neither "that of privation nor of opposition, but rather a superlative negation, which in its very act of negation, is a transcendent nothing that lies before everything"[13].

The superlative theology underlines that the negotiations are limitations of our mind, not of its object[14]. Also, the superlative theology includes giving names to God, but it is added the word *super* (in greek language is preposition), to show that should apply to God infinitely more than created things. For example, we call God Super- Good.

Finally in the positive theology, we don't employ univocal and literal words, but instead of that we should use analogies for God[15]. Elisabeth Theokritoff underlines:

> "(Ps-)Dionysius takes up the Neoplatonist idea of the scale of being; but he turns it into a structure of theophany, revelation of God. Its purpose is to allow each creature to reflect the divine glory in its own unique way, according to its analogy with its Creator"[16].

So, the Cataphatic one supplies the knowledge of God which is an imperfect knowledge, while the apophatic leads to the ignorance of God; for God is unsayable and unknowable in the categories of human language[17]. The Cataphatic theology expresses the knowledge of God through the divine names which refer to God[18].

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[12] Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God, Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine—Human Communion* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 18.

[13] Eugene Thacker, *After Life* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 55.

[14] "God and heaven cannot be put into put into words not because they are too vague, thin and whispy but because they are too definite and specific, too real for words. It is our language and concepts that too vague, thin and whispy", Peter Kreeft, Fr. Ronald Tacelli, *Handbook of Catholic Apologetics: Reasoned Answers to Questions of Faith* (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2009), 216.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Elizabeth Theokritoff, "Creator and creation", in *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, by Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) (63-77), 65. Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (London, New York, 2001), 84-5, 105-9.

[17] C.D. Sebastian, *The Cloud of Nothingness* (2016), 38.

[18] Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God, Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine—Human Communion* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 20.

We can support that for pseudo-Dionysius, God is better characterized and approached by negations than by affirmations. All names and theological representations must be negated. According to pseudo-Dionysius, when all names are negated, "divine silence, darkness, and unknowing" will follow. For him God in Himself is beyond the God we know through cataphatic theology. God is more adequately "known" through apophatic theology, the paradoxical mystical theology of denial or unknowing:

> "God is therefore known in all things and as distinct from all things. He is known through knowledge and through unknowing. Of him there is conception, reason, understanding, touch, perception, opinion, imagination, name, and many other things. On the other hand, he cannot be understood, words cannot contain him, and no name can lay hold of him. This is the sort of language we must use about God, for he is praised from all things according to their proportion to him as their Cause. But again, the most divine knowledge of God, that which conies through unknowing, is achieved in a union far beyond the mind, when mind turns away from all things, even from itself, and when it is made one with the dazzling rays, being then and there enlightened by the inscrutable depth of Wisdom."[19]

Through the treatise of Mystical Theology, Dionysius presents the way with which a Christian can achieve his union and assimilation with God through the Apophatic -mystical theology. Apophatic theology, as it was underlined above, reveals the weakness of human thought before the mystery of the vastness of divine nature. God, who transcends all human thought, reveals His energies to mankind. Through these divine actions, and by the illumination of human's mind by God, a man attempts to capture the knowledge of the ultimate reality, "creating" concepts - allegations that either relate to what is God, affirmative theology, or relate to what is not, affirmative theology[20]. Moreover, affirmative and negative way of knowing God is not an exclusively gnostic, but originally ontological issue. Gnosis is closely related to ontology and is defined by its constant parameters[21]. In the first chapter of this treatise "Mystical Theology" Dionysius poses the question "What is the Divine darkness" and opens with a prayer in which the supplicant says:

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[19] Dionysius Areopagite, *On Divine Names*, VII.3, PG 3, 872AB. *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, transl. by Colm Luibheid, foreword, notes, and translation collaboration by Paul Rorem, preface by Rene Roques, introductions by Jaroslav Pelikan, Jean Leclercq, and Karlfried Froehlich, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 108-109.

[20] Chr. Giannaras, *Heidegger and Areopagite*, the thought about the absence and the unknowing of God (Athens: Domos, 1998), 138. E. Artemi, *Terms of Formation of Knowledge in Byzantine George Pachymeres in his parable of the treatise Concerning the Mystical Theology of Dionysios Areopagite,* in greek, post doctorate thesis (Patras-Athens: University of Patras, 2015), 79.

[21] Ibid.

"TRINITY!! Higher than any being, any divinity, any goodness![22] Guide of Christians in the wisdom of heaven! lead us up beyond unknowing and light, up to the farthest, highest peak of mystic scripture, where the mysteries of God's Word lie simple, absolute and unchangeable in the brilliant darkness of a hidden silence. Amid the deepest shadow [darkness] they pour overwhelming light on what is most manifest. Amid the wholly unsensed and unseen they completely fill our sightless minds with treasures beyond all beauty)"[23].

So, Mystical union with God is only possible in terms of the darkness of "unknowing" *(agnosia)*. It is never an actual or complete union with the Unnamable God; the transcendent Divinity Who is beyond Being *(hyperousios)*. Generally, it should be underlined that the use of darkness in the knowledge of God was used by Gregory of Nyssa, who can be seen as the anticipator of Denis the Areopagite.

In Dionysius' thought the unspeakable and the speakable, the uncreated and the created one co-operate and connect each other. Through this relationship, the knowledge of God emerges. This knowledge is characterized sometimes as affirmative and other as negative. Many anthropomorphic expressions or human characteristics as hands and feet are used for God. All this is symbolic theology, according to Dionysius of Alexandria. The latter emphasizes that through these causes

"the theologian plunges into that darkness which is beyond intellect, we shall find ourselves not simply running short of words but actually speechless and unknowing. So man should understand that the names for God are abusive concepts of the human mind"[24].

It is a situation that leads man to realize that he is in full "rationality and inanimation", since as much as he tries to reach God, he understands so much that the share in the truth of God, in the sight of God is like going up in the rough term of mystical theology. Additionally, in Symbolic theology, the symbol is the way in which human spirituality in its broad meaning is expressed through formalizing materials. Even the words act symbolically. For their part, of course, the terms do not mature themselves as to their semantics, but to the people who use them[25].

Dionysius underlines the absolute transcendence and unknowability of the Trinity while emphasizing the reasonable accuracy of words as verbal signifiers[26]. The divine names of God reveal his attributes which descend towards

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[22] Dionysius asks from God the help him, to reveal him the truth about the Godhead. It reminds us of Homer, the greek ancient poet who in his both epic poems, *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, asks the help of Muse of epic poetry to reveal the things that happen among Gods.

[23] Dionysius Areopagite, *On Mystical Theology,* Prologue, PG 3, 997A, in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, transl. Luibheid-Rorem (1987), 135.

[24] E. Artemi, *Terms of Formation of Knowledge.* (2015), 80. Dionysius Areopagite, *On Mystical Theology,* 3, PG 3, 1033B.

[25] E. Artemi, *Terms of Formation of Knowledge.* (2015), 80.

[26] Emmanuel Clapsis, *Orthodoxy in Conversation: Orthodox Ecumenical Engagements* (Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2000), 42.

the created world, yet they do not draw humanity closer to his inaccessible essence. God's nature remains beyond the human capacity for comprehension and knowledge. The human language is unable to express the antinomy of transcendental Christian God revealing Himself in this world as creator and redeemer[27]. Moreover, Dionysius explains that we can have a mystical union (μυστική ἕνωσις) with God, but this union is beyond human knowledge:

> "But when our souls are moved by intelligent energies in the direction of the things of the intellect then our senses and all that go with them are no longer needed. And the same happens with our intelligent powers which, when the soul becomes divinized, concentrate sightlessly and through an unknowing union on the rays of 'unapproachable light' "[28].

The negative way of Pseudo-Dionysius was influenced by Neoplatonism. For this point, there are different views. We will refer to some scholars who agree or disagree about the connection of Neoplatonic Philosophy with the texts of Dionysius "Concerning the Mystical Theology" and "Of the Divine Names". George Pachymeres, a Byzantine Greek historian, philosopher and miscellaneous writer of the 13th-14th century accepted Pseudo-Dionysius as a Neoplatonist[29]. Martin Luther accuses Dionysius of being more platonic than Christian, "plus platonizans quam christianizans"[30]. In modern times, Lossky is one who does not accept Pseudo-Dionysius as a Neoplatonist[31]. The Russian theologian explains that Dionysius' God is the God of the Holy Bible, who brought everything in being ex nihilo, and this God is not the primordial God-Unity (the One = ἕν) of the Neoplatonist philosophers[32].

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[27] Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (London, New York, 2001), 90. Anita Strezova, "Knowledge and Vision of God in Cappadocian Fathers", *The Voice of Orthodoxy, http://www.thevoiceoforthodoxy.com/knowledge-and-vision-of-god-in-cappadocian-fathers/*, access 15 August 2018.

[28] Dionysius Areopagite, *Divine Nature*, IV. 11, PG 3, 708D, trans. Luibheid & Rorem, 80; *Divine Nature*, I. 1, PG 3, 585B, trans. Luibheid & Rorem, 49; *Divine Nature*, I. 1, PG 3, 588B, trans. Luibheid & Rorem, 50; *Divine Nature*, II. 7, PG 3, 645A, trans. Luibheid & Rorem, 63; *Divine Nature*, V. 3, PG 3, 817B, trans. Luibheid & Rorem, 97-8; *Mystical Theology* IV, PG 3, 1040D, trans. Luibheid & Rorem, 141; Ep. i, *To the monk Gaius,* PG 3, 1065A, trans. Luibheid & Rorem, 263.

[29] E. Artemi, *Terms of Formation of Knowledge.* (2015), 48-72, 127-35.

[30] Martin Luther, *De Ordine,* t. 1, in Louis Bail, *Summa Conciliorum Omnium apud Fredericvm Leonard* (1672), 625.

[31] Vl. Lossky, *The mystical theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge-London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd. 1968), 29.

[32] Ibid., 29–31: "There have been many attempts to make a neoplatonist of Dionysius. ... The God of Dionysius, incomprehensible by nature, the God of Psalms: 'who made darkness his secret place', is not the primordial God-Unity of the neoplatonists. ... In his refusal to attribute to God the properties which make up the matter of affirmative theology, Dionysius is aiming expressly at the neo-platonist definitions: 'He is neither One, nor Unity' (οὐδὲ ἕν, οὐδὲ ἑνότης). In his treatise of the Divine Names, in examining the name of the One, which can be applied to God, he shows its insufficiency and compares with it another and 'most sublime' name – that of the Trinity, which teaches us that God is neither one nor many but that He transcends this antinomy, being unknowable in what He is (*Of the Divine Names* XIII, 3)."

Another western theologian who agrees that in Dionysius' theology is influenced by Neoplatonism, is Denys Turner. The latter adds that in Dionysius' work, there is not only neoplatonic influence but a platonic, too[33]. C.D. Sebastian underlines "Pseudo-Dionysius's negative way might have been influenced more by the Neoplatonic thought than the Hebraic Biblical ethos"[34] as Sebastian Brock had accepted[35]. The same opinion about the connection of neoplatonic philosophy and the texts of Pseudo-Dionysius is analyzed by professor Ch. Terezis[36]. He (Terezis) thinks that the texts of pseudo Dionysius have been written by Christians who lived in a neoplatonic environment[37] and mainly in the Mystical Theology there are neoplatonic influences but in the Divine names, there are many indirect references to platonic and aristotelian philosophy[38]. Broadly speaking, Dionysius' theological thought had many influences from the philosophical movement of later Platonism.

Generally, we will underline that despite the neoplatonic and platonic background in the texts of Dionysius[39], there is a rich variety of historic receptions of Dionysius, in both Eastern and Western Christian traditions[40]. Andrew Louth argues that:

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[33] Turner underlines that: "Denys invented the genre for the Latin Church; and for sure, he forged the language, or a good part of it, and he made a theology out of those central metaphors without which there could not have been the mystical tradition that there has been: 'light' and 'darkness,' 'ascent' and 'descent,' that love of God and eros. This is the vocabulary of our mysticism: historically we owe it to Denys; and he owed it, as he saw it, to Plato and Moses", D. Turner, *The darkness of god: Negativity in Christian mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 13.

[34] C.D. Sebastian, *The Cloud of Nothingness* (2016), 39.

[35] Sebastian P. Brock, *Studies on Syriac spirituality*, ed. Jacob Vellian, The Syrian Churches series, Vol. XIII, (yothi Book House, Kottayam 1988), 42: "Wherever the influence of the Dionysian writings was strong (and it was strong in both East and West but above all in the West), the heart is not important location in the spiritual geography of the human being. It has become separated on this map of sacred space from the intellect (and in some cases more or less replaced by it). This is why, in the Western Christian tradition 'prayer of the heart' usually has a somewhat narrower sense than it has in most of the Eastern Christian tradition, for in the West the heart is simply the seat of emotions, of affective prayer, whereas in the East it has (among certain writers at any rate) retained its biblical role of being the seat of the intellect and as well."

[36] Ch. Terezis, *Assays in Christianity of the East* (Patras: Hellenic Open University, 2017), 599.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., 600.

[39] Alexander Golitzin, "Anarchy vs. Hierarchy? Dionysius Areopagita, Symeon New Theolgian, Nicetas Stethatos, and their Common Roots in Ascetical Tradition," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (1994): 131-179; idem, *Et introibo ad altare dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with Special Reference to its Predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition*, Analekta Vlatadon 59, (Thessaloniki, 1994). Idem, "Dionysius Areopagites in the works of Saint Gregory Palamas: on the question of a 'christological corrective' and related matters", *Scrinium* 3, no. 1 (2007): 83-105, doi: 10.1163/18177565-90000151

[40] Sarah Coakley, "Dionysian Studies in Transition", in Re-*thinking Dionysius the Areopagite*, eds. Sarah Coakley, Charles M. Stang (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 15.

"Dionysius' influence is pervasive, though not all-pervasive. It is also uneven, both in the sense that some Byzantines seem more open to his influence than others, and also in the sense that there is a very generalized influence, alongside genuine attempts at engagement with his thought"[41].

We will agree with professor Louth and we will refer the names of some notable Christian thinkers who received the influence of Dionysius and they exploited the effect of Dionysius theology in a constructive way within their entire work. Here, we will refer only to some of these who employed Dionysius' influence are Sergius of Reshaina (died 536)[42], John of Scythopolitis (c. 536-550)[43], Maximus Confessor (c. 580-662)[44], Germanus of Constantinople (c. 634-733)[45], Symeon New Theologian[46], Nicholas of Cusa[47], Nicetas Stethatos[48], and Gregory Palamas[49]. The influence of Dionysius' theology has been received fruitfully in

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[41] Andrew Louth, "The reception of Dionysius in the Byzantine World: Maximus to Palamas", in Re-*thinking Dionysius the Areopagite*, eds. Sarah Coakley, Charles M. Stang (Wiley-Blackwell, West Sussex, 2009), 120.

[42] István Perczel, "The earliest Syriac reception of Dionysius", in Re-*thinking Dionysius the Areopagite*, eds. Sarah Coakley, Charles M. Stang (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 70: "He (Sergius of Reshaina) interpreted Dionysius in the light of Evagrian gnoseology".

[43] Ibid., 80. Paul Rorem and J. C. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 9-15.

[44] A. Louth, "The reception of Dionysius" (2009), 128: "The influence of Dionysius on Maximus is, however, manifest, even if we discount the few scholia that may still belong to Maximus. Maximus acknowledges it explicitly in his Mystagogia, which is presented as a supplement to the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, and the use of apophatic theology and the other themes mentioned as part of the generalized influence of Dionysius are found throughout Maximus' writings. What we find, too, however, is an engagement with Dionysius' ideas that develops them in a novel way". Also, A. Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (London, New York, 2001).

[45] Jelena Bogdanovic, "Rethinking the Dionysian Legacy in Medieval Architecture", in *Dionysius the Areopagite between Orthodoxy and Heresy*, ed. Filip Ivanović (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 126.

[46] Alexander Golitzen, trans. and ed., *On the Mystical Life. The ethical discourses/ St. Symeon the New Theologian,* vol. 3 (Crestwood New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 39-41, 84. A. Golitzen, *El Introibo ad Altare Dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita* (Thessalonica, 1994), 223-227.

[47] P. E. Sigmund, *Nicholas of Cusa and Medieval Political Thought* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1963), 247-9.

[48] Matthew J. Pereira, *Beholding Beauty In Nicetas Stethatos' Contemplation of Paradise*, 55, https://usqr.utsnyc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Pereira.pdf: "In accord with his esteemed predecessor Dionysius, Nicetas shares similar philosophical presuppositions with Plato, albeit with the major difference that his analysis of the sensible and intelligible is situated within a narrative largely shaped by the biblical themes of creation, fall, and the restoration of humanity and the saving economy of the Trinitarian outreach".

[49] A. Louth, "The reception of Dionysius", 2009, 138. Hieromonk Alexander, "Dionysius Areopagites in the works of Saint Gregory Palamas: on the question of a 'christological corrective' and related matters", *Scrinium* 3, no. 1 (2007), 83–105, doi: 10.1163/18177565-90000151.

contemporary Orthodox thought as John Romanides[50], Vladimir Lossky[51], Sergius Bulgakov[52], Alexander Golitzin[53], Christos Yannaras[54], Andrew Louth[55], Dimitru Staniloae[56] and many others[57].

2. The conception of Dionysius' Areopagite theology concerning the Knowledge of God in the theology of Dumitru Stăniloae

Dumitru Stăniloae was a Romanian Orthodox theologian who supported that if someone wants to speak about God, he should have a theology of experience[58]. Fr Staniloae is an apophatic theologian according to His eminence Kallistos Ware[59]. For Staniloae "Apophatic knowledge is not irrational but supra-rational, for the Son of God is the Logos and contains in himself the "reasons" of all created things"[60].

Staniloae adopts the opinion of Gregory Palamas about the knowledge and vision of God:

> "The vision (contemplation) ... is one thing and theology is another, because it is not the same way to say something about God as it is to gain and see God. For negative theology is also a word. But visions (contemplations) are above words..."[61]

So, Staniloae underlines that the vision of God is higher than any kind of knowledge which bases on rationality or on faith[62]. This opinion reminds us the first part of Mystical Theology of Dionysius. The latter advises Timothy's:

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[50] J. S. Romanides, "Notes on the Palamite Controversy and Related Topics", *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 6, no. 2 (1960/61): 186-205 & 9, no. 2 (1963/64): 225-270. Risto Saarinen, *Faith and Holiness: Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue 1959-1994* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 189.

[51] David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Michigan – Cambridge: Grand Rapids, 2003), 29.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Michael Craig Rhodes, *Mystery in Philosophy: An Invocation of Pseudo-Dionysius,* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2012), 12.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid., 11.

[56] Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, 29.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Marc-Antoine Costa de Beauregard, *Dumitru Stăniloae* (Paris: Cerf, 1983), 156.

[59] Kallistos Ware, "Foreword" in Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: The experience of God* (Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), xx.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Gregory Palamas, *Defence of the Holy Hesychasts* 2.3.49, ed. Christou, vol. 1, 582.3-6. Ştefan-Lucian Toma, *The patristic tradition in the work of f. Dumitru Staniloae and the modern world.* (in Greek) P. Pournaras, Thessaloniki 2007, 306-308. D. Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1998). 115.

[62] Ibid., 95-96: "According to patristic tradition, there is a rational or cataphatic knowledge of God, and an apophatic or ineffable knowledge. The latter is superior to the former because it completes it. God is not known in his essence, however, through either of these. We know God through cataphatic

> "to leave behind you everything perceived and understood, everything perceptible and understandable, all that is not and all that is, and, with your understanding laid aside, to strive upward as much as you can toward union with him who is beyond all being and knowledge"[63].

In other part of his work he underlines the significance of knowing God through apophatic way abandon any words and their meanings and any symbol which refers to God[64].

Father Staniloae, following Dionysius, without recognizing the scholastic view "analogy entis"[65], has enough to say about the reason that creation is receptive to God himself and through it the natural revelation of God is known and realized completely in the illumination of the supernatural revelation[66]. This supernatural revelation generates the knowledge of faith. But it should be highlighted that the natural revelation is not entirely natural because through the creation of nature, man can know God,

> "Almighty God brings into being and sustains everything, and provides in every way for everything; and is present, to all, by the irresistible embrace of all, and by His providential progressions and operations to all existing things"[67].

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knowledge only as creating and sustaining cause of the world, while through apophatic knowledge we gain a kind of direct experience of his mystical presence which surpasses the simple knowledge of him as cause who is invested with certain attributes similar to those of the world. This latter knowledge is termed apophatic because the mystical presence of God experienced through it transcends the possibility of being defined in words. This knowledge is more adequate to God than is cataphatic knowledge-- Rational knowledge, however, cannot simply be renounced. Even though what it says about God may not be entirely adequate, it says nothing which is opposed to God. It is just that what it does say must be deepened through apophatic knowledge. Moreover, even apophatic knowledge, when it seeks to give any account of itself at all, must resort to the terms of the knowledge of the intellect, though it does fill these terms continuously with a deeper meaning than the mind's notions can provide. ... In our opinion these two kinds of knowledge are neither contradictory nor mutually exclusive, rather they complete each other. Strictly speaking, apophatic knowledge is completed by rational knowledge of two kinds, that which proceeds by way of affirmation and that which proceeds by way of negation. ... One who has a rational knowledge of God often completes this with apophatic knowledge, while the one whose apophatic experience is more pronounced will have recourse to the terms of rational knowledge when giving expression to this experience".

[63] Dionysius Areopagite, *Mystical Theology*, I.1, PG 3, 997B, trans. Luibheid & Rorem, 135.

[64] Gheorghe Dragulin, "Pseudo-Dionysios the Areoapgite in Dumitru Staniloae's Theology", in Lucian Turcescu, *Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology* (Iasi: The center for Romanian Studies, Iasi 2002), 78.

[65] *Analogia entis* is an approach to the Divine which holds that the created world offers, by analogy, a means of grasping the nature of the Divine. Without it, the Divine becomes utterly unknowable, incommunicable, inconceivable, and so on.

[66] D. Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1998), 1.

[67] Dionysius Areopagite, *On Divine Names*, IX. 9, PG 3, 916C, trans. John Parker, *The Collected Works of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Ontario: Woodstock, 2015), 41.

So the natural revelation can be conceived by us as fully meaning of knowledge of God through the supernatural revelation of Him[68], which came to its close in incarnation of Word, in Christ[69]. These two revelations, natural and supernatural don't confute each other.

This double methodology for knowing God through the natural and the supernatural[70] revelation has to do with experience and illumination and purification of human mind. No one can approach God with understanding unless he is purified from passions[71]. Only then he can succeed the union with Him, to obtain the knowledge of as the church fathers support[72]. So the believer understands that any definition of God becomes synonym to the total apophatism[73]. Also, the "genuine knowledge" of God can happen only within the "framework of personal communion"[74].

At the same time between God and created things there is no likeness at all, even though created things were made by God and depend upon God. This means that the truth about God and the truth about the nature of the universe are not identified with one another, even though one of them is dependent on the other[75]: "God can always be known from the creatures, but it is possible never to know God from creatures"[76]. The truth about the nature hides the "superessential gloom, which is hidden by all the light in existing things"[77].

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[68] D. Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1998), 16.

[69] Ibid., 37.

[70] Ibid., 23: "By supernatural revelation, God causes his own words to appear directly in the conscience of the believer, or other words which manifest his own Person. In this, God does not work through nature but through a kind of utterance and action which makes more obvious the presence of his Person, as he guides man towards union with that Personal reality as his final goal. Through this, God enters into direct and evident communion with the believer and this convinces him of God's existence and satisfies his thirst for communion with infinite Person, giving him proof at the same time that he is not left to the care of blind forces that will cause him to be lost, but is raised instead to a relationship with the supreme Personal reality who will lead him into an eternal existence in full communion with himself".

[71] Ibid., 87.

[72] Ibid., 117: "although the content of what is known transcends the content of such terms to a much greater extent than the knowledge of him through simple faith... One who has this vision or experience of God is simultaneously aware that, in his essence, God transcends the vision or experience. ... The apophatic experience is equivalent to a sense of mystery that excludes neither reason nor sentiment, but it is more profound than these".

[73] Andrew Louth, "The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology of Dumitru Stăniloae", in Lucian Turcescu, *Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology* (Iasi: The center for Romanian Studies, 2002), 66.

[74] Silviu Eugene Rogobete, "Mystical Existentialism or Communitarian Participation?: Vladimir Lossky and Dumitru Staniloae", in Lucian Turcescu, *Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology* (Iasi: The center for Romanian Studies, 2002), 177.

[75] D. Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1998), 87.

[76] Ibid., 17.

[77] Dionysius Areopagite, *Mystical Theology*, II.1, PG 3, 1025B. trans. John Parker, *The Collected Works of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Ontario: Woodstock, 2015), 53.

Father Dumitru accepts that for the knowledge of God, the believer should not stay only in the apophatic theology but also in the affirmative one. So he tries to compromise the apophatic theology of Dionysius concerning the knowledge of God with the affirmative one in order to present a complete way in order God to be known to men[78]:

> "To rise above the things of the world does not mean these disappear; it means, through them, to rise beyond them. And since they remain, the apophatic knowledge of God does not exclude affirmative rational knowledge... In apophatic knowledge the world remains, but it has become transparent of God. This knowledge is apophatic because the God who now is perceived cannot be defined; he is experienced as a reality which transcends all possibility of definition"[79].

So in the previous passage is expressed the same opinion of Staniloae with Dionysius on his Divine Names VII.3[80]. Both they agree that the combination of both these ways of theology provides to people the natural knowledge of God[81]. Staniloae underlines:

> "If we read his (Areopagite's) writings attentively, we see that he everywhere combines apophatic knowledge with cataphatic. This follows from the fact that he too speaks of a spiritual progress in one who knows God"[82].

Also, fr Staniloae declares the cataphatic knowledge, nesting it (or framing it) as he does within the exponentially larger apophatic experience. He presents Dionysius as apophatic spiritual writer who is finally and correctly identified as one who harmonizes the two apophatic and affirmative knowledge of God:

> "Since it is the Cause of all beings, we should posit and ascribe to it all the affirmations we make in regard to beings, and, more appropriately, we should negate all these affirmations, since it surpasses all being. Now

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[78] A. Louth, "The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology of Dumitru Stăniloae", (2002), 65.

[79] D. Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology,* (1998), 99.

[80] Dionysius Areopagite, *On Divine Names*, VII.3, PG 3, 872AB, trans. Luibheid & Rorem, 108-109: "God is therefore known in all things and as distinct from all things. He is known through knowledge and through unknowing. Of him there is conception, reason, understanding, touch, perception, opinion, imagination, name, and many other things. On the other hand, he cannot be understood, words cannot contain him, and no name can lay hold of him. This is the sort of language we must use about God, for he is praised from all things according to their proportion to him as their Cause. But again, the most divine knowledge of God, that which conies through unknowing, is achieved in a union far beyond the mind, when mind turns away from all things, even from itself, and when it is made one with the dazzling rays, being then and there enlightened by the inscrutable depth of Wisdom".

[81] A. Louth, "The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology of Dumitru Stăniloae", (2002), 66.

[82] D. Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology,* (1998), 109. Dionysius Areopagite, *On Divine Names*, I.5, PG 3, 593CD.

we should not conclude that the negations are simply the opposites of the affirmations, but rather that the cause of all is considerably prior to this, beyond privations, beyond every denial, beyond every assertion"[83].

So, there is a complementary between negative and cataphatic theology[84]. These two kinds of theology cannot be separated from one another and complete each other.

Staniloae supports as Dionysius Areopagite and as Gregory Palamas that through the negative theology and the creatures of God, we can know God. Also, he explains that in order not Dionysius to be misunderstood, in the opening prayer of St. Dionysius' Areopagite *Mystical Theology* it should be translated as hyper: above and not as super[85].

Staniloae believes as Dionysius that the knowledge of God is the apophatic experience given only to those who "believe," who are "Christian" and accept the illumination of their mind from the Godhead because of his development of the spiritual life. This also is very clear in the *Mystical Theology* of Dionysius and mainly in the chapter 1.1. Moreover, fr. Staniloae supports that:

> "man progresses in the spiritual life, the intellectual knowledge about God -as creator of the world and source of its providential care- which comes to man from the world, is imbued with the direct and richer contemplation of him, that is, with apophatic knowledge"[86].

Adrian Agachi argues that Staniloae's teaching of apophatic knowledge was influenced more by Gregory Palamas and not of Dionysius of Areopagite[87]. On this point we will disagree with him because Dionysius influenced Palamas and then through the text of Palamas influenced Staniloae. So the beginning influence of Staniloae came from Dionysius. As for the relation of Gregory Palamas with Dionysius Areopagite as far as apophaticism, F. T. Tomoioagă argues:

> "In his (Palamas') interpretation (on mystical theology) of Dionysius the Areopagite, Saint Gregory is overwhelmed with wonder: Is it not obvious to everybody that Dionysius's apophaticism is the result of a union with

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[83] Dionysius Areopagite, *Mystical Theology*, I.2, PG 3, 1000B, trans. Luibheid & Rorem, 136. D. Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1998), 111.

[84] Ibid. 96.

[85] Gheorghe Dragulin, "Pseudo-Dionysios the Areoapgite in Dumitru Staniloae's Theology", in Lucian Turcescu, *Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology* (Iasi: The center for Romanian Studies, 2002), 76.

[86] D. Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1998), 97.

[87] Adrian Agachi, *The Neo-Palamite Synthesis of Father Dumitru Stăniloae* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 68.

God? Dionysius expresses the inability of the human mind to describe the depths of this union with the divine. However, what is ineffable at the level of language is accessible at the level of experience"[88].

We can support that Staniloae was influenced by Gregory Palamas, who was really influenced by Dionysius Areopagite, as Staniloae analyzes. If someone studies carefully the *Philokalia* of Staniloae, he will draw to the conclusion that Staniloae argues that Gregory of Palamas was influenced by Dionysius' theology. Generally, Staniloae employs the negative theology of Palamas and Dionysius to speak about the knowledge of God through His creatures and "the predefinitions of the existences in God"[89].

Staniloae explains that the true knowledge "recognizes the personal reality of God as ultimate reality. This knowledge bases on participation, a dialogue in love with people and Godhead, with the creation, with each other. So it isn't doubted that the knowledge and union are inseparable[90]. In this point, Staniloae reminds us of Dionysius who teaches that "every rational and intellectual beings desire and are fulfilled by God according to knowledge (γνωστικῶς)"[91]. This knowledge is the result of the response of the acceptance of the illumination of logical being with a reciprocal ecstatic love. The latter is the cause and creates the union of human being with God[92]. So, for the Romanian theologian, father Staniloae and for theologian of fifth and sixth century, Dionysius the knowledge and the union are inseparable, because only "by knowing God perfectly in the life to come we will also be united permanently with him"[93].

In another point of his treatise, *Experience of God,* fr. Staniloae shows that the union with God is the only path for the infinite development in the knowledge of Godhead[94], and explains the etymology of the word knowledge shows the relation with the "object" of the knowledge and in case of Christianity, the knowledge of God:

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[88] F.T. Tomoioagă, "The vision of divine light in Saint Gregory Palamas's theology", *Acta Theologica* 2015 35, no. 2, 147, doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/actat.v35i2.9.

[89] Gheorghe Dragulin, "Pseudo-Dionysios the Areoapgite in Dumitru Staniloe's Theology", in Lucian Turcescu, *Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology* (Iasi: The center for Romanian Studies, 2002), 75.

[90] Silviu Eugene Rogobete, "Mystical Existentialism or Communitarian Participation? Vladimir Lossky and Dumitru Staniloae", in Lucian Turcescu, *Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology* (Iasi: The center for Romanian Studies, 2002), 185. D. Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1998), 201.

[91] Dionysius Areopagite, *On Divine Names*, IV. 4, PG 3, 700B, trans. Alan Brown, "Dionysius the Areopagite" (pp. 226-236) in Augustine Casiday (ed), *The Orthodox Chrtistian World,* Routledge, New York 2012, p. 229.

[92] Dionysius Areopagite, *On Divine Names*, IV, 13; I. 4, PG 3, 712A; 592C. trans. Luibheid & Rorem, p. 82, 53.

[93] D. Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1998), 201. Dionysius Areopagite, *On Divine Names*, VII, 4, PG 3, 872D.

[94] D. Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1998), 201.

"The etymology of the latin cognosco (cum + gnosco) shows from of old that human beings have been aware of the impersonal character of knowledge. The same thing is attested by the Romanian word *conştiinţă* ('consciousness' / 'conscience'). I do not know myself apart from a relationship with others. In the last analysis I know or am conscious of myself in relationship with God. The light of my knowledge in respect of things or of myself is projected upon the communitarian human image from the supreme personal community. We are conscious of ourselves only in relationship with the other and, in the final analysis, before God. The 'I' by itself would no longer possess consciousness; through consciousness it knows its own spiritual 'place' in relationship with the others. It grows in self – consciousness simultaneously with its growth in self – knowledge, and its growth in self–Knowledge corresponds to its growth in self-knowledge to its growth in the knowledge of God, of its neighbors, and of created things"[95].

All this above brings in our thought the close connection for the progress in knowledge of God in Staniloae's text with Dionysius' writings *On Divine Names* and *On Mystical Theology*. *On Divine Names,* Dionysius clarifies the way of divine knowledge through an onward movement of the Divine Names. Besides *On Mystical Theology,*

"in order to know God it is necessary to be in proximity to Him, to have come near to Him in some measure, so as to attain communion with God and deification (theosis). This condition is accomplished through prayer. This is not because prayer in itself brings us close to the incomprehensible God, but rather that the purity of heart in true prayer brings us closer to God"[96].

The knowledge includes love for the "object" that man tries to know. So Staniloae underlines that we cannot obtain the knowledge of God without having love for Him[97]. Dionysius, on the other side, speaks about the "knowledge of the true eros: 'εἰς τὴν τοῦ ὄντως ἔρωτος γνῶσιν' "[98]. And fr. Staniloae adds that this

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[95] Ibid., 204

[96] "Hieromartyr Dionysius the Areopagite the Bishop of Athens",
https://oca.org/saints/lives/2013/10/03/102843-hieromartyr-dionysius-the-areopagite-the-bishop-of-athens [access 22 September 2018]

[97] D. Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1998), 202-203: "Full Knowledge is always love also, and as such is directed towards another person... In the final analysis, knowledge is the loving reference of one subject to another subject. Even through reference to an object, the knowing subject has indirect reference to another subject, and it is only through this reference that he knows himself and actualizes himself as subject".

[98] Dionysius Areopagite, *On Divine Names*, IV.13, PG 3, 709C-712AB, transl. Parker, 22: "But Divine Love is ecstatic, not permitting (any) to be lovers of themselves, but of those beloved. They shew this too, the superior by becoming mindful of the inferior; and the equals by their mutual coherence; and the inferior, by a more divine respect towards things superior. Wherefore also, Paul the Great, when possessed by the Divine Love, and participating in its ecstatic power, says with inspired lips, 'I live no longer, but Christ lives in me'. As a true lover, and beside

love of man for God can be developed through the frames of freedom. The love for God can have as real result the knowledge of God but not in theoretical level but in practice[99].

For Staniloae, the apophatic and cataphatic theology have a powerful interaction between them. A synthesis between negative and affirmative reveal the knowledge of God.

> "At the basis of this synthesis, however, lies an experience which transcends both the terms of affirmation and of negation that express it. God possesses these in a way which is absolutely superior to the terms themselves"[100].

This view of Staniloae is attuned to the view of Dionysius *On Mystical theology*:

> "Since it is the Cause of all beings, we should posit and ascribe to it all the affirmations we make in regard to beings, and, more appropriately, we should negate all these affirmations, since it surpasses all being. Now we should not conclude that the negations are simply the opposites of the affirmations, but rather that the cause of all is considerably prior to this, beyond privations, beyond every denial, beyond every assertion"[101].

As we can understand, both affirmation and negation are part of one's talk about God, although negation is more in keeping with God's transcendence[102].

On this point we can draw to the conclusions the negative theology and the cataphatic one are two paths for the knowledge of God. There are many differences between them, but they are not used separately because the one completes the other[103]. Staniloae tries to speak about the essence of God starting from Dionysius'

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himself, as he says, to Almighty God, and not living the life of himself, but the life of the Beloved, as a life excessively esteemed. One might make bold to say even this, on behalf of truth, that the very Author of all things, by the beautiful and good love of everything, through an overflow of His loving goodness, becomes out of Himself, by His providences for all existing things, and is, as it were, cozened by goodness and affection and love, and is led down from the Eminence above all, and surpassing all, to being in all, as befits an ecstatic superessential power centred in Himself. Wherefore, those skilled in Divine things call Him even Jealous, as (being) that vast good Love towards all beings, and as rousing His loving inclination to jealousy, —and as proclaiming Himself Jealous—to Whom the things desired are objects of jealousy, and as though the objects of His providential care were objects of jealousy for Him. And, in short, the lovable is of the Beautiful and Good, and Love preexisted both in the Beautiful and Good, and on account of the Beautiful and Good, is and takes Being".

[99] D. Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1998), 107.
[100] Ibid., 111.
[101] Dionysius Areopagite, *Mystical Theology*, I. 2, PG 3, 1000B. transl. Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius a Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 187.
[102] Ibid., 188.
[103] D. Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1998), 122-123.

acceptance that the Godhead has "the existence in itself"[104]. For Areopagite this existence becomes synonym with the essence of God, the hypostatic reality and from this essence all the attributes of God spring and in which all the creatures participate[105]. Staniloae analyzes the previous view of Dionysius that "the God is the substantive Cause and maker of being, subsistence, of existence, of substance, and of nature... For God is not some kind of being"[106], and he says that God is

> "as personal reality, God is the undetermined source of all the qualities which are determined in some way through their procession from him. The personal divine reality is undetermined in an eminent way because it is the hypostasizing of the superessence from which every created essence receives its existence. God can be said to be the tripersonal superessence, or the superessential tripersonality. What this superessence is, we do not know. But it exists of itself; like any essence, however, it is not real except by the fact that it subsists hypostatically, in persons"[107].

So for the Romanian theologian, God is the personal reality which is "self-existence" and at the same time "communion of persons". He is the original of all things, a communion of all things, a communion of three distinct persons whose existence consists in the giving and receiving of themselves to and from each other[108]. Staniloae relates Dionysius' teaching about the superessence of God with Cappadocians' in order to found the orthodoxy of the teaching of Areopagite in this subject. This happened, because Dionysius is credited with the form of Neoplatonic frame "by making both Trinity and oneness equally inapplicable to the superessence of God"[109], but related with Cappadocians, neither the person nor the essence has an ontological priority over the other as far as the Godhead.

Staniloae[110] as Dionysius think that the names "αὐτοδύναμιν" and "αὐτοζωήν"[111], "life itself and subsistence of life itself" reveal the only God is the self - source of life, the supreme life and only He can give the life to all the others:

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[104] Ibid., 129.
[105] Dionysius Areopagite, *On Divine Names*, 5, 4, PG 3, 817CD. trans. Luibheid & Rorem, 98.
[106] Ibid.
[107] D. Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1998), 129.
[108] Dennis F. Kinlaw, *Let's Start with Jesus: A New Way of Doing Theology* (Michigan: The Francis Asbury Society), 98.
[109] Paul L. Gavrilyuk, "The reception of Dionysius in twentieth-century eastern orthodoxy", in Re-*thinking Dionysius the Areopagite*, eds. Sarah Coakley, Charles M. Stang (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 376. Vl. Lossky, *The Vision of God* (Bedfordshire: The Faith Press, 1973), 101.
[110] D. Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1998), 132.
[111] Dionysius Areopagite, *On Divine Names*, 11, 6, PG 3, 953B-956A. trans. Luibheid & Rorem, 124-125: "This is not something oblique, but is in fact quite straightforward, and there is a simple explanation for it. The absolute being underlying individual manifestations of being as their cause is not a divine or an angelic being, for only transcendent being itself can be the source, the being, and the cause of the being of beings. Nor, in summary, is God to be thought of as identical with those originating and creative beings and substances which men stupidly describe as certain gods or creators of the world.

"since God is super-essentially Existent and bestows existence upon all things that are, and brings the world into being, that single Existence of His is said to become manifold through bringing forth the many existences from Itself, while yet He remains One in the act of Self-Multiplication; Undiffered throughout the process of Emanation, and Full in the emptying process of Differentiation; Super-Essentially transcending the Being of all things, and guiding the whole world onwards by an indivisible act, and pouring forth without diminution His indefectible bounties"[112].

Both Staniloae and Dionysius use the vision of the divine light as the way or the final step in knowledge of God. The image of light is omnipresent. The divine light is identified with God himself. The light, as natural light, as supernatural, as sun, as ray as a cloud of darkness is employed to express God. The knowledge of God is revealed through the apophatic acceptance of darkness, as the result of the light of God. Through the divine light, the mind can have the experience of the union with God[113].

God's knowledge of Himself is not distinct from His knowledge of created beings according to Staniloae and Dionysius. On this point of view Staniloae argues:

"Created things are not given to us only so that each of us can carry on a private dialogue with God; they have been given so that all of us can take part in a dialogue among ourselves and collectively take part in a dialogue with God. Put another way, this dialogue is to take place among ourselves in the consciousness that created things are given us by God so as to be used as gifts among ourselves in his name, following his command, and out of his richness..."[114].

Such men, and their fathers before them, had no genuine or proper knowledge of beings of this kind. Indeed, there are no such beings. What I am trying to express is something quite different. Being itself, life itself, divinity itself, are names signifying source, divinity, and cause, and these are applied to the one transcendent cause and source beyond source of all things. But we use the same terms in a derivative fashion and we apply them to the provident acts of power which come forth from God in whom nothing at all participates. I am talking here of being itself, of life, of divinity itself which shapes things in a way that each creature, according to capacity, has his share of these. From the fact of such sharing come to qualities and the names existing, living, possessed by divinity, and suchlike".

[112] Ibid. 2, 10, PG 3, 649AB, by C.E. Rolt, *Dionysius the Areopagite: On the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology* (London: SPCK, 1920), 43-44.

[113] Cătălin Vatamanu, "Biblical grounding for the divine light theology in the Father Stăniloae's work", *Teologie și viață*, no. 5-8 (May-August 2015): 30. Emil Bartoș, "The Dynamics of Deification in the Theology of Dumitru Stăniloae", 211. Jonathan Morgan, "A Radiant Theology: The Concept of Light in Pseudo-Dionysius", in Greek *Orthodox Theological Review*, 55, no. 1-4 (2010): 132. Dionysius Areopagite, *On Divine Names*, 4, 4, PG 3, 697C trans. Luibheid & Rorem, 74; *On Divine Names*, II, 7, PG 3, 645B, trans. Luibheid & Rorem, 64; Ibid., I, 5, PG 3, 593C, 54; Ibid., II, 8, PG 3, 645D, 63-64. Dionysius Areopagite, *Celestial Hierarchy*, I, 1-2, PG 3, 121A, trans. Luibheid & Rorem, 145. Dionysius Areopagite, *Mystical T jheology* III, 3, PG 3, 1033A, trans. Luibheid & Rorem, 138.

[114] Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, "Creation: The Visible World"*, vol. II, trans. and edited by Ioan Ionita and Robert Barringer (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Press, 2000), 26-27.

And Dionysius supports that the creation allowed human beings to be aware of God, the only Creator. Our knowledge of God through nature is an immanent knowledge: "God is therefore known in all things and as distinct from all things"[115]. So, for both writers the natural revelation of God is known and understood fully in the light of supernatural revelation, or we might say that natural revelation is given and maintained by God continuously through His own divine act which is above nature.

To sum up Staniloae tried to present Dionysius Areopagite as the real saint of the late 1st century or the early 2nd century. He insists that Dionysius' writings are authentic and they are written by Dionysius or by one of his associators[116]. In this paper we will refer to the effect of Areopagite on Staniloae with regard to the knowledge of God. Father Staniloae's and Dionysius' Areopagite teaching about the knowledge of God is thought to be a synthesis between the logical, the natural and the apophatic, cataphatic and supernatural knowledge of God and His revelation to people. The Knowledge of God is not solely scientific knowledge and theoritic, but mainly true experience illumination of human mind from Him and union with Him.

Conclusions

In this paper we presented the teaching of Dionysius Areopagite about the knowledge of God. He underlines that light and knowledge comes from God down to human beings as illumination of the mind, as natural and supernatural revelation of God. Also we referred to Staniloae theology about the knowledge of God and the influence that fr. Staniloae accepted by Dionysius.

For Dionysius, the nature, the universe is a theophany, "a manifestation of God, in which beings closer to God manifest God to those further away"[117], as father Louth underlines. Areopagite uses both apophatic and cataphatic theology, "the sacred science" to know the One God. Only with both affirmations and denials, the Triune God can be known by the human beings. Also, Dionysius speaks about the superlative theology which shows that there are no words for someone to speak about the God who is insayable and unknowable in the categories of human language.

The divine names of God reveal His attributes to people. Man tries to unite with God, in order to know Him, but this union is difficult to be described with the finite human vocabulary. Also, concerning the knowledge of God, it is

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[115] Dionysius Areopagite, *On Divine Names*, VII, 3, PG 3, 872A, trans. Luibheid & Rorem, 108.
[116] https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2009/10/apostolic-authorship-of-corpus.html
[117] Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (London, New York, 2001), 85.

difficult to talk about the divine darkness without talking about the divine light simultaneously.

Fr. Dumitru Staniloae respects Dionysius' theology and for the Romanian theologian, this teaching is a genuine Christian without any influence of Neo-Platonism. He accepts the interaction of apophatic and cataphatic theology as Dionysius does. These two theologies are the only way to God to be known. God is self-existence and at the same time Communion of persons.

To sum up, the influence of Dionysius to Staniloae about the knowledge of God is profane in the same words of Staniloae:

> "God is not knowable, and yet the one who believes can experience him in a sensible and conscious manner. This is the positive fact. Man is submersed in the incomprehensible, indefinable and inexpressible ocean of God; nevertheless, he is aware of this. God is the positive reality beyond what we know of as positive; yet in comparison with the created world he is a negative reality beyond what we know of as negative, Dionysius asserts this too in his paradoxical characterization of God, although the paradox does not imply that each parts cancels out the other, but rather that both parts are transcended: 'this supra – existent Being. Mind beyond mind, word beyond speech...'[118]"[119].

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[118] Dionysius Areopagite, *On Divine Names*, I, 1, PG 3,588b. trans. Luibheid & Rorem, 50.

[119] D. Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1998), 112-113.

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'GLOBAL NORTH AND GLOBAL SOUTH':
THE SIGNIFICANCE AND MEANING OF THESE TERMS FOR OUR UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICE OF MISSION

MARINA NGURSANGZELI BEHERA[*]

ABSTRACT. The paper explores the metaphors of Global South and North. Looking at earlier terms such as the first, second and third world and identifying the changes coming with the shift of gravity in World Christianity and those after the year 1989 as important moments to start speaking of global Christianity, Global North and South, it is not the geography of places but the interrelations – economic, political, cultural, religious - of the various contexts which determine a meaningful usage of these terms. The interrelations are used as a background to discuss the paradigm of 'mission from the margins' from the perspective of the author who hails from Northeast India - considered to be part of the global South – and working in a center for mission studies in the Global North.

Keywords: global Christianity, Global South, Global North, postcolonial, mission from the margins

North and South - and the East?

Postcolonial discourses demand of you to situate yourself, both in terms of the position you speak from and in relation to the context you are addressing. The assumption behind this is that your place of origin or the context you come from informs your theology. It seems to me that the Orthodox tradition you are rooted in has a different approach, perhaps connecting such contextuality of theological approaches with the fragmentation of the Church into a multiplicity of churches, mainly in Western Christianity. This could be interpreted as the result of discontinuing with the tradition of the early church which was in the classical sense 'ecumenical' – as defined by the ecumenical councils – and 'catholic' as the one and universal church.

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In the Protestant tradition I have been formed by, contextuality is however almost something like a faith statement which should ensure that your theology will be relevant to believers and non-believers of your context. This is expected to happen when teaching and preaching the Gospel speak to the cultural, religious and political situations of the people in their own languages.

To me, contextuality of the Gospel is one effect/consequence of the reflection of how the Gospel came to the region I am from. I hail from Aizawl, Mizoram in the North-east of India, which was, in the long century of Protestant mission, in the 19th c., at the margins of Western mission or to put it differently, at the receiving end.

One example for what I am pointing to is that the Gospel started to take root only when the Mizo understood Christ as the most powerful spirit overthrowing all others spirits which had an all-pervasive negative influence on them and their social and religious practices. That message proved to be extremely relevant to them whereas the early preaching of the corrupted nature of humankind and the forgiveness of sin in Jesus Christ with which the missionaries began, was to them literally foolish. This relevance of the Gospel led to an incredibly fast growing of the Church among the Mizo. Later, in the early revivals in 1906, already seven years after the first baptisms, the Mizo also acknowledged the importance of sin, its forgiveness and of salvation in Jesus Christ. This short note explains how the Mizo mission history leads to reflect on the relevance and the implied contextuality of the Gospel. It leads, however, also to the pertinent question of how far the attempt of making the Gospel relevant can be pushed before it dissolves in culture – and is not God's word any more.

I speak from the background of that experience of the Mizo Christians and of my church, the Presbyterian Church of India, with the Gospel. Hailing from Mizoram, I am often invited to speak as a Christian from the so called Global South. Even while working in Oxford I am not so much considered a theologian of the Presbyterian tradition. I am expected to represent the authentic Global South and to speak from my original context.

Cluj is south of Oxford from where I have come to attend this meeting and north of my home city Aizawl. All three places are actually located in the Northern hemisphere of the globe, yet Oxford is supposedly in the Global North, Aizawl in the Global South. And Cluj? To look at the location on the map demonstrates that the terms Global North and South are not meant as geographical terms. Both are metaphors for spaces which are not defined by what they are. They are defined by their interrelations in the fields of politics, economics, culture, religion, and especially in terms of wealth and poverty, an agglomeration of relations, which characterize the different contexts by their interrelations. This dissociation of space from its location on the globe can be identified more clearly when we add

two aspects: on various maps Australia and Japan are tagged as Global North. One is to the south of the equator, the other to the north so this designation is not based on their location on the globe. It is based on their economic and political power and international influence.[1] The second factor is that coming from such a sphere we wear its geo-metaphorical tags and that appears to establish the relationship between us. So, I am from the Global South, a female theologian not ordained and whatever the colour of my skin is, it is definitely not white. Assumptions about the people like me in the Global South are that they live in economical weaker situations or, at the margins of the real centers of power.

White people, especially men in the Global North are assumed to being privileged, economically better off, having had a better education than available to many in the Global South. The assumption is that these contexts will influence our respective theologies. When it comes to the sphere of theology and education, the dominant influence that is rejected on the basis of this matrix is labelled Western by many theologians who attempt to speak to their contexts in the Global South. (From the perspective of contexts, it comes therefore a bit as a surprise that it seems not to be meaningful to talk of a Global West.)

I am struggling to find my position in these metaphorical spaces, what about Christians in Cluj? Do they consider themselves to be part of the Global North? Would maybe east of the Global North make sense to them, especially in view of their history? Or would they side with the Global South, at least if it comes to a weaker economic power compared to other countries in the European Union? I could imagine that the orthodox background makes a difference, in which the tradition of the one and 'catholic' church to teach and preach the Gospel in a relevant way may be the point of reference.

In my reflection two layers intersect: one talking of contexts and various theological resources and another of a metaphorical geography with which we orient ourselves in this world. In reflecting on 'mission from the margins' I have become recently interested about where the metaphors of the North and South or the West and the rest come from and how they may help us to define our space and position or, whether they are perhaps too simple and blur real issues.

From the 'Third World' to 'Global South'

The current approach of clubbing countries according to economical, developmental and political systems goes back to the fifties of the last century. With the global changes after the Second World War the French sociologist and

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[1] *Global Survey of Evangelical Protestant Leaders* (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life) (Washington: Pew Research Center, 2011), 11. http://www.pewforum.org/Christian/ Evangelical-Protestant-Churches/Global-Survey-of-Evangelical-Protestant-Leaders.aspx.

anthropologist Alfred Sauvy used the term Third World in 1952 for the first time. According to him the first world was formed by the capitalist countries, the Second by those of the communist/socialist countries, one of them being Romania. Sauvy was inspired to apply the new term Third World not by geographical aspects. He was inspired by the former French Third Estate, i.e. those in France who before the French revolution did not belong to the nobility or the bourgeois class. These were striving for a better life, political influence and better economic opportunities, all of which were denied to them by the two other classes. In referencing this, the term Third World was thought of by Sauvy to constitute those countries which were attempting to stay independent of the two other post-war blocks.[2] Even though the term was used first in the West, persons from a series of such countries started to apply this term to themselves. The countries they represented were quite diverse in their state of development but they had some aspects in common: people living there shared the expectations and aspirations for far reaching radical political and social changes, not only for themselves but for the whole world. Economic advancement, modernization, sustainable development, education and health systems, democratization – and less dependency were what they hoped for. One easily can see the analogy to the French pre-revolutionary time.

India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru was actually one of those who started the movement which led to the foundation of the so called Non-Aligned Movement of 25 states, in 1962 in Belgrade (then the capital of what was Yugoslavia and today the capital of modern-day Serbia).[3]

Only around a decade later, the Third World acquired the characteristic of being the poor world, being economically backward and hence needed help to develop in the direction of the Northern industrial economy. It became, however, slowly apparent that these countries were quite diverse and so new groups became visible: such as the rich oil producing and exporting countries in the Middle East, or the so-called Tiger states in Asia which modernized so rapidly. Both groups left behind the least developed countries of which most are to be found in the southern hemisphere of the globe.

It was with the dissolving of the Eastern communist block after 1989 that with the disappearing of the Second World, the term Third World lost its defining power. The dissolving of the Second World left people in locations like Cluj perhaps in the necessity to redefine their space in relation to the changing power settings.

With the growing globalisation, the newer term Global South became more characteristic as defining the continuing relationship of dependence between centers and margins. Global South seems to have been first used by the World

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[2] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_World.

[3] See Suryanarayanan, 'Role of the non-aligned nations in U.N.O. for peace and disarmament 1960 – 1987'. Thesis (University of Calicut: Department of History, 2002), 95. https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/50774/8/08_chapter%202.pdf

Bank in the 1980s to transcend the hierarchical order which was associated with the terms First World, Second World etc. The new term also connected to discourses about global change, global development, globalisation. In other words, it became associated with a perspective that at least presumed to focus on a common development in a globalised and interdependent world.

Christians in the Global World

South, North, East, West, poor, rich, developed, underdeveloped, center, periphery ... What could all these terms mean for a discussion here in Romania? Are all those from Europe from the Global North, especially those countries that belong to the European Union? According to the maps we saw, yes. But where do we place ourselves? And what does the answer to this question imply for a reflection on Mission from the margins? In general, in the Protestant mission history which started rather late at the beginning of the 18th century and was so strong in the 19th c. the North has been the sending region, and the South the receiving region, the margins. But if we look closer, the missionaries from the North have often been on the margins of their societies. Mizoram may have been on the margins of Wales from where the first missionaries came at the end of the 19th c. But Wales itself was on the margins within the United Kingdom.

In November of last year, I co-organized a conference on 'mission from the margins' at Aizawl Theological College, a college of my church, (the Presbyterian Church of India, Mizoram Synod) and I learned then that the Synod supports around 2700 mission workers. One of the questions that emerged from the conference was how the understanding of mission has been affected now that the vibrant Mizo Presbyterian Church has itself become a center for sending missionaries to the margins in other places.

With participants from Europe and from North East India, we discussed what it would mean to study 'mission from the margins' together, coming as we were from the Global North and the Global South. We also needed to ask questions such as 'Do we have a common mission'? Have the mentioned relations between the North and South become a defining power we cannot escape? If such defining relations exist between North and South, as Christians are we able to become united and thereby transcend defining categories and power relations?

To sharpen that perspective let us look briefly into some of the developments in the ecumenical world. At exactly the time when terms such as First World etc., were starting to be used, the World Council of Churches held for the first time its assembly in a Third World country, i.e. 1961 in New Delhi, India in which participants gave a different picture compared to the earlier general assemblies in Amsterdam

and in Evanston 1954. It is well known that in the 1961 a number of orthodox churches as well as several churches from the then Third World countries joined the WCC in New Delhi.[4] Several voices at this 3rd Assembly of the WCC pointed out that the churches had played an important role in shaping the concept that the rapid social changes in the various societies were interrelated. These churches promoted the idea that their ecumenical fellowship could bring in the vision of a worldwide community, of a global humanity which should engage together with these dramatic changes and not the individual churches alone.[5] M.M. Thomas, a well-known Indian theologian said in hindsight that New Delhi constituted the shift from the WCC being a fellowship of basically West European protestant churches to an ecumenical '*truly* world movement.'[6]

One can point to several factors which support that claim that Christians and their churches can tell a different story of these decades. The World Missionary Conference in Mexico City in 1963 spoke of 'mission in six continents.' It claimed that the period of missionaries being sent only from the North to the South was over.[7] In 1972 Philip Potter, a Caribbean, and considered as being black was elected the first General Secretary of WCC. At the WMC in Bangkok in 1973 under the theme 'salvation today,' almost only voices from the Third World were to be heard in the first days of the Conference and the Western missionary societies felt accused of their close association with the powers of the First World.[8] They were also confronted with the accusation that their wealth was the result of an unjust economic system which was based on the exploitation of the Third World.

When it comes to numbers we can observe what is often called the 'shift of gravity to the Global South', i.e. the fact that today 2/3 of all Christians live in what is called the Global South.[9]

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[4] See Hooft, W.A. Visser 't, 'The General Ecumenical Development since 1948' in Fey, Harold E. (ed.), The Ecumenical Advance. A History of the Ecumenical Movement. Vol. 2 1948-1968 (Geneva: WCC, 1970 2nd ed.), 1-26.

[5] See the passages on the Christian responsibility for Rapid Social Change in the New Nations (247-250) in Albrecht's contribution. Albrecht, Paul, '9. The Development of Ecumenical Social Thought and Action,' in: Fey, Harold E. (ed.), The Ecumenical Advance. A History of the Ecumenical Movement. Vol. 2 1948-1968 (Geneva: WCC, 1970 2nd ed.), 235-259.

[6] Thomas, Madathilparampil Mammen, *My Ecumenical Journey* (Trivandrum: Ecumenical Publishing Centre, 1990), 252.

[7] Orchard, Ronald Kenneth, *Witness in Six Continents. Records of the meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches*. Held in Mexico City, December 8th to 19th, 1963 (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1964).

[8] *Bangkok Assembly, 1973: Minutes and Report of the Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism,* 31 December, 1972 and 9-13 January 1973 (Geneva: WCC, 1973)

[9] See Johnson, Todd M., und Kenneth R. Ross, (eds.), *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910-2010*. (Edinburgh: University Press), 2009.

This is paralleled with the calculated number of transcultural missionaries being approximately 440.000 in 2010.[10] While in absolute numbers, the United States still tops the chart by sending 127.000, 'of the ten countries sending the highest number of missionaries in 2010, three were in the Global South: Brazil, South Korea, and India.' Large numbers of missionaries are further sent out by churches and mission organizations in South Africa, the Philippines, Mexico, China, Colombia, and Nigeria.[11]

'The 10 countries that sent the highest number of international missionaries in 2010 were home to 32 percent of the world's church members but sent almost 73 percent of all international missionaries.'[12]

If we take these numbers and movements as indicators of the changes that occurred over the last decades, it may appear as if the North is still powerful when it comes to economics. But it could look marginalized in terms of spirituality, faith, church life and evangelism.[13] Often enough we hear or read that the decline in church membership, the growing number of non-believers etc. is resulting in the marginalization of Christians in the Global North in their societies. It would appear that in terms of faith, spirituality and evangelism, the resources in the Global South are greater. One factor which probably contributes to this is as can be seen in Northeast India, the 'the three selves' model that the local churches and their missions practiced successfully right from the beginning of their history.[14]

Our conference in Aizawl also confirmed that the perspective the Church in Mizoram had from its beginnings was to be a Church with a mission. Does this then mean that the Church had initially been at the margins, but found its way to becoming a vibrant hub, a center of mission by deciding to be a mission minded Church?

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[10] *Christianity in its Global Context, 1970–2020. Society, Religion, and Mission* (June 2013). Ed. by Center for the Study of Global Christianity at the Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary (http://wwwgordonconwell.com/netcommunity/CSGCResources/ChristianityinitsGlobal Context.pdf). The following quotes and numbers all are taken from this publication, 76-77. More elaborate graphs and regional surveys of the same center are to be found in *Atlas of Global Christianity*, 258-289.

[11] *Christianity in its Global Context, 1970–2020,* 76.

[12] *Christianity in its Global Context, 1970–2020,* 76. 'Yet, if one looks at the global picture a surprising fact pops up: The majority of these missionaries is sent to majority Christian countries: "The 'top nine' receiving countries were home to only 3.5% of the world's non-Christians but received more than 34% of all international missionaries.'

[13] The quoted PEW paper *Global Survey of Evangelical Protestant Leaders* found that 71 % of evangelical leaders in the South opine that evangelism is successful and will change their countries whereas those in the North are more pessimistic, 11.

[14] Biehl, Michael, 'Concluding Remarks,' in: Ngursangzeli, Marina, and Michael Biehl, (eds.), *Witnessing to Christ in North East India* (Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, 31) (Oxford: Regnum publs., 2016), 423-428.

Christian and non-Christian spheres

If we speak of holistic mission then this perspective may be a bit too spiritualized and simplistic- as if the opposition is a secularized wealthy people versus the faithfully poor. It seems to imply as if the story would change simply because the movement of sending of missionaries had changed direction.

At the famous first World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, a distinction was applied that were to remain influential for a long time. The theme of the first volume of the eight commission reports to the Conference was: 'Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World.' The implication was that there was a Christian World where those who lived in it had the Gospel, and there was a non-Christian World to which the Gospel needed to be carried and this world was considered to form the margins of the Christian World.

With the changes within World Christianity an important shift occurred in mission and in theology. The jubilee conference of Edinburgh 2010 looked back and highlighted that mission is happening from 'everywhere to everywhere.' With that understanding mission can also happen from the margins and not only to the margins. This is borne out of the fact that the number of missionaries working in foreign countries has increased considerably since 1910.[15] Some of these missionaries are sent by congregations to peoples groups' in the own country or to other countries[16], some are individual so called tent-maker missionaries, others are supported by large mission organizations. Again, others are sent as part of a sharing of personnel or in the context of one church spreading internationally like with some of the new African and Asian churches – the variety is immense and almost impossible to map. The surprising fact: among those countries sending high numbers of missionaries are several in the Global South: Brazil, India, the Philippines and Nigeria among others.

Conclusion

Global North and Global South are metaphors that refer to an agglomeration of relations between the two regions and their contexts. Globalization is the buzzword that accompanies these terms. Globalization can mean different things but it is,

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[15] *Christianity in its Global Context, 1970–2020,* 76.

[16] As one instructive example see Hong, Sung-wook, 'Mission Engagement of a Local church. The Case of Anyang City, Korea,' in: Ma, Wonsuk, and Kyo Seong Ahn (eds.), *Korean Church, God's Mission, Global Christianity* (Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, 26) (Oxford: Regnum, 2015), 242-253. These church send missionaries as well transnational (Brazil, North Korea) as well as in Korea to city or island or mountain community where the "evangelization rate is low", 249.

broadly speaking, a specific constellation of global relations and strategies affecting or even dominating local circumstances. Seen critically from a non-Western perspective, globalization is not a metaphor and still has a geography and therefore centers of powers and marginalized regions. Although many of these centers of power still can be localized in the Global North, new power centers have arisen in the Global South. That is also for the power centers of Christianity which have shifted to the Global South.

At the conference in Aizawl, we concluded that mission from the margins seems to be a paradigm which takes into account the important changes in World Christianity and mission over the last hundred years. As a paradigm *for mission* it demands from us to look into local contexts, into relations of power and to identify margins and marginalized groups in the own environment with whom mission is engaging. The position of a Church in mission could then be considered from two perspectives: it can be part of a region that is at the margins within a globalized world or in its own society; or it can be powerful and engaging with the margins in its own society.

We explored the implications of 'mission from the margins' with people from the Global South and North like I have approached them in this contribution. This paradigm is a challenge to reflect critically on where we place ourselves on a global map and in the local context and how others experience our mission. This encourages us to look closer into our own contexts and to share about our mission practices across the regions.

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TRANSHUMANISM AND CHRISTIANITY. CONFLICT OR COMPATIBILITY?

CĂLIN EMILIAN CIRA[*]

ABSTRACT. In recent times, humanity has experienced an extraordinary evolution of science and technology. In this context, the transhumanist movement has emerged, which argues that through scientific and technological knowledge it will be possible to modify the human nature and the surrounding world by employing genetic engineering, biotechnologies, artificial intelligence. Thus, in this article we will try to very briefly outline the challenges that this way of thinking brings for the Christians and possible ways of responding to some of these issues.

Keywords: Christianity, Transhumanism, technology, science, Christian anthropology.

As a result of the scientific evolution of the modern era, our perspective on nature and people has undergone a series of radical changes. A better understanding of the laws of nature brought about extraordinary technological advancements. Consequently, nowadays science and technology represent a decisive factor in the functioning of society. This extraordinary success of the two spheres often leads to scientism and the belief that all of the problems of the world can be solved through technological means. One of the trends supporting such ideas is Transhumanism which essentially proposes the creation of a new man:

> "Transhumanism is a way of thinking about the future that is based on the premise that the human species in its current form does not represent the end of our development but rather a comparatively early phase"[1].

From this definition it results that humanity has the right and the possibility to modify not only the external environment, but also human nature itself. In order to achieve this desideratum the proposed means are not prayer, ascesis, the

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[1] Nick Bostrom, "The transhumanist FAQ - A General introduction - Version 2.1. (2003)", accessed January 23, 2019, https://nickbostrom.com/views/transhumanist.pdf.

cultivation of virtues, but reason, the scientific method, genetic engineering, artificial intelligence. The latter will lead to the creation of a new species, more disease-resistant, with above-average intelligence and with a longer lifespan, even capable to achieve, at some point, immortality.

One could argue that the Church should not pay attention to this way of thinking, as the ideas advocated by Transhumanism seem taken out of science-fiction literature and films, but in reality, their ideas are based on the current scientific and technological progress. For this reason, understanding the ideas promoted by this movement is imperative and the Church should offer responses to these challenges.

The present article is a very brief introduction to the vast and complicated topic of the relationship between Christianity and this new trend. For this reason, we will start from a short presentation of Transhumanism which will help us observe how these ideas evolved over time, followed by an outline of the Christian perspective on technology, the positions of Transhumanism and Christianity on the human body and the challenges for the Christian religion brought forth by artificial intelligence.

Transhumanism. A Brief History

The ideas promoted nowadays by the transhumanist movement have prevailed, in various forms, throughout the history of mankind. For example, we can find the idea of achieving immortality depicted in the Epic of Gilgamesh or in various tales where the notion of an elixir of youth searched for by medieval alchemists is present[2].

The Renaissance is regarded by the historians of Transhumanism as a key moment because, unlike in previous eras, "the human being and the natural world again became legitimate objects of study"[3]. However, most often Transhumanism is seen as a continuation of the Enlightenment which set an emphasis on reason, education, knowledge and science:

> "Trans-humanism emphasizes the philosophy's roots in Enlightenment humanism. From here comes the emphasis on progress (its possibility and desirability, not its inevitability), on taking personal charge of creating better futures rather than hoping or praying for them to be brought about by supernatural forces, on reason, technology, scientific method, and human creativity rather than faith"[4].

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[2] See Nick Bostrom, "A history of transhumanist thought", *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, 14 (April. 2005):1.

[3] Nick Bostrom, "A history of transhumanist thought"*, 2.

[4] Max More, "The philosophy of transhumanism", in *The transhumanist Reader*, ed. Max More and Natasha Vita-More (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), 4.

From this perspective we can see the antitheological and antichristian view. Man is solely responsible for fulfilling his destiny, he is no longer dependent on the divinity. Nonetheless, an important precursor who lived during the scientific revolution and was, in fact, the one to propose and develop the scientific method, Francis Bacon (1561-1626), was he himself a Christian. In *Novum Organon* (1620) he proposes a new method for achieving knowledge:

> "It was a qualitative and organized approach to the acquisition of reliable knowledge about the natural world, one that relied upon induction rather than tradition"[5].

In the 19th century, characterized by an extraordinary scientific and technological revolution, the belief that through these means man is in charge of his destiny grew stronger. Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by means of natural selection was especially instrumental in this respect because it presented the world as a living, ever-changing, ever-perfecting organism:

> "[...] And as natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection"[6].

Another important precursor of the movement, to whom the use of the term is actually attributed, was the biologist Julien Huxley (1887-1975). The first chapter of his book *New Bottles for New Wine* (1957) bears the name "Transhumanism". For him

> "the human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself – not just sporadically an individual here in one way, an individual there in another way, but in its entirety, as humanity. We need a name for this new belief. Perhaps *transhumanism* will serve: man remaining man, but transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature"[7].

Alongside these optimistic perspectives, there were also thinkers who saw in the use of technology the potential for the instauration and upsurge of evil and for the installment of dictatorial regimes. Two famous names are worth mentioning: Aldous Huxley and George Orwell. In the novel *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), Julien Huxley's brother, imagines a world in which

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[5] Michael S. Burdett, "Contextuliazing a Christian Perspective on Transcendence and Human Enhancement. Francis Bacon, N.F. Fedorov, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin", in Ronald Cole-Turner, *Transhumanism and transcendence. Christian Hope in the Age of Technological Enhacement* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 21.

[6] Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (London: ElecBook, 1997), 403.

[7] Julien Huxley, *New Bottles for New Wine* (London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1957), 17.

technology is used to engineer human beings in laboratories and medicine able to psychologically manipulate and induce a state of satisfaction. It is, in fact, a world characterized by hedonism. The novel *1984* written by George Orwell (1903-1950) also presents a dictatorship in which technology is used for the control and surveillance of the population.

At the same time, we need to mention Eugenics, a movement supported by various countries (such as USA, Canada, Sweden, Germany) in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. This trend maintained that the risk of the genetic degradation of the population is real and, as a result, certain races and disabled persons had to be discouraged from reproducing. These ideas can also be considered precursors of Transhumanism:

> "[...] Like its forebear, the eugenics movement, transhumanism will result in terrible deeds. Transhumanism sometimes claims to be a 'liberal eugenics', purified of all that was evil in the old eugenics"[8].

A major characteristic of all the above-mentioned authors is their atheism. However, we can also find Christian thinkers who expressed ideas regarding the possibility to modify the human nature through science and technology: Nikolai Fydorovich Fydorov (1829-1903) and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955).

Nikolai Fydorovich Fydorov is a lesser known author but one with an original vision. He assumed his Christian Orthodox identity but at the same time he was a firm believer in reason and science. He believed man can control the forces of nature and even defeat death. In fact, he stated that through technology the universal resurrection of human beings is possible:

> "When the theoretical reason which studies death and life, and the practical one which returns life and thus defeats death (in the task of universal resuscitation), together carry out the will of the Son, who gave the commandment for all to come together, and the will of the Holy Spirit, who acts (and not 1 16 only speaks) within those who unite, then in working on the Common Task they will learn to make a reality of 'the hoped for' "[9].

Father Teilhard de Chardin, unlike Fydorov, was a well-known thinker in the Catholic world, as well as in the Protestant, Orthodox and even secular ones. He was a complex personality, specializing in natural sciences (paleontology, geology) as well as in theology. He states: "we have seen and admitted that evolution is an ascent towards consciousness"[10]. At the same time, he militates

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[8] Steven J. Jensen, "The Roots of Transhumanism", *Nova et Vetera,* English Edition, 12, no. 2 (2014): 516.

[9] Nikolai Fydorovich Fydorov, *What was man created for? The Philosophy of the Common Task* (London: Honeyglen, 1990), 116-117.

[10] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (Harper Perenial Modern Classics, 2008), 258.

for the use of knowledge to improve the human organism through "a nobly human form of eugenics"[11].

One movement that enjoys great attention within Transhumanism nowadays is that of "technological singularity":

> "At the basis of the definition of TS (technological singularity, our note) is the simple idea of the progress of an (artificial) intelligence superior to the human one.[...] Within cognitive and computational sciences it represents the alleged moment when an intelligence like AI (artificial intelligence, our note) will surpass human intelligence and the technological progress will become extraordinarily rapid, making the future unpredictable (as if it weren't unpredictable already!) and completely different from what we see today"[12].

What we can observe is that the ideas supported by the advocates of Transhumanism are not necessarily new. The dream of improving the characteristics of human beings and of achieving immortality has been ever-present throughout history. Today it seems more plausible as a result of the rapid technological and scientific developments. It has supporters within the academia, the press, and also within the fields of information technology and biotechnology.

This illustrates the major importance of this way of thinking. For this reason, the Church must try to respond to the challenges posed by transhumansits.

The Relationship between Christianity and Technology

Technology was and still is a permanent presence in the life of man. Ever since prehistoric times, human beings have used their intelligence to design tools able to ease their existence or ensure their survival. Today, as a result of the swift development of technology, people, perhaps, trust it more than they trust the deity.

Technology may refer to the following: the "totality of human artifacts", the "totality of technical activities (i.e. the design assumption)", the "totality of technical knowledge"[13]. As such, we can assert that technology controls society and has even become an aim in itself.

In this context, one must reflect upon the type of attitude Christians should have towards technology. Should they oppose it, embrace it or, rather, a perspective based on reason is required? In order to attempt an answer, we will start from the Holy Scripture and from some religious authors and Holy Fathers.

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[11] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man,* 282.
[12] Bogdan Popoveniuc, *Filosofia Singularității. Creierul global o etică a gândirii fără om* [*The Philosophy of Singularity. The Global Brain an Ethics of Humanless Thinking*] (Bucharest: Eikon, 2016), 64.
[13] See Bogdan Popoveniuc, *Filosofia Singularității. Creierul global o etică a gândirii fără om*, 21.

In the Holy Scripture, crafts are seen as a gift from God:

"See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with divine spirit, with ability, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft" (Exodus, 31, v.2-5).

Also, in the same chapter, verse 6, the idea of God offering the gift of technical intelligence appears: "[...] I have given ability to all the skilled workers." Clement of Alexandria in *The Stromata* sustains that crafts and philosophy are from God:

"Indeed the Scripture calls 'wisdom' any human science and art; indeed, there are many sciences and arts covered by the human mind![...] Rightfully, the apostle said that the wisdom of God is *'of many kinds'*, has 'many faces and many forms' and shows its power, for our benefit, through art, science, faith, prophecy[...]"[14].

At the same time, Origen in his *Homilies on Numbers* wrote:

"[...] the craftsman's wisdom is from the Lord, whether in gold or in silver or in any other material, and also the weaver's wisdom. And notice that it can be justly said about all these that the knowledge of these is from the Most High"[15].

Origen considers that although science is God's gift it can also be used for evil:

"[...] the wisdom of all knowledge traces its origin to God, but sinks into evil when men of evil purpose, or even demons, mix in certain corruptions of the wisdom of God [...]"[16].

At the same time, Saint John Chrysostom in *Homilies on Genesis* considers that crafts and arts are the gift of wisdom given to people by God:

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[14] Clement of Alexandria, *Scrieri. Partea a doua. Stromatele* [*Works. Part two. The Stromata*], in *Părinţi şi scriitori bisericeşti* 4 [*Fathers and Writers of the Church* 4], translation, foreword, notes and indices by Pr. D. Fecioru (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1992), 24.

[15] Origen, *Homilies on Numbers*, trans. by Thomas P. Scheck, edited by Christopher A. Hall (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 112.

[16] Origen, *Homilies on Numbers*, 113.

" [...] Look, beloved, how life moves slowly forward, how life begins to organize, how the people, one by one, discover, with the help of their God given wisdom, all sorts of arts and crafts; and this is how the arts and crafts came to exist"[17].

Despite the fact that there is a positive attitude of the Scripture and of the Holy Fathers towards technology, it is regarded as a consequence of the fall from grace, because in Paradise these means were unnecessary. The "garments of skin" given to Adam and Eve in the Scripture can mean mortality and, implicitly, the new organization of postlapsarian life:

> "Saint *John Chrysostom* teaches us that before the fall from grace, 'citadels', 'crafts', or 'garments' were unnecessary. 'They were not needed at the time, but afterwards became necessary as a result of our own incapacity; these and all those other needs. All these were brought to life by death itself. The 'garments of skin' are the attire with which man confronts death. We can regard them as the new organization of human life, as new methods, as different clothing, one could say, adequate and indispensible for confronting the various conditions faced by our planet after the fall"[18].

The Holy Scripture, the Fathers and church writers argue that technology, the crafts, are a gift of the wisdom with which God has endowed man. At the same time, they urge discernment in their use because they can be used for evil and even for the destruction of man. This appeal to resort to reason is valid even nowadays when we live in a permanent "technological revolution" that risks altering and even destroying the person.

The Body in Christian and Transhumanist Anthropologies

The problem of the body is a fundamental one in both Christianity and Transhumanism which aims to modify it through biotechnology and even eliminate it by transferring consciousness into a computer. Christianity, on the other hand, does not see the body as something to be eliminated, but on the contrary, due to the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ, corporeality is a

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[17] Saint John Chrysostom, *Scrieri. Omilii la Facere* (I) [*Works. Homilies on Genesis* (I)], in *Părinți și scriitori bisericești* 21 [*Fathers and Writers of the Church* 21], translation, introduction, indices and notes by D. Fecioru (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1987), 367.

[18] Panayotis Nellas, *Omul – animal îndumnezeit* [*The Deification of Man*], introduction and translation diac. Ioan I. Ică jr. (Sibiu: Deisis, 1994), 54-55.

fundamental dimension of the person next to the soul. Man is made up of body and soul. Each of these elements taken separately does not form the whole man. In fact, the body was created before the soul:

> "We are amazed by the fact that, according to the biblical passage in the Genesis, the human body was the first created by God: 'Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being' (Gen.2, 7), the dust designating the body and the breath of life, the soul"[19].

The creation of man was a special act of God:

> "[...]The act of creating the man differs from the act of creating nature even in its component related to the body. God made the body 'from the dust of the ground', so he did not simple order the ground to make the man, thus giving it power. By this he distinguished the human body from the rest of nature, more than the bodies of various animals differ from nature. He made the body for the soul which is especially related to God"[20].

The creation of man in the image of God is another fundamental aspect of Christianity that shows us the importance of the human being:

> "And God said: 'Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness, to rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, and over all the earth itself and every creature that crawls upon it' "(Gen.1, 27).

This aspect reveals the extraordinary value that man has in creation. By image, the Fathers of the Church understand that man is a rational, creative being, in charge of and responsible for creation[21]. These characteristics, however, were weakened by the fall from grace which led to an alteration of the divine image. Nevertheless, God did not abandon man but sent His Son into the world for his salvation. Especially through this act of the Incarnation of the Logos we can see the importance of the body in Christianity:

> "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John.1, 14).

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[19] Jean-Claude Larchet, *Semnificația trupului în Ortodoxie* [*Theology of the Body*], translated by sister Antonia (Bucharest: Editura Basilica a Patriarhiei Române, 2010), 15.

[20] Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* [*Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*], 2nd edition, vol.1 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1996), 266.

[21] See Panayotis Nellas, *Omul – animal îndumnezeit*, 9.

Through the Incarnation and especially through the Resurrection, Christ shows us that we are called to eternal life. Not only is the soul immortal but due to the Resurrection of Christ we have the guarantee of our own deliverance from the bondage of death: "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep" (1 Cor. 15, v.20). Saint Paul in the First Letter to the Corinthians wrote that the resurrected bodies will have a new state. They will no longer be subjected to decay and death:

> "So will it be with the resurrection of the dead: What is sown is perishable; it is raised imperishable; It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body" (1Cor, 15, v.42-44).

On the surface, the transhumanist movement and Christianity seem to have a similar purpose, overcoming the defects of the body and even immortality itself. However, the means of achieving these goals are different from the Christian approach. If in Christianity it is God who accomplishes the resurrection of the dead and the transfiguration of the world, in Transhumanism man, with the help of technology, wants to attain this fact. The attitude towards the body is ambivalent in the case of transhumanists. On the one hand, the body is viewed positively because it is the support of the mind, so it is a necessity. On the other, we also encounter a Gnostic perspective that sees in the body something that needs to be modified or even overcome because it is a mere material structure: "Up until now, our mortality was tied to the longevity of our *hardware*. When the hardware crashed, that was it"[22]. The quote underlines the fact that man's soul is not immortal. However, the mind could be transferred to another "hardware", just like a file or computer software:

> "As software, our mortality will no longer be dependent on the survival of the computing circuitry. There will still be hardware and bodies, but the essence of our identity will switch to the permanence of our software. Just as, today, we don't throw our files away when we change personal computers – we transfer them, at least the ones we want to keep. So, too, we won't throw our mind file away when we periodically port ourselves to the latest, ever more capable, 'personal' computer"[23].

It is interesting that this idea is similar to metempsychosis, but it is a transmigration of the mind directed by its owner.

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[22] Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines* (New York: Viking, 1999), 94.
[23] Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines*, 94.

As we can observe, there is a different perspective on the relation to the body in Christianity and in Transhumanism. For Christians, the body is the creation of God called to immortality and resurrection while the other vision wants a radical alteration of the body and even a liberation from it. Another aspect that differentiates the two is that God can transform the universe and the body while man, although he desires to achieve immortality, in reality cannot do so because he is unable to eliminate all existential risks that can lead to death.

Artificial Intelligence

Another great technological and moral-theological challenge is the extremely rapid evolution of the field of artificial intelligence. This field of research is relatively new: "AI is one of the newest fields in science and engineering. Work started in earnest soon after World War II, and the name itself was coined in 1956"[24]. According to John McCarthy, one of the pioneers in the field, artificial intelligence

> "is the science and engineering of making intelligent machines, especially intelligent computer programs. It is related to the similar task of using computers to understand human intelligence, but AI does not have to confine itself to methods that are biologically observable"[25].

Experts in the field distinguish between two types of Artificial Intelligence. The first, called narrow AI, which performs specific tasks in a limited field of activity (e.g., industrial robots) and General Artificial Intelligence (General Artificial Intelligence), which is a system with an intelligence equal or greater than human intelligence (not yet accomplished). This technology raises a series of questions such as: how the automation based on artificial intelligence affects work, war and also whether it is possible to achieve intelligence at the human level or even a super-intelligence. If this is possible how should we relate to these inventions? Another issue under debate is related to the role of the human being in such a technological context. Theology has an obligation to get involved in these issues in order to provide an answer to the faithful but also to the secularized world.

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[24] Stuart Russel, Peter Norvig, *Artificial Intelligence. A Modern Approach.* Third Edition (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2010), 1.
[25] John McCarthy, "What is artificial intelligence?", accessed February 18, 2019, http://jmc.stanford.edu/articles/whatisai/whatisai.pdf.

As a conclusion

As we could see, in general Transhumanism is at odds with Christian ideas. The focus is on the man who, with the help of technology, can, we dare say, find salvation. Singularity is the moment when the world will be transformed into a "new heaven and a new earth". Although there is this optimistic dimension, the followers of this movement also see the risks posed by the prefigured changes. As such, they mention the risk that only those with financial possibilities will have access to various skill-improving technologies and thus inequalities will be exacerbated and, as a result, social conflicts will develop; the evolution of artificial intelligence will lead to the disappearance of many trades and jobs, to environmental damage, to the possibility to control the population much easier and even to the emergence of dictatorships. At the same time, in Transhumanism there is no talk of immortality of the soul and of life after death. It all comes down to this world. That is why all hope is placed in what man can do. Christianity, regardless of confession, cannot neglect such ideas, but must engage in a dialogue with the supporters of this movement. At the same time, discernment is necessary. A Christian cannot believe that man is capable to free himself from the "bondage of sin and death" strictly through technological means. This is a form of idolatry.

Nonetheless, a disciple of Christ can appreciate these advancements that take place and even become involved in the development of human knowledge and technology capable to ease and improve the lives of all. There is no incompatibility between such an activity and following the teachings of Christ, a fact that was emphasized by some authors and Fathers of the Church. But the church can reveal and draw attention to the fact that the desire to create a new man and even a perfect world lies not in our power but with God alone.

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II. HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

THEODORET OF CYRUS ON MESSALIANISM

DANIEL BUDA[*]

ABSTRACT. This paper aims to review the positions of Theodoret of Cyrus on Messalianism. After a brief presentation on Messalianism and of the position taken against it by some Church Fathers and synods, the author formulates the hypothesis that Theodoret, while taking a position on Messalianism, was careful not to harm the reputation of Antioch, as this theological centre could be perceived in Alexandria as a fief of Messalianism in the East. In *Historia religiosa* Theodoret carefully avoids any association of his ascetic heroes with Messalianism. The report on Messianism in *Historia ecclesiastica* also carefully disconnects Antioch from Messalianism and declared that Syria was cleared up of their influence.

Keywords: Theodoret of Cyrus; Messalianism; Antioch; Historia Religiosa; Historia ecclesiastica; Theodoret on Messalianism

I. Introduction

The interest in Messalianism has been raised in the previous century, when the collection of fifty *Spiritual Homilies,* traditionally ascribed to Macarius the Egyptian, also surnamed "The Elder" or "the Great" (around 300 – shortly before 390) a few generations after his death. It was proved as originating in fact in Syria (sometime between 390 and 431) and being produced in Messalian circles[1]. As Andrew Louth formulated, "the ascription of these homilies to Macarius was a device to keep them circulating among the orthodox"[2]. In fact,

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[1] For a short and clear report on the process of discovering the real origins of the *Spiritual Homilies*, see J. Quasten, *Patrology: Vol. III, The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature from the Council of Nicaea to the Council of Chalcedon* (Spectrum Publishers, 1962), 163-164. For a report on the contesters of this theory, see ibidem, Quasten, *Patrology*, 164-165.

[2] Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition. From Plato to Denys,* 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 111.

their author was, most probably, a Messalian named Symeon of Mesopotamia[3]. The interest for Messalianism has also grown because they were perceived by some scholars as being comparable with previous Montanism[4] or as predecessors of modern Pentecostalism[5] or Evangelicalism[6].

In this study, I intend to review the way in which Therodoret of Cyrus presents Messalianism in his writings. One may expect that Theodoret, who originated in Syria and was a prolific author, wrote about this heretic-ascetic movement which appeared in the region of his origin. There are indeed several records on Messalianism in his writings. However, this research will try to go beyond a simple record and analysis of anti-Messalian statements of Theodoret. When reviewing his statements on Messalianism in his *Historia religiosa,* I will refer to his complex attitude on Messalianism by revisiting previous scholarship on this particular matter. Also Theodoret's report on Messalianism in *Historia ecclesiastica* serves the same purpose of disconnecting Antioch as a theological-spiritual centre from any connection or association with Messalianism.

Before reviewing the way in which Theodoret perceived Messalianism, I will introduce two other chapters: a propaedeutic one on Messalianism and a register of patristic references against it. The scope of the first chapter is to simply introduce the potential readers into the doctrine and spirituality of Messalianism. The second chapter, which is far from being exhaustive, is aimed to show the reactions of different Church Fathers, as well as of synods, to Messalianism. It highlights the fact that Messalianism as a heretic-ascetic movement was refuted both by the Orthodox Church, as well as by other churches. Especially the reports on the way how Antiochian theologians previous to Theodoret reacted to Messalianism play an important role for the argumentative construct of this paper. Out of these brief presentations, these questions emerge: Did Theodoret, as an Antiochian theologian, have a special interest in refuting Messalianism? Was his refutation particularly biased by his own context?

II. What is Messalianism?

Messalianism was a monastic movement which appeared in Mesopotamia and developed further in Syria during the last part of the fourth century C.E. Their name comes from the Syriac word "msallyane" which means "the praying ones".

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[3] H. Dörries, *Symeon of Mesopotamien. Die Überlieferung der messalianischen Makarius-Schriften,* Texteund Untersuchungen, 55:1 (Leipzig, 1941).

[4] Reinhart Staats, "Messalianer", *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 22, (1993): 607. However, unless in Montanism, Messalianism did not teach the imminent apocalyptic end of the world.

[5] Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 112.

[6] See Henri Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila* (Oxford, 1976), 179.

It is the participle of the word which means "prayer". Their Greek name "euchites" has the same meaning and comes from the word "euche", which means "prayer". Both the Syriac and the Greek names are an allusion of the emphasis on prayer which is typical for the spirituality of this movement. They named themselves "pnevmatikoi" i.e. "spirituals"[7], but also "beggars" and "the poor" (cf. Mathews 5:3: "poor in spirit")[8]. Their message could be summarized as the following: "the only thing that matters is prayer. Fasting, asceticism (even morality), Baptism, the Eucharist, and the institution of the Church – all this is beside the point"[9]. It seems also that they did not have a lot of respect for philosophy and for scholastic work; a concrete attitude regarding labour was missing and they did not want to be bound to any place on earth, therefore they walked from one place to another, living out of alms. Their prayer did not follow a clear liturgical order. According to some later records, they also deny the role of the saints and refuted the worship of icons[10].

III. Church Fathers and synods against Messalianism

There are several patristic records and synodical decisions against Messalianism. Each of them described and rejected one or another aspect or aspects of their teachings, spirituality and/or discipline.

Ephraim the Syrian (306-373) mentions the Messalians in his *Hymnes on the heresies* written in Edessa between 363 and 373[11]. This is one of the first historical records on Messalianism.

There is an ascetical treatise entitled *On Sickness and Health* attributed to St. Athanasius of Alexandria (c.296-298 - 373) in which heretics who demand uninterrupted divine service and therefore do not tolerate any sleep, are refuted. Possibly this writing meant the messalians[12].

Some authors noticed "a Messalian atmosphere" in some of the questions and a "restraint in the answers" in the first redaction of the *Small Asketikon* of St. Basil the Great (330-379), which goes back to 358/359[13]. There is also a "Messalian influence noticeable" in the first chapter of the *Great Asketikon* by the same author[14].

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[7] Antoine Guillaumont, "Messaliens", *DP*, tome X, (Paris, 1980), 1074.
[8] Staats, "Messalianer", 607.
[9] Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 112.
[10] Staats, "Messalianer", 607.
[11] *Hymnes sur les hérésies* 22, 4, CSCO 169 (E. Beck, 1957), 79.
[12] Quasten, *Patrology. Vol. III*, 49 affirms that "style and content do not offer anything which would contradict" the attribution of this treatise to St. Athanasius.
[13] Quasten, *Patrology. Vol. III*, 212.
[14] Quasten, *Patrology. Vol. III*, 213.

Gregory of Nyssa (335-394) in *De virginitate* criticized their ethics sharply, as they were living in communities both of women and men in which they were considering their dreams as revelations[15].

Gregory of Nyssa (335-394) wrote in around 380 about some old monks who came from the eastern borders of the Empire, i.e. from the region of Antioch as Abrahamic fathers asking the flock in Constantinople to take part in dubious actions.[16] A year later, the same Gregory defended the deity of the Holy Spirit in the synod of Constantinople, mentioned some monks coming from the East who seemed to confirm his pnevmatology[17].

The first synodical condemnation of the Messalians took place in Side, Pamphylia (390) in a synod attended by 25 bishops and presided by Amphilochius of Iconium (339-394). Flavian of Antioch (381-404) was informed about the decisions taken against Messalians by a synodical letter. The main accusations on Messalians presented in this synod, based on different testimonies, but also on their writings were the following: since the fall of Adam, each human being is possessed by a demon; Baptism is clearly played down, as it does not cleanse the demon and the roots of the sin remain; only prayer is efficient in expelling the demon from the human soul and in making space for the Holy Spirit[18].

Flavian of Antioch himself held a synod against the Messalians, around 400. Their leader, Adelphos, was interrogated and condemned as a heretic. After the synod, Flavian held correspondence with the bishops from Osroene, Upper Mesopotamia, on the matter of Messalians. It seems that he burned Messalian monasteries and sent Messalian monks into exile. In a letter to an Armenian bishop, he complains about the protection he provided to these heretics[19].

St. John Chrysostom (350-407) who was a priest in Antioch from 386 to 397, acknowledged the presence of Messalians in his native city. There are modern theologians stating that the critic of Chrysostom on "the men of today ... (who) do not shudder when they measure themselves with such a great man as this"

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[15] Gh. Ny., *De virg 23*. See also the English translation: St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity*, NPNF 205, 582-583: "From this number, too, come the Dreamers, who pot more faith in the illusions of their dreams than in the Gospel teaching, and phantasies <revelations.> Why, we have known ascetics of this class who have persisted in their fasting even unto death, as if <with such sacrifices God were well pleased, and, again, others who rush off into the extreme diametrically opposite, practicing celibacy in name only and leading a life in no way different from the secular; for they not only indulge in the pleasures of the table, but are openly known to have a woman in their houses; and they call such a friendship a brotherly affection, as if, forsooth, they could veil their own thought, which is inclined to evil, under a sacred term. It is owing to them that this pure and holy profession of virginity is <blasphemed amongst the Gentiles>".

[16] See Greg. Nyss., *Oratio XXXIII*.

[17] See Greg. Nyss., *Opera IX*, 337ff.

[18] Staats, "Messalianer", 607.

[19] Photius, Bibl., cod LII, ed. Henry I, 38, 43-45.

(i.e. St. Paul)[20] has in mind the Messalians. This critique was formulated around 386-388, when Flavian was the bishop of the city. In one of his sermons, Chrysostom warned his listeners on a certain visionary who affirms that he has seen the pure nature of God which remains unseen even to the Cherubim[21]. This critique might be also directed against the Messalians. These evidences prove that Messalianism was an issue in Antioch when St. John Chrysostom was a priest there[22].

Mark the Hermit, a disciple of St. John Chrysostom wrote *About the Law of the Spirit* in which he attacked the Messalians. The same character has another piece entitled *On Those who suppose Justification* in which he refuted the Messalian identification of grace with mystical experience. *On the Baptism* has the same character, as it deals with the effects of the sacrament of Baptism[23].

Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 310-320 - 403) in his work *Panarion*[24] signalised their presence in Antioch around 376-377. They are described as vagabonds who renounced any possession; they were begging on the streets, as they were refusing any work and any discipline, a part of prayer. Epiphanius mentions that they originated in Mesopotamia.

In 415, St. Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376-444) called a synod against the Messalians, which means that they were present in Alexandra in his time. Also, Hieronymus (c.347-420) who travelled in the East around the same time, met them and compared them with Pellagians[25]. His comparison with a similar heresy present in the West indicates that the Messalians were unknown there.

Nilus of Ancyra (around 430), who was an archimandrite in a monastery near Ancyra, made an "implicit refutation" of the Messalians in his writing *On Voluntary Poverty,* ch. 21 who rejected poverty on the pretext that it made perpetual prayer impossible[26].

The Council of Ephesus, 431, took a radical decision on Messalianism, more in the spirit of Cyril of Alexandria than in the spirit of previous synodal decisions against Messalianism. The Council of Ephesus decided that a Messalian bishop has no right to repentance. Therefore, in care a bishop was proved as

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[20] J. Chrysostom, *Treatise on the Priesthood*, IV. 6.

[21] J. Chrysostom, *Hom. In illud, Vidi dominum* 2, 2 PG 56, 109.

[22] For further details see Hieromonk Vasile Birzu, *Reverberation of Messalian Controversy in the Life and Work of St. John Chrysostom,* in *Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, Ierarh, Teolog, Filantrop* (Sibiu: Andreana, 2008), 367-395.

[23] Quasten, *Patrology. Vol. III*, 164.

[24] *Panarion haer. 80*, *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte 37*, ed. K. Holl (Leipzig 1933), 484-496.

[25] *In dial. Adv. Pelagianos*, Prol. 1.

[26] Quasten, *Patrology. Vol. III*, 164.

being a member of this heresy, he automatically lost his office[27]. *Codex Theodosianus* (428), following the synodical decision of Ephesus, ranked Messalianism as one of the most dangerous heresies[28].

Diadochos of Photiki (c. 400 – c.486) wrote around 468 a piece called *One Hundred Chapters on Spiritual Perfection* in which he refuted the Messalian belief that after the fall of Adam, every human being has a demon which was not expelled through Baptism, but it can be expelled only by ceaseless prayer. He also refutes the messalian idea of cohabitation between grace and sin in the human soul. The presence of the grace and the deliverance of the sin through baptism does not mean that there is no further battle with sin[29].

John of Damascus (c. 675/676 - 749) considered that the enthusiasm of the Messalians, expressed as they were being filled and fulfilled by the Holy Spirit as suspicious[30].

Messalianism was condemned also outside of the byzantine Orthodoxy. An Armenian synod gathered in 447 in Shahapivan condemning the Messalians as those who used to have too much influence on women and children. Also, the Nestorian Church took, after 550, several synodical decisions against the Messalians[31].

IV. Theodoret of Cyrus on Messalianism

The records of Theodoret of Cyrus (c. 393 – c. 458) on Messalianism are considered as one of the most important ones, together with those of Ephraem the Syrian, Epiphanius of Salamis, Cyril of Alexandria and John of Damascus[32]. They are perceived as some of the most important informers on the early history of this movement[33].

Why is Theodoret interested in Messalianism? One may simply respond that Theodoret wrote about Messalianism as many other Church Fathers and theologians of his time have done. Even more, it is natural to find records on Messalianism in his writings, as a theologian of his calibre was interested in all sorts of dynamics within Christianity during his time. I think that there is evidence to affirm that for Theodoret, as an Antiochian theologian, the issue of

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[27] ACO I,1,7, NR. 80; Mansi IV, 541-544.
[28] Cod. Th. XVI,5,65.
[29] Staats, "Messalianer", 609.
[30] *Haer. 80*, PG 94; I, 728-737.
[31] Staats, "Messalianer", 611.
[32] Staats, "Messalianer", 609.
[33] Guillaumont, "Messaliens", 1074.

Messalianism was particularly delicate. This fact really influenced his attitude regarding Messalianism and the way he described this heresy in his writings.

What could make the issue of Messalianism delicate for Theodoret? One could find the answer in the previous chapters of this study. Even if the origins of Messalianism were in Mesopotamia, it rapidly first spread in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire and settled in Antioch which was the most important centre of the East. Everyone who knows the history of Antioch well knows that other heresies were also born in the vicinity of Antioch, making particular efforts to settle in the city. This was an important step for the success of further missionary efforts to spread their ideas in the Roman Empire. The particular efforts done in Antioch and in its vicinity – either solitary (see the references on Flavian of Antioch, St. John Chrysostom and Mark the Hermit) or collectively (synods hold in Side and Antioch) – to know better and then to condemn Messalianism[34] is, in my opinion, evidence that the presence of Messalians in Antioch was already an issue before Theodoret wrote his works. Every responsible churchman who knew the dimension of Antiochian monasticism and its influence in the Church could be nothing else but concerned about the spread of such a strange movement among monks and nuns.

The positions of Theodoret of Cyrus on Messalianism which are dated later, were influenced by some particular developments in the Church. I refer to the growing rivalry between Alexandria and Antioch as theological-spiritual centres. Theodoret lived and wrote in a period when this rivalry reached its highest points. Messalianism reached Alexandria quite early (see the references on St. Athanasius of Alexandria) and became a real problem in the time of St. Cyril of Alexandria. Given the delicate relationship between Antioch and Alexandria, one may speculate that St. Cyril has had enough reasons to perceive Messalianism as a heresy coming from Antioch. The extreme decision taken against it in the Synod of Ephesus (431), under the presidency of St. Cyril could be attributed to his volcanic character, but also to the fact that Messalianism originated in the East where Nestorius and his heresy also came from.

As the greatest theologian of the Antiochian school of his time and its *port Drapeau*, Theodoret aimed to condemn Messalianism, but at the same time he wanted to make sure that the fact that Antioch was one of the first centres in the Roman Empire, does not harm the reputation of the city as a theological centre. Especially after the Nestorian controversy and the synod of Ephesus, Theodoret was interested in avoiding the development of the idea that Antioch is a place which produces heresies. And the connections between Messalianism and Antioch could only provide arguments of this kind to the rivals of Antioch.

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[34] Reinhart Staats describes Messslianism as a monastic movement which was later condemned as a heresy. Staats, "Messalianer", 611.

IV.1. Historia religioasa

History of the Monks or *Historia religiosa* is chronologically the first historical writing of Theodoret. Its date of composition is about 444[35]. It is in fact a description of 28 men and 3 women ascetics. All figures presented are ascetics living in Syria and in the region and many of them, even from the diocese of Cyrus, where Theodoret was a bishop. The central figure of *Historia religiosa* is Simeon Stylites. In my opinion, the main purpose of *Historia religiosa* was to prove that Antioch, as an ecclesial centre, developed a monasticism which was in no way lower that the Alexandrian monasticism[36]. Messalianism definitely did not serve this purpose.

I used as a starting point for this subchapter an article published in 1961 in French on *Théodoret et Messalianisme[37].* It focuses almost exclusively on the way in which *Historia religiosa* relates with Messalianism. R. P. Pierre Carnivet started from the idea that Theodoret was not keen to present any deviation of the Syrian monasticism. However, Carvinet affirms:

> „Toutefois, il n'est pas impossible de deviner sous les propos de Théodoret des réticentes ou de discrètes suggestions qui sont autant d'efforts pour corriger des déviations alors courantes dans le monahisme"[38].

He suggests that Theodoret was aware of the deviations of Messalianism already before becoming a bishop, when he spent his life as a monk in the monastery of Nicerte, near Apamea (before 423). The role of Theodoret is compared with the one played by Gregory of Nyssa who condemned Messalianism with the purpose of renewing the monastic life in Asia Minor[39]. Theodoret played the same role in Syria, however he did not condemn Messalianism openly in *Historia religioasa*, because the goal of this writing was exactly to present Syrian monasticism as being a model for the entire Christian world. Carvinet suggested that in order to get the real attitude of Theodoret on Messalianism, we need to focus more on what is not within the contents of *Historia religioasa* than on what is. His main arguments for this hidden condemnation of Messalianism in *Historia religiosa* are:

1. The way in which Theodoret presents the visions of his heroes. We also learned about the role that visions play in Messalianism. Unlike Diadochos of Photiki, who is mentioned above, Theodoret did not make any differences between good visions which obviously come from God and bad visions which come from the demons.

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[35] Quasten, *Patrology. Vol. III*, 550.
[36] I work on a separate study where I intend to present in details the evidences which support this hypothesis.
[37] R. P. Pierre Canivert S.J., "Théodoret at le Messalianisme", *Revue Mabillon* (1961): 27-34.
[38] Canivert S.J., "Théodoret at le Messalianisme", 26.
[39] Canivert S.J., "Théodoret at le Messalianisme", 26

Also in case of Symeon Stylithos who is the central figure of *Historia religiosa*, Theodoret pays the right attention to visions. While the Syriac *vita* of Symeon is full of reports about his miracles and visions, Theodoret is more careful in presenting Symoen's visions. Carvinet concludes that:

> „Cette difference essentialle entre la *Vie Syriaque* et la notice de Théodoret n'est pas accidentelle. Théodoret a pu être soucieux de ne rien rapporter qui ne lui parût contrôlé, mais il a sans doute voulu éviter d'accorder trop d'importance à ces révélations qui survenaient dans les sanges et où les Messaliens avaient tendance à chercher la règle de leur conduite, croyant entendre par là l'Esprit-Saint"[40].

2. *Theodoret's attitude regarding handwork.* Theodoret puts emphasis on prayer, but he also suggests that every ascetic should live out of their own work. The Messalians despised hand working and preferred to live out of alms. This is clear from the way he presents the lifestyle of Theodosius of Rhodes, one of the monastic figures he presented in *Historia religiosa*:

> „...n'est-il pas surprenant que Théodoret ait pris la peine, tout en ménageant les uns et les autres, de présenter le manière de vivre des moines de Théodose de Rhôsos, qui faisaient de la vannerie et des voiles et écoulaient eux-mêmes leur marchandise, avec un appui de preuves qu'il ne donne pas à ceux qui conçoivent différemment la pauvreté"[41].

3. *Theodoret does not speak about significant Messalians* like Alexander Acemetrus who lived in the area of Mesopotamia for twenty years before moving to Constantinople. On the contrary, Theodoret makes serious efforts to prove that some of his ascetic heroes were defenders of Orthodoxy against heresies as well as against Pagans and Jews[42].

IV.2. Historia ecclesiastica

Historia ecclesiastica is the main historical writing of Theodoret. It explicitly intends to continue the *Historia ecclesiastica* of Eusebius of Caesarea, extending the presentation of the events from 323 to 428. It has a strong anti-heretical character and it was written in 449-450 when Theodoret was in exile in Apamea. This is his record on Messalianism:

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[40] Canivert S.J., "Théodoret at le Messalianisme", 29.

[41] Canivert S.J., "Théodoret at le Messalianisme", 32.

[42] See Daniel Buda, *Rolul monahilor în formarea spirituală a credincioșilor potrivit lucrării Historia religiosa (H. r.) a lui Teodoret al Cyrului* în Vasile Stanciu, *Misiunea parohiei și mănăstirii într-o lume în continuă schimbare. Lucrările simpozionului internațional de Teologie, Istorie, Muzicologie și Artă, 3-4 nov. 2015, vol. I,* ed. Cristian Sonea (Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Renașterea, 2016), 415-432, especially ch. II.6.

"At this time also arose the heresy of the Messaliani. Those who translate their names into Greek call them Euchitae.

They also have another designation which arose naturally from their mode of action. From their coming under the influence of a certain demon which they supposed to be the advent of the Holy Ghost, they are called enthusiasts.

Men who have become infected with this plague to its full extent shun manual labour as iniquitous; and, giving themselves over to sloth, call the imaginations of their dreams prophesying. Of this heresy Dadoes, Sabbas, Adelphius, Hermas, and Simeones were leaders, and others besides, who did not hold aloof from the communion of the Church, alleging that neither good nor harm came of the divine food of which Christ our Master said 'Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood shall live for ever'.

In their endeavour to hide their unsoundness they shamelessly deny it even after conviction, and abjure men whose opinions are in harmony with their own secret sentiments.

Under these circumstances Letoius, who was at the head of the church of Melitene, a man full of divine zeal, saw that many monasteries, or, shall I say, brigands' caves, had drunk deep of this disease. He therefore burnt them, and drove out the wolves from the flock.

In like manner the illustrious Amphilochius to whom was committed the charge of the metropolis of the Lycaonians and who ruled all the people, no sooner had learnt that this pestilence had invaded hid diocese than he made it depart from his borders and freed from its infection the flock he fed.

Flavianus, also, the far famed high-priest of the Antiochenes, on learning that these men were living at Edessa and attacking with their peculiar poison all with whom they come in contact, sent a company of monks, brought them to Antioch, and in the following manner convicted them in their denial of their heresy. Their accusers, he said, were calumniating them, and the witnesses giving false evidence; and Adelphius, who was a very old man, he accosted with expressions of kindness, and ordered to take a seat at his side. Then he said 'We, O venerable sir, who have lived to an advanced age, have a more accurate knowledge of human nature, and of the tricks of the demons who oppose us, and have learnt by experience the character of the gift of grace. But these younger men have no clear knowledge of these matters, and cannot brook to listen to spiritual teaching. Wherefore tell me in what sense you say that the opposing spirit retreats, and the grace of the Holy Ghost supervenes'. The old man was won over by these words and gave vent to all his secret venom, for he said that no benefit accrues to the recipients of Holy Baptism, and that it is only by earnest prayer that the indwelling demon is driven out, for that every one born into the world derives from his first father slavery to the demons just as he does his nature; but that when these are driven away, then come the Holy Ghost giving sensible and visible signs of His presence, at once freeing the body from the impulse

of the passions and wholly ridding the soul of its inclination to the worse; with the result that there is no more need for fasting that restrains the body, nor of teaching or training that bridles it and instructs it how to walk aright. And not only is the recipient of this gift liberated from the wanton motions of the body, but also clearly foresees things to come, and with the eyes beholds the Holy Trinity.

In this way the divine Flavianus dug into the foul fountain-head and succeeded in laying bare its streams. Then he thus addressed the wretched old man. 'O thou that hast grown old in evil days, thy own mouth convicts thee, not I, and thou art testified against by thy own lips'. After their unsoundness had been thus exposed they were expelled from Syria, and withdrew to Pamphylia, which they filled with their pestilential doctrine"[43].

The long report of Theodoret in *Historia ecclesiastica* about the Messalians could be summarized as the following:

- Names used to designate the Messalians;
- Nomination of the Messalian leaders;
- Their belief and behaviour;
- Measures taken against them in Metilene by Letoius and in Lycaonia by Amphilochius;
- Report on the actions taken by Flavian of Antioch: interrogation of Adelphius; further details about their way to deal with things and about their doctrine.

It is clear that Theodoret wrote this report on Messalians, using the Antiochian tradition he is familiar with. Perhaps he even had access to the acts of the synod of Flavian against the Messalians, as he was active in Antioch and in the area of Antioch for many years. The list of the Messalian leaders mentioned by Theodoret is completed with other names by Photius[44] and other later authors. Adelphius is also mentioned as by Philoxen of Mabbog as the founder of the heresy of Messalianism[45]. For the purpose of this article, it is enough to concentrate on the passages which reflect the actions taken by Flavian. Beforehand, Theodoret underlines that Messalianism "was living in Edessa" and because they were "attacking with their peculiar poison all with whom they come in contact." Given the situation, Flavian of Antioch "has sent a company of monks, (and) brought them to Antioch." It seems that Theodoret

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[43] Theodoret, *H.E.*, 4, 10.

[44] Photius mentions also a Messalian leader called Sabbas and having the surname "the Castrate" and a certain Eusebius of Edesa. Photius, *Bibliothèque*, codex 52, t.1, ed. R. Henry (Paris, 1959), 36-40.

[45] Philoxéne de Mabboug, *Lettre à Patrice d`Edesse 108-111*, PO 30, fast 5, ed. R. Lavenant (Paris, 1963), 850-855.

intends to suggest that Messalianism, even if it was condemned in a synod in Antioch, was not a challenge present in Antiochian, but in Edessa. Or we know from the testimonies of St. John Chrysostom and other Antiochians that the Messalinas were present in Antioch.

At the end of his report, Theodoret concludes that they "were expelled from Syria, and withdrew to Pamphylia, which they filled with their pestilential doctrine". It means that he however admits that the Messalians were present in Syria, but not in Antioch. And most important is the fact that Messalianism "withdrew to Pamphylia". So, Syria remained a province free of "their pestilential doctrine".

I think that this is enough evidence to allow us to conclude that the report of Theodoret on Messalians from *Historia Ecclesiastica* is also a part of the same effort, made however in a different manner than in *Historia religiosa,* to keep the reputation of Antioch untouched by Messalianism.

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UNDERSTANDING *OUR FATHER* IN THE CONTEXT OF HUMAN PERFECTION PREACHED IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, ACCORDING TO ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA'S *HOMILIES ON THE LORD'S PRAYER*

ADRIAN PODARU[*]

ABSTRACT. It is not by chance that the prayer *Our Father* is recommended by Jesus Christ during the so-called Sermon on the Mount. All that has been said in this Sermon aimed at perfection: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5, 48). Viewed in this light, the Lord's prayer is also the prayer which is properly uttered only in a state of perfection, and even if it may be used as a mean to achieve perfection, nevertheless it is perfectly uttered only in a state of perfection; therefore, in a way, the Lord's prayer is the aim of the Christian life. This is the view of St. Gregory of Nyssa and this is what this article tries to argue by using the texts of this Cappadocian Father.

Keywords: Lord's prayer, St. Gregory of Nyssa, asceticism, perfection, *parrhesia*, the perfect prayer.

When I have chosen this title, I had had in my mind the idea that, being offered to His disciples and to those who listened to Jesus in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord's Prayer was meant to be a perfect prayer, The prayer that should be uttered or, better said, The prayer that is properly uttered only by those who strive to become in the likeness of God, who strive to become perfect. The whole Sermon on the Mount has a single and striking motto: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5, 48). Speaking of murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, fasting etc. Jesus Christ surpasses or fulfills the Law of Moses, in his hope to guide people to another level in their resemblance to God, to a level which prolongs itself ultimately in what Gregory calls ἐπέκτασις. And as David Brown said about the meaning of ἐπέκτασις (as an eschatological process) "we may think of heaven as in part constituted by endless exploration of the infinite riches of God"[1].

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[1] David Brown, *Discipleship and Imagination: Christian Tradition and Truth*, Oxford, 2000, 122.

The present paper does not intend to point out any philosophical influences on Gregory of Nyssa' *Homilies* on Our Father, any rhetorical devices used by him, or to argue in favor of a Christian Tradition regarding prayer, which, eventually, would have been followed by Gregory. The present paper is humble in its intentions: it tries only to underline and to argue with texts the fact that, for Gregory, the prayer *Our Father* is the perfect prayer and it is properly used only by ascetic Christians, spiritually active Christians, not by nominal Christians, who are Christians only by name, but anti-Christians in deeds. The Lord's prayer is uttered in a more and more proper way as the Christian progresses in his effort to be in the likeness to God.

The first texts of Gregory which I would like to put forward are taken from the treatise *On perfection*. Gregory says: "Since the good Lord has allowed us fellowship in the greatest, most divine and first of names to make us worthy of being called Christians by Christ's name, we must realize every term explaining this name so that the name given us is not false but is borne out by our lives"[2]. And a few lines further: "Therefore, those who name themselves after Christ must become first what this name demands and then adjust this call to themselves"[3]. Or, again and more explicit:

> "If we are to be named brothers of him who brought us into birth, innocence of life will constitute our kinship with him provided that no impurity separates us from a union in innocence. The First-Born is justice, holiness, love, redemption and so forth. If these qualities characterize our lives, we will manifest the brilliant marks of our nobility that they may bear witness to that fact that we are Christ's brothers"[4].

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[2] Οὐκοῦν ἐπειδὴ τοῦ μεγίστου τε καὶ θειοτάτου καὶ πρώτου τῶν ὀνομάτων γέγονε παρὰ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ δεσπότου ἡμῖν ἡ κοινωνία, ὥστε τοὺς τῇ ἐπωνυμίᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ τιμηθέντας Χριστιανοὺς ὀνομάζεσθαι, ἀναγκαῖον ἂν εἴη πάντα τὰ ἑρμηνευτικὰ τῆς τοιαύτης φωνῆς ὀνόματα καὶ ἐν ἡμῖν καθορᾶσθαι, ὡς μὴ ψευδώνυμον ἐφ᾽ ἡμῶν εἶναι τὴν κλῆσιν, ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ τοῦ βίου τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἔχειν (*Perf*, GNO VIII/1, 177, 7-14). The English translation of this text and of the following two, with some adjustments, is to be found on this website: http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/ 03d/0330-0395,_Gregorius_Nyssenus,_On_Perfection,_EN.doc, which was accessed on 10.12.2018.

[3] Οὐκοῦν τοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἑαυτοὺς ὀνομάζοντας πρῶτον γενέσθαι χρὴ ὅπερ τὸ ὄνομα βούλεται, εἶθ᾽ οὕτως ἑαυτοῖς ἐφαρμόσαι τὴν κλῆσιν (*Perf*, GNO VIII/1, 178, 2-4).

[4] Οὐκοῦν εἰ μέλλοιμεν ἀδελφοὶ χρηματίζειν τοῦ καθηγησαμένου ἡμῶν τῆς γεννήσεως, τὸ ἀναμάρτητον τῆς ζωῆς ἡμῶν πιστώσεται τὴν πρὸς ἐκεῖνον συγγένειαν, μηδενὸς ῥύπου τῆς πρὸς τὴν καθαρότητα συναφείας ἡμᾶς ἀφορίζοντος. ἀλλὰ καὶ δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἁγιασμὸς ὁ πρωτότοκός ἐστι καὶ ἀγάπη καὶ ἀπολύτρωσις καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα. οὐκοῦν εἰ διὰ τῶν τοιούτων καὶ ὁ ἡμέτερος χαρακτηρίζεται βίος, ἐναργῆ παρεξόμεθα τῆς εὐγενείας ἡμῶν τὰ γνωρίσματα, ὥστε τὸν ταῦτα καθορῶντα ἐν τῇ ζωῇ τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ προσμαρτυρεῖν ἡμῖν τὴν πρὸς τὸν Χριστὸν ἀδελφότητα (*Perf*, GNO VIII/1, 203-204, 16-24; 1-3).

There are in these texts two words that are important and relevant in our context: συγγένεια (kinship) and ἀδελφοὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ (brothers of Christ) or ἡ πρὸς τὸν Χριστὸν ἀδελφότης (the brotherhood to Christ). The first one appears in the *Second Homily* on the Lord's Prayer as well, when Gregory says: "He then makes them not merely spectators of the divine power but even partakers, and leads those present into kinship, in a certain way, with the transcendent nature"[5]. The one who leads us into kinship with the transcendent nature is Christ Himself[6], so it is not a natural kinship, but a mediated one. There is only one Son of God by nature, but there can be many sons of God by choice, by human choice which, eventually, is fertilized and made effective by God's/ Christ's grace. We become sons of God and therefore, ἀδελφοὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, but this implies a resemblance/ likeness with the true Son of God.

In the Funeral Oration (or Encomium) delivered in honour of his deceased brother, Basil, Sf. Gregory of Nyssa speaks about the proper way of praising someone, especially a saint: *μίμησις*, that is by copying, in your own life, the virtues that made that saint a saint:

> "Brethren, having imitated his discretion by appropriating it, let us praise virtue according to his worthiness and fulfill all his wonderful deeds by sharing his wisdom. By praising poverty, we become poor with regard to material wealth. No one should speak of contempt for this world simply because it is laudable and glorious; rather, let one's life testify to such contempt with regard to what the world values. Do not merely say that he is dedicated but dedicate yourselves to God, and not only that he possessed the hoped for rest but that you treasure up this wealth like him. It certainly lies within your power. *[Basil] stored up his own wealth in the treasure house of heaven, so imitate the teacher in this way [cf. Lk 6.40]. The disciple will be perfect when he resembles the master.* In other occupations one who is a disciple to a physician, geometrician or a rhetor will be not be worthy of his master's art unless he admires this skill by speech, for he has not yet shown himself worthy of such respect. Allow someone to say to him, 'How can you say that a physician was your master

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[5] Ἔπειτα δὲ οὐ θεατὰς μόνον τῆς θείας δυνάμεως, ἀλλὰ καὶ κοινωνοὺς ἀπεργάζεται, καὶ εἰς συγγένειαν τρόπον τινὰ τῆς ὑπερκειμένης φύσεως τοὺς προσιόντας ἄγων (*Or. dom.* II, SC 596, 350, 15-18). The English translation is made by Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, page 16 in the pdf document delivered to us prior to the colloquy.

[6] Lucian Turcescu says: "Nonetheless, since the status of sons of God is the supreme state that we can reach, it is not only through our own efforts that we achieve this. It is the Son of God proper who helps us in this by joining us to him by spiritual generation" ("«Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they will be called Sons of God» (Matt. 5, 9): Does Gregory of Nyssa have a Theology of Adoption?" in Hubertus R. Drobner and Albert Viciano (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Beatitudes. An English Version with Commentary and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the Eighth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Paderborn, 14-18 September 1998)*, Brill, 2000, 397-406), 399.

when you have no knowledge of his skill? How can you say that a geometrician was your master, when you have no knowledge of his craft?' But if anyone demonstrates expertise in what he has learned, his own knowledge will honor his master's instruction. *Thus we who magnify the teacher Basil should reveal his teaching by our lives* because his name honored God and men in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory and power forever and ever. Amen"[7].

If *μίμησις* is a proper way of praising a man by another man, if, as in this encomium, one is properly named "one's disciple" if he imitates not only in words, but also in virtues and deeds the virtues and deeds of his master, then, when we speak about the relationship between Christ, our Lord, and Christians, who bear Christ's name, *μίμησις* becomes a necessity even more. And it is not only a necessity for the individual, but also a necessity from a missionary standpoint. Let me explain myself:

In the *Third Homily* on the Lord's Prayer, St. Gregory of Nyssa says about those who do not sanctify the Lord's name through their deeds:

"Somewhere I have heard the Holy Scripture condemning those who come to be liable for blasphemy against God. For it says, 'Woe on those because of whom my name is blasphemed among the Gentiles'. This means something like this: those who have not yet come to believe in the word of truth turn away from faith in the mystery because of how those who have accepted it live. This happens whenever there is nominal

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[7] Οὕτως οὖν, ἀδελφοί, καὶ ἡμεῖς μιμησάμενοι τῇ σωφροσύνῃ τὸν σώφρονα, οἷς ποιοῦμεν, κατ᾽ ἀξίαν τὴν ἀρετὴν ἐπαινέσωμεν, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα ὡσαύτως τὸ θαῦμα τοῦ σοφοῦ ἐν τῇ μετουσίᾳ τῆς σοφίας πληρούσθω. ὁ τῆς ἀκτημοσύνης ἔπαινος ἐν τῷ καὶ ἡμᾶς γενέσθαι τῆς ὑλικῆς περιουσίας ἀκτήμονας. ἡ ὑπεροψία τοῦ κόσμου τούτου μὴ λεγέσθω, ὅτι ἐστί τις ἐπαινετὴ καὶ ἐπίδοξος, ἀλλὰ μάρτυς τῆς ὑπεροψίας τῶν κατὰ τὸν κόσμον σπουδαζομένων ὁ βίος ἔστω. μὴ λέγε μόνον, ὅτι τῷ θεῷ ἐκεῖνος ἀνέκειτο, ἀλλὰ ἀνάθες καὶ σὺ σεαυτὸν τῷ θεῷ, μήθ᾽ ὅτι μόνον ἦν αὐτῷ κτῆμα ἡ ἐλπιζομένη ἀνάπαυσις, ἀλλὰ καὶ σὺ θησαύρισον σεαυτῷ τοῦτον τὸν πλοῦτον ὥσπερ ἐκεῖνος. ἔξεστι γάρ. μετέθηκεν ἐκεῖνος ἀπὸ γῆς εἰς οὐρανὸν τὸ πολίτευμα, μετάθες καὶ σύ. τοῖς ἀσύλοις τοῦ οὐρανοῦ θησαυροφυλακίοις τὸν ἴδιον ἐναπέθετο πλοῦτον. μίμησαι διὰ τούτων καὶ σὺ τὸν διδάσκαλον. Κατηρτισμένος γὰρ ἔσται μαθητὴς ὡς ὁ διδάσκαλος αὐτοῦ. καὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς ἐπιτηδεύμασιν ὁ ἰατρῷ μαθητεύσας ἢ γεωμέτρῃ ἢ ῥήτορι ἀναξιόπιστος ἐπαινέτης τῆς τοῦ διδασκάλου τέχνης γενήσεται, εἰ τῷ μὲν λόγῳ θαυμάζοι τοῦ καθηγητοῦ τὴν ἐπιστήμην, ἐφ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ δὲ δεικνύοι μηδὲν τοῦ θαύματος ἄξιον. ἐρεῖ γάρ τις πρὸς αὐτόν· πῶς ἰατρὸν λέγεις τὸν ἑαυτοῦ διδάσκαλον αὐτὸς ἀνίατρευτος ὤν; ἢ πῶς μαθητὴν σεαυτὸν τοῦ γεωμέτρου λέγεις ἀπείρως τῆς γεωμετρίας ἔχων; ἀλλ᾽ εἴ τις ἐν ἑαυτῷ δείκνυσι τὴν τέχνην, ᾗ ἐμαθήτευσε, σεμνύνει τῇ καθ᾽ ἑαυτὸν ἐπιστήμῃ τὸν τῆς τέχνης καθηγησάμενον. οὕτω καὶ ἡμεῖς οἱ Βασίλειον αὐχοῦντες διδάσκαλον τῷ βίῳ δείξωμεν τὴν μαθητείαν ἐκεῖνο γινόμενοι, ὅπερ αὐτὸν ὀνομαστόν τε καὶ μέγαν θεῷ καὶ ἀνθρώποις ἐποίησεν, ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν, ᾧ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ἀμήν (*Bas*, GNO X, 1, 133-134, 19-23; 1-21). The English translation, with some adjustments, is to be found at this website: http://full-of-grace-and-truth.blogspot.com/2013/12/an-encomium-to-st-basil-great-by-st.html, which was accessed on 15.02.2019.

faith, but the way of life speaks against the name—either they commit idolatry through greed, or they disgrace themselves with drunkenness and revelry, or they wallow in the filth of prodigality like a pig—immediately the unfaithful ones have the argument at hand, *not accusing the free choice of those who spend their life badly but claiming that the mystery teaches them to do such things*. For so-and-so, who has been initiated into the divine mysteries would not have become an abuser or greedy or a thief or any other similar evil, unless sinning was legal for him"[8].

Basically, St. Gregory says that non-Christians will judge one's faith through one's deeds: if your deeds are good and praiseworthy, then your faith will be judged good and praiseworthy; if your deeds are bad are blameworthy, your faith will be judged accordingly[9].

The same idea is expressed by St. John Chrysostom in his treatise *On the Priesthood*, although he speaks from a different perspective. Speaking of the priest's force of arguing his faith and debating with the heretics, St. John says:

"But when a dispute arises concerning matters of doctrine, and all take their weapons from the same Scriptures, of what weight will any one's life be able to prove? What then will be the good of his many austerities, when after such painful exercises, any one from the Priest's great unskillfulness in argument fall into heresy, and be cut off from the body of the Church, a misfortune which I have myself seen many suffering. Of what profit then will his patience be to him? None; no more than there will be in a sound faith if the life is corrupt. Wherefore, for this reason more than for all others, it concerns him whose office it is to teach others, to be experienced in disputations of this kind. For though he himself stands safely, and is unhurt by the gainsayers, yet the simple multitude under

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[8] Ἤκουσά που τῆς ἁγίας γραφῆς κατακρινούσης ἐκείνους οἳ τῆς κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ βλασφημίας αἴτιοι γίνονται. Οὐαὶ γάρ, φησί, δι᾿ οὓς *τὸ ὄνομά μου βλασφημεῖται ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν*. Τοῦτο δὲ τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν· οἱ μήπω πεπιστευκότες τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἀληθείας πρὸς τὸν βίον τῶν παραδεδεγμένων τὴν τοῦ μυστηρίου πίστιν ἀποσκοποῦσιν. Ὅταν τοίνυν τὸ μὲν ὄνομα τῆς πίστεως ᾖ, ὁ δὲ βίος ἀντιφθέγγηται τῷ ὀνόματι, ἢ διὰ πλεονεξίας εἰδωλολατρῶν ἢ ἐν μέθαις καὶ κώμοις ἀσχημονῶν ἢ τῷ βορβόρῳ τῆς ἀσωτίας ὑὸς δίκην ἐγκαλινδούμενος, πρόχειρος εὐθὺς παρὰ τῶν ἀπίστων ὁ λόγος, οὐκ εἰς τὴν προαίρεσιν τῶν κακῶς τῷ βίῳ κεχρημένων τὴν κατηγορίαν τρέπων, ἀλλ᾿ ὡς τοιαῦτα πράττειν τοῦ μυστηρίου διδάσκοντος. Μὴ γὰρ ἂν γενέσθαι τὸν δεῖνα τὸν τὰ θεῖα μεμυημένον μυστήρια ἢ λοίδορον ἢ πλεονέκτην ἢ ἅρπαγα ἢ ἄλλο τι τοιοῦτον κακὸν εἰ μὴ ἔννομον αὐτοῖς τὸ ἁμαρτάνειν ἦν (*Or.dom.*II, SC 596, 400-402, 5-19; 1). The English translation belongs to Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, 28-29.

[9] Here the necessity of assuming faith is revealed with much strength: the nominal Christians will never or very seldom adjust their lives to the Christian teachings they are supposed to know and to observe. On the other side, those who assume their faith and try to transform their lives according to it will do, in most cases, only what is good and right. Accordingly, one is entitled to call himself a Christian only if his life is adjusted, as much as possible, to the Christian moral doctrine.

his direction, when they see their leader defeated, and without any answer for the gainsayers, will be apt to lay the blame of his discomfiture not on his own weakness, but on the doctrines themselves, as though they were faulty; and so by reason of the inexperience of one, great numbers are brought to extreme ruin; for though they do not entirely go over to the adversary, yet they are forced to doubt about matters in which formerly they firmly believed, and those whom they used to approach with unswerving confidence, they are unable to hold to any longer steadfastly, but in consequence of their leader's defeat, so great a storm settles down upon their souls, that the mischief ends in their shipwreck altogether"[10].

Returning to the *Homilies on the Lord's Prayer*, there is one verse which points out the fact that the state of those who properly utter this prayer should be that of perfection (or close to it): "Forgive us our debts, as we too forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6:33). It is this present tense which testify that the state of perfection is already present in the person who prays. Gregory says:

"As our text marches on, now it has come to the very pinnacle of virtue. For through the words of the Prayer it sketches out what it wants a person approaching to God to be like: someone who just about no longer exhibits the limits of the human nature but has become like God himself through virtue, so that he seems to be another god, in that he does those things that can be done by God alone. After all, the forgiving of our debts is proper to God and his special prerogative, for it is said, 'No one can forgive sins except God alone'. Accordingly, if one should imitate in his own life the characteristics of the divine nature, in some sense he becomes what he has imitated through an exact likeness"[11].

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[10] John Chrysostom, *De sacerdotio* IV, 9, 3-21 (SC 272, 278-280): Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐκεῖ μόνον αὐτὸν τὸ πᾶν κατορθοῦν φαίην ἄν, ὅταν δὲ ὑπὲρ δογμάτων αὐτῶν κινῆται καὶ πάντες ἀπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν μάχωνται γραφῶν, ποίαν ἰσχὺν ὁ βίος ἐνταῦθα ἐπιδεῖξαι δυνήσεται; Τί τῶν πολλῶν ὄφελος ἱδρώτων, ὅταν μετὰ τοὺς μόχθους ἐκείνους ἀπὸ τῆς πολλῆς τις ἀπειρίας εἰς αἵρεσιν ἐκπεσὼν ἀποσχισθῇ τοῦ σώματος τῆς Ἐκκλησίας; Ὅπερ οἶδα πολλοὺς παθόντας ἐγώ. Ποῖον αὐτῷ κέρδος τῆς καρτερίας; Οὐδέν, ὥσπερ οὖν οὐδὲ ὑγιοῦς πίστεως, τῆς πολιτείας διεφθαρμένης. Διὰ δὴ ταῦτα μάλιστα πάντων ἔμπειρον εἶναι δεῖ τῶν τοιούτων ἀγώνων τὸν διδάσκειν τοὺς ἄλλους λαχόντα. Εἰ γὰρ καὶ αὐτὸς ἕστηκεν ἐν ἀσφαλείᾳ, μηδὲν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀντιλεγόντων βλαπτόμενος, ἀλλὰ τὸ τῶν ἀφελεστέρων πλῆθος τὸ ταττόμενον ὑπ' ἐκείνῳ, ὅταν ἤδη τὸν ἡγούμενον ἡττηθέντα καὶ οὐδὲν ἔχοντα πρὸς τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας εἰπεῖν, οὐ τὴν ἀσθένειαν τὴν ἐκείνου τῆς ἥττης ἀλλὰ τὴν τοῦ δόγματος αἰτιῶνται σαθρότητα, καὶ διὰ τὴν τοῦ ἑνὸς ἀπειρίαν ὁ πολὺς λεὼς εἰς ἔσχατον ὄλεθρον καταφέρεται. The English translation belongs to W.R.W. Stephens in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. First Series*, vol. 9 and was taken from this website: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/19224.htm, which was accessed on 20.04. 2019.

[11] Ἦλθε προϊὼν ὁ λόγος ἐπ' αὐτὸ τῆς ἀρετῆς τὸ ἀκρότατον· ὑπογράφει γὰρ διὰ τῶν τῆς προσευχῆς ῥημάτων οἷον εἶναι βούλεται τὸν τῷ θεῷ προσερχόμενον, οὐκέτι σχεδὸν ἐν τοῖς τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως ὅροις δεικνύμενον, ἀλλ' αὐτῷ τῷ θεῷ διὰ τῆς ἀρετῆς ὁμοιούμενον, ὥστε δοκεῖν ἄλλον εἶναι

In a different context and addressing to people contemporary to us, St. Silouan the Athonite says that the presence of the Holy Spirit in us is ascertained by the love of our enemies, shown in the acts of forgiving them and praying for them[12]. In the nineteenth century, another saint named Seraphim of Sarov told a Christian whose name was Motovilov what was the aim of the Christian life: "The true aim of our Christian life consists of the acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God"[13]. It is the Holy Spirit of God the one who sanctifies our life and St. Gregory of Nyssa is aware of this, when he quotes the *Our Father*' version recorded in the Gospel according to Saint Luke:

> "Or perhaps, in keeping with how the same idea is expounded for us more clearly by the text (by Luke), is it that the one who asks the kingdom to come is calling on the alliance of the Holy Spirit? For in that Gospel, in place of 'Your kingdom come', it says this: 'Your Holy Spirit come to us and purify us' "[14].

The Lord's Prayer consists of some requests which are very different from the wishes of a normal person, more interested in earthly things than in divine ones. To be interested in earthly things is "to babble on like the gentiles do"; on the contrary, to be interested in divine things is the sign of a "developed mind", a sign of a holy life:

> "What counsel, then, does the text offer to us? That at the time for prayers we should not suffer from the same malady that dwells in the mind of young people. For those whose minds are undeveloped do not try to figure out how any of their wishes might come true but instead whimsically picture for themselves various turns of good luck, envisioning riches,

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έκεῖνον ἐν τῷ ταῦτα ποιεῖν ἃ τοῦ θεοῦ μόνου ἐστὶ ποιεῖν. Ἡ γὰρ τῶν ὀφλημάτων ἄφεσις ἴδιόν ἐστι τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐξαίρετον· εἴρηται γὰρ ὅτι Οὐδεις *δύναται ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας εἰ μὴ μόνος ὁ θεός.* Εἰ τοίνυν τις ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ βίῳ μιμήσαιτο τῆς θείας φύσεως τὰ γνωρίσματα, ἐκεῖνο γίνεται τρόπον τινὰ οὗ τὴν μίμησιν δι᾽ ἀκριβοῦς ὁμοιότητος ἐπεδείξατο (*Or. dom.* V, SC 596, 478-480, 1-8; 1-3). The English translation is made by Mark DelCogliano, page 48 in the pdf document delivered to us prior to the colloquy.

12 See the chapter "How man recognizes the presence of the Holy Spirit in him" in Jean-Claude Larchet, *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, (Romanian edition), Sophia, 2001, 322-325.

13 The whole conversation of the two may be read at the following website address: http://orthodoxinfo.com/praxis/wonderful.aspx, which was accessed on 20.04.2019. I have chosen these two rather contemporary saints (St. Silouan and St. Seraphim of Sarov) because I try to underline the continuity of the Tradition in the works of the Fathers, no matter the period they have lived in, a continuity which is assured and preserved by the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

14 Ἢ τάχα, καθὼς ἡμῖν ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου τὸ αὐτὸ νόημα σαφέστερον ἑρμηνεύεται, ὁ τὴν βασιλείαν ἐλθεῖν ἀξιῶν τὴν τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος συμμαχίαν ἐπιβοᾶται; Οὕτω γὰρ ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ φησίν, ἀντὶ τοῦ *Ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου, Ἐλθέτω τὸ πνεῦμά σου τὸ ἅγιον ἐφ᾽ ἡμᾶς καὶ καθαρισάτω ἡμᾶς* (*Or. dom.* III, SC 596, 412-414, 14-17; 1-2). The English translation belongs to Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, 32.

marriages, kingdoms, and great cities renamed with their name—they imagine themselves as being in whatever position the vanity of their thoughts presents to them"[15].

And a few passages later in the same homily, Gregory says:

"Indeed, it would be one of the most irrational acts for someone coming before God to seek fleeting gifts from the eternal one, earthly gifts from the heavenly one, humble things from the lofty one, this earthly and lowly good fortune from the one who gives the kingdom of the heavens, the brief use of alienable goods—whose removal is inevitable, whose enjoyment is fleeting, whose administration is insecure—from the one who grants gifts that cannot be taken away"[16].

So, even the requests contained in the Lord's Prayer testify to the state of the one who prays, which is in the likeness of God.

To utter the Lord's Prayer is an act of παρρησία, of boldness, and requires purity of soul:

"Indeed, for someone who says this, there is a need for such a soul, for this much boldness, for such a conscience in order to apprehend God, insofar as is possible, from the titles conceived of for him, as one is led by the hand to the understanding of the inexpressible one and learns that the divine nature, whatever it is in itself, is goodness, holiness, joy, power, glory, purity, eternity, being ever stable and the same, and all like concepts of the

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[15] Τί οὖν ἡμῖν συμβουλεύει ὁ λόγος; Μὴ ταύτὸν πάσχειν ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῶν προσευχῶν οἷον ἐν τῇ τῶν νηπίων διανοίᾳ συνίσταται πάθος. Ὥσπερ γὰρ οἱ ἀτελεῖς τὴν διάνοιαν οὐχ ὅπως ἄν τι γένοιτο τῶν κατὰ γνώμην αὐτοῖς ἐπινοοῦσιν, ἀλλὰ κατ᾽ ἐξουσίαν εὐκληρίας τινὰς ἑαυτοῖς ἀναπλάσσουσιν, θησαυροὺς καὶ γάμους καὶ βασιλείας καὶ πόλεις μεγάλας ταῖς προσηγορίας αὐτῶν ἐπονομαζομένας ὑποτιθέμενοι· εἰς ἐκεῖνο εἶναι τῇ διανοίᾳ φαντάζονται ὅπερ ἄν αὐτοῖς ἡ ματαιότης τῶν λογισμῶν ὑπογράψῃ· (*Or. dom.* I, SC 596, 322, 1-9). The English translation belongs to Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, 8.

[16] Καὶ γὰρ ἂν εἴη τῶν ἀλογωτάτων προσελθόντα θεῷ ζητεῖν παρὰ τοῦ ἀϊδίου τὰ πρόσκαιρα, παρὰ τοῦ ἐπουρανίου τὰ ἐπίγεια, παρὰ τοῦ ὑψηλοῦ τὰ χαμαίζηλα, παρὰ τοῦ βασιλείαν οὐρανῶν δωρουμένου τὴν γηΐνην ταύτην καὶ ταπεινὴν εὐκληρίαν, παρὰ τοῦ τὰ ἀναφαίρετα χαριζομένου τὴν ἐν ὀλίγῳ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων χρῆσιν, ὧν ἀναγκαία μὲν ἡ ἀφαίρεσις, πρόσκαιρος δὲ ἡ ἀπόλαυσις, ἐπικίνδυνος δὲ ἡ οἰκονομία (*Or. dom.* I, SC 596, 344, 1-7). The English translation belongs to Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, 14. The same idea is expressed by Saint Maximus the Confessor in *On the Lord's prayer* when he says: "The prayer includes petitions for everything that the divine Logos effected through His self-emptying in the incarnation, and it teaches us to strive for those blessings of which the true provider is God the Father alone through the natural mediation of the Son in the Holy Spirit" (*Philokalia* II, London-Boston, Paperback Edition, 1990, 286). And later in the same work, St. Maximus says: "It is for this reason, I think, that Scripture calls this teaching 'prayer', since it contains petitions for the gifts that God gives to men by grace. Our divinely inspired fathers have explained prayer in a similar way, saying that prayer is petition for that which God naturally gives men in the manner appropriate to Him" (*Philokalia* II, 289).

divine nature; once one has understood these from the divine scripture and from suitable reflections, he then has the audacity to utter such a word and to call such a one his own father"[17].

This boldness is not an act of impudence, but rather is founded on the purity of soul and it is a sign which testifies the lack of two emotions/ feelings which are present in the sinful persons: shame (αἰσχύνη) and fear (φόβος). It is the merit of Jean Daniélou to clarify the meanings or παρρησία and to put this word in connection to prayer (προσευχή). I quote: „La *parrhesia* est comme le couronnement, l'épanouissement de l'*apatheia*. L'âme, purifiée par l'*apatheia*, recouvre la liberté de ses rapports avec Dieu, elle ose à nouveau se presenter devant lui, elle rentre dans sa familiarité"[18]. And a few lines further:

> „La *parrhesia* s'oppose à l'*aischyne*, à la honte, d'une part. Et d'autre part elle s'oppose à la crainte. Elle marque par là une double restauration: d'une part, la restauration dans l'état d'innocence, qui s'oppose à la honte; de l'autre, la restauration dans l'état d'amitié, qui s'oppose à la crainte"[19].

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[17] Οἵας γὰρ τῷ λέγοντι χρεία ψυχῆς, ὅσης τῆς παρρησίας, οἵας τῆς συνειδήσεως ἵνα θεὸν νοήσας, ὡς ἔστι δυνατόν, ἐκ τῶν ἐπινοουμένων αὐτῷ προσηγοριῶν πρὸς τὴν σύνεσιν τοῦ ἀφράστου χειραγωγούμενος καὶ μαθὼν ὅτι ἡ θεία φύσις, ὅ τί ποτέ ἐστιν, αὐτοαγαθότης ἐστίν, ἁγιασμός, ἀγαλλίαμα, δύναμις, δόξα, καθαρότης, ἀϊδιότης, ἀεὶ κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχουσα, καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα νενόηται περὶ τὴν θείαν φύσιν διά τε τῆς ἁγίας γραφῆς καὶ διὰ τῶν οἰκείων λογισμῶν κατανοήσας εἶτα τολμήσῃ τὴν τοιαύτην προέσθαι φωνὴν καὶ τὸν τοιοῦτον ἑαυτοῦ κατονομάσαι πατέρα (*Or.dom.*II, SC 596, 362, 1-10). The English translation belongs to Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, 18.

[18] Jean Daniélou, *Platonisme et Théologie Mystique. Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nysse*, Paris, 1944, 111.

[19] Daniélou, *Platonisme et Théologie Mystique*, 112. There are also other short definitions of *parrhesia*: "la confiance filiale, la familiarité avec Dieu"; "la vertu caractéristique de la filiation adoptive" (*Ibidem*, *passim*). It is well worthy to note some remarks of John Behr on παρρησία: "It is not surprising that the prayer which is said with this transcendent boldness was reserved, in the early centuries, for those who had committed themselves to Christ, revealed only in the last stages of catechism when it was handed down, "traditioned", together with the rule of faith, as a "concise statement of the Gospel" (Tertullian). If this prayer expresses our identity as Christians, then so too does the boldness that we are granted; and it is a boldness not only to approach God in this manner, but one that extends to our whole bearing as Christians" (John Behr, "With boldness and without condemnation", *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 51, 4 (2007), 359-69), 359. A few lines further, he says: "The word that is used, *parrhesia*, expresses not just daring or temerity, but confidence and frankness, a freedom of approach granted by God towards himself, and in turn the right and the duty to speak the truth, with all the risks and dangers that this will entail in worldly terms" (John Behr, "With boldness and without condemnation"), 359. And later on: "Rather than indignation and condemnation (as is all too common today), a godly *parrhesia* requires soberness, the acceptance of the hardship and tribulation that will come to those who speak God's truth, and from which it is spoken, and a reluctance to condemn anyone. Such is the character of Christian existence in this world" (John Behr, "With boldness and without condemnation"), 360.

When a sinful person dares to say the Lord's Prayer in a sinful condition and without humiliation, as an ὑβριστής, he then makes an act of blasphemy:

"Indeed, if someone, upon self-examination, realizes that he still needs purification and that his wretched conscience is filled with stains and vile blotches, and even before he is cleansed of so many evils of this kind he adopts himself into God's clan and says, 'Father'—the unjust one speaking to the just one! the impure one speaking to the pure one!— his words would be a total outrage and sheer nonsense as he names God the father of his own wretchedness. For the term 'Father' signifies the cause of the one who comes to exist from him. Therefore, if someone of wretched conscience claims God as his own father, he would accuse him of being none other than the source and explanation of his own evils"[20].

There are still many texts which support the idea mentioned at the beginning of this paper. I would like to quote only one more text, a text which can be seen as an epitome of all that has been said. It is in the *Second Homily* on the Lord's Prayer and it sounds like this:

"Therefore, when he gives the command in the prayer to call God your own Father, he is enjoining nothing other than that you, through godly living, become like the heavenly Father, just as elsewhere he more openly commands something similar, when he says "Become perfect as your Father too is perfect"[21].

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[20] Εἰ γάρ τις πρὸς ἑαυτὸν βλέπων ἔτι καθαρσίου δεόμενον καὶ τὴν μοχθηρὰν ἑαυτοῦ συνείδησιν ἐπιγινώσκων πλήρη κηλίδων καὶ πονηρῶν ἐγκαυμάτων, πρὶν καθαρθῆναι τῶν τοιούτων κακῶν πρὸς τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ συγγένειαν ἑαυτὸν εἰσποιοῖ καὶ λέγοι· *Πάτερ*, τῷ δικαίῳ ὁ ἄδικος, καὶ τῷ καθαρῷ ὁ ἀκάθαρτος, ὕβρις ἄντικρυς ἂν εἴη καὶ λοιδορία τὰ ῥήματα, εἴπερ τῆς ἰδίας μοχθηρίας πατέρα τὸν θεὸν ὀνομάζοι. Ἡ γὰρ τοῦ πατρὸς φωνὴ τὴν αἰτίαν τοῦ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ὑποστάντος διασεμαίνει. Οὐκοῦν ὁ μοχθηρὸς τὴν συνείδησιν, εἰ πατέρα ἑαυτοῦ τὸν θεὸν λέγοι, οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἢ τῶν ἰδίων κακῶν ἀρχηγόν τε καὶ αἴτιον αὐτὸν εἶναι κατηγορήσει (*Or.dom.*II, SC 596, 364-366, 10-19; 1-3). The English translation belongs to Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, 18-19.

[21] Προστάξας τοίνυν ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ λέγειν πατέρα ἑαυτοῦ τὸν θεόν, οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἢ ὁμοιοῦσθαί σε τῇ θεοπρεπεῖ πολιτείᾳ τῷ οὐρανίῳ κελεύει πατρί, καθάπερ καὶ φανερώτερον ἑτέρωθι τὸ τοιοῦτον παρεγγυᾷ λέγων· *Γίνεσθε τέλειοι καθὼς καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τέλειός ἐστιν* (*Or.dom.*II, SC 596, 378, 9-14). The English translation belongs to Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, 22-23. In *In Canticum Canticorum*, St. Gregory says that a state of perfection is required even for those who try to understand the deep meaning of the *Song of Songs*: Πάλιν τοίνυν τὸν ἐν τοῖς προοιμίοις ἐπαναλήψομαι λόγον· μή τις ἐμπαθὴς καὶ σαρκώδης ἔτι τῆς νεκρᾶς τοῦ παλαιοῦ ἀνθρώπου δυσωδίας ἀπόζων πρὸς τὰς κτηνώδεις ἀλογίας κατασυρέτω τὰς τῶν θεοπνεύστων νοημάτων τε καὶ ῥεμάτων ἐμφάσεις, ἀλλ᾽ ἐκβὰς ἕκαστος αὐτὸς ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἔξω τοῦ ὑλικοῦ κόσμου γενόμενος καὶ ἐπανελθὼν τρόπον τινὰ δι᾽ ἀπαθείας εἰς τὸν παράδεισον καὶ διὰ καθαρότητος ὁμοιωθεὶς τῷ θεῷ οὕτως ἐπὶ τὸ ἄδυτον τῶν προφαινομένων ἡμῖν διὰ τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου μυστηρίων χωρείτω. εἰ δέ τισιν ἀπαρασκεύαστός ἐστιν ἡ ψυχὴ πρὸς τὴν τοιαύτην ἀκρόασιν, ἀκουσάτωσαν τοῦ Μωϋσέως νομοθετοῦντος μὴ κατατολμῆσαι τῆς ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρος τὸ πνευματικὸν ἀναβάσεως, πρὶν πλῦναι τῶν καρδιῶν ἡμῶν τὰ ἱμάτια καὶ τοῖς καθήκουσι τῶν λογισμῶν περιρραντηρίοις τὰς ψυχὰς ἀφαγνίσασθαι (*In Cant* I, GNO VI, 25, 2-15). The English translation of this text is: „Again,

I would like to make only a short observation, in accordance to the Orthodox Church, of the most proper place and time in which the *Our Father* prayer should be uttered: in the Church, in the Holy Liturgy[22]. The whole Liturgy and every Liturgy is a process of Ascension from earth to heaven, a process of transforming our status from slavery to sonship, and this is marked especially by some moments in the Liturgy: the Cherubic Hymn ("Let us, who mystically represent the Cherubim and who sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-creating Trinity, now lay aside every worldly care"), then the exclamation before the Lord's Prayer ("And grant us, Master, with boldness and without condemnation, to dare call You, the heavenly God, Father, and to say…") and finally the Holy Communion Itself, which makes us partakers in the divine nature. This is why I said at the beginning that this prayer is properly used only by ascetic Christians, by spiritually active Christians, because the most revealing sign of the fact that they are ascetic and active is the participation to the Holy Liturgy. What is the Holy Liturgy, if not an exercise of altruism, a school where everyone learns how to love one's neighbor in common prayer? Let us recall of Moses: when the Israelites have made for themselves a metal ox and given worship to it, God was angry and wanted to send destruction on them. Moses said: "This people has done a great sin, making themselves a god of gold; but now, if you will give them forgiveness, forgive them! But if not, let my name be taken out of your book!" (Exodus 32: 31-32). It is exactly the same attitude which must characterize our presence in the Church, during the Holy Liturgy: we are all there to pray together to God, acknowledging our need for God's grace and our determination to stay together in front of God and receive the same treatment from Him in the name of Christian solidarity. There is a canon in the Orthodox Church which stipulates that if a person do not participate in the Holy Liturgy three times one after another without good reasons, that person should be stopped from the Holy Communion. This canon is not a punishment, but rather a barometer which shows us how long a person is spiritually alive when not participating in the Holy Liturgy. And without Liturgy, the utterance of the Lord's prayer is severely diminished in its effects of making us perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect.

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therefore, we reiterate, what we said by way of preamble. Let not any passionate and fleshly person, who still gives off the deathly smell of the old humanity, drag the meaning of the divinely inspired ideas and words down to the level of brutish irrationality. No, let each depart from himself and get beyond the material cosmos and ascend somehow, by way of impassibility, into paradise, and having by purity been made like to God, let him in this fashion journey to the inner shrine of the mysteries manifested to us in this book. And if the soul of some persons is not prepared to listen in this way, let them pay attention to Moses when he decrees that no one should dare the ascent of the spiritual mountain until the garments of our hearts are washed clean and our souls are purified by the appropriate sprinklings of reasoned thoughts" (Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, tr. Norris, 2012, 27).

[22] This assertion is founded on the life itself of the Church and it is experienced by every Orthodox Christian who practices his faith liturgically.

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PHILOTHEOS KOKKINOS'S *HYPOMNĒMA* ON SAINT NIKODEMOS THE YOUNGER (*BHG* 2307)

MIHAIL MITREA[*]

ABSTRACT. Philotheos Kokkinos was one of the most prolific late-Byzantine hagiographers, who eulogized saints of old, as well as contemporaneous holy figures. He dedicated the first among his *vitae* of contemporaneous saints to the little-known holy man Nikodemos the Younger from the Philokalles monastery in Thessalonike. While superior of this monastery, Kokkinos gathered information about the holy man's life and arranged it into the form of a short *vita*, titled *hypomnēma* (*BHG* 2307). This article analyzes the ways in which Kokkinos constructed an identity in narrative form for Nikodemos, exploring elements of holy foolery, hesychast influences, the miracle accounts weaved into the narrative, as well as its intended audience.

Keywords: Philotheos Kokkinos, late Byzantium, hagiography, hesychasm, *hypomnēma*, narrative structure, Nikodemos the Younger, holy fool, miracles

Introduction[1]

Three decades after the relics of St Nikodemos the Younger had been discovered in Thessalonike in the early 1310s, Philotheos Kokkinos described the joy and pride of the locals in the *vita* he composed for the saint (hereafter also referred to as the *v. Nik.*):

> the whole city of Thessalonike … thought that the discovery of the holy
> body of the divine Nikodemos was a stroke of good fortune and a source
> of unceasing joy. And they took no greater pleasure in the nature and

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location and good order of the city or in the strength of its walls than in this 'holy man'. For each one believed the magnificence and godliness of the relics to be his own glory.[2]

This article investigates Kokkinos's hagiographical account in honor of this little-known late-Byzantine holy man. As abbot of the Philokalles monastery in Thessalonike where Nikodemos had lived as a monk and his relics had been discovered and preserved, Kokkinos was well positioned to try his pen and talent at reconstructing the life of the holy man. The ensuing *hypomnēma* is Kokkinos's first hagiographical composition for a contemporaneous holy figure and the only extant source on Nikodemos's life. This article explores the ways in which Kokkinos arranged the scanty biographical information on the holy man into narrative form, crafting a holy identity for his hero as a fool for Christ's sake and practicing hesychast. The article has a fourfold structure. First, it offers a short biographical sketch of the hagiographer, highlighting the socio-cultural context of his life and literary activity. Secondly, it presents the manuscript tradition of Kokkinos's text in honor of Nikodemos, as well as its modern editions and translations. Thirdly, it introduces the 'hagiographical genre' of *hypomnēma*. Finally, it offers a detailed analysis of the text, addressing, *inter alia*, the elements of holy foolery, hesychast influences, the miracle accounts weaved into the narrative, and its intended audience.

1. Philotheos Kokkinos – a brief *curriculum vitae*[3]

Philotheos Kokkinos hailed from Thessalonike, where he was born around the turn of the fourteenth century to a family of seemingly modest circumstances and alleged Jewish origin. He received a classical education under the "gentleman scholar" Thomas Magistros (*ca*. 1280–*ca*. 1347/8) and reportedly worked for him as a cook to offset the cost of his studies.[4] Despite this modest background, Kokkinos had a distinguished ecclesiastical career. As a monk, he spent a considerable time on Mount Athos, enjoying the spiritual guidance of renowned

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[2] Philotheos Kokkinos, *The Vita of Nikodemos* (hereafter *v. Nik.*) 7.20-26, ed. Demetrios G. Tsames, *Φιλοθέου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Κοκκίνου ἁγιολογικὰ ἔργα, Α΄. Θεσσαλονικεῖς ἅγιοι* (Thessalonike: Κέντρον Βυζαντινῶν Ἐρευνῶν, 1985), 90. English translation by Alice-Mary Talbot, "Nikodemos, a holy fool in late Byzantine Thessalonike," in *ΔΩΡΟΝ ΡΟΔΟΠΟΙΚΙΛΟΝ: Studies in Honour of Jan Olof Rosenqvist*, ed. Denis Searby (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 2012), 223–232, at 229.

[3] On Kokkinos's life and œuvre, see Mihail Mitrea, "A Late-Byzantine Hagiographer: Philotheos Kokkinos and His *Vitae* of Contemporary Saints" (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2018), 38–131; see also Dionysios A. Tsentikopoulos, "Φιλόθεος Κόκκινος. Βίος και έργο" (PhD thesis, Aristotle University of Thessalonike, 2001), 19–154 (life), 157–366 (writings).

[4] On Thomas Magistros, see Niels Gaul, *Thomas Magistros und die spätbyzantinische Sophistik. Studien zum Humanismus urbaner Eliten in der frühen Palaiologenzeit* (Mainzer Veröffentlichungen zur Byzantinistik 10) (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), especially 229–271.

holy men such as Sabas the Younger (*ca.* 1283–1348) at Vatopedi and Germanos Maroules (*ca.* 1252–*ca.* 1336) near the Great Lavra, both of whom he would later eulogize in hagiographical works. In his forties, he served as abbot of the Philokalles monastery[5] in Thessalonike (1340/1–1342) and subsequently as superior of the Great Lavra (1342–1345). By his late forties he was appointed metropolitan of Thracian Herakleia[6] by Patriarch Isidore I Boucheir (1347–1350)— whose *vita* he would later write—and was elevated to the patriarchal throne after six years as metropolitan. However, after a brief tenure of less than a year and a half, he was deposed—following Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos's forced abdication and John V Palaiologos's rise to power—and reportedly striped of his priestly office. After a decade of enforced leisure, mostly in Constantinople at the Monastery of Christ Akataleptos, Kokkinos was reinstated on the patriarchal throne in the autumn of 1364. As evidenced by the *Register of the Patriarchate of Constantinople*, he was actively involved in the political and religious life of Byzantium during his twelve-year tenure.[7] Finally, Kokkinos was deposed a second time in 1376 and died of old age after a couple of years. Within two decades of his demise, he came to be celebrated as a saint, and today the Greek Orthodox Church celebrates his feast day on the eleventh of October.[8]

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5 On the Philokalles monastery, dedicated to Christ the Savior, see Raymond Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins (Bithynie, Hellespont, Latros, Galèsios, Trébizonde, Athènes, Thessalonique)* (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1975), 400, 418–419; Paul Magdalino, "Some additions and corrections to the list of Byzantine churches and monasteries in Thessalonica," *Revue des études byzantines* 35 (1977): 277–285, at 282; George I. Theocharides, "Μία ἐξαφανισθεῖσα σημαντικὴ μονὴ τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης. Ἡ μονὴ Φιλοκάλλη," *Μακεδονικά* 21 (1981): 319–350; Marcus L. Rautman, "Ignatius of Smolensk and the late Byzantine monasteries of Thessaloniki," *Revue des études byzantines* 49 (1991): 143–169, at 157–158.

6 On Thracian Herakleia, see Andreas Külzer, *Ostthrakien (Eurōpē)* (Tabula Imperii Byzantini 12) (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008), 398–408.

7 Jean Darrouzès, *Les regestes des actes du patriarcat de Constantinople*, vol. 1: *Les actes des patriarches*, fasc. 5: *Les regestes de 1310 à 1376* (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1977), nos. 2463–2681a. The *Register* survived in the fourteenth and fifteenth-century *Vind. hist. gr*. 47 and *Vind. hist. gr*. 48 and documents the period between 1315–1372 and 1379–1402. See the forthcoming *Das Register des Patriarchats von Konstantinopel*, vol. 4: *Edition und Übersetzung aus der Urkunden aus den Jahren 1364–1372*, eds. Otto Kresten and Christian Gastgeber (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 19.4) (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften). On the *Register*, see Gastgeber, Ekaterini Mitsiou, and Johannes Preiser-Kapeller (eds.), *The Register of the Patriarchate of Constantinople: An Essential Source for the History and Church of Late Byzantium* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2013).

8 See Sofia Kotzabassi, "Eine Akoluthie zu Ehren des Philotheos Kokkinos," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 46 (1996): 299–310; Tsames, "Εἰκονογραφικὲς μαρτυρίες γιὰ τὸν ἅγιο Φιλόθεο Κόκκινο πατριάρχη Κωνσταντινουπόλεως," *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς τῆς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης* 22 (1977): 37–52; see also Basil Dentakes, *Βίος καὶ ἀκολουθία τοῦ ἁγίου Φιλοθέου πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως (1353– 1354 καὶ 1364–1376), τοῦ θεολόγου* (Athens, 1971); *Πρακτικὰ Θεολογικοῦ συνεδρίου εἰς τιμὴν καὶ μνήμην τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Φιλοθέου ἀρχιεπισκόπου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Θεσσαλονικέως (14–16 Νοεμβρίου 1983)* (Thessalonike, 1986).

Kokkinos's life coincided with a turbulent period in the history of Byzantium.[9] After a time of relative stability until the 1320s, the fourteenth century was riddled with political malaise. Prolonged civil wars were coupled by territorial contraction due to loss of territory to the Serbs and Ottoman Turks and increasing commercial dominance of Venice and Genoa. Byzantium also faced increasing impoverishment, lack of social cohesion and social upheavals in its cities, such as the Zealot revolt in Thessalonike.[10] Moreover, the mid fourteenth-century brought the onset of the acrimonious hesychast debates.[11] In spite of, or perhaps in response to, this socio-political, economic, and religious mayhem, late Byzantium nurtured a significant blossoming of arts and letters, including a revival in the composition of saints' *lives* and miracle collections. Around eighty percent of the surviving late-Byzantine hagiographical texts comprise compositions about saints of old (*metaphraseis* or, as Talbot put it, "old wine in new bottles"), while the other twenty percent represent *vitae* and *enkomia* of new saints, especially leading figures of the hesychast movement such as Gregory Palamas.[12] In line with contemporaneous trends, Kokkinos

[9] On late Byzantium, see Donald M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261–1453*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Dimiter Angelov (ed.), *Church and Society in Late Byzantium* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 2009).

[10] On the Zealot revolt in the "second city" of the Byzantine Empire (and the sources documenting it), see Marie-Hélène Congourdeau, *Les zélotes: une révolte urbaine à Thessalonique au 14ème siècle: le dossier des sources* (Paris: Beauchesne, 2013); eadem (ed.), *Thessalonique au temps des Zélotes (1342–1350). Actes de la table ronde organisée dans le cadre du 22e Congrès international des études byzantines, à Sofia, le 25 août 2011* (Paris: ACHCByz, 2014); Christos Malatras, "Ο μύθος των Ζηλωτών της Θεσσαλονίκης," *Βυζαντιακά* 30 (2012/13): 229–242; John W. Barker, "Late Byzantine Thessalonike: A second city's challenges and responses," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 57 (2003): 5–33, at 16–21; see also Ihor Ševčenko, "Nicolas Cabasilas' 'anti-Zealot' discourse: a reinterpretation," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 11 (1957): 81–171.

[11] See, for instance, John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Hesychasm: Historical, Theological and Social Problems: Collected Studies* (London: Variorum, 1974); Dirk Krausmüller, "The rise of hesychasm," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 5: *Eastern Christianity*, ed. Michael Angold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 101–126; Norman Russell, "The Hesychast Controversy," in *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, eds. Anthony Kaldellis and Niketas Siniossoglou (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 494–508; see also Tudor Teoteoi, "Isihasmul şi criza conştiinţei bizantine în secolul al XIV-lea," *Studii Teologice* (series III, year III) 3 (2007): 5–62.

[12] For an overview of Palaiologan hagiography, see Talbot, "Hagiography in late Byzantium," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. 1: *Periods and Places*, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 173–195; eadem, "Old wine in new bottles: the rewriting of saints' lives in the Palaiologan period," in *The Twilight of Byzantium. Aspects of Cultural and Religious History in the Late Byzantine Empire*, eds. Slobodan Ćurčić and Doula Mouriki (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, 1991), 15–26. On miracle collections, see Efthymiadis, "Late Byzantine collections of miracles and their implications," in *Οἱ ἥρωες τῆς Ὀρθοδόξης Ἐκκλησίας. Οἱ νέοι ἅγιοι, 8ος-16ος αἰώνας*, ed. Eleonora Kountoura-Galake (Athens: Center for Byzantine Studies, 2004), 239–250; idem, "Collections of miracles (fifth–fifteenth centuries)," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. 2: *Genres and Contexts*, ed. Efthymiadis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 103–142, at 128–129.

eulogized holy men and women from the early Christian era, such as St Anysia of Thessalonike (*BHG* 146), St Demetrios the Myroblytos (*BHG* 547d), and St Febronia of Nisibis (*BHG* 659g), as well as five contemporaneous figures: Nikodemos the Younger (*BHG* 2307), Sabas the Younger (*BHG* 1606), Isidore I Boucheir (*BHG* 962), Germanos Maroules (*BHG* 2164), and Gregory Palamas (*BHG* 718). With the exception of Nikodemos, whose *vita* he composed during his hegoumenate at Philokalles, Kokkinos was personally acquainted with all the contemporaneous figures he eulogized. They had been either his spiritual fathers (Sabas and Germanos) or friends and fellow combatants in the hesychast debates (Isidore and Palamas).

2. Manuscript tradition, critical editions, and translations

Kokkinos's *hypomnēma* on Nikodemos survived in two manuscripts: the fourteenth-century codex Meteora, Monastery of Transfiguration 374, ff. 3ʳ–8ʳ (hereafter *M*) and the early sixteenth-century Mount Athos, St Panteleimon Monastery 571 (Lambros 6078), ff. 248ʳ–257ʳ (hereafter *P*).[13] In both codices, colophons spell out the *termini ante quem* for their production. Thus, on f. 178ᵛ of *M* a certain monk Athanasios Glabas wrote that he finished copying the book in May 1359, with the support of his spiritual son, hieromonk Meletios. In the case of *P*, a certain copyist Demetrios, son of deacon/priest (παπᾶς) Chalkias, noted on f. 259ᵛ that he completed the book on April 17, 1522, having had the (financial?) support of a certain Georgios *grammatikos*. Both *M* and *P* seem to belong to the same family, since they transmit almost the same content, although placed in a slightly different order. It might even be the case that *P* is the *apographon* of *M*.[14] For instance, if Kokkinos's *hypomnēma* comes in first position in *M*, in *P* is copied close to the end of the codex. Their content, including the story of Barlaam and Joasaph (*BHG* 224), excerpts from the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, and *stichēra* for novice monks, suggests that *M* and *P* had been likely copied and used in a monastic milieu; for instance, the scribe of *P* added the formula *eulogēson despota*

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[13] For detailed descriptions of *M* (213 x 145 mm, ff. 213), see Nikos A. Bees, *Τὰ χειρόγραφα τῶν Μετεώρων. Κατάλογος περιγραφικὸς τῶν χειρογράφων κωδίκων τῶν ἀποκειμένων εἰς τὰς μονὰς τῶν Μετεώρων*, vol. 1: *Τὰ χειρόγραφα τῆς Μονῆς Μεταμορφώσεως* (Athens, 1967, ²1998), 394–395, 663–664; idem, "Geschichtliche Forschungsresultate und Mönchs- und Volkssagen über die Gründer der Meteorenklöster," *Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher* 3 (1922): 364–403, at 397–402; Robert Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. VI/1. *Historia animae utilis de Barlaam et Ioasaph (spuria)* (Patristische Texte und Studien 61) (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 353–355. For *P* (205 x 150 mm, ff. 259), see Spyridon P. Lambros, *Catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts on Mount Athos = Κατάλογος τῶν ἐν ταῖς βιβλιοθήκαις τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους ἑλληνικῶν κωδίκων*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900), 399; Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 287–288.

[14] See Bees, "Forschungsresultate," 401, n. 4; cf. Volk, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 288.

("master, give the blessing") after the title of Kokkinos's composition (which features the term *hypomnēma*, unfortunately illegible in *M*),[15] which suggests that the text was read during liturgical services or in the monastic refectory.

Kokkinos's *hypomnēma* was first printed in 1911 by Manuel Gedeon, who specified that the published text was a transcription (μετεγράφη) of *P*.[16] Seven decades later, in 1981, Demetrios Tsames published a somewhat improved edition of the text, based also solely on *P*,[17] which he subsequently collated with *M* and published the critical edition in 1985.[18] However, its virtues notwithstanding, Tsames's edition is in need of further amendments, which I propose in a forthcoming article. For instance, the title is not omitted in *M*, as Tsames claimed, but is rather illegible, as mentioned already.[19] Moreover, in several cases the paragraph division fails to take into account the otherwise helpful punctuation of the manuscripts (especially of *M*). This further posed difficulties (e.g., the transition from the first to the second paragraph) for Alice-Mary Talbot's translation of the text into English.[20] My translation into Romanian is forthcoming.

3. *Hypomnēma*

Before proceeding to the analysis of the text, a few words are in order about the type of hagiographical composition Kokkinos chose for eulogizing Nikodemos. *Hypomnēma* (literally, "memorial") is a relatively rare form of hagiographical composition. In fact, as Kazhdan pointed out in the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, this term designates various kinds of compositions, such as a type of petition to the emperor, documents from the patriarchal chancellery, and "a form of panegyric of a saint."[21] For instance, it was used in the Metaphrastic Mēnologion

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[15] Ms Panteleimon 571, f. 248ʳ: Φιλοθέου πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως ὑπόμνημα εἰς τὸν ὅσιον πατέρα ἡμῶν Νικόδημον τὸν νέον τὸν ἐν τῇ σεβασμίᾳ μονῇ τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ Θεοῦ τῇ τοῦ Φιλοκάλλους· εὐλόγησον δέσποτα. (*Hypomnēma* by Philotheos, Patriarch of Constantinople, on our holy father Nikodemos the Younger from the venerable monastery of Philokalles of our Savior Jesus Christ, the truthful God; master, give the blessing).

[16] Manuel Gedeon, "Φιλοθέου πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως ὑπόμνημα εἰς τὸν ὅσιον πατέρα ἡμῶν Νικόδημον τὸν νέον, τὸν ἐν τῇ σεβασμίᾳ μονῇ τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ Θεοῦ τῇ τοῦ Φιλοκάλλους," in *Ἀρχεῖον ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἱστορίας*, tome I, vol. 2. (Constantinople, 1911), 151, text at 175–185.

[17] Tsames, "Τὸ ὑπόμνημα τοῦ Φιλοθέου Κοκκίνου στὸν ὅσιο Νικόδημο τὸ νέο," *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς τῆς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης* 26 (1981): 89–99.

[18] Tsames, *Θεσσαλονικεῖς ἅγιοι*, 83–93.

[19] I thank Dr Chariton Karanasios for sending me black and white digital reproductions of *M*, ff. 3ʳ–8ʳ. I am also grateful to Archimandrite Niphon Kapsales and Dr Nikolaos Vryzidis for their permission and support respectively to acquire a colour photo of f. 3ʳ.

[20] Talbot, "Nikodemos," 223–232.

[21] Alexander Kazhdan, "Hypomnema," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Kazhdan et al. (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 965.

for the biographies of the Holy Apostles, e.g., Andrew (*BHG* 101), James (*BHG* 764), John (*BHG* 919), Matthew (*BHG* 1226), Timothy (*BHG* 1848).[22] Thus, the *hypomnēma* is a concise account of a saint's life, in which the rhetorical and literary embellishments are secondary to the act of conveying biographical information on the holy man commemorated.[23] Kokkinos appears to have been familiar with this 'hagiographical genre,'[24] since he quotes in his eleventh *antirrhētikos* from Symeon Metaphrastes's *hypomnēma* on John the Evangelist.[25] As mentioned, the superscription of Kokkinos's work in *P* features the term *hypomnēma*, which the sixteenth-century scribe most likely copied from the *antigraphon*. Internal evidence also suggests that Kokkinos himself titled his composition *hypomnēma*; thus, in the preface, he employs the cognate verb *hypomimnēskō*: "I will *briefly mention* a few of his [Nikodemos's] deeds."[26] The term appears exclusively in the title, as Kokkinos refers to his text using interchangeably either *logos* (*v. Nik.* 1.1, 4.30, 9.1, 12.3), that is "account," "story," or *diēgēma* (*v. Nik.* 4.31, 11.9), that is "narrative." Keeping in line with the characteristics of this type of hagiographical composition, or rather constrained by the scarce information on the holy man, Kokkinos keeps his work concise, at approximately five folios in *M* and 2.700 words in the modern edition. The brevity of this text is not representative of Kokkinos's work in general. In fact, the *hypomnēma* on Nikodemos is the outlier

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[22] See also *BHG* 485 (prophet Daniel), *BHG* 877 (the translation of John Chrysostom's relics to Constantinople), *BHG* 991 (Luke), *BHG* 1493 (Peter and Paul), *BHG* 1527 (Philip), and *BHG* 1835 (Thomas). On the Metaphrastic Mēnologion, see Christian Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes. Rewriting and Canonization* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2002); idem, "Symeon Metaphrastes and the metaphrastic movement," in *Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. 2: *Genres and Contexts*, 181–196.

[23] See Elisabeth Schiffer, "Hypomnema als Bezeichnung hagiographischer Texte," in *Wiener Byzantinistik und Neogräzistik: Beiträge zum Symposion Vierzig Jahre Institut für Byzantinistik und Neogräzistik der Universität Wien im Gedenken an Herbert Hunger (Wien, 4.-7. Dezember 2002)*, eds. Wolfram Hörandner, Johannes Koder, and Maria A. Stassinopoulou (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004), 397–407; see also Martin Hinterberger, "Byzantine hagiography and its literary genres," in *Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. 2: *Genres and Contexts*, 25–60, at 36.

[24] For terminological considerations on 'hagiographical genre' and 'hagiography' in Byzantium, see Hinterberger, "Autobiography and hagiography in Byzantium," *Symbolae Osloenses* 75 (2000): 139–164; idem, "Byzantine hagiography;" cf. Felice Lifshitz, "Beyond positivism and genre: 'Hagiographical' texts as historical narrative," *Viator* 25 (1994): 95–113.

[25] Philotheos Kokkinos, *Antirrhētikos* 11.694-698, ed. Demetrios Kaïmakes, *Φιλοθέου Κοκκίνου δογματικὰ ἔργα* (Thessalonike: Κέντρον Βυζαντινῶν Ἐρευνῶν, 1983), 428: Ὁ δέ γε τῷ ἐπιστηθίῳ Θεολόγῳ σοφώτατα τὸ **ὑπόμνημα** ξυντιθεὶς τοιάδε περὶ ἐκείνου φησὶ τῆς θείας τοῦ Χριστοῦ μεμνημένος μεταμορφώσεως. "Πρὸς τὸ ὄρος τε ἀνιόντι Χριστῷ συνάνεισι, καὶ θέας ἀξιοῦται ὡς ὑπὲρ λόγον καὶ θαυμαστῆς, αὐτὴν τὴν τοῦ Λόγου θεότητα παραγυμνωθεῖσαν ἰδών, καὶ οὐρανίου φωνῆς ἀκούει" (my emphasis). See *PG* 116, 685D.

[26] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 1.5-6: διὰ βραχέων τὰ ἐκείνου ὑπομνήσομεν.

in terms of length among Kokkinos's *vitae* of contemporaneous saints, which range from *ca*. 20.000 words (the *vita* of Germanos) up to 50.000 words (the *vitae* of Sabas and Palamas).

Its unusual brevity compared to Kokkinos's other lengthy *vitae* may also be explained by the scarce information he confesses to have had at his disposal. Kokkinos took an interest in Nikodemos's life during his hegoumenate at Philokalles, where his hero had entered as a monk towards the end of his life and died around 1307. As only three decades had passed since Nikodemos's demise, Kokkinos most likely gathered some information from people who personally knew the saint, perhaps the monks under his supervision. He offers a glimpse into his working room by stating that:

> "I have composed the present narrative, different parts from different sources, and assembled them like mosaic pieces into the form and shape of a single unit, so to speak, since I have found no prior information on the saint."[27]

The *tesserae*, that is, the building blocks, for his account of Nikodemos's life can be gleaned from the *v. Nik.*: the holy man hailed from the Macedonian city of Berrhoia; he reached maturity during the reign of Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (*r*. 1282–1328) and became a vagrant ascetic; towards the end of his life, he arrived in Thessalonike where he joined the monastery of Philokalles as an obedient monk, yet spent a considerable amount of time outside the monastery in the company of harlots; he abstained from food and gave alms to prostitutes and the poor; around the age of forty he was murdered by a group of locals (i.e., 'clients' of the harlots); he was denied burial inside the monastery grounds and a few years later his uncorrupted body was discovered and reburied in the same location; his relics effected miracles and were placed in a church erected on the site with imperial support.

4. The hagiographer at work: weaving the *vita* of the saint

The ways in which Philotheos Kokkinos weaves this scarce biographical information into the narrative form of a *hypomnēma* merits closer investigation. He endeavors to reconstruct the *life* of Nikodemos along the aforementioned milestones and to flesh out a *vita* for the holy man, despite minimal documentation. Kokkinos thus divides the narrative into four roughly equal sections, adding a short preface and a final invocation of similar length:

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[27] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 11.8-11. English translation by Talbot, "Nikodemos," 231.

Preface (*v. Nik.* 1[28], *ca.* 130 words)
1. Early life and wanderings (*v. Nik.* 2–3, *ca.* 540 words)
2. Monastic life at Philokalles and in the company of prostitutes
   (*v. Nik.* 4–5, *ca.* 600 words)
3. Circumstances surrounding his death; the discovery of his relics
   (*v. Nik.* 6–7, *ca.* 540 words)
4. Three posthumous miracles; church built in honor of the saint
   (*v. Nik.* 8–11, *ca.* 700 words)
Final invocation (*v. Nik.* 12 = *ca.* 130 words)

The *hypomnēma* opens with a rhetorical question, in which Kokkinos posits (making a pun on his own name): "Who could pass over the story of the truly great ascetic Nikodemos and not relate his accomplishments to God-loving ears (*philotheoi akoai*)?" Stressing that such an omission "would certainly cause immense harm to lovers of the good [things]," Kokkinos states his intention to "briefly mention a few of his deeds for those who knew him."[29] Therefore, he embarks on this endeavour by casting aside his fear and hesitations—elements pertaining to the *topos modestiae*—for the spiritual purpose of encouraging his audience to emulate the holy man's virtue.[30]

Lacking information on the family, education and early life of his subject, Kokkinos resorts to hagiographical tropes, following long-established guidelines (i.e., the blueprint of the *enkōmion* and the *basilikos logos*) for eulogizing a holy man's origin and childhood.[31] Thus, he briefly commends Nikodemos's family and native city of Berrhoia for its advantages and especially its fruit, the holy man himself:

> "His birthplace … is blessed in its natural location and position and many other advantages, but is adorned by none of these as much as its own fruit, I mean the wondrous Nikodemos. He came not from an undistinguished family, but from one of the most important in these parts."[32]

Kokkinos uses Emperor Andronikos II's reign as a temporal marker to place Nikodemos's *floruit*. Upon reaching maturity, Nikodemos spends the next twenty years as a wandering ascetic. Kokkinos describes the solitary life of his hero in generic terms and compares him to the Old Testament figures of Abraham

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[28] I follow the paragraph division in Tsames's edition (1985).

[29] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 1.1-6. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 224.

[30] On hagiographical commonplaces, see Thomas Pratsch, *Der hagiographische Topos: Griechische Heiligenviten in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), e.g., 22–32 (*topoi* in the *prooimia*).

[31] See, for instance, *Menander Rhetor*, ed. and trans. by Donald A. Russell and Nigel G. Wilson (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1981), xi–xlvi, 76–95.

[32] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 2.1-5. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 224.

and Moses, writing in *homoioteleuton* that he "chose the life of an expatriate, being oppressed, *afflicted*, *ill-treated*, wandering *in desert places and mountains*" (Hebrews 11:37-38).[33]

The lack of particulars about Nikodemos's ascetic life offers Kokkinos a blank canvass for infusing his narrative with hesychast elements. He therefore weaves at this point generic passages with a strong hesychast flavor about his hero's spiritual exercises, including fasting, vigils, mortification of the flesh and suppression of passions, which lead to extraordinary spiritual accomplishments. Kokkinos writes that Nikodemos was "well girded with strength by God," "wisely surrounded himself with the cardinal virtues" and "came in the possession of the divine mysteries."[34] Without making any overt references to hesychasm, Kokkinos promotes it by fashioning Nikodemos as pursuing a hesychast lifestyle.[35] The holy man thus undertook continuous meditation and contemplation of the divine, "approached the mountain of impassivity," "mystically saw God through the perception of his soul," and "constantly delighted in God's beauty."[36] Such hesychast undertones are more conspicuous and extensive in Kokkinos's later saints' *lives*.[37]

After twenty years of solitary asceticism, Nikodemos embraced the cenobitic life in the monastery of Philokalles in Thessalonike out of a desire to practice obedience (*hypotagē*).[38] Kokkinos stresses the holy man's devotion to the rule of obedience and the extent of his submission to the superior of the monastery, which elicited the astonishment of his fellow monks.[39] At the same time, however, Nikodemos began to spend time with harlots. Kokkinos does not offer a detailed picture of their encounters, apart from stating that the holy man "always engaged in conversations with prostitutes," pretended "to participate in boisterous revelry" with them, offered them alms, and that he was found "reclining" in their midst prior to his death.[40] This behavior earned him widespread criticism

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[33] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 2.9-11: τὴν ξένην εἵλετο, στενού**μενος**, θλιβό**μενος**, κακουχού**μενος**, ἐν ἐρημίαις καὶ ὄρεσι διαιτώ**μενος** (my emphasis). Talbot, "Nikodemos," 225.

[34] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 2.20, 25-26; 3.1. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 225.

[35] Other late-Byzantine men of letters also include hesychast elements in their hagiographical works. For instance, Gregory Palamas inserts a lengthy section on hesychast experience and practice in his *Logos* on St Peter of Athos (*BHG* 1506), fashioning Peter as an international hesychast. See Mitrea, "'Old wine in new bottles'? Gregory Palamas' *Logos* on Saint Peter of Athos (*BHG* 1506)," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 40 (2016): 243–263.

[36] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 3.1-3; 2.21. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 225.

[37] See Mitrea, "A Late-Byzantine Hagiographer," 226–238; idem, "'Hail, Glory of the Fathers!' Patristic sources and references in the hagiographical works of Philotheos Kokkinos," in *The Legacy of St. Gregory Palamas: Studies in Late Byzantine Theology and Its Reception*, ed. Tikhon Alexander Pino (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

[38] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 4.1-4.

[39] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 4.9-11.

[40] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 4.12-13; 5.6-9; 6.6-7. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 226–228.

and, as Kokkinos mentions, his superior even threw him out of the monastery on several occasions.[41]

Nikodemos's conduct, which masks a spiritual purpose under a façade of promiscuity and provocation, has been interpreted as a display of holy foolery.[42] However, Kokkinos does not attach any label to his hero's actions or employ anywhere in the *v. Nik.* terms denoting holy foolery, such as *salos*, *mōros*, or *mōria*. He simply states that Nikodemos "chose to be considered and called *anathema* (cf. Romans 9:3) by everyone for the sake of his fellow men."[43] Moreover, Kokkinos provides a quite extensive excursus justifying the holy man's behavior, as he would do to an even greater extent in the case of Sabas the Younger.[44] He thus explains that Nikodemos willingly submitted himself to the hardships that accompanied his actions, bearing them with "adamantine will" for the "glory that is to come."[45] Moreover, Kokkinos infuses his narrative once again with hesychast elements, stressing that Nikodemos's soul was "unified mystically with God" and, paraphrasing again the Apostle Paul (Romans 8:38-39), was not distracted by anything external, "*neither things present, nor things to come, nor anything else at all in creation will be able to* distract this soul *from the love* of its Beloved."[46] Kokkinos repeats several times that Nikodemos strove to suffer all the hardship in secret "so that he might thereby attain greater glory from God."[47] Sergey Ivanov describes Nikodemos as a "negligent and dissolute monk, whose provocative behaviour the author adjusted to the hagiographic canon," and highlights Kokkinos's frequent interventions in the narrative and his need to explain Nikodemos's acts of holy foolery.[48]

Kokkinos also extols Nikodemos's ability to abstain from food and be nourished by the life-giving prayer alone. For instance, he presents a case in which the holy man allegedly forewent nourishment for a week, while working in the fields of the monastery, in order to offer his food to the poor or to prostitutes "as payment, to keep them from defiling their beds."[49] Kokkinos fashions this behavior as an effort of his hero to emulate "the divine Vitalios, whose lifestyle and character

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[41] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 4.13-15.

[42] Sergey Ivanov, *Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond*, translated into English by Simon Franklin (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 223–225; Talbot, "Children, healing miracles, holy fools: highlights from the hagiographical works of Philotheos Kokkinos (1300–*ca.* 1379)," *Bysantinska Sällskapet Bulletin* 24 (2005): 48–64, at 57–59.

[43] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 5.14-16. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 227.

[44] See, for instance, Philotheos Kokkinos, *The Life of Sabas* 20.36-48, ed. Tsames, *Θεσσαλονικεῖς ἅγιοι*, 198.

[45] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 4.15-17. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 226.

[46] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 4.24-28. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 226–227.

[47] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 2.13-14. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 225; cf. *v. Nik.* 7.3.

[48] Ivanov, *Holy Fools*, 224–225, 232.

[49] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 5.6-9. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 227.

he loved excessively."[50] The *Life* of St John the Merciful (*BHG* 886d), patriarch of Alexandria (610–619),[51] narrates the story of a hermit from Gaza by this name, who went to Alexandria at the age of sixty to work as a day laborer. At the end of each day, he used his wages to save harlots from fornication, leading many to give up their depraved lifestyle and marry or become hermits. However, the apparent scandalous nature of his actions earned Vitalios insults and physical assaults, which ultimately contributed to his death. The striking similarity between the life course of these two holy men could indicate that Kokkinos drew on the story of Vitalios when composing the *hypomnēma* on Nikodemos. As his audience was most likely familiar with the story of "the divine Vitalios," Kokkinos artfully makes this *synkrisis* in order to foreshadow, as it were, the similar violent death of Nikodemos, as a consequence of his actions.[52]

Finally, Kokkinos presents the dramatic circumstances surrounding the holy man's death. One day, while reclining in the midst of prostitutes, Nikodemos is fatally stabbed by their 'clients,' described by Kokkinos as the "devil's slaves."[53] The hagiographer thus fashions his hero's death as a result of the devil's plot:

> "But this 'saintly conduct' was intolerable to Satan who had malicious designs against Nikodemos from the very beginning, for the common enemy of our kind bore a severe grudge against him, and ground his teeth against him in insane fashion."[54]

Barely breathing, Nikodemos is taken back to the monastery, but is denied entrance, likely due to the dishonorable circumstances of his stabbing. Shunned by his monastic community, Nikodemos professes his humility one last time—rendered by Kokkinos in narratized speech[55]—, reproaching himself for his unworthiness to enter the monastery, as well as the life to come.[56] This can be interpreted as an indication of Kokkinos's disapproval of Nikodemos's lifestyle[57]. After receiving

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[50] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik*. 5.9-12. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 227 (translation slightly modified).

[51] See *Léontios de Néapolis, Vie de Syméon le fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre*, chapter 38, ed. and trans. by André-Jean Festugière and Lennart Rydén (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1974), 387–391.

[52] Kokkinos's familiarity with the *Life* of St John the Merciful is also evidenced in his *vita* of Germanos Maroules (39.52-57), where he compares his hero to John the Merciful. Cf. Ivanov, *Holy Fools*, 223–224.

[53] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 6.6, 11-12.

[54] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 6.1-3. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 228.

[55] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, translated into English by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980), 170–171, defines "narratized speech" as the most distant type of discourse in terms of narrative mood, in which the character's words are integrated into the narration.

[56] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 6.17-20.

[57] Cf. Talbot, "Children, healing miracles, holy fools," 58.

the holy communion outside the gates, the holy man succumbs alone and his body is buried in an unspecified location, in the vicinity of the monastery.[58] Kokkinos expresses his disapproval towards this dramatic episode, inserting several exclamations in his account, such as "o, what stupidity" or "alas."[59] Moreover, he specifies the retribution that befell the murderers, who were captured by the "Latins," that is, the Catalan Company, and had their hands cut off.[60] He also comments on the fairness of the murderers' punishment, deeming it "a just action, even if they did not obtain a punishment worthy of their brazen deed."[61]

After the account of Nikodemos's death, Kokkinos touches briefly on the discovery of his relics by some passers-by who perceived their fragrance a few years later. Upon digging a trench, they found Nikodemos's body, described in *asyndeton* as "intact, whole, complete, having suffered no corruption whatsoever."[62] Returning to the passage I quoted at the beginning of this article, Kokkinos presents this discovery as "a stroke of good fortune" and a reason of joy and celebration for the whole city of Thessalonike.[63] Then, Nikodemos's relics receive a "proper burial with perfumed oils and linen winding cloths," performed by the archbishop of the city (most likely Metropolitan Jeremiah) with all the citizens.[64]

Miraculous elements in Kokkinos's hypomnēma

Having led a controversial lifestyle (often in the company of harlots), Nikodemos was most likely not in want of detractors. Consequently, Kokkinos dedicates close to a quarter of the *hypomnēma* to miracle accounts, for the purpose of legitimizing and defending his hero. This includes one healing and two punishment miracles, which depict the holy man as swift in helping his supporters and, conversely, punishing his opponents.

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[58] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 6.13-17; 7.1-4.

[59] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 6.12-13.

[60] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 7.5-8. In the spring of 1308, the Catalan Company raided the outskirts of Thessalonike. Cf. José Simón Palmer, "The *Life* of St. Sabas the Younger as a source for the history of the Catalan Grand Company," *Scripta Mediterranea* 18 (1997): 35–39.

[61] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 7.7-8. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 228.

[62] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 7.17-18: σῶον, ἄρτιον, ὅλον, μηδεμίαν δήπουθεν καταφθορὰν ὑποστάν. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 229.

[63] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 7.20-26.

[64] Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 7.26-29. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 229. On Metropolitan Jeremiah, see George T. Dennis, "The late Byzantine metropolitans of Thessalonike," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 57 (2003): 255–264; Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, *Der Episkopat im späten Byzanz. Ein Verzeichnis der Metropoliten und Bischöfe des Patriarchats von Konstantinopel in der Zeit von 1204 bis 1453* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2008), 444–445.

The first miracle presents a case of miraculous healing, in which a man is cured of paralysis after making supplications and shedding tears at Nikodemos's shrine.[65] However, while the miracle itself seems fairly common, Kokkinos's account stands out through the detailed description of the beneficiary, a Serbian from Dalmatia by the name of George Karabides, "who once came over to the Romans as a deserter" and settled in Thessalonike.[66] This level of detail[67] could indicate that the man was known to Kokkinos's audience and might have even been alive when he wrote the *v. Nik.* Additionally, Kokkinos might have selected this miracle in order to underline the role played by Serbians (whom Kokkinos calls *Tribaloi)* in promoting Nikodemos's cult. It is surely not by chance that the saint features in a fresco in the *katholikon* of the Hilandar Monastery on Mount Athos, rebuilt and painted under the patronage of the Serbian kral Stephen Uroš II Milutin (1282–1321).[68]

The second miracle account features a high official who travels from Adrianople to Thessalonike in the imperial entourage, perhaps that of Michael IX Palaiologos.[69] The man visits the saint's shrine and asks about Nikodemos's life, learning from those present about his conduct regarding prostitutes. However, instead of marveling at the holy man's life and deeds, the traveler passes a negative moral judgment on the story, finding it "vulgar and base."[70] Consequently, when he kisses the saint's coffin, his lips are stuck to it as punishment. Kokkinos captures the reaction of the onlookers, who are greatly terrified at the sight of this retribution and plead to the saint on behalf of the disbeliever, saving him from his penance. Kokkinos most likely referenced the intra-textual audience, namely, the onlookers, in order to serve as a role model for his audience and offer a cue about the reaction expected upon hearing the account of this miracle. When Kokkinos composed the *hypomnēma*, there might have still been detractors

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[65] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 8.

[66] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 8.1-3. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 229.

[67] Details regarding the age, origin, social status, and even name of beneficiaries were fairly common in late-Byzantine miracle accounts and collections of miracles. These details served the purpose of reinforcing the veracity of the miracle accounts, especially in the context of the canonization process of a holy figure, whose miracle-making powers they attested. See, for instance, the posthumous miracles of Patriarch Athanasios I, recorded by Theoktistos the Stoudite, as well as the dossier of Palamas's miracles complied by Kokkinos.

[68] See Ioustinos Simonopetritis, "Τοιχογραφία τοῦ ὁσίου Νικοδήμου τοῦ ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ στό καθολικό τῆς μονῆς Χιλανδαρίου," *Πρωτᾶτον* 7 (1983): 133–137; Sharon Gerstel, "Civic and monastic influences on church decoration in late Byzantine Thessalonike," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 57 (2003): 225–239, at 235.

[69] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 9. On Michael IX Palaiologos, see Helga Gickler, *Kaiser Michael IX. Palaiologos: sein Leben und Wirken (1278 bis 1320): eine biographische Annäherung* (Frankfurt am Main: PL Academic Research, 2015).

[70] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 9.12-13. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 230.

of the holy man and people who questioned his actions and sanctity. Therefore, the miracle might have served as a legitimizing device in support of Nikodemos's sainthood, as well as in spreading his cult, since the punishment turned the skeptic into a "loud herald and true expounder of the miracle" and implicitly of the saint.[71]

The last miracle account in the *v. Nik.* presents the story of a woman who visits the saint's shrine to seek his help in curing an unspecified affliction that had troubled her for many years.[72] However, instead of simply praying or touching the saint's relics, she surreptitiously removes and appropriates one of his teeth. Interestingly, while in most miracle accounts the beneficiaries touch their afflicted body parts to a sarcophagus, Kokkinos writes that the woman does the reverse. She places the head of the saint on the afflicted part of her body, which suggests that the saint's head could have been preserved in a different reliquary chest than his body. Kokkinos does not present the woman's act as premeditated or motivated by a desire to acquire material rewards by selling the relic, as was often the case in instances of *furta sacra*.[73] She might have appropriated the saint's tooth simply to increase her chances of recovery. However, instead of a swift cure, the "wretched woman," as Kokkinos calls her, is struck with madness and punished for the injury she brought to the saint's body. Upon returning the holy relic to its rightful place with a tearful confession and remorse, the woman is absolved of her punishment. Kokkinos's way of presenting both these punishment miracles (*v. Nik.* 9–10) underlines their instructive function. Nikodemos's coffin "educated" (*epaideue*) the "uneducated lips" (*apaideuta cheile*) of the skeptic man, while the woman who stole his tooth received swiftly her "education" (*paideia*), or "was punished."

Before the final invocation, Kokkinos briefly mentions that a church was built in honor of the saint with imperial donation on the site where his relics had been discovered.[74] In the closing of the *hypomnēma*, Kokkinos invokes Nikodemos's protection of the flock at Philokalles against "visible and invisible enemies." Moreover, he asks the saint to guide his actions as superior of the monastery, so that "having led *a quiet and tranquil life* (1 Timothy 2:2), [he] may offer both them and [himself] as unblemished and untouched sacrifices to the all-holy Trinity."[75] This may hint at the setting and the time when Kokkinos delivered this *hypomnēma*, which was most likely in front of the monastic community at Philokalles, perhaps on the feast day of the saint (1340/1–1342).

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[71] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 9.25-26. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 230.

[72] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 10.

[73] See Patrick J. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990).

[74] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 11.

[75] Philotheos Kokkinos, *v. Nik.* 12.6-12. Talbot, "Nikodemos," 231 (translation slightly modified).

Conclusion

This article has analyzed Philotheos Kokkinos's first hagiographical composition dedicated to a contemporaneous holy figure, namely Nikodemos the Younger, looking at Kokkinos's technique of arranging the bits and pieces of information about the holy man in the form of a *hypomnēma*. Despite the scarcity of biographical data, Kokkinos created a balanced structure for the short *vita¸* allocating narrative space to: (1) his hero's early life and period of wandering asceticism; (2) his life in a cenobitic environment and activities as a holy fool; (3) violent death and discovery of his holiness; as well as (4) manifestations of his miracle-making powers, despite the controversy surrounding his later life. True to the literary conventions of this type of 'hagiographical genre,' Kokkinos's account is concise and unembellished with rhetorical ornaments, classical references or use of dialogue. However, as a gifted hagiographer, he succeeds to flesh out within these constraints a life and an identity for his hero, employing scriptural quotations and allusions, as well as *synkriseis* with Biblical figures and other models, particularly the holy fool Vitalios. Moreover, Kokkinos infuses his narrative with hesychast undertones when extolling Nikodemos's virtues or justifying his actions, fashioning him as a practicing hesychast. Kokkinos's later *vitae* of contemporaneous holy men include more extensive hesychast elements and references, through which he sought to promote and vindicate the hesychast theology that has remained at the core of Christian Orthodoxy up to this day. Through his *hypomnēma*, Kokkinos composed an authoritative text that filled in a gap and honored, promoted and perhaps rekindled the local cult of Nikodemos the Younger. As he noted in the preface to the *v. Nik.*, Kokkinos envisaged this work as a spiritual exercise addressed to lovers of the good, i.e., the monastic community at Philokalles, and by extension the whole city of Thessalonike, to train and encourage them to emulate Nikodemos.

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III. SOCIAL THEOLOGY

FAMILY AND ECONOMY IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

ADAM ZADROGA[*]

ABSTRACT. The aim of the article is to show the interdependencies that occur between the family and the economic function it undertakes. The author points out and describes the mutual relations between the marriage and family bond, and economic conditions. The healthy state of the conjugal and family bond is generally reflected in the economic well-being of that particular community of people, and in a macro dimension, it provides a strong foundation for the whole society and its economy. On the other hand, economic processes and factors that create an economic and social environment of the family determine the way it functions as a household and also affect (at least indirectly) its inner harmony. The article shows not just the scale and depth of the connections between the family and the economic function it performs, but also how important these connections are in a moral and social sphere.

Keywords: family, economy, economic function of the family, marriage and family bond, human capital

1. Introduction

The family is the foundation of social life. The Church emphasizes that the family is the first and fundamental structure for the so called "human ecology"[1]. Among the many specific functions that the family has to fulfil is its economic role. The subject of the article[2] are the problems of marriage and the

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[1] John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1981), no 42; John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Centesimus annus* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1991), no. 32.

[2] This article is based on the research effects published by the author in Polish: Adam Zadroga, "Funkcja ekonomiczna w życiu rodziny," in *Rodzina jako Kościół domowy*, ed. Antoni Tomkiewicz, Włodzimierz Wieczorek (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2010), 593–602.

family in this context. The aim is to show the interdependencies that occur between the family and the economic function it undertakes. Author points out and describes the mutual relations between the marriage and family bond, and economic conditions. The article tries to answer the following questions: How important is a healthy and strong family for socio-economic life? How do certain economic factors affect the functioning of marriage and the family? Which economic and social phenomena pose a threat to the family, and which ones support and strengthen the marriage and family bond?

2. Importance of the family for the socio-economic life

The family plays an important role in a macroeconomic dimension. Speaking more broadly, it is the pillar of the whole social life. Hence, in the first place, it is worth emphasising its more general importance for society and its development, which is not directly connected with economy. The family makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the good of society. What is more, a healthy family should always be the measure, a point of reference for all kinds of social trends. A society built on a family scale is the best guarantee against drifting off course into extreme social models based either on individualism or collectivism, because the family is the place in which the person is always at the centre of attention as an end and never as a means[3]. "Every social model that intends to serve the good of man must not overlook the centrality and social responsibility of the family"[4]. This is particularly true in the case of weak and vulnerable individuals who are at risk of social marginalization. It is the family (supported by welfare institutions), rather than any other institutions, that supports and protects those weak ones – from school children to the elderly no longer able to take care of themselves, from the disabled to the sick[5].

Therefore, "it is patently clear that the good of persons and the proper functioning of society are closely connected with the healthy state of conjugal and family life"[6]. This is because "without families that are strong in their communion and stable in their commitment, peoples grow weak. In the family, moral values are taught starting from the very first years of life, the spiritual heritage of the religious community and the cultural legacy of the nation are transmitted. In the family one learns social responsibility and solidarity"[7].

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[3] Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004), no. 213, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html

[4] Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,* no. 214.

[5] Stefano Zamagni, "Rodzina jako podmiot gospodarczy," *Społeczeństwo* 13, no. 2 (2003): 231.

[6] The Second Vatican Council, *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et spes* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965), no. 47.

[7] *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,* no. 213.

In economy, the importance of the family for economic development has been pointed out by G. Becker – a leading economist of the so called Chicago School. Becker has recognised the category of "human capital" and pointed out that the standard of living in a country is ultimately dependent on the development and use of what is the essence of "human capital" of that country, namely health, abilities, knowledge and skills of its people. In this sense, "human capital" is the most valuable "resource" for the entire economic system, as it enables the proper functioning and future of this system[8].

In this context, the family turns out to be the unique foundation and indispensable source of "human capital". The family, fulfilling its procreative function, is both the producer of human capital and its first investor[9]. Apart from caring for physical growth of its members, the family is also the "first and irreplaceable school of social life (...). The family is the cradle of and the most effective tool for humanisation and personalisation of the society: it cooperates fully and in the only proper way in the building of world making life truly human, in particular by guarding, preserving, and transmitting virtues and "values"[10]. The family is the first place where the future participants of economic and social life receive their education and formation. It is the place where children should be taught the proper attitude towards work, acquire interpersonal skills, and exercise an attitude of commitment and dedication. These personality traits are not only vital in today's labour market, but they are also a precondition for a healthy and sustainable economic development[11].

Pope John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio* states that "the future of world and of the Church passes through the family"[12]. To justify and confirm this thesis of the Holy Father, it is enough to consider the issue of increasing negative demographical trends. This shows how important a well-functioning family is for society and economy. The family is, after all, the main source of "renewal" of society. The problems in fulfilling this mission bring about serious consequences for social and economic life, as evidenced by the effects of present demographic changes that negatively affect the solidarity-based model of pension system[13].

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[8] Gary Becker, "Znaczenie kapitału ludzkiego," *Społeczeństwo* 7, no. 1–2 (1997): 51–52.

[9] Pontifical Council for the Family, "Gospodarka dla rodziny," *Społeczeństwo* 7, no. 1–2 (1997): 239.

[10] *Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio,* no. 43.

[11] Jerzy Gocko, "O ekonomię w służbie rodziny," in *Człowiek – miłość – rodzina. „Humanie vitae" po 30 latach,* ed. Janusz Nagórny, Krzysztof Jeżyna (Lublin: RW KUL, 1999), 328; Adam Zadroga, "Rodzina jako wspólnota osób wychowująca do pracy," in *Wychowanie w rodzinie chrześcijańskiej. W 25. rocznicę adhortacji apostolskiej Jana Pawła II „Familiaris consortio". Przesłanie moralne Kościoła,* ed. Tadeusz Zadykowicz (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2008), 167–175.

[12] *Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio,* no. 86.

[13] Zamagni, "Rodzina jako podmiot gospodarczy," 230.

"It is now increasingly recognized that demographic dynamism is a necessary, yet not sufficient condition for economic development. The widespread belief that a high population growth is a cause of weak economic growth is now being abandoned. Having said that, it is true that population growth can place a significant burden on a country's development and that some countries may experience temporary difficulties because of it. However, there is no country that would have growing economy in the period of demographic stagnation"[14].

Apart from the key importance of family for demographic trends, another contemporary issue which shows a significant influence of the marriage and family bond on social and economic life is the crisis of conjugal life and growing problem of divorce.

"Family breakdown constitutes not only a serious threat to the development of spouses and their children, but also weakens the social structure and threatens the social order and the democratic systems. Additionally, the direct and indirect costs of family breakdown in terms of a country's economy and its security are enormous. These costs are connected with high expenditure on social welfare and legal scrutiny systems. In many cases, a country's economy gets distorted up to its critical point. (...) The family breakdown also results in the destruction of 'human capital' of its members, which, in the long run, always translates into real material costs"[15].

Analysing the importance of the family in strictly economic terms, it is possible to identify at least two specific functions that the family has in economic processes. First, the family plays an important role in the mechanism of linking and redistribution of work income, which means that it collects and distributes the income of its members, in this way restoring equality. In this sense, the family is seen as a strong factor in social amortisation. Furthermore, the family acts as a sort of "filter" between the individual and the market in terms of consumer choices. This means that the consumer preferences of the individual are not usually a result of his/her personal, rational thinking. Instead, they reflect a set of values, customs, and lifestyles of the family to which this individual belongs. This means that it is the family that becomes the typical consumer[16].

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[14] Gocko, "O ekonomię w służbie rodziny," 330; Jean Didier Lecaillon, "Społeczne i ekonomiczne znaczenie rodziny," *Społeczeństwo* 7, no. 1-2 (1997): 35.

[15] Gocko, "O ekonomię w służbie rodziny," 330–331.

[16] Zamagni, "Rodzina jako podmiot gospodarczy," 231–232.

3. Influence of family's economic function on marriage and family life

Sociological studies clearly indicate that the quality and stability of marriage and family life is determined not only by personality traits and certain demographic conditions, but also by a number of financial and economic variables[17]. In Poland, which has been undergoing political transformation, the most important factors heavily influencing the situation of families include: an increase in the cost of living, high dependency ratio and unemployment. These trends have a negative influence on the functioning of Polish families, which can be seen, among other things, in: low and unfavourable structure of consumption (most of the household budget is spent on food and housing fees), poor housing conditions and relatively poor provision with durable goods. Poor families quite often save on food. This dramatic situation is caused by ever-increasing housing maintenance costs as well as by increased costs of some health care and education services accompanied by a relatively slow increase in remuneration[18].

What influence does it all have on the daily functioning of the marriage and family in a human and a social and moral dimension? How does it affect certain missions that the spouses and family are obliged to fulfil? Difficult economic situation of some Polish families is seen in the problem of child malnutrition (a reproach to the whole society), and in the fact that many families and entire social groups are living below the minimum subsistence level, which has a negative bearing on their health[19]. This translates into biological degradation of these people and it takes its toll on their lifestyles. A hard-economic situation of the family (especially in the case of unemployment) is very often a source of internal conflicts primarily between the spouses. It also creates the temptation for them to force minor children to take up employment. The stressful atmosphere in the family often results in pathological behaviours, including alcohol abuse and physical or psychological violence[20].

Lack of sufficient funds to cover current expenses forces many parents to take up additional work to earn money. As a result, the time they could devote to their family continues to shrink, which, in turn, may have a destructive influence on marriage and family life. First of all, permanent lack of time for the spouse and children makes it impossible to fulfil other fundamental functions of the family,

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[17] Gocko, "O ekonomię w służbie rodziny," 332–333.

[18] Pełnomocnik Rządu do spraw Rodziny, *Raport o sytuacji polskich rodzin* (Warszawa: Departament Spraw Rodziny, 1998), 84–88.

[19] Pełnomocnik Rządu do spraw Rodziny, *Raport o sytuacji polskich rodzin,* 82–90.

[20] Franciszek Kampka, "Bezrobocie i postawy moralne," *Społeczeństwo* 5, no. 1 (1995): 64; Andrzej Derdziuk, Adam Zadroga, "Bezrobocie jako wyzwanie dla podmiotów życia społeczno-gospodarczego," *Kontrola Państwowa* 51, no. 6 (2006): 52–61.

apart from the economic one[21]. As a result, "higher levels" of family life are impoverished, overwhelmed by activities aimed at maintaining the family "on the surface"[22].

Lack of family time, however, does not only affect people who are somehow forced to take up additional gainful employment. Those with excessive professional aspirations, earning relatively well, but lacking the virtue of temperance are also affected. They often get addicted to work (workaholism), a company becomes their "home", and needs of their family (their spouse and children) are relegated to lower levels in the hierarchy of life issues. This frequently leads to a gradual "breakdown" of the marriage and family bond and usually ends in divorce. Let me here make a comparison with a garden which, when neglected, simply degenerates[23].

Another problem connected with time is how married couples and families spend their time off work, especially Sundays. It seems that today we can talk about a crisis of spending leisure time. Modern lifestyle characterised by rapid civilization changes, consumerism and increased reliance on technology makes physical and spiritual regeneration more and more difficult. Married couples and families succumb to a fashion of spending free time not so much on being with each other, but rather on being next to each other. This happens when there is no room for a real, emotionally engaging, interpersonal contact between the spouses and between parents and children. It is often easier and more convenient to watch TV together (even during so called "family" dinner), or do "family" shopping in a supermarket. However, spending free time in such a way does not provide us with an opportunity to enter into a meaningful dialogue and to build greater unity and stronger interpersonal ties.

Simple observations, confirmed by scientific studies[24], show that modern married couples and families are largely addicted to spending free time in a consumerist way. Booming "leisure industry" and marketing campaigns that create desires, rather than real needs are certainly responsible for such a situation. Advertising is an important mechanism that generates these needs and wants, which is reflected in ever increasing financial needs of marriage and the family. Especially children are vulnerable to the negative effects of advertising. It turns out that some of the marketing effort is just deliberately targeted at children, who, in turn, exert pressure on their parents to make "appropriate" purchases[25].

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[21] Zbigniew Tyszka, "Rodzina polska w okresie transformacji społeczno-ustrojowej," in *Rodzina w zmieniającym się społeczeństwie,* ed. Piotr Kryczka (Lublin: RW KUL, 1997), 117–118.

[22] Gocko, "O ekonomię w służbie rodziny," 334.

[23] Krystian Wojaczek, "Wpływ przemian ekonomicznej funkcji rodziny na więź małżeńską," *Roczniki Teologiczne* 51, no. 10 (2004): 103–104.

[24] Janusz Mariański, *Kościół a współczesne problemy społeczno-moralne. Kwestie wybrane* (Lublin: TN KUL, 1992), 127–128.

[25] Maria Braun-Gałkowska, "Reklama telewizyjna a dzieci," *Edukacja i Dialog* no. 5 (1997): 15–20.

Another serious challenge for the conjugal and family bond is when one of the spouses or sometimes both of them stay abroad for a long time for economic reasons. Research[26] leaves no doubt about the consequences of the so called economic migration for married couples and families. Temporary separation of the spouses from each other and of parents from their children

> "is not only connected with the oppressive longing for the loved ones, but brings about a number of negative perturbations in the conjugal and parental relations, which often undermine, or even annihilate what is the ultimate aim of the economic function for which this migration has been undertaken. (…) There is no doubt that separation for economic reasons, disrupts the conjugal bond, that is the process of a reciprocal gift of person to person, and consequently has a direct bearing on the conjugal love and bond"[27].

Another danger that should be mentioned is connected with the fact that

> "the spouses that live far away from one another do not live in a social vacuum. Frequent meetings with others, corresponding to the optimization of the process of emotional attraction, can eventually lead to a situation in which feelings to the spouse will gradually be replaced by feelings to someone else. This is one of the most common causes of marital breakdown among couples that are separated for economic reasons"[28].

One way in which the family often fulfils its economic function is running a family business. Let me point out here that it is one of the most effective ways the family can perform its economic role, and it helps to build strong interpersonal relationships, though, of course, potential conflicts are also possible. When running a company together, people share not only "normal" conjugal and family life, but also a concern to build a thriving business. The focus on achieving a common purpose (in this case, the economic one) should help to strengthen the bond

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[26] *Wyjazdy zarobkowe. Szansa czy zagrożenie? Perspektywa społeczno-moralna,* ed. Konrad Glombik, Piotr Morciniec (Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictw Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2005); *Migracja zarobkowa do Włoch. Próba podejścia interdyscyplinarnego,* ed. Dorota Bryk, Bohdan Rożnowski, Maciej Stanisław Zięba (Lublin: Oficyna Wydawnicza EL-Press s.c., 2008).

[27] Krystian Wojaczek, "Rodzina w konfrontacji z migracją zarobkową," in *Wyjazdy zarobkowe. Szansa czy zagrożenie? Perspektywa społeczno-moralna,* ed. Konrad Glombik, Piotr Morciniec (Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictw Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2005), 209–210.

[28] Wojaczek, "Rodzina w konfrontacji z migracją zarobkową," 212; Krystian Wojaczek, "Rozłąka z przyczyn ekonomicznych, czy więź małżeńska?" in *Ad plenam unitatem. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana księdzu arcybiskupowi Alfonsowi Nossolowi Wielkiemu Kanclerzowi Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego z okazji 25-lecia święceń biskupich oraz 70. rocznicy urodzin,* ed. Piotr Jaskóła, Rajmund Porada (Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictw Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2002), 607.

between them. In the case of marriage and the family, this will naturally give them the opportunity to spend more time together, which would not be possible if they worked full time in different places. However, such a situation may lead to dilemmas how to reconcile business objectives with the needs of family members, or how to achieve these objectives not harming relations within the family[29].

Building the family bond without having some basic material resources is hardly possible. Firstly, it is extremely important for a family to have their own place to live, a home. Especially nowadays, when most people do their professional work in factories, administrative organizations, offices, and stores, they need a home to return to at the end of the day, a home which offers them peace and a congenial atmosphere. Secondly, the living community of parents with their children finds a particularly intimate expression in the common table. At the family table, an apportionment is made in a selfless way to each one according to his or her needs[30].

> "In the modem family, the table is not only the site of the common meal, but also the place of common conversation, of play, of entertainment. Unfortunately, however, a questionable silence has come over many families which no longer allows cordial, personal talk to arise as it did in the time of engagement or in the first years of marriage. For weeks on end a family might talk in a matter-of-fact businesslike way about household expenses, for instance. It is a tension-filled muteness. They are mute next to one another and against one another, whether the tension exists between the father and the mother, or between the parents and the grown children, or between the children"[31].

The family's care for physical needs finds its specific expression in the sacrifice of women to take care of the household. Unfortunately, this effort is often underrated not only by the so-called public opinion and the state, but also by men themselves. This often creates tensions in marital relationships, especially if the husband fails to notice the value of the work done by his wife in the home. But the truth is that running a household is an extremely demanding job.

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[29] Grant Thornton, *Biznes rodzinny,* trans. Anna Kanclerz (Gliwice: Helion, 2004).

[30] Joseph Höffner, *Chrześcijańska nauka społeczna*, trans. Stanisław Pyszka (Kraków: WAM 1993), 87–89.

[31] Höffner, *Chrześcijańska nauka społeczna,* 89.

4. Conclusions

To sum up, the family and economy are mutually dependent. The healthy state of conjugal and family bond is generally reflected in the economic well-being of that particular community of people, and in a macro dimension, it provides a strong foundation for the whole society and its economy. On the other hand, economic processes and factors that create economic and social environment of the family determine the way it functions as a household, and also affect (at least indirectly) its inner harmony. The article shows not just the scale and depth of the connections between the family and the economic function it performs, but also how important these connections are in a moral and social sphere. Concern to provide for the material needs of the family may have positive as well as negative influence on the conjugal and family bond. Work, different forms of family consumption of material goods or ways of spending money have ambivalent effects for the family. But what ultimately determines the character of these effects? It seems that the key to the proper (which means, respecting human dignity and the family value) way of exercising economic function by the family lies in the moral attitudes of individuals following well-formed consciences in their everyday ethical choices[32].

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[32] Zadroga, "Funkcja ekonomiczna w życiu rodziny," 601.

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SPIRITUAL CARE FOR THE ELDERLY: OFFERING THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK ABOUT DEATH

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ABSTRACT. To speak of the Romanian village today is to consider a reality of life populated more and more by elderly people and children whose parents work outside the home, in town, or even abroad. The quality of life of the elderly remaining in the village is, in this context, a major concern for the political authorities and religious leaders. Indeed, many studies have shown that taking into account the religious and spiritual dimension contributes to the well-being of seniors.

Recent research in Switzerland has highlighted the fact that many elderly people who live in senior care facilities are interested in talking about death with someone they trust. This trusted person is not necessarily the priest or chaplain. For many residents, this role is given to someone within the elderly person's network of family and friends (spouse, daughter, niece, close friend, etc.). What happens when this network is empty and the elderly person is more isolated? We propose to think about how these observations can be transposed into a practice of spiritual care adapted to the context of the Romanian village.

Keywords: spiritual care, elderly, death, Romanian villages

The population in Romanian villages, as more generally in the world, tends to age. Overall, this shift in average age an be attributed to the increase in life expectancy. In Romanian villages, this is only part of the explanation, because it is also important to note that many young adults and people in the prime of life are leaving the village to work elsewhere. Therefore, the Romanian village of today is losing some of its vital forces. This results in more loneliness for many older people living in the countryside. It necessitates the development of a formal

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primary care system that, if necessary, makes up for the absence of informal caregivers (family members, friends). It also necessitates the consideration of how and by whom spiritual care is provided. In the countryside, it has often been the case that an older person is integrated into his/her extended family. In such a situation, he/she has a number of interlocutors to choose from if he/she feels the need to talk about existential issues. With whom would he/she be able to speak if relatives were completely absent? The traditional answer would certainly be to say that it is the task of the priest. Nevertheless, if we took the time to question each elderly person, would each choose a priest as an interlocutor for a discussion of existential issues?

Recent research in Switzerland highlights the fact that many elderly people living in residential care facilities are interesting in talking about spiritual and existential questions, such as those that surround the mystery of death. For such a topic, one might have thought that an elderly person would select the chaplain as their first choice of interlocutor. Surprisingly, when it came to choosing an interlocutor for talking about death, the majority of residents did not choose the chaplain. Most of the residents preferred, if possible, to discuss the topic of death with a person more intimately related to them: a wife or husband, a daughter or son, a niece, a friend, etc. However, when the network of relatives is lacking, the chaplain remains an important resource. What lessons can we draw from these observations as we reflect on the spiritual care of the elderly in Romanian villages today? Below we propose some elements to feed this reflection.

Aging in the Population

The proportion of elderly is increasing in Europe and around the world. According to United Nations estimates, the age group 60 and above represented 12% of the world population in 2015 and is expected to increase to 22% by 2050.[1] The proportions are higher in Europe: close to 24% in 2015, close to 30% in 2030, and about 34% in 2050. In Romania, the estimates are similar to Europe for 2015 and 2030, but slightly higher (about 36%) in 2050.

One major reason for the increase of the number of elderly people is the increase in life expectancy. All regions of the world have experienced an increase in life expectancy since 1950 due in particular to the postponement of mortality. In Europe, improvements resulting in survival beyond age 60

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[1] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Ageing 2015*, ST/ESA/SER.A/390 (2015), 122.

now account for more than half of the total increase in longevity.[2] Projections for the coming decades predict that we will continue to see improvements for survival at older ages. This is largely due to advances in medicine and access to care, as well as improvements in prevention programs.

> "The accuracy of projections of life expectancy at older ages will depend on the degree of progress achieved in preventing or postponing mortality caused by many of the diseases associated with old age, in particular non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes and respiratory diseases."[3]

An important consequence of this increased longevity is that the number of very old people, home-based and not very mobile, will increase significantly.

Elderly People in Romanian Villages Today: The Current Picture

Ten years ago, Nancu and colleagues could write, "The rural area has 9.7 million inhabitants (44.8% of the country's population), of which 2.4 million are age 60 and over."[4] This meant that large proportion of Romanians lived in the countryside, and that a quarter of the population living in rural areas of Romania was at least 60 years old. These authors also note, "demographic ageing in Romania is more obvious in the countryside than in town."[5] This was due to a drop in fertility in rural areas and the fact that young people have been leaving the villages to look for work in urban areas or abroad. Consequently, Nancu and colleagues predict that the proportion of elderly and retired people in Romania's rural population will be over 50% in the future.[6] Already, today, in Romania, around 60% of people age 65 and over live in the countryside. This is one of the highest percentages in Europe: only the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Liechtenstein have higher percentages of elderly people living in rural areas.[7]

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[2] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Ageing 2015*, 50.

[3] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Ageing 2015*, 56.

[4] Daniela Violeta Nancu, Liliana Guran-Nica, and Mihaela Persu, "Demographic Ageing in Romania's Rural Area," *Human Geographies: Journal of Studies and Research in Human Geography* 4 (2010): 35.

[5] Nancu, "Demographic Ageing," 36.

[6] Nancu, "Demographic Ageing," 37.

[7] United Nations, Economic Commission on Europe. *Older Persons in Rural and Remote Areas*. Policy Brief on Ageing no. 18, UN ECE/WG.1/25 (March 2017), 2. http://www.unece.org/population/ageing/policybriefs.html

It is generally observed that older people in rural areas may face the risk of social isolation and loneliness, especially when they experience reduced mobility and difficulties in maintaining their social networks. Loneliness and reduced access to social networks have a negative impact on access to healthcare and social care. The UNECE Policy Brief on Ageing no. 18 published in March 2017 notes:

> "With the out-migration of younger people, it is not only care facilities that are at risk of disappearing, but also, for example, shops, community centres and post offices. These closures increase the risk of older people becoming socially isolated and negatively impacts upon their overall quality of life, possibilities to find sources of informal support and the community vitality in a broader sense."[8]

This is particularly true in many Eastern European countries where "internal rural-urban migration and international out-migration has led to the depletion of informal care networks."[9]

This report from a United Nations commission highlights the importance of community and informal support for the elderly. Interestingly, it does not mention the role that religious communities play in providing support to older people. Admittedly, the situation is very different from one country to another and religious communities are not necessarily important actors in all contexts. This may explain their absence in a report that discusses the situation of older people in rural areas around the world. However, one can reach the same conclusion by reading the article entitled "Aging in Romania: Research and public policy" published by Bodogai and Cutler in 2013 in *The Gerontologist*.[10] In their report, which is not limited to the situation of elderly people living in the countryside, these authors draw attention to the need to rethink the organization of the care system for the elderly:

> "Thus, there are major inadequacies in the organization of the social service system for older persons: too few public services, insufficient budget funds, insufficient collaboration between public and private services, and frequently overlapping services."[11]

However, even in this article, which deals very specifically with the situation in Romania, there is no mention of churches or religious communities. Yet, churches are prominent throughout the territory of Romania; priests and pastors of parishes provide a pastoral presence to a large number of elderly people.

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[8] United Nations, Economic Commission on Europe, *Older Persons in Rural and Remote Areas*, 12.
[9] United Nations, Economic Commission on Europe, *Older Persons in Rural and Remote Areas*, 15.
[10] Simona I. Bodogai and Stephen J. Cutler, "Aging in Romania: Research and Public Policy," *The Gerontologist* 54, no. 2 (2013): 147–152. DOI:10.1093/geront/gnt080
[11] Bodogai and Cutler, "Aging in Romania," 151.

Moreover, it is now well known that religiosity is associated with longer life. In their review on spirituality, religiosity, aging, and health in global perspective, Zimmer and colleagues show that religiosity not only promotes better physical health but also better mental health.[12] Religion, or spirituality, seems to have a positive impact on cardiovascular conditions, chronic pain, depression, anxiety, stress, and wellbeing, among other things. Religious people tend to self-assess, have better overall health, and have less need for hospitalization. Much of the literature on religion and health concerns the elderly, and it is important to recognize the importance of spiritual care to the support of these people.

Spiritual Needs and Spiritual Care of Elderly People

The *Guidelines on chaplaincy and spiritual care in the NHS Scotland* of the National Health Service Scotland define "Spiritual care" and "Religious care" as distinct terms:

> "Spiritual care is usually given in a one to one relationship, is completely person centred and makes no assumptions about personal conviction or life orientation. Religious care is given in the context of shared religious beliefs, values, liturgies and lifestyle of a faith community. Spiritual care is not necessarily religious. Religious care should always be spiritual."[13]

In Romania, however, the distinction is not so clear; spiritual care means, for many people, especially the elderly, religious care. Nevertheless, we must not forget that not everyone considers himself/herself as belonging to a church or a religious community. That is why it is important not to talk only about religious care, but also to recognize that people who do not wish to come into contact with churches still have the right to receive spiritual care. In other words, both religious and non-religious people can express spiritual needs.

Jackson and colleagues write that they have found no definition of "Spiritual need in older people who are living in residential care or receiving home care" in the 335 relevant papers resulting from their literature review on spirituality, spiritual need, and spiritual care in elder care.[14] That is why they propose the definition given in a practical guide for nurses.[15] They explain that

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[12] Zachary Zimmer et al., "Spirituality, Religiosity, Aging, and Health in Global Perspective: A Review," *SSM-Population Health* 2 (2016): 373-381.

[13] National Health Service Scotland, *Guidelines on Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care in the NHS Scotland*, (Glasgow, UK: NHS Education for Scotland, 2009), 1.

[14] David Jackson et al., "Spirituality, Spiritual Need, and Spiritual Care in Aged Care: What the Literature Says," *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging* 28, no. 4 (2016): 284, DOI: 10.1080/15528030.2016.1193097

[15] A. Narayanasamy, *Spiritual Care: A Practical Guide for Nurses* (Lancaster, UK: Quay/BKT, 1991).

this definition seems "relevant to aged care settings."[16] The definition given in this practical guide consists of a list of needs. Spiritual needs are

> "The need to give and receive love; the need to be understood; the need to be valued as a human being; the need for forgiveness, hope and trust; the need to explore beliefs and values; the need to express feelings honestly; the need to express faith or belief; the need to find meaning and purpose in life."[17]

Unfortunately, when we read this definition, it is so broad that it we may find it difficult to distinguish spiritual needs from psychological needs. This stems from the fact that there is a tendency in the world of health to confuse spirituality and wellbeing. This trend is more pronounced in secularized societies. Danish researchers have highlighted this very convincingly.

La Cour et al. (2012) asked 514 adult Danes about their understanding of the word "spirituality."[18] Through factor analysis on the structure of the answers, they distilled six different understandings: (1) spirituality as positive dimensions in human life and well-being; (2) spirituality as New Age ideology; (3) spirituality as an integrated part of established religious life and religious traditions; (4) spirituality as a vague striving, opposed to religion; (5) spirituality as selfishness; and (6) spirituality as ordinary, secular inspiration in human activities. This result leads them to conclude, "A common understanding of the concept 'spirituality' does not exist in a modern secular context such as that of Denmark."[19] This also leads them to recommend the use of the term spirituality in scientific research only for understandings (2), (3) and (4):

> "A coherent use of the term spirituality in future research might there-fore comprise spirituality understood as a *context-bound experience of relatedness to a vertical transcendent reality*. With this in mind, we might suggest that only three of the six understandings of spirituality found in this study qualify as research themes. These are spirituality understood as New Age ideology, as integrated part of established reli-gion, and as striving towards a vaguely defined higher reality, opposed to religion. Conversely, spirituality understood as positive human fee-lings or relations, as selfish attitudes or as common inspirations is not recommended as a coherent topic for research."[20]

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[16] Jackson et al., "Spirituality, Spiritual Need, and Spiritual Care," 284.

[17] Jackson et al., "Spirituality, Spiritual Need, and Spiritual Care," 284.

[18] P. La Cour, N. H. Ausker, and Niels Christian Hvidt, "Six Understandings of the Word 'Spirituality' in a Secular Country," *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 34 (2012): 63-81.

[19] La Cour, Ausker, and Hvidt, "Six Understandings," 77.

[20] La Cour, Ausker, and Hvidt, "Six Understandings," 80.

Indeed, understanding (1) confuses spirituality and wellbeing, and understandings (5) and (6) confuse spirituality with psychological attitudes or behaviours. Also, note that only understanding (3) gives a religious interpretation of spirituality.

Vachon, Fillion, and Achille (two psychologists and a nurse) present a similar viewpoint to that of La Cour and colleagues. In the context of a literature review on end-of-life care, they write:

> "We might therefore define spirituality as a 'developmental and conscious process, characterized by two movements of transcendence; either deep within the self or beyond the self.' Those two movements may be experienced by the same person, or not."[21]

This means that a need should be considered "spiritual" in the true sense of the term, only if it concerns a search for *relatedness to a vertical transcendent reality*. If it meets this criterion, then spiritual care would support for this search. Among the spiritual needs of the elderly that may require the support of a spiritual care, we shall focus on one in particular: the need to talk about death.

Talking about Death: Results from Recent Research in Switzerland

To talk about death is a spiritual need of the elderly. We found this to be true in an exploratory study we conducted in two care homes in Switzerland.[22] In our study, we collected questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Sixty-six seniors agreed to complete the questionnaire: 51 residents (46 long-term residents, 5 short-term residents) and 15 people living in apartments attached to one of the care homes. All of these seniors identified primarily with Protestant or Catholic religious tenets. Among them, 30 residents agreed to participate in an in-depth interview. Of these, 21 self-identified as Protestant, seven as Catholic, one as Orthodox, and one as Atheistic.

About half of the seniors who answered the questionnaire (n = 66) thought it important (score of 7 or more, out of a maximum of 10) to be able to talk about the end of life with someone they trust. When asked who this trusted person would be, 20 residents (38%) identified a family member, 12 identified a friend (23%), and 11 identified a chaplain (21%), one or two people identified a trusted volunteer or staff member. It is interesting to note that among those

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[21] Mélanie Vachon, Lise Fillion, and Marie Achille, "A Conceptual Analysis of Spirituality at the End of Life," *Journal of Palliative Medicine* 12 (2009): 56. DOI: 10.1089/jpm.2008.0189

[22] Pierre-Yves Brandt et al., "Vieillir en institution en Suisse romande: La prise en compte de la spiritualité pour favoriser le bien-être," Working paper n°12, ISSR, Université de Lausanne, Lausanne Switzerland, 2017. https://www.unil.ch/issr/files/live/sites/issr/files/shared/Publications/WP_WorkingPapers/WorkingPaper_12_ISSR_FTSR_UNIL.pdf

who identify the chaplain as their trusted interlocutor of choice, only five communicate with the chaplain regularly. The other six do not have regular contact with the chaplain, but think he is the appropriate person with whom to talk to about end of life issues. It should be noted that of the 20 residents who identified a family member as their chosen trusted person (often a son or a daughter), only three participants indicated that the chaplain could also meet this need for them. Similarly, of the 12 who identified a friend as their chosen trusted person, only three indicated that the chaplain could also serve in this capacity for them. In fact, although a few residents identify several trusted persons, the majority of them mention only one.

However, when we interviewed the professional caregivers, they told us that most residents do not talk about the end of life spontaneously. A nurse explained that some people talk about death "very easily according to their life story, their experiences," These are the ones who "have come close to death, who have seen loved ones die in front of their eyes (...), who have made suicide attempts." Most of the residents never talk about end of life spontaneously.

The chaplain whom we interviewed says very similar things. He also finds that this topic of discussion does not arise so easily in his interviews with residents. There are certainly some exceptions. Some residents talk constantly about death. For these residents such talk is "the expression of a weariness of life." Other residents with "Christian hope" also speak freely of it. Nevertheless, it is often only upon the occasion of the demise of a resident that the theme of death comes into the conversation.

These observations are in tension with the statement by half of the residents of the importance of being able to talk about death with someone. We need to recognize that this is an important topic for many seniors; yet, many find it a difficult topic to address. Thus, even though the questionnaire shows that residents most often identify a trusted family member as a conversation partner on the topic of death and dying, the interviews temper any conclusions we may draw as to the frequency and depth of these conversations, as they show that the dialogue is sometimes difficult. For example, one resident says she realizes that her children do not like her talking about this subject and she has stopped "bothering them with that." Some caregivers also pointed out that family members of deceased residents often found themselves in a state of helplessness because they had never addressed the issue of last wishes with the deceased. Thus, if there is a request to initiate conversation on this topic, the invitation does not necessarily find the expected echo of assent.

Therefore, when a resident does not talk about the end of life issue, it is not always easy to know if it is because he/she believes that this topic is not important or because he/she finds it difficult to talk about. What is important to remember is that many of these elderly people say they prefer to discuss this topic only with one trusted person. Some residents will find this person

within their circle of relations or friends. The chaplain can also play this role, both for those individuals who recognize him/her as the privileged interlocutor for this topic and as a supplement in the absence of a person of trust (for those who do not identify a trusted interlocutor among their relatives).

Elderly People in the Romanian Village Today: Suggested Considerations for Spiritual Care

To conclude, we draw some considerations from this study, which we think could be applied to the situation of the Romanian village of today. If we take seriously the fact that having the opportunity to talk about death is a need felt by many older people, then we must ensure that the elderly who live in the villages have this opportunity. Residents in the care homes studied in Switzerland primarily chose family members as interlocutors. If the elderly people living in the village are surrounded by their families, they are more likely to find among their relatives a trusted person with whom they can talk about end of life issues. However, when older people are very isolated, without the close presence of a family member or a friend, things become more complicated. Sometimes even if relatives are in close physical proximity, intimate relationships are not possible with them, or the topic of death too difficult. In these cases, having the opportunity to talk with somebody well versed in spiritual matters to spirituality can be a welcome resource. Knowing that at present, priests bear the responsibility for most of the spiritual care in rural areas, this underscores their duties in this regard. Priests are responsible to visit elderly people at home and / or to find volunteers who can provide spiritual support. This presupposes that priests, pastors, and volunteers have received in active listening.[23]

"If doctors treat 'life', priests treat the 'heart'", said the Rev. Taio Kaneta, Chief Priest of the Tsūdai-ji Zen Temple, on 17 March 2015, during *The 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai*, Japan. This presupposes a competence of listening and spiritual accompaniment, as we have just said. It also presupposes the residents' willingness to accept priests at trusted partners in conversation.

In the context of the Romanian village, the role of the priest or pastor is not only spiritual; it is also clearly religious, in the sense that the priest or pastor acts as the minister or representative of a church. This can present an obstacle to village residents who wish to receive spiritual care, some residents do not want to have anything to do with church representatives. Although these individuals may have disconnected from organized religion, they still may have spiritual concerns or may wish to talk about the end of life with someone who is able to listen and attend to their concerns. If residents have no relatives

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[23] A. Manzano et al., "Active Listening by Hospital Chaplaincy Volunteers: Benefits, Challenges and Good Practice," *Health and Social Care Chaplaincy* 3, no. 2 (2015): 201-221.

in proximity or in trusted relationship, and they are averse to connecting with representatives of organized religion (priests or pastors), to whom can they turn for spiritual care?

This obstacle to receiving spiritual care is an issue that should be discussed by the spiritual care experts who providing pastoral care and religious support, such as priests and pastors, in collaboration with those who are responsible for primary care in rural areas.

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IV. REVIEWS

Alexandru Prelipcean, *Romanos' Renaissance. From the beginning to the present: Bibliography about Romanos the Melodist*, in col. Studien zur Orientalischen Kirchengeschichte (vol. 61), edited by Martin Tamcke, Lit Verlag, Zürich, 2019, 82 pages, ISBN 978-3-643-91132-2

Among the latest contributions published in the collection Studien zur Orientalischen Kirchengeschichte at the prestigious Lit Verlag, this summer appeared the volume *Romanos' Renaissance. From the beginning to the present: Bibliography about Romanos the Melodist*, prepared by Alexandru Prelipcean and edited by Prof. Dr. Dr.h.c. Martin Tamcke. In his "Preface", the illustrious professor from "Georg-August" University of Göttingen underlines the genuine interest of the Lutheran theologians in Romanos the Melodist, as shown by the article written by Christian Ludwig Philipp Meyer in the third edition of the "Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche" (1906). Christian Ludwig Philipp Meyer was clearly very keen to broaden the Protestants' understanding of Orthodoxy and his appreciation of Romanos' work is an indicative of how highly regarded was the Melodist, "that complying with Meyer's standards inevitably elevated him to a father of theology and piety as well". Paradoxically the Orthodox theologians "presumably denied such views or treated them with scepticism and thus the debate surrounding the message of the text intensified and still influences current practice" (p. 8). Expressing his interest in the sources of the orthodox Tradition, Professor Martin Tamcke points out that the research conducted by Alexandru Prelipcean is another necessary step in the exploration of early ecclesiastical sources and their lasting impact.

In the "Note on the edition" Alexandru Prelipcean shows that his work intends to be primarily a useful tool for those who will focus their attention on the life, work and theology of the great Christian hymnographer from the time of Emperor Justinian (p. 13). Although he doesn't claim exhaustivity for his bibliography, the sources and all scholarly contributions gathered in this volume are enough to emphasize and "revive the importance of Theological hymns, written by the 'humble Romanos' (τοῦ ταπεινοῦ Ῥωμανοῦ)". This bibliography dedicated to the Byzantine hymnographer follows the history of the critical editions, the contemporary translations of the Romanos writings, Doctoral dissertations and monographs dedicated to Romanos and their reviews, the articles from dictionaries and encyclopedias, and the Romanos' studies and articles.

Bringing together this bibliography Alexandru Prelipcean takes further the research in this field, after completing his PhD thesis dedicated to Romanos the Melodist *("Word, give me words": from the life of "humble Romanos" to the poetic theology of the Byzantine Melodist* [in Romanian]), Astra Museum, Sibiu, 2017, 299 p.) and proves his determination to go the extra mile following a research subject. The result is this indispensably instrument for the future investigations on Romanos the Melodist.

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